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Mutant Crawl Classics

Role Playing Game

TRIUMPH & TECHNOLOGY
WON BY MUTANTS & MAGIC

SPECIAL PREVIEW ON PAGE 171!

On the cover: The wizard van cometh!

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Joseph Goodman here, welcoming you to Gen Con 2015! Come visit Goodman Games at booth #525. It's been another great year for Goodman Games and I'm very excited to present this year's Program Guide. This annual publication has become an important milestone. It summarizes all the fun we've had in the previous year, kicks off the announcements and new releases for the coming year, and of course is chock full of gaming goodness!

This year's Program Guide features tons of new material! If you're a fan of our products, it's a whopping huge cross-section of usable game material, including four new DCC RPG adventures plus new Metamorphosis Alpha and Xcrawl articles. We pay homage to the industry's founders with some Judges Guild material, and an interview with "the original dice guy" Colonel Lou Zocchi (who is here at Gen Con!). Our ongoing interest in the art of gaming is reflected by art folios for both Doug Kovacs and William McAusland, and we trace the industry's origins in fantasy literature with two stories by Brendan LaSalle. And of course, Archmage Abby is back with help for your love life!

I hope you have a blast at Gen Con this year, and enjoy this program guide. Every year is bigger and better for Goodman Games. This year we let ourselves daydream with the front cover image of the wizard van. It's not a reality yet…but there's always next year, and at this rate, who knows what lies ahead?

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Table of Contents

ARTICLES

Tables for Thieves. Secret meetings, hidden keys, black markets, and other fun tables by Dieter Zimmerman.....2
An Interview with Colonel Lou Zocchi. We speak with "the original dice guy." 4
Twenty Funky Dice Tables. From D2 to D30! By Ken St. Andre.....22
DCC RPG Worlds Tour 2014. Pictures from the road!.....49
Dear Archmage Abby. Your questions answered! 83
2015 Mailing Labels. Did you get *this* in the mail? 104
The Mythos Alphabet. D is for Deep Ones and T is for Tentacles! By Brad McDevitt 143
Judges Guild 1977 Fantasy Catalog. Take a trip down memory lane! 211
The Gamer's Yearbook. Your notes from the past year!.....226

DCC RPG ADVENTURES

The Black Feather Blade. Level 1 adventure by Daniel J. Bishop 27
Evil Reborn. Level 4 adventure by Jon Hook.....40
The Seventh Pit of Sezrekan. Level 0 adventure by Harley Stroh. 65
The Hypercube of Myt. Level 0 tournament module by the Cabal. 86

DCC RPG CONTENT

Cranking Up The Funk In DCC Dice Rolling. Roll your ability scores with 3d7! by Terry Olson.....16
Xcrawl Apocalypse: The Athlete. A preview of the DCC RPG adaptation of Xcrawl! by Brendan LaSalle.....34
Appendix F: The Ythoth Raider. An expansion of the Purple Planet Glossography. By Harley Stroh.....38

MUTANT CRAWL CLASSICS

MCC RPG Preview. Triumph & technology won by mutants & magic! By Jim Wampler.....171

METAMORPHOSIS ALPHA

New Devices for the Starship Warden. More new tech! by Robert Payne.....99
Even More Mutations. Because 200 isn't enough…here are more! by Dieter Zimmerman 102

ART

Art Folio: Doug Kovacs. The man behind the look of DCC RPG.....120 (color images at 61)
Art Folio: William McAusland. From DCC #1 to now!.....155 (color images at 63)

FICTION

Xcrawl: Best Possible Combination. By Brendan J. LaSalle.....106
Journey to the Hole in the Sky. By Brendan J. LaSalle.....200

TABLES FOR THIEVES

By Dieter Zimmerman

8 PLACES TO HAVE A SECRET MEETING

Roll	Location
1	On a rooftop: climbing one or two stories is an easy matter for people who know what they're doing, and many rooftops have plenty of space not visible from the streets.
2	Under the rug: hidden cellars and meeting rooms are common in old buildings.
3	At grandma's house: some high-level guild meetings are held at the guildmaster's grandmother's house. Her aged ears are delightfully deaf to all conversation, and she makes the tastiest lemon cakes.
4	In the sewers: not the most pleasant place to meet, but there are unlikely to be eavesdroppers lurking about.
5	Back room at the Dancing Dagger: everyone knows the Dancing Dagger pub is a guild hangout, so meeting in the back room may not be "secret," but it is private.
6	Out in the woods: if you take hunting gear with you, no one is going to suspect you're up to no good.
7	In the middle of the street: thieves' cant was designed to allow sensitive conversations in public.
8	In the graveyard: dead men tell no tales.

