

WHILE I WAS AWAY - 50 REASONS FOR CHARACTER ABSENCES

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Compatibility: This product is designed to be system agnostic and usable with any pen and paper role playing game system.

INTRODUCTION

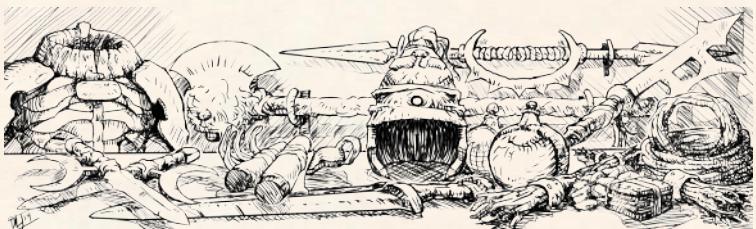
It can happen, for one reason or another, that a player is unable to attend a regular session to play their character, often due to real life interfering with gaming. This may be known ahead of time, or it may be unexpected, perhaps due to an illness. There are a number of ways of handling this when it happens. One is to have their character run by another player, but this has potential problems - especially if the character is killed. Another is to ignore the absence, and go on as if the player had never been absent, but simply not allow them to gain any experience or benefit for whilst they were away. A further possibility, and one that is definitely suited to known absences, is to have the character doing something else, separate from the rest of the group, when the player is away.

The following is a list of potential activities that could account for the character being absent. Some of these have game effects, especially financial ones, so they shouldn't be chosen randomly, or by GameMaster fiat. Any potential effects should be arranged in advance, when possible. Some activities are only really possible for certain types of character class, whilst others can be done by any. Others fall somewhere in-between; they may be suited more for one type of character than another, but could be possible for all. Suggestions as to which character types would be most plausible are covered. Some activities should be arranged before the player is absent, especially those related to creating things, and are therefore best

suited for planned absences, whilst others can be decided on afterwards, which are suited for unexpected absences. How long this different activities take may be down to what is being done, as some will have definite lengths, based on the system used, and others will be more flexible. Some are suitable for short game absences; others can take weeks of game time. These activities can make a character absence more interesting and game related than simply saying a character is absent.

A GM may choose for an activity done during an absence to be automatically successful, although this is best suited for long absences in game-time, where the character has spent enough time on whatever they are doing to get it right. This is entirely up to the GM, and will depend on the activity in question; some may have the potential for being detrimental to game balance if success is automatic. A GM may decide that certain activities may only be done once, especially those that provide benefits for doing.

Although the listed activities are aimed at a traditional fantasy setting, with a bit of tweaking many will be appropriate for other settings. For example, in a modern setting, training could instead be attending a conference. Other activities may require even less modification than this; some will be essentially impossible in a setting lacking magic. Each reason for absence also comes with an example of how the absence can be integrated in gaming terms, with activity costs, time taken and results.



ACQUIRING RARE INGREDIENTS

Some spells and magic items may require unusual or rare ingredients in order to cast the spell or make the magic item in question. For those that the GM decides don't require an actual adventure to obtain, just time and money, they can be used as a reason for a character being absent. This could be for perhaps a few days, maybe even stretching into a few weeks, depending on the scarcity of the items in question. This activity is only really suitable for classes that cast spells that need components or who can make magic items of any type.

Example: Berena the Alchemist needs to get some unusual ingredients for some potions that she is making. The GM rules that this is merely time consuming, and that the character will need to spend 6 game days checking all the appropriate shops in the area, for an eventual cost of 600 gp.

ACQUIRING RESEARCH MATERIALS

Research materials in this case refers to books, as well as other written materials, such as scrolls and codices. These would be purchased by those characters that require a library of books; the stereotypical character here would be the "mage" class, but this isn't the only type. Whilst mages, and divine spellcasters, may require a library for spell research and magic item creation, other characters may require these as well. Those who have skills based on what they now - the "sage" would be an example here - could also build up a library of research materials on their chosen subjects. Mages may be the most common researchers, but even a fighter might acquire research

materials, perhaps on military tactics, famous generals, and martial techniques.

This activity can be suitable for almost any class, as the majority of classes have skills that could be improved by knowledge. The time taken here can be quite short, perhaps only a day, to many weeks, depending on where the materials are and how much is being purchased. The cost of the books will also vary. The GM should determine what game effect the materials acquired will have - perhaps they will provide a bonus to a skill under certain conditions. A character using a skill relevant to a region's history, for example, could have the outcome improved by spending time in their library researching. The cost of the materials, the game effect and, if desired, book titles, should all be determined by the GM.

Example: Diran the Sage wishes to expand his library on the history of the city and the surrounding country. The books he needs range from relatively common and inexpensive, to rare and expensive. The sage spends one game month, including travel time, visiting stores, speaking to people and consulting with historians with suitable knowledge. The total cost of the acquisitions comes to 1,200 gp and will give Diran a bonus of +5 to any skill checks made regarding the history of the covered area.

ADDING SPELLS TO A SPELLBOOK

If a spelluser who requires a spellbook, typically mage-types, wants to add new spells to it, these typically takes time. Depending on the rules system used, spells, especially powerful ones, can take many hours to add to a spellbook. Should the spelluser be trying to add several spells to the book, this could easily

translate into days of game time, as the character will not be able to add spells 24 hours a day. They will also need to sleep and eat, and possibly rest their mind.

This activity can be used for absences of a few days at most for appropriate spellusing characters.

Example: Morallin the Mage wishes to add five new spells to his spellbook from another spellbook that he recently acquired. This is determined to take a total of 27 hours, or 4 game days at 8 hours per day, rounded up, and will cost Morallin around 1,500 gp to buy the required materials.

ARMOUR FITTING

Certain types of armour, such as full plate (although even leather armour might require a little bit of fitting), may well need tailoring, or rather the blacksmithing equivalent, to fit the wearer. This may need to be done for either armour that is being custom-made for the wearer, or to adjust captured armour so that a player can use it. Refitting armour for a new character will also cost money; if it is made specifically for the character, the cost would normally be in the purchase price. To ensure that the armour is fitted correctly, the character may need to be available for several days, or longer, for when the smith needs them. This activity is only appropriate for melee combat types who would wear armour of a suitable type, such as melee warriors and certain divine spellusers.

Example: Sir Tristan the Paladin has hired an armourer to make him a new

suit of full plate armour. The cost of the fitting is already included in the cost of the armour, but he will need to be available for the next five days as the

armourer custom makes the armour for the paladin.



ATTENDING A FESTIVAL

Festivals can be either religious or secular in nature. Religious festivals

will only be suitable for followers of the appropriate religion, and are best suited to classes such as divine spellcasters and holy warriors, whilst secular festivals can be attended by anyone. A religious festival will be celebrating a particular deity, or pantheon, whilst a secular festival could celebrate almost anything, such as a ruler's birthday, a day that a city or country was founded or simply one celebrating food and drink; the last being a common component of many festivals anyway. If the character has a suitable skill, they may be competing in events surrounding the festival.

Festivals are generally quite short, typically one day to a week at most, so they are best suited to shorter in-game absences. Festivals are unlikely to cost much money, and in return are unlikely to give much benefit. There might be a slight increase in status in the local community, or within the religion in question if it's a religious festival, but not much more than that.

Example: Ioan the Priest is attending an important religious festival for his patron deity. The festival is going to last three days, and Ioan's expenses are only going to be 1 gp, but by serving as one of the priests performing the festival, the GM

rules the Ioan will get a +1 bonus to any diplomacy-related rolls with members of his religion.

ATTENDING A MEETING

Characters with mercantile interests may need to attend a meeting of some type. Perhaps they own a business, and such gives the owner a voice on the city council in certain matters, or perhaps it's simply a meeting to do with running the business, the latter being possible for a family-run organisation. Members of a guild, of any type, may need to attend a meeting for an important vote, such as to induct new apprentices, promote members to higher ranks or to elect new guild officials. This activity is suitable for any character type, but the character needs to have a viable reason to be attending a meeting, such as owning or being involved in a business, or being a member of a guild, as in the two examples given. This is unlikely to cost anything, and will be quite a brief absence, probably taking only one or two days of game time at most.

Example: Caducia, as a master in the local Guild of Alchemists, is attending a vote to determine who will be the guild's Grandmaster for the next year. The GM decides that who the Grandmaster is for the next year will not have a significant game effect, so a realistic vote is not needed. Caducia is absent for three days, the first two to narrow down the candidates and vote for the next Grandmaster and the final day for the inaugural ceremony.

ATTENDING A SPORTING EVENT

Attending sporting events is not a modern pastime, it is one that has been done for many centuries. Chariot races

were a popular sporting event, as were various types of gladiatorial competition. Games were often based around military skills of some type, which then evolved into sporting events, something that had a side effect of providing a competitive reason to improve military skills. In this activity, the character is watching a sport, rather than competing in it. The GM should choose an appropriate sport, or event, that can be attended. These events are suitable for all character types to attend, and can take from one day to a week or more.

The character may place a bet on the event, but the odds should be determined in advance, if this is the case. Whether or not the character wins their bet should be calculated by a simple dice roll, rather than anything more complex, as this is activity is done simply to explain an absence, not as an actual role-playing opportunity.

Example: Incylus is going to the first chariot races of the season in his city. The opening races last for three days, and Incylus is going to place a bet on them. The GM rules that he has a 1 in 20 chance of having a winning bet, with a maximum deposit of 20 gp. The roll is modified by Incylus' own skill in Charioteering, as this gives him a professional insight into the quality of the competitors.

ATTENDING COURT

Attending court here is not meant in the legal sense, but rather royal court, or that of lesser nobility. Players who are members of the aristocracy, even low ranking members, perhaps simply a knight, will occasionally get summoned to attend court. Whether this is merely that of a baron, or a higher level of the aristocracy, even a king or emperor, will

depend on what the GM decides and what is suitable for the land in question - if there it isn't an empire, there won't be an emperor. This event will mostly be time consuming, rather than expensive; the character may have to travel some distance to get to court.

At the GM's discretion, the character may get a bonus for having attended court, probably on any social interactions with other members of the aristocracy for a period afterwards.

Example: Dame Herera is summoned to attend court at the local duke's residence. The ducal palace is two days travel away, and court will last a week, making nine days in total to get there and back. Food and lodging will be provided at the palace, so Herera will only have to pay for transport, which the GM decides will cost 16 gp in total there and back. The GM also decides that Dame Herera will get a +2 bonus on any Diplomacy rolls for the next month when interacting with any other members of the aristocrat subordinate to the duke in question.

BREEDING ANIMALS

This activity could refer to breeding one of the more unusual breeds of animal, such as griffons or hippogriffs, or a more expensive breed of one of the more normal types, such as horses. Or it could even be breeding regular animals, should a character have an interest in making sure it goes properly, perhaps a druid or someone who owns, or part owns, a farm. The breeding itself is unlikely to



take much time, given that most animals are only capable of breeding for a matter of days or weeks at most. It could be expensive, if the animal is an unusual breed, or if a stud fee needs paying for a horse for example. It could be potentially dangerous as well, for the fantastic breeds, but no significant damage should take place "off camera." If money needs to be spent, then there should be a potential reward, at the GM's discretion. This is an absence that is suitable for any character who has the appropriate animals or skills.

Example: Barka's hippogriff steed is coming into season, and he wishes to breed it. As he lacks another hippogriff, Barka has to find someone else with one. An agreeable owner of a male hippogriff is found, and they will breed it for the pick of the litter. The actual breeding only takes a week, and has no upfront payment. Barka's hippogriff will be unusable as a steed until after she has given birth, which means she will be out of commission for several months at least. Down the line, there are three offspring, of which Barka keeps two. The GM rules that he will need to look after them for the next six months, at a cost of 5 gp per week each, until they can be sold.

BRINGING IN THE HARVEST

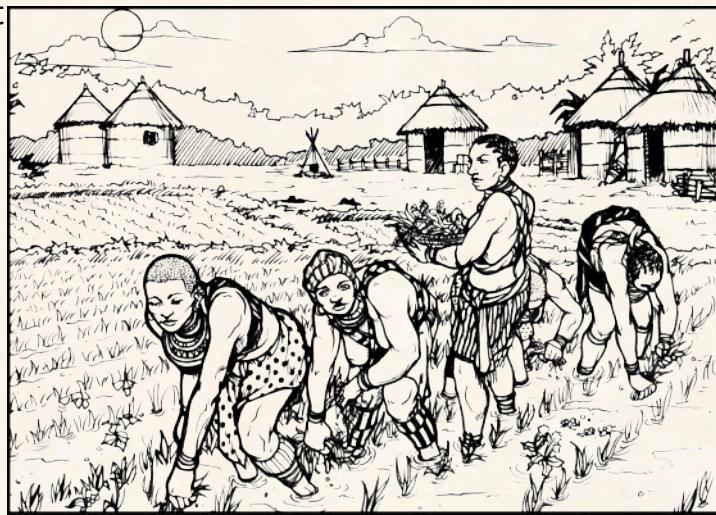
Many characters may have become adventurers simply to get away from the farm, but they may still return if needed, especially if there is something special about this particular crop, or they have

an interest in the farm in question. This activity is suited for characters who have a farming background, or those that own a farm. The harvest itself will take a few days to a few weeks, depending on the crop. There will be travel time on top of that; it is unlikely that the character will be many days travel away from the relevant farm. The character may well receive some sort of reward with a monetary value for this, especially if it's on their own property.