12 PLACES TO FIND A HIDDEN KEY

Roll	Result
1	Under the rug.
2	On a hook inside the fireplace.
3	Behind a book on the bookshelf.
4	In a pot on the shelf.
5	In a hidden compartment on the very thing it is meant to open.
6	On the collar of a vicious dog.
7	Underneath the scrolls and books strewn atop the desk.
8	In the stuffing of a doll.
9	Buried in the garden.
10	In a mouse hole.
11	Under a loose floorboard or flagstone.
12	In a mostly full bottle of wine.

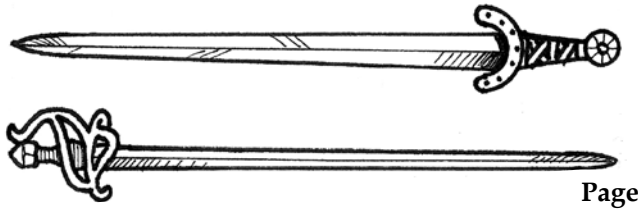
20 ITEMS FOR SALE ON THE BLACK MARKET

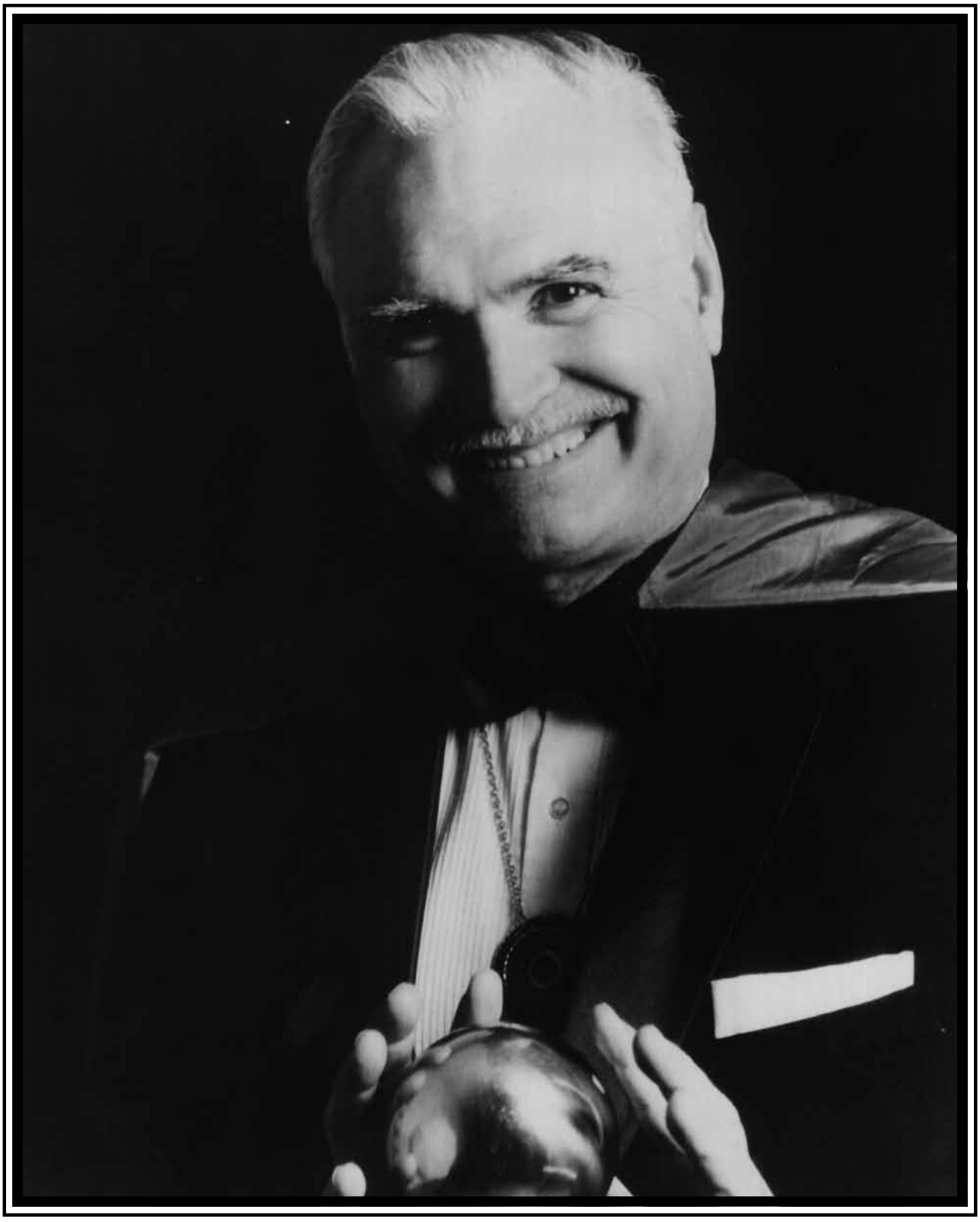
Roll	Result
1	A very realistic portrait of Maxim Kreb, Duke of Prebletain, stolen from the Duke's manse.
2	Forged documents proving employment with Barsters & Barsters Trading Company, and stating that these barrels are full of salted pork.
3	The Vile Opuscule, a book about the size of a man's palm, containing illustrations of demons. All the book's previous owners have died terrible deaths, but of course the seller will not mention that.
4	A group of items for performing unnamed dark rituals: a cow's skull, candles, incense, charcoal, and a sheet of parchment with gibberish all over it. None of these items are illicit, but some gullible fool might think them a real find.
5	Crates with false bottoms. These are popular with smugglers.
6	The shield and spear broach members of the city watch wear on their cloaks.
7	Holy robes from the temple of Ulesh. Not many people have the need to infiltrate the temple of the god of peace, and the priests will not harm anyone caught with them, so they are being sold cheap.
8	An ounce of dreamweed, a plant that provides euphoric lucid dreams when smoked.
9	A stash of rings and necklaces that once belonged to Marza Opellan, the famous courtesan.
10	A key to the Fishmonger's Guildhall.
11	A tin of gut-ripper, a white powder that causes intense digestive problems for a short time.
12	The matching sword and dagger that were formerly owned by the diplomat who mysteriously disappeared last week.
13	A dozen ceramic jars full of blood. It is a mix of cow, pig, and human blood.
14	A brown warhorse with no tack. Judging by the scabs on its flanks, it was in a fight not long ago.
15	The secret recipe for Auntie Lola's sugar-glazed ham roast.
16	The lute and tongue of Aymore Skorrum, the Musing Minstrel.
17	Numerous magic wands of varying craftsmanship, but all totally non-magical.
18	Three children. They were kidnapped from Chancellor Ubrik's estate, and so cannot be sold through the usual slave traders. Chancellor Ubrik has already refused to pay any ransom for the children, but he will do anything else in his means to recover them if their whereabouts become known.
19	A cask of aged wine removed from the cellar of the Dusk Temple.
20	A bronze belt buckle fashioned into a demonic face. It was created by the wizard Fzerikal the False-hearted. He still has a magical connection to it, and will occasionally scry on the wearer just out of curiosity.