Example: Ithican's family has for many years harvested maple syrup from their trees. This is a delicate process, and those lacking the correct skills can damage the trees. Ithican, having been raised to harvest maple sap from an early age, heads home to help. The farm is two days travel away, making four in total. The harvest season also lasts three weeks this year, for a total absence of 25 days. Maple syrup is valuable, and Ithican is given 10 gallons at the end of the harvest, to sell as desired.

BUILDING A CONSTRUCT

In some systems players can build constructs - artificially constructed creatures, with golems being the most well known, although there are many others. Constructs are primarily magical, but steam- and clockwork-powered automatons are also possibilities. Building constructs is both expensive and time consuming, and the finished construct can also be powerful, so the cost and the construct being built both need determining in advance. A character



planning to build one will also need a suitable workspace or laboratory, whether their own or one they have access to.

This activity is only suited for those characters who can build constructs. Primarily, this will be spellusers of some type, but if such as steam or clockwork is being used instead of magic, it can also be done by characters with the requisite skills needed to build such a construct.

Example: Ninan the Mage wishes to construct a simple golem to protect her laboratory when she is away. Golem construction is expensive, and the cost to build it will be 20,000 gp. The GM decides that it will take a month for Ninan to find and buy the required materials, and then construct the golem.

BUYING PROPERTY

Characters may, at some point, wish to purchase land, a house or a business. This process can easily be time consuming, but it isn't an activity that would normally be gamed, beyond making a few dice rolls, but this can be used as a reason for a character's absence.

This activity is generally suitable for any type of character class, although characters with high skills related to personal interaction and money, and higher intelligence, will be the most realistic to use this activity, as with others there could be unexpected, and potentially expensive, errors and problems. This could be a desired

outcome for the GM who wishes to reduce the amount of excess cash that characters have available, although it does run the risk of annoying players. Given that this sort of transaction is, in real life, potentially complex, this activity could be sued for absences of only a few days to weeks or even months of game time.

Example: The characters are planning to buy a local inn as both a base of operations and a source of income. The legal processes require that one of them be on hand to deal with any problems if they arise and sign any needed forms, so Utic remains in the city to complete the transaction. No problems arise during the process, and the sale is successfully completed in two weeks of game time.

CHARITY WORK

This activity is perhaps best suited to members of the right type of religious order - those with mandates to support those less fortunate, or similar ideals, are the best - but other characters may also wish to do charitable works. This is an activity that isn't suited to evil characters, or even most of those that are neutral.

There are different actions that can be done for charitable activities; giving out food and drink is one of the more common ones, but healing the sick is another possibility. This work may or may not cost the character money; all the costs could be incurred by the organisation in question, but some may expect their members to donate more than just time and skills, but money as well. Charitable works are unlikely to take much time, although this can depend; it is perfectly possible for a character to spend a month in game time doing them, if a prolonged absence needs to be accounted for.

At the GM's discretion, the charitable work could give the player a bonus when interacting with the poorer classes of society afterwards for a period of time.

Example: Ingus the Priest is going to spend a week feeding and ministering to the sick in the poorer areas of the city. The GM rules that the costs of this are born by his religious order, and that for the next month following the charitable work, Ingus will receive a +2 bonus on any Diplomacy rolls when dealing with the poorer people of the city.

CLOTHING FITTING

This doesn't refer to "off the rack" clothing, or most of the clothes that a character would buy, but it could easily be applied to expensive clothing used by the higher classes of society and suitable for attending court or other significant occasion

In this case, the clothing will need fitting to the player in question, rather than it being one size fits all, and tailoring is essential as poorly fitting clothing will give the wrong impression and result in damage to the character's social standing. Good quality tailored clothing can also be comparatively expensive, easily several hundred gp, so the player needs to agree to this cost beforehand, and some sort of benefit should be given.

Tailoring clothing to fit is generally not as difficult as fitting armour, but it can still be time consuming. This absence is suitable for any character who has an appropriate level of status or wealth for them to be buying the clothing in the first place.

Example: Dame Intidar is going to be attending a formal ball and will require a

new set of clothing for it. The GM rules that the clothing fits extremely well, and enhances Intidar's appearance. As a result of this, she gets a bonus of +2 to checks to skills such as Diplomacy when wearing the clothing at the ball. The cost of the clothing and fitting is 200 gp.

COPYING A BOOK

The characters have acquired a rare book or scroll which perhaps needs duplicating, for one reason or another. The original may need to be sold or returned; in the latter case, it may have been stolen and need copying as quickly as possible so that it can be returned before it is missed, as the owner of the book is too dangerous to annoy.

In most cases this copying work would be entrusted to a scribe, but perhaps there isn't one competent in the book's language available. There may be some other reason for not using a scribe or similar. The book may be easily recognisable, in the case of a stolen item, and the characters would certainly not want a scribe recognising it and reporting it. There may also be magical writing that a standard scribe is unable to read. This activity is most suited for the more studious types of characters, such as many spellusers, but others with appropriate skills related to reading and writing, an appropriate language or the ability to read magical writings, if

necessary, can also do it. An illiterate barbarian



would be unsuitable for the task.

Example: Munus the Mage has been loaned a rare book on magic by his master, in order to copy it. The writing is in an obscure magical language, and the ink used can only be read using a spell capable of seeing magical writings, so Munus will need to copy the book himself. This is a difficult task, and the GM rules that this will take two weeks, at the end of which Munus will have his own copy of the tome.

CRAFTING ITEMS

This refers to the manufacture of non-magical items, not magical ones. This activity is suitable for any class with an appropriate skill related to the manufacture of goods, which could be of any type, from weapons to armour to furniture - although the latter is possibly more unlikely. The time taken can be variable, as can the cost of materials, depending on how complex the process is to complete the item in question, and what level of quality it needs to be. There are different reasons why a character may want to craft an item themselves. Perhaps a base item needs creating in order to enchant it into a magical item, or maybe the character simply needs a more specialised item than is easily available. The materials could be unusual, and only the character has the appropriate skills needed to work them.

Most crafting will require an appropriate skill check but, should the time taken be sufficiently longer than would normally be required, the GM may rule that success is automatic, especially if the costs are also higher.



Example: Titia the Fighter is forging a new sword for herself. A spelluser of her

acquaintance is going to enchant it afterwards, so Titia, having been raised as a weapon smith and having the appropriate skills and having kept up with them, decides to forge it herself so that it is perfectly suited for her. The GM rules that this sword will normally take a week to do and cost 100 gp, but Titia decides to take two weeks and spend 200 gp, so the sword is automatically created successfully, and is ready for enchanting.

CREATING ART

Characters with suitable artistic skills could be spending the time they are absent creating artwork, such as a sculpture or a painting, which could then be sold at a profit, at the GM's discretion. The time taken for this is variable; a major piece of artwork can easily take days, perhaps even weeks, of game time to complete, but more simple ones could be completed in a day. There may also be some initial expense for purchasing materials; how much will depend on what is being made, as a life size sculpture will require more expensive materials than a painting would. This is an activity that is only suited to characters with appropriate skills.

Example: Gerfertis has some artistic skills, and is going to spend three days creating a portrait of an important personage in his town. The GM rules that this will require only 5 gp of materials to do and, if Gerfertis makes a successful skill roll for the appropriate craft skill, he will be able to sell the painting for 50 gp.

DOING RESEARCH

This can be done by any character with access to a suitable library, whether this is their own, belongs to a guild, of which they are either a member or can gain access to - spellcaster's guilds are ideal

here - or to a city, as well as suitable skills and high enough intelligence to actually accomplish something. This can be doing needed research in order to find out information that is needed for a series of adventures that the party is doing, whilst the rest of the party goes off and does another related task. The research time will be variable, and there may be a cost for using other libraries too. The GM should determine of the research results in automatic success; in most cases, it probably should, as this is only to explain a character's absence.

Example: The adventurers need to find the location of the Lost City of Trakdum. Whilst the rest of the party is on a related side quest, Brahemlin the Sage remains in the city researching the location in her own library, that of the city and various other guild and magical libraries that she can gain access to, for a fee. The GM rules that finding the city's location will take two weeks of game time and the associated fees for using the various libraries will come to 200 gp. The fees are paid by the entire party, not just the sage, as the research will benefit them all.

FIGHTING A DUEL

Duels may primarily be the focus of combat types, but other classes might participate in them too, although those should have a duel of an appropriate type, as even spellusers can fight duels, albeit ones that are most likely magical in nature, rather than physical.

Any duel should only be a fairly minor one, perhaps only to first blood, and not one with any major in-game significance as it is essentially happening "off camera." Certainly, it should not result in the death of the character - or even their opponent, if the latter is a significant NPC

- or any other major outcome. Such duels should be played out as normal. A duel is unlikely to take up much in the way of game time, maybe only around 1-3 days in total, for both the lead up to it and wind down afterwards.

Example: After an argument over a lady, Sir Makius the Cavalier is challenged to a duel by a fellow knight. The argument is not that severe, and both sides agree that a duel to first blood will satisfy honour. The pair will meet outside the city in two days time; Sir Makius spends the next day preparing. The GM rules that Makius successfully drew first blood in the duel, and honour is satisfied. With that being the case, the two knights bury the hatchet by drinking together, which takes another day, for three in total.



FULFILLING A FEUDAL DUTY

This is appropriate for any titled character, from the lowest knight, or equivalent, upwards. Feudal positions are largely not dependent on the character's class; although fighter classes may be the most likely, any class could have received a title, either inherited or gained as a reward for services done. Titles may come with land, or they may simply be court titles, but in either case, they may still have attached responsibilities as, although land owners may most commonly be those with feudal responsibilities, as they have land from which to raise troops or supplies, simply lacking land does not necessarily mean that there are no responsibilities that go

with a title; those without land were often required to directly serve in a military role. The duties could be such as to provide men or supplies for their superior's or their king's wars. Duties could be expensive or, in the case of direct service, dangerous, so some sort of benefit should accrue for fulfilling them.

Example: As part of his responsibilities to the king, Baron

Freemaster has to supply men and equipment to help maintain the country's borders against invading orcs. The king wishes the baron to bring a troop of 10 men-at-arms, a squire and a knight to the capital. Getting the men ready, equipping them and escorting them to the capital will take Freemaster 3 weeks, after which he is free to leave. The cost incurred by the baron is ruled by the GM to be 1,000 gp. As a result of fulfilling his duties, the baron will receive a bonus of +1 on his dealings with the king for the next three months.

GIVING A PERFORMANCE

This activity is most suited to a bardic character, as this character type is one whose class revolves around artistic performances, but it could be done by any character with the appropriate skills. Perhaps they have a major break where they are going to perform one or more of their pieces in front of an important potential patron. Alternatively, this could be a regular performance slot for a specific period of time. The amount of time this takes could be only a few days for a single performance, to many weeks,

for a regular performance slot.

The character should earn some money from doing this activity; the amount earned should be determined in advance, but be related to the character's levels and skills; greater skill should give a commensurately greater reward.

Example: Potenes the Bard has been given a chance to perform at the city's main theatre in front of its most wealthy and influential citizens. If this performance goes well, he may gain patrons or private performances. Potenes spends two weeks practising for the performance, which only lasts a night. The GM considers how well the Bard did in front of the audience, by using his skills and a skill roll, and deems it was a success. Potenes gains a patron, meaning that he will pay less for bardic supplies in the future.

GOING HUNTING

Hunting is an activity that is best suited to aristocratic characters, or barbarian types, but others can participate as well. Hunting in this case is not monster hunting, but instead game animals, although the game animals may be quite substantial in size. This will be with a party of fellow hunters, rather than solo hunting, and should therefore be assumed to not be dangerous.

The character, as a result of this hunt, may bring back trophies from the animals in question, as well as skins, furs and meat, all of which may have a monetary value, at the GM's discretion, or could simply be

decorative.

Example: Throk the Barbarian is returning home for the annual tribal seal hunt. He will take six days travelling there and back and three days on the hunt itself, for nine days in total. When Throk returns, he has the skins and meat from the seals he has hunted, which are valuable and worth, according to the GM's decision, 200 gp.