14 MEMBERS OF THE CITY WATCH

Roll	Result
1	Fallan Fladeboe: He used to be a soldier of some renown, but has "retired" to the city watch. He is missing his left hand, and his mind isn't as sharp as it used to be. On his best days he is competent, and on his worst days he is falling-down drunk.
2	Sconto Balama: When notable people are watching, this burly man is an upstanding member of the watch. On his own, he will happily accept any bribes offered.
3	Mick the Nose: Slight of build but keen of intellect, Mick likes to claim he can smell the reek of crime on a person.
4	Dremmer Kruer: He just wants to do his job, and doesn't want any extra trouble. The ugly scar on his throat is a reminder of a time he cared about his job a little too much.
5	Suvallis Tull: Underneath his affable exterior, Suvallis is all business. His head is shaved bald, and he has a fondness for sweets.
6	"Filthy" Harald: The nickname refers to his methodology rather than his appearance. He does not hesitate to use excessive violence on those he feels deserve it.
7	Nockman Fisher: Young and idealistic, Nock believes that what is "right" and what is "lawful" should be the same thing. When these things are in conflict, he will choose "right" every time.
8	Jemfro Cagfro: He is the very definition of a bully. He is needlessly cruel to those weaker than himself, but obsequious to those with the trappings of superiority.
9	Lysystro Odel: He craves excitement and adventure, but working for the city watch is often dull. He loves a good chase, and his chases frequently end in a reckless shortcut and a flying tackle.
10	Taj Hooker: With many years of service under his belt, he is a mentor to the younger watchmen. He has a way with women that is unrivaled amongst his peers.
11	Aenis Dethwer: He is a pudgy, whiskered man who is well past his prime. He still believes in the letter of the law, but sometimes it is just too much work to bother with.
12	Grez and Drez: These young twins are never apart. The watch commander gave up trying to separate them long ago. They crack jokes that are only funny to each other, and they fiercely protect one another.
13	Sallon Gold: Sal is actually a member of the thieves' guild who has infiltrated the city watch. He won't jeopardize his position without orders from the guild master, but he'll do what he can for fellow guild members.
14	Hermes Perron: He is slow and methodical, taking in every detail of a scene or person. He excels at solving mysteries, but is physically overcautious.

Continued on page 152





Colonel Lou Zocchi: the creator of the 100-sided die, "the original dice guy," professional magician, and inductee in the Adventure Gaming Hall of Fame.