GOING TO A REUNION

Some characters, in particular those of aristocratic birth or spellusers, both regular and divine, may have attended some sort of learning institution with comparatively large classes. Such institutions could have regular, or irregular, reunions, where old students can socialise and exchange knowledge and perhaps meet the more recent classes of students. Such events are unlikely to take long, possibly a few days at most, although there may also be

travel time. Any expenses are likely to be fairly minor, perhaps travel and lodging costs and maybe some food as well. The character may get some useful contacts or knowledge from these reunions.



Example: Zanda the Wizard is returning to his Mage School for the optional annual reunion. The guild is not far away, only two days travel, so he loses four days in total for travel. There are some costs associated with the travel, and the overnight stay once he arrives. In total, he spends six days, including two at, and recovering from, the reunion, and 50 gp in associated costs. In return, he gets some

tips about spell research that the GM decides will give him a +1 bonus to success the next time he researches a new spell.

GROWING PLANTS

Whilst druidic classes may be the most obvious subjects of this activity, it can also be done by other classes with suitable skills, such as herblore, or who need plants for a variety of reasons. Druids and similar classes could be growing anything, from grass to trees, perhaps reseeding a damaged area of the countryside. Other classes would be most likely to grow small plants, such as herbs, although other plants could be used, and then use them as potion ingredients and spell components. How long this activity takes will depend on how much depth the process is gone into; simply planting a few seeds will barely take any time, but planting trees could easily take weeks. Drudic classes should probably earn experience from the activity, whilst others will get needed components at a fraction of the normal price. Success might not be automatic, especially if the ingredients are expensive.

Example: Irindia the Herbalist is going to attempt to grow some plants she needs. She spends a week preparing and planting several beds of rare herbs in her greenhouse. She then spends another two weeks looking after the seedlings as they start to grow, before she can safely leave them in the hands of her apprentice. The total cost for this is 500 gp - these are expensive materials. When the plants mature three months later, Irindia makes a skill roll to see what happens. Half of the plants have successfully matured, and Irindia now has 2,000 gp worth of rare herbs.

GUILD DUTY

A character who is the member of a guild may occasionally have to attend guild ceremonies or perform other guild-related duties, although these may be quite minor. Of the character classes, mage and thief types are the most likely to belong to a relevant guild, as most other guilds will be profession-related, such as craftsmen guilds. Mages and thieves regularly have their own guilds in many settings, but there is no reason why a character with an appropriate skill couldn't be a member of the relevant guild and occasionally need to attend guild-related activities. These activities are unlikely to take much in the way of time, or cost much money, and may simply be ceremonial.

Example: Nadta the Thief is attending the Stealing of the Purse ceremony at the Thieves' Guild. This is a formal ceremony commemorating the first purse stolen by the founder of the guild. Although it celebrates an actual event, the ceremony is far more stylised - and favourable to the thief - than the original event was. This takes her two days, and her accommodation is provided by the guild.

HARVESTING PLANTS

This activity is most suited to the acquisition of certain rare plants which may need to be harvested at particular times of the year, and is most appropriate for those character types who would have use for such plants, perhaps in magic items, potions and herbal concoctions. The benefit for the character is that they will be able to get rare plant ingredients without having to pay for them, as they would in a shop, although the GM may rule that more expensive plants may require special tools to harvest, or may simply be unavailable to be harvested by characters. The time

taken for this activity is unlikely to be high, unless the plants are in a distant region - which would be more suited to an adventure - and so this absence will probably last a week and most, and often less.

Example: Jaynger the Mage needs to harvest the rare night-flowering moon drop for an expensive magical item that she is creating. The flower only blooms once a year under the light of a new moon, for a matter of mere minutes, and Jaynger will be away for both the day before the harvest and the day after it to ensure that she is able to harvest the flower as it blooms.

HOLIDAY

The idea of going on a holiday for relaxation may be, to a large extent, a comparatively modern concept, but there is no reason why a character could not do it. This would be suitable for any character with sufficient money to spend some time away, and the cost may not be that great, although this will depend on how luxurious the break is. Perhaps they go on a romantic getaway with a significant other - or a non-significant other. The length of time could be anything from a few days to a few weeks. The GM may decide that the character may get a bonus to a skill for some time following the trip, especially if it was an expensive one.

Example: Sircia is treating herself to a getaway after her latest adventure, in order to recuperate. She is going to spend a week at a luxury inn a few miles outside of town that is favoured by the wealthy. This is a very expensive place to visit, and it will cost her 100 gp per day, for 700 in total. The GM rules that, because Sircia is feeling well rested and at ease after her trip, she gains a +1

bonus to all mental related skills and skill checks for the following two weeks.

HOSTING A SUPERIOR

In feudal times, those with rank would often be expected to host their superior when the latter was visiting. This was often very expensive, and it wasn't uncommon for it to put the host on the brink of insolvency, or even past it, so kings were known to use it as a weapon against potentially troublesome subordinates. If this is used as an activity to explain a player's absence, then it certainly shouldn't be that financially ruinous.

Successfully hosting a superior could give a boost to the character's social ranking, or improve their relations with their superior, in which case it should also incur a cost.

Example: Lord Stard is hosting his immediate superior, Baron Larka, for three days as the latter tours his various vassals. The visit goes extremely well, and Larka is impressed. The GM decides that this will give Stard a +1 bonus to any relevant rolls when dealing with the baron for the next six months, and that the total cost for the visit is 1,500 gp.

IMPROVING THEIR PROPERTY

Characters who own land or a building could be absent because they are improving it. This would be done because character either cannot afford to pay someone else to do it, or they have the required skills, which contractors wouldn't. The latter case would probably mostly relate to magical enhancements and improvements, but it could be that a character has expertise in certain non-magical skills that normal tradesmen lack. There will definitely be a cost

incurred in improving a property and the time required could easily be anything from a few days to a few months, depending on what is being done. Any character can be absent for this reason; all that is required is that they own property of some type, whether this be a shack, a farm or a castle.

Example: Justidar the Mage is improving his wizard's tower by adding some traps and other surprises to it. Many of these

traps are magical in nature, so Justidar has to do them himself. In addition, he doesn't want anyone he hires to have full knowledge of how his traps work, so he also needs to organise the hirelings carefully. This process is going to take Justidar three weeks to do, and 4,000 gp, at the end of which his tower will be substantially better protected than it was.

INCARCERATION

Thief classes may be the most obvious choice for this absence, but other characters could have run afoul of local laws for one reason or another, but the result is that the character in question spends some time in the local jail.

Any game effects should be comparatively minor, at most a few days, or weeks, in jail, and/or a minor fine, as the long term consequences of breaking laws can be significant, possibly even fatal, and expensive, and punishments could include being permanently barred from a city as well as loss of bodily parts. This absence should be planned out and should therefore not be decided on the spur of the moment. An alternative is that the character was not actually guilty,

and is released after several days.

One benefit a thief character could gain is to get a new criminal contact whilst locked up, possibly a source of suitable merchandise, a fence for stolen goods or a new contact with a local criminal organisation.

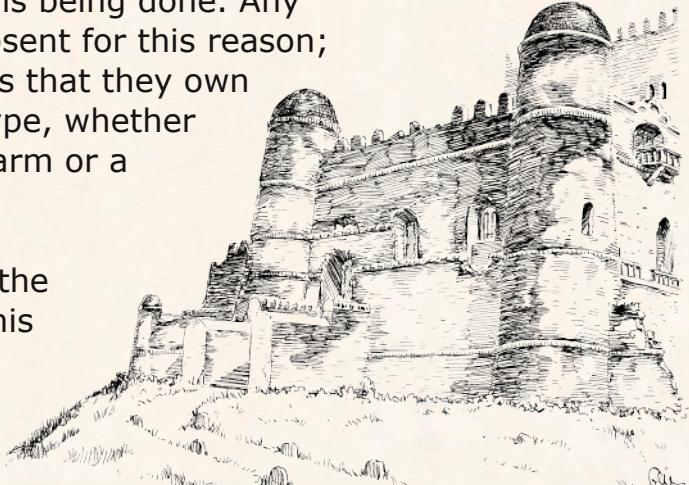
Example: Finicus the Thief gets locked up for seven days after he was accused of pick pocketing. There is insufficient evidence to prosecute him, as Finicus didn't have any stolen goods on him, so he is released with a 10 gp fine and a warning. Whilst he is locked up he meets Adicus the Fence who offers to buy stolen goods from Finicus at 10% more than the thief was getting elsewhere.

JURY DUTY

In some locations, those accused of a crime may be eligible for a trial by their peers. This is unlikely to happen in the more autocratic states, but it can happen, especially in such as free cities. Anyone who is considered to be a citizen of the state may be eligible to serve on a jury.

The trial could take anything from days to weeks, partly depending on the crime and partly depending on the state's legal system. This activity is suitable for any class, although those that are considered more disreputable, such as thieves, or who have had their own problems with the law, may not be asked to serve on a jury. There is unlikely to be an associated cost for this absence.

Example: Jaramin, as a citizen of the city



of Stornia, is required to serve on the jury for the trial of a murderer. This is quite a complex case, and the trial will take four weeks in total to come to a decision. The decision has no game effect, and Jaramin has no associated costs, as food, drink and accommodation are provided for the serving jurors.

LEARNING A NEW SKILL

This is an activity suitable for any character who plans to get a new skill, including languages. Depending on how skill acquisition is handled in the game system in question, learning new skills might require actual game time to do, and these will usually be stated. For those that don't, it might simply be that the absence coincides with when a new skill, or other ability, would be acquired, so the GM could simply state that the character is off learning their new skill, as an explanation for their absence. The time needed to acquire skills can be greatly variable, from days to months, depending on the skill and the game system, and some systems may also require a monetary cost.

Example: Hydagar has decided to learn a new language. In the game system being used, skills are not commonly given a required time for learning, so this is simply a skill that would normally have been acquired. The GM rules that this will take two weeks to do, and costs him nothing.

LEARNING NEW MATERIAL

This activity is only really suitable for bardic character types, unless such are lacking and another character type has an appropriate skill, although they are unlikely to get as much benefit from this. The character can spend the time learning suitable material, such as a new

song or poem, or maybe even writing it. This new material may give a skill bonus when it is used, at the GM's discretion, particularly if it is material they created themselves, or is for a specific type of performance. There may or may not be an associated cost; costs could be for writing materials if the character is creating their own, or there may be a fee to gain access to the material being learned. The length of time required for this activity could range from a day to possibly months, the latter most appropriate for creating brand new material from scratch.

Example: Moncherk the Bard is learning a new epic poem, which will take two weeks. The GM rules that there is a cost for learning this from its creator, of 50 gp. The poem is new and the GM also rules that this novelty will make the poem more effective, at least initially. Moncherk will get a bonus of +1 when using the performance related to the poem for one month.

MAGIC ITEM CREATION

This type of absence is only suited to characters who can actually create magical items. Spell using classes are the most common type here, especially non-divine ones, but others may be possible. This type of activity tends to be time consuming, and may be expensive. Unless the creation is of small, probably limited, magical items, such as potions or scrolls, the absence could easily stretch into weeks. This will need some preparation beforehand to determine what is going to be created, and what the time and cost will be. Any type of magic item that can be created by players, including potions and scrolls, is suitable for this activity. If the character spends more time than normal making the item, the GM may rule that success is

automatic, but it may also be more expensive.

Example: Erana the Mage wishes to make herself a new magical staff. This is a potentially time consuming and always expensive task to accomplish. The GM decides that the staff that Erana wishes to create will take one week and 10,000 gp to make; Erana decides to take 3 weeks and 15,000 gp. The GM decides that the staff is automatically created successfully after this period.

MILITARY SERVICE

This is most suited for combat types, but other character classes may be required to serve also. Some cities or realms may require all able-bodied citizens within a certain age range to spend some time training for, or serving in, the militia. Serving in the actual army is not really a suitable activity here, as that would require constant service, and far too much time, whilst militia service or training might only be for a few weeks a year. It is unlikely to be shorter than a week. This activity is unlikely to have any associated expense, as equipment, food and lodging would probably be provided. There may be a small experience reward, or skill bonus, at the GM's discretion.

Example: Kazog is a citizen of the Free City of Fideria, and citizens can be expected to spend several weeks in militia training every year. Kazog is going to spend two weeks training with the city's militia, and the GM rules that he also earns a little experience as well.

MISSED THE



BOAT

This does not have to be a literal boat, although it could be, if appropriate. In this situation, the reason a character is not with the rest of their party is simply because they failed to reach the required transport, whether this be a boat, coach or otherwise, before it departed. They will rejoin the rest of the party when they arrange replacement transport. This is suitable for any character class, but in most cases this will probably only delay the character for a day at most, unless there is very little transport available and the destination is some distance away.

Example: Skarak misses the coach that is taking the party to the city their next excursion is near. The GM states that the next scheduled coach will not be until the next day, so Skarak meets up with the rest of the characters a day later.