An Interview With Colonel Lou Zocchi

Colonel Lou Zocchi is the creator of the 100-sided die, "the original dice guy," a professional magician, and an inductee in the Adventure Gaming Hall of Fame. In this entertaining interview, he tells how he became one of the earliest distributors of *Dungeons & Dragons*, how TSR lost $8 million manufacturing dice, how he created a 79-sided die no one wants, how he won the worldwide Air Force Talent Contest, and why 13.85mm is the perfect thickness for a 5-sided die.

Colonel Lou Zocchi has been active in the game industry since the early 1960's. He has been a game designer, publisher, and distributor. Many role-players know him through his influential work on dice manufacturing. His company Gamescience produced the original precision dice, and Mr. Zocchi himself created and patented the 100-sided die, which he trademarked as the *Zocchihedron*. Gamescience was the most prominent reseller (and inventor) of many unusual dice shapes, including the d3, d5, d14, d16, and d24, all of which were utilized by Joseph Goodman in the *Dungeon Crawl Classics Role Playing Game*.

Although Lou is known best for dice, his experience in the industry is vast. He was designing wargames before *Dungeons & Dragons* was created. He contributed to the earliest publications of Guidon Games, original publisher of *Chainmail* and early employer of Gary Gygax before TSR. In the 1970s, he was one of the earliest distributors of *Dungeons & Dragons*. He bought and re-sold wood-grain editions of D&D directly from Gary Gygax in the earliest days of the hobby. Lou founded Zocchi Distribution and for decades was one of the leading distributors of game products in the US. After Judges Guild closed its doors, Zocchi published an improved and expanded version of Tegal Manor. And of course, he has designed, published, and sold wargames for decades.

In this interview, DCC RPG creator Joseph Goodman asks Lou to tell us a little more about his role in forming the industry we know today. This interview is transcribed from a series of phone calls conducted in late 2014.

Hi Lou. Thanks for talking with me today. First, can you tell me about your earliest involvement in adventure gaming as a fan, before you gained your first professional credits?

Well, I had been selling my own game *Alien Space*. Because there were blank spaces in it, I got letters from other people who had self-published. They said, "Why aren't you selling my things in your game?" One of those people was Gary Gygax. I regarded Gary as a friend, even though I hadn't met him. He had written some complimentary things about *Alien Space*. When he brought out D&D, I gathered some information about it, and put the information about D&D in the empty spaces in *Alien Space* as I sold them. Eventually I had so many things about other self-published items in the game, I had to print a separate page and insert it, and it kept growing.

When you first bought D&D, it came in a wood-grain box and had no dice. These wood-grain boxes were originally intended to sell pantyhose, and TSR got them at a good price when the manufacturer in Milwaukee couldn't move them. As a reseller of D&D, one of the things I quickly learned was that if I didn't have dice, I couldn't sell the games I had purchased. When I bought 100 copies of D&D from Gary, the first thing I had to do was get on the telephone and call Creative Publications, a school supply company in Palo Alto, California. They were the only ones who had polyhedrons. If I waited a day I couldn't get the dice, because Gary would have ordered them, and then I would have to wait a week until the next shipload came in.

I kept writing to Creative Publications to get a more reliable price and supply. "Why don't you sell me a barrel of 4's, a barrel of 6's, a barrel of 8's, and so on," I asked the owner. "That way I can assemble the sets myself." The owner was named Dale Seymour. He wrote me a letter saying he was burned out with me trying to get a better price. "If you want a better price, then make them yourself," he said.

Well, I had a friend from high school and we played in a band together. He played accordion and I played gui-

“When I bought 100 copies of D&D from Gary, the first thing I had to do was get on the telephone and call Creative Publications, a school supply company in Palo Alto, California. They were the only ones who had polyhedrons. If I waited a day I couldn’t get the dice, because Gary would have ordered them, and then I would have to wait a week until the next shipload came in.”

tar. I visited him while I was on leave from the Air Force base where I was stationed. I showed him one of the dice that came from Taiwan. I said, “Can you make something like this?” He said, “Yeah, but those people work for fifty dollars a week and we work for twenty dollars an hour. I can’t compete on price. But this die is made from the cheapest and most frangible plastic. I know a formula for dice that will work, and be durable, and they will soldier on year after year.”

I gave him money for molding tools and he made the dice. We sold each die for $1 for a single 20-sider, when you could get a complete set of Taiwan dice for $1.50. But players knew those cheaper dice would self-destruct after 6 months and be ineffective as a random number generator.

Tell me about the products you produced for Guidon Games, future publisher of *Chainmail*.

Guidon was the name of the company. Do you know what a guidon is?

No.

A guidon is a little triangular shaped flag at top of pole that troops can see and know to rally on that point. At least they did during the Civil War.