OUTFITTING A LABORATORY

This activity is naturally most suited to character classes that would use a laboratory, such as mages or alchemists, although other classes who have suitable skills may also choose to outfit one. Outfitting a laboratory will probably cost quite a bit of money, and the character will need to have a suitable property available in which to build it.

The finished laboratory, at the GM's discretion, may give bonuses to related skills and tasks that are performed in it. It is recommended that a character does see an advantage gained for the money invested in the lab. It may take days or

weeks to assemble the needed materials

Example: Bilthia the Alchemist is assembling a laboratory for making potions consisting of glassware, other suitable equipment and a range of standard ingredients. This will cost Bilthia 10,000 gp to assemble and construct, and will take two weeks to outfit it. The GM rules that the completed laboratory will give a bonus of +2 to the success roll of any appropriate skills practiced in the newly-constructed laboratory, such as making potions, and decides that there may also be a bonus to the efficacy of any potions prepared, depending on the potion type. For example, a curing potion may cure one more point than normal, but a potion that increases an attribute by 1 will last longer.

OUTFITTING A TRAINING FACILITY

A character could be building themselves a training facility to improve their skills. This activity is suitable for many different classes of character, if not all of them, although what the facility will contain will differ. For example, fighter types could have a setup involving training dummies, or an archery range for those whose primary weapon is the bow, and thief types could have locks and traps to practice on.

Building the facility will incur a cost, and will also require the character to own or have access to a suitable property. Having an effective training facility could increase any experience earned whilst training in it, or give other advantages, depending on what the GM decides. Some

advantage should be gained by spending the money.

Example: Tadeus the Fighter is outfitting a room in a property that his character is a part owner of. He will need to purchase training dummies, weapon racks, training weapons, targets and other appropriate equipment. The facility will also require extensive use of glass windows to let in sufficient light. The total cost will come to 5,000 gp for outfitting the facility, although there is no charge for acquiring the room, as it is in property that the characters already own, and it will take 3 weeks in total. Following its construction, Tadeus will be able to train in his new facility, and the GM decides he can get a small experience point bonus every week he does this.

PERFORMING RITUAL MAGIC

Some game systems allow the option to perform certain spells as ritual magic, or may in fact require ritual magic in order to achieve certain goals. Ritual magic is more time consuming than casting a regular spell - which can often be done in the middle of battle - and tends to require a quieter area and more in the way of specific paraphernalia than a regular spell. Consequently, it can be more expensive to perform, but it also tends to have an increased chance of

success, and sometimes can be done by a wider range of character types than traditional spells. The time taken for ritual magic could extend from a few hours to several days, but even the shortest period of time required should be considered to take up an entire day of



game time for the purposes of in-game absence.

Example: Sinsini the Mage wishes to cast a spell to protect her wizard's tower better. This spell can be cast as a magical ritual, but it will be more expensive. The GM decides that the ritual will require 5,000 gp in components to cast it, and that it will take three days. At the end of the ritual, Sinsini's tower is protected, and the spell is twice as effective as normal.

RECOVERING FROM ILLNESS

In many game systems that are high magic, recovering from disease, major injury or even death can be practically immediate, but in some this is not the case, or the illness or injury in question may be resistant to magical healing methods. The GM can then decide to allow some time for the character to heal using normal methods, thus explaining their absence.

Recovery is something that is suitable for any character class, although it is only really suitable for a character who has been injured in the first place; however, the injury could have always been due to an accident, rather than anything that actually happened during game play. In the latter case, the injury shouldn't have any permanent effect, as it simply provides a reason for this absence.

Example: Flidis was badly injured in a recent adventure, and the injury is resistant to magical healing, so she will need to rest up and heal naturally. The GM rules that this healing will take two weeks of game time.

RELIGIOUS RETREAT

This activity applies especially to divine

spellusers and religious warriors, but it could also be appropriate for any devout character. This will usually entail either going to a remote location that's owned by their religion or, for such as druids, that is simply remote or spending time in fasting and silent contemplation, or a combination of both.

The GM may allow a bonus for the time spent in contemplation, such as some experience earned or improved spellcasting for a defined period of time. The length of the absence is unlikely to be short; at least a week should be considered to be the minimum, and longer periods of a month are certainly possible.

Example: Ingoya the Priest spends a week fasting and in quiet contemplation at a distant monastery belonging to his order. The monastery is far enough away that it takes three days to travel to, and another three to return, so Ingoya is absent for a total of thirteen days. As a consequence of this week, for the next two weeks, the GM rules that Ingoya will receive a +1 bonus on all rolls related to religious skills.

RUNNING THEIR ESTATE

A character that owns land, or a business, will need to at least occasionally check in and make sure that everything is running correctly. They may employ a non player character, for example a bailiff or a reeve, to handle the day to day management, but they may still need to get an update every so often. This is suitable for any character type that owns land or a business of any description. Depending on travel time, it is unlikely to take more than a few days and, given that the character owns where they will be staying, accommodation costs will be absorbed by the business.

Example: Charnad is visiting his small estate for an update on how things are going, and to approve certain items that his reeve cannot. The estate is close to where the characters currently are, so there are only two days of travel time there and back. He also spends a week on the estate itself, for 9 days in total, and incurs no expenses from the trip.

SPELL RESEARCH

This is an activity that is only suitable for spellusers, with the stereotypical "mage" classes being the most likely candidates, but divine spellusers are also a possibility. This is an activity that needs forward planning, to determine what the costs and time taken is likely to be. Spell research can quite easily be both time consuming and expensive, and whether or not the finished spell will be approved by the GM needs deciding before the research is

conducted, not afterwards. Spell research is likely to be very time consuming, and may take weeks or months of in-game time to complete, so this is really only suitable for long absences. The GM may decide that success is automatic, if the character spends significantly more time than normal on it.

Example: Eritina the Mage is researching a new spell and the GM rules that the spell will take 3 weeks of study and 3,000 gp to research normally. The player is going to be absent longer than that in in-game time, so the GM rules that 6 weeks and a cost of 6,000 gp will result in automatic success.



STUDYING WILDLIFE

This activity is most suited to those characters with either an interest in wildlife, probably shown by them possessing a related skill, or for rangers and druidic types who may need to keep track on the wildlife in a region they are responsible for. The study could be simply noting the mating and lairing habits and preferred food of a certain creature in the wild, or it may be a more complicated survey of the interaction between predators and prey for a specific small region. This is an activity that is unlikely to cost much; supplies will be all that are needed, and any character with skills related to surviving in the wild will be able to hunt and gather their own food and drink. This may provide experience or a bonus in certain related skills at the end of it, at the GM's discretion. It may also provide the character with

information that others may pay for.

Example: Aeligo the Druid is conducting a survey of the wildlife of his area, measuring the populations

of predators and prey and seeing whether they are in balance. This will take him three months to do, but he is able to get by without purchasing any supplies, so it costs nothing. At the end of it, Aeligo has a thorough idea of how the populations are interacting and, due to the time spent, the GM decides that he will also get a +1 bonus to any skills related to dealing with the species he was studying. A local landowner also offers him 100 gp for the results, but Aeligo declines, believing that it would be used solely to

hunt the animals.

SUPERVISING WORK

A character may need to supervise construction, improvement or other work that is being carried out to property or land that they own, to make sure that it is being carried out correctly. Whilst most work may not need active supervision, the occasional job will, and this can provide a reason for an absence. The only requirement is that the character actually owns some property that can be improved, or has some other work that needs carrying out, and that they are either already doing, or want to do, some improvements to it in the case of the property, or are planning to employ someone in the case of other work. This will cost money, but if the work is already being carried out, it will not cost any more. If it isn't already being done, there will be an expense incurred. Depending on the work being carried out, this could take from a few days to weeks.

Example: Sir Atathorn is having a new tower added to his castle. This is a difficult job, as the walls surrounding the castle need partially demolishing at the corner where the new tower will be built, and if this is done improperly, the castle will be weakened rather than strengthened at that point. Atathorn has skills in defending and besieging castles, so he will be able to tell if any errors have been made, even if he can't do the work himself, and ensure that they are fixed. This will not cost any more, as the knight has already paid for the work, but it will take time, three weeks according to the GM.

TOURNAMENT

Tournaments may be associated with knights on horseback, and would

therefore be associated with certain types of fighter, but any character class could attend an appropriate tournament. For example, mages could enter spell casting tournaments and even thieves could enter something like a lock-picking tournament. This particular tournament will not be a major event, as such should be role-played, but instead something comparatively minor. The event is unlikely to last more than a few days at most, cost much to participate in or give much in the way of reward. A character might risk a small amount of more, and possibly win a multiple of this back, using a skill roll. They might also gain a small amount of experience.

Example: Zord the Thief is entering a lock-picking tournament at the local guild. Each entrant puts 10 gp up, winner takes all, and there are 24 entrants. The tournament will last for 3 days, with the entrants picking locks of increasing complexity. The GM rules that Zord has to succeed at three different skill rolls against his Lockpicking skill, at increasing levels of difficulty, in order to win the tournament, which he does, pocketing the 230 gp profit.

TRAINING

A character could be absent because they are spending time improving their own skills and abilities, and some systems allow training as a slower method of skill development and class advancement. Training of this type will probably have an associated cost. This activity is suitable for all characters as all character types can improve their skills and abilities, assuming that such is allowed or feasible in the particular game system being used. Training could result in a skill's rank being improved, the character earning some experience points for the time spent or a bonus being added to rolls related to a

particular skill.

Example: Vrok the Fighter wishes to enhance his longsword skills. The GM rules that it will take 4 weeks and cost 1,000 gp in associated training costs, at the end of which Vrok learns how to use a particular longsword in a manner that inflicts more damage, giving him a +1 on all damage rolls done with it.

TRAINING AN APPRENTICE

Mage types may be the most common sort of class associated with the assumption of apprentices, but other classes can also train their equivalents. Martial classes could train a squire or man-at-arms, divine spellcasters could train an acolyte, bards can train journeymen in their related skills and even thieves can take on apprentices.

Spending time training an apprentice may be a requirement of an organisation or guild to which the character belongs, or there may be other advantages for characters to do so; perhaps the apprentice can do necessary work for their master which takes time but does not require a great deal of magical skill to perform.

Example: As part of her responsibilities from being a member of the local Mage's Guild, Odoar the Mage must spend some time training the guild's apprentices. At her guild, mages are not assigned specific apprentices, but instead spend time contributing when needed to the general



pool of apprentices that need training. This training is quite time consuming, and will take her a month of game time. In exchange for this, Odoar gets some minor magical items of the GM's decision, such as potions and spell scrolls.

VISITING FAMILY

The most likely reasons for a character to be visiting their family is because of births, deaths and marriages. This activity should only really be done if the character is already known to have family, as suddenly finding out about family can be annoying for players and may be disruptive to backstories. If they do have family, it is not necessarily a good idea to kill a close relative; again, this can annoy

players. A family event that is minor, yet important within a family, is advised, such as the marriage of a reasonably close relative or the birth of a child to one of these. Deaths should really only be of more distant relatives. Otherwise, this activity is suitable for any character class.

As well as the time spent with the family, there will also be the time taken to get there. The event itself will probably only take a day or two, and travel time each way would likely be comparable, otherwise the character would probably not have received their notification in time.

Example: Filian has been invited back home to attend a cousin's wedding. Home is reasonably close to where the characters currently are, and the GM

states that it will take 2 days travel to get there, and the same to return. The wedding itself will add another 2 days, for 6 in total. The only expenses incurred will be quite minimal; the GM states that 10 gp will cover travel and gift expenses.

WRITING A BOOK

Any character, not just bardic types or those associated with intellectual activities, such as mages, could write a book as long as they are either intelligent enough to do so and possess the required skills or can dictate it to a ghost writer. Such books could be based on their experiences or knowledge, either describing an adventure they have had or places they have visited, or how to do something. A written book may even be a potential source of income, but there is also an upfront cost in getting it published. This activity can easily take several weeks of game time, if not longer, although once the writing is done the character will not need to be present continually for anything else. Whether or

not the book could be a success should, to a degree, be determined before it is published, probably by making a roll on a relevant skill.

Example: Gruk the Barbarian decides to write a book about his journeys in the Northern Wilds. Being a barbarian, he lacks the intellectual skills for book writing, but his people have a strong verbal tradition of sagas and epic stories, and Gruk has been taught how to tell a stirring story that grabs the heart of the listener. He hires a scribe to help him put his story onto paper andneaten it up for general publication. Narrating the book to the scribe takes three weeks and the GM decides that the cost for the scribe's services and the necessary ink and writing material will be 60 gp. Once the first copy is written, it can be duplicated and made into books more cheaply. The GM rules that Gruk's book is a minor success and that it makes a 5 gp profit every week, after all the expenses are paid out.