I had a game called *Hard Tack*, American Civil War rules, published by them.

What was your earliest involvement in games?

First of all, I played a lot of chess. 95% of people who enjoy fantasy games play chess and 90% enjoy science fiction. I was playing lots of chess, and when I was in Japan I saw in the Sears & Roebuck catalogue a game called *Gettysburg*. I thought, “Why would you play this game if the South always loses?” Well, it turns out you didn’t have to lose as the Southern player. If you play an aggressive Southern side you can gobble up the Northern forces before they can win.

I had been buying games from Milton Bradley and Parker Brothers. They were all the same. You roll the dice and go the indicated number of clouds and then you win the game. It was the same stuff, over and over and over. But in *Gettysburg*, infantry marched at the rate they really marched in real life. Everybody comes on to the board at the same time they came on in history. You have the option of launching an attack or not launching an attack. The more you out-number an enemy force before you make an attack, the better your chances of destroying them. It was a very playable game. Even though there were historical errors in the order of battle, it opened the game concept for everyone else. Charles Roberts was the first to figure out how to do it. Nobody else had games to do it that way at that time.

What were your first published game credits?

Battle of Britain. When I was stationed in Japan, I thought the Battle of Britain was a really fascinating campaign. Every book available on the subject was a book that I would buy. Eventually I noticed I had quite a few works that gave me information about the order of battle. I then worked at designing a game that would simulate the Battle of Britain. I succeeded.

Strategy & Tactics was coming out of Japan, published by Chris Wagner. I asked Chris if he would be interested in playtesting my Battle of Britain game. I sent him a copy. He wrote me back and said he liked it. He had an advertiser who was selling a game called *Confrontation*. “If you have no problem, we will connect you with our advertiser Phil Orbanes,” he said. He sent a prototype to Orbanes, whose company Gamescience was planning a Battle of Britain game they hadn’t written yet. They were interested in publishing mine.

I put up $2,000 to have it published. Orbanes would pay me back out of the game sales. Phil took his game Confrontation, along with Battle of Britain, to the Chicago Hobby Show. There he spoke with a man named Casey who had a group called The Allstate Investors Group, which owned Renwal Models. When Casey saw *Battle of Britain*, he made an offer to publish it.

Renwal had invested a lot of money in something called the Living Pigeon. It was 3-D model of a pigeon. You could take it apart and see its muscles, skeleton, internal organs, and so on. There weren’t that many pigeon buffs who were buying it up. And it cost them a fortune to make all the intricate tools to fit all those parts in the cavity if the pigeon. They needed something else. They published *Battle of Britain*, and ran 25,000 copies of the game. Then they gave Phil Orbanes a job on their design staff when he graduated from college.

I thought you founded Gamescience! How did you end up main guy behind Gamescience?

Well, it turned out that Mr. Casey’s view was that they would sell little miniatures of Spitfires and other model airplanes that would be used as playing pieces for their games. But when Renwal took a look at it, they knew it would be cheaper to make die-cut counters. So they didn’t invest in models for the games, and went out of business 3 years later. When they

were on the ropes, Jim Dunnigan, who now owned *Strategy & Tactics*, called me and told me they would sell me my *Battle of Britain* game. Which they did. At the time I was in California at George Air Force Base. So they shipped all 23,500 unsold games to me. They weren't aggressive about promoting *Battle of Britain*. They wanted to be in the model business. The Hollywood movie Battle of Britain came out that year, and Renwal didn't take advantage of it. If it were me, I would have visited every movie theater in town and stacked 25 copies of the game in the lobby to sell to customers coming out of the movie.

Once you inherited those games, what did you do?

They sold me the games and the name Gamescience. Phil Orbanes worked for another company by then, called The Gambit of Games Company. You may not know his name, but eventually he became the Vice President at Parker Brothers, and was in charge of new product development. I think he worked there 20 or 25 years. Phil worked his way to the top and he stayed in the game business.

From there I published *Alien Space*, which I already told you about. That started as "Starfleet Battle Manual." I didn't know what a copyright was at the time. After I published *Starfleet Battle Manual*, Paramount's legal staff got on my case. So I changed the game's name to *Alien Space*. That is why there is a great similarity between *Starfleet Battle Manual* and *Alien Space*.

You are well known as a pioneer for precision dice. Tell me, how did your fascination with dice begin?

I invented the 3-sided die, 5-dided die, 14-sided die, 16-sided die, 24-sided die, and 100-sided die. A lot of people don't realize how many other things you can use these dice for. What a lot of people don't know is that when I sent you a package of them, I asked you to design an adventure module that used all of them. Because you had such great penetration with these modules, Koplow and all the other dice guys in the market got requests for these shapes. Because they had customers who bought your game, DCC RPG. The people who were supposed to be taking over Gamescience called me and said, "These shapes are taking off, we can't believe how fast they are going out the door, we can't keep up!" Essentially it was your creative genius that expanded the market for these dice.

"Renwal had invested a lot of money in something called the Living Pigeon. It was 3-D model of a pigeon. There weren't many pigeon buffs who were buying it up."

When you look at the 3-sided die that Chessex, Koplow, and others use, and the shape I am producing, they are different. They use a 6-sided shape. But I have a football-shaped die with R-P-S on the sides and 1-2-3 on its ends. Do you know what the R-P-S is for? Rock, paper, scissors, that's right. My 3-sided dice does two jobs whereas all the other dice only do one job. I am just as happy the other guys always went with the 6-sided die, because if they had not, then I would have had to go to the courts to prove my case.

Long ago I perceived that if I were to do a 9, 11, or 13-sided die, I would be the only person in the market to do that. I had counted on doing that. Consequently I put a TM in my catalogue after every one of those shapes. I am the only one technically able to sell a 3-sided die called a 3-sider. I trademarked it as far back as 1990. I am kind of sending this out as a double message. All the other people who have 3's need to find another way to describe it.

My 14-sider is trademarked. When you look at another persons' 14-sider you see the numbers 1-14. My die also has the days of week so you can use it to track fortnights. One of my customers said, "Why don't you ink half the digits in red and other half in blue?" I couldn't figure out why. Well, red would be daylight and blue would be night. Now I have glow-in-the-dark dice with half the digits in red, half in blue. When you roll my die, you get three pieces of info. Number one is day of the week, number two is any day numbered 8 or more is next week. Not only does it tell this week or next

Lou Zocchi is inducted into the Adventure Gaming Hall of Fame at Origins in July 1987. Presenting the award is Charles Roberts, founder of Avalon Hill.

Lou Zocchi receives his promotion to full Colonel.

Joseph Goodman and Lou Zocchi at Gen Con 2014.

“I took 10 dice out of the red-box D&D set, and stacked them on top of each other, then stacked 10 more of the same dice from other red-box sets beside them. The first stack is ¾ of an inch taller.”

week, it shows daylight or dark. The other 14's that everyone else is selling don't have all of these three features.

When I invented the 24-sided dice I didn't know how many uses there could be for it. Well, at Gen Con I saw the people who published *Knights of the Dinner Table*, so I gave them a dozen 24-sided dice. “Why don't you have a dice-designing contest from your readers, and give these dice to the best suggestions that come in?” They picked the top 5 ideas from their submissions. Knights of the Dinner Table from June 2005 published the list of 5 different things you can do with 24-sided dice. If you buy my sets, you'll find the five winning ideas reprinted by permission of Knights of the Dinner Table.

You know, Lou, I might have to copy that idea for a contest.

I will be coming up with other unusual shapes. Because I am not as brilliant as all the people who play; they may make better suggestions. I will need suggestions that tell what to do with my new shapes.

Are you still manufacturing Gamescience dice?

Another company offered to buy Gamescience from me. The other company failed to keep the many promises they made me. I had to repossess the tools. We are going to be making new dice very soon. I got a significant amount of money as a result of being at Gen Con. That Gen Con sales money is going to be used to get the tools up and running.

I can produce 17 gem colors, and 13 opaque colors. Based on how traditional manufacturing works you can only do 1 color every other day. You have to clean the molds between days. If you do a different color every day, you get an odd hue from the mixed colors. There are two ways to go: you drain the plastic from the previous day's batch, or keep the dice running with a mix of yesterday's pigment and today's. That produces mixed or rainbow dice. For example, you mix the plastics for diamond and ruby to get a pink hue. That's how it came to pass that many of the colors I do sell happened. I needed sapphire, then switched the tooling to diamond, and as a result got a clear dice with a hue of blue and we called that ice. It sold very well and many people love that color.

What characteristics make Gamescience dice special?

Well the first thing is, we don't put our dice through same process as everyone else uses. When you buy a model airplane or model tank or car, you have to separate the part you want from its round casting runner. When you clip it free, it leaves a blemish. With models most people don't see it, because it is on the inside of what you are assembling. When you do it with dice, it is more visible.

I was making opaque dice for 6 years and no one commented on the clip marks. I invented gem dice, and was the only person doing it. When we clipped the die from its casting runner, people noticed it on the gem dice, and started to gripe and groan. My competitors use a plastic injection process that is identical to mine, they have the same problem. When they clip a die free, there is blemish. To get rid of it, they polish the die in a rock tumbler until the blemish is polished off. Then they put the die in the french fry basket, and sink it to bottom of a vat of paint to coat each face with paint. They let the dice dry. They put them in the rock polisher again and polish off all the excess paint. Now they have dice with a good contrasting color in its digits. The problem is, the die looks like crap because it has so many scratches. Next they put it in the rock tumbler again, and change from a rough medium to a fine medium to polish it. Every dice manufacturer polishes the dice until the scratch lines are polished off.

The problem is, after taking a beating in the rock tumbler like this, every edge has a unique radius and the faces are all different sizes because there's no way to take a uniform amount off every single face. When some dice are polished harder than others, there will be a break in one of the digits. Like the 2 doesn't have its bottom part, or the hook on the 2 isn't there anymore. These are faults that come about from using the rock tumbler method.

I don't use that method. My dice come out of the tool with exactly correct dimensions. Every edge is sharp and crisp. My dice will randomize. The competition's dice will generally stop on the faces that have the smallest thickness of the dice. When you take an egg out of a carton, it always rolls on its side because it's finding its lowest center of gravity. To prove this is what is happening, I took 10 dice out of the red-box D&D set, and stacked them on top of each other, then stacked 10 more of the same dice from other red-box sets beside them. The first stack is ¾ of an inch taller because the first set is stacked on facings 1-20 then the second set is stacked on facings 9-12. The rock tumbler method destroys the edges needed for good randomization. Furthermore, each of my dice designs were copyrighted on April 25, 2013 with registration number VA1-875-058.

Wow, that is an interesting test we could all perform at home.

There are two studies that I came across. Go to Google and enter “d20 Randomness Test.” That is one study where 20-sided dice from Gamescience and Chessex were rolled 10,000 times. The test had a backboard. The rolling of a die only counted if it hit the green felt backboard. There was also green felt on the table. They did 10,000 rolls, and I am thinking, “God, how long does that take?” When they finished that test, they published the results. I like this test because the Gamescience dice in my opinion came out much better than Chessex dice in terms of being able to randomize. One of the things

they said was if you make 10,000 rolls and the dice work correctly, you should get 500 1's, 500 2's, 500 3's, and so on. If you come within 33 results over or under 500, it is acceptable. For example, if you get 533 1's, that is acceptable. Of all 20 faces on a Chessex die, only one face registered within the parameter. 6 of my faces were within 10 of 500. 13 of my faces were within 33 of 500.

So I believe the Gamescience dice performed well. However, Kevin Cook has the world's largest dice collection. Just over 50,000 dice as we discuss this, and he is adding more all the time. Kevin said their test was not good because most people play on a kitchen table, with no felt, and no backing board. That's an interesting thought. Kevin's point is valid. Most of us play on a table, or on a kitchen table covered in tablecloth. That makes a big difference in how the dice performs.

When you manufactured the d5, what accuracy standards did you use?

When I invented the 5-sided dice, I didn't know how thick to make them. I made prototypes in widths of 10mm, 11mm, 12 mm, 13mm, and so on, up to 20mm. I mailed all of them to a doctor who teaches mathematics at a college in Canada. He had built a dice testing machine. I told him I wanted dice that were able to roll all 5 results evenly. The die was shaped like Vicks cough drop.

"I realized I was rolling on glass. We had playtested on 6mm plastic sheet, then repeated the test on 12mm plastic. Plastic has giveback. Glass has no giveback. I didn't know this when I designed the die. People could be rolling on the wrong surface."

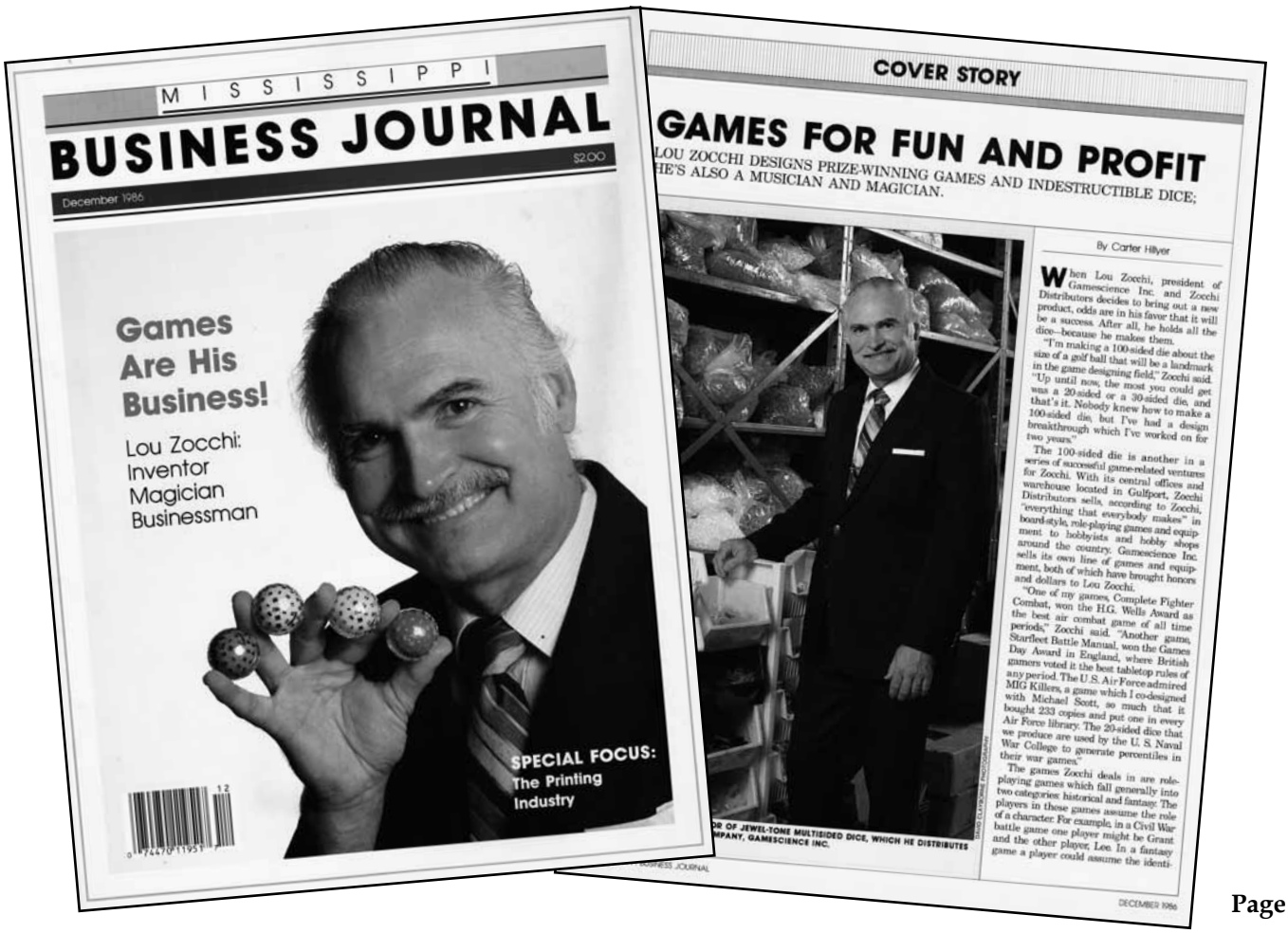
Well, the professor came back and said I need to make dice that were 13.85 mm thick.

I said, "A millimeter is very small, and you want me to take 1/15 off? I didn't send you a 13.85mm to test."

He said, "Well, I rolled the 10mm dice 10,000 times, and plotted the performance. Then I rolled the 11mm, 12mm, 13mm, and so on, and plotted their performance. After I tested the 14mm, I knew the number I was looking for was at 13.85."

So, when I went to the tool and die maker, I said it had to be 13.85mm thick.

When I got the dice, I was bragging to everyone how well they were rolling. I went to a hobby shop and I tried to explain to a lady how well it was rolling. Every time I rolled I got a 1 or 5, which was the triangle side. Then I realized I was rolling on glass. We had play-tested on 6mm plastic sheet, then repeated the test on 12mm plastic sheet. Plastic has a giveback. Glass has no giveback. I didn't know this when I designed this. People could be



“If you take a Gamescience dice and you let it roll, 6 or 8 or 12 inches, it will randomize beautifully. Because every face and every edge is dissipating a uniform amount of energy, they provide equal access to all faces.”

rolling on the wrong surface. The die is designed to be used on plastic and wood, which provides giveback. Glass and metal surfaces have no giveback and the tablecloth will change how the die performs.

I personally play on glass tabletop. I never realized it would affect dice performance.

That glass would kill the performance of the dice.

Do dice towers appropriately randomize results?

Every time I dropped a 5-sided die in a dice tower, it came out 1 or 5. It could not come up on its edges. I don’t know how much drop you need. I don’t endorse dice towers. They are probably adequate for dice of every shape. Because a 5-sided die is not the usual shape, it is more likely to come up 1 or 5 when dropped into a dice tower.

Interesting. You really have to study these things to make the dice work as intended.

It turns out that everybody else is taking a production shortcut to get the digits inked. I have been sitting here night after night inking dice since 1974. I am fed up with it. I don’t want to spend rest of my days inking dice.

But it does get better results.

Yeah, from a mathematical perspective, people buy dice expecting them to randomize better.

I do a seminar on getting better dice results. You will see guys making a short dice roll that looks like they’re cheating because they aren’t rolling far. They are screwing themselves because a die has to go eight or more inches across the table and offer the table as many faces as it has. They get unfavorable results with short-distance rolls.

If you take a Gamescience dice and you let it roll, 6 or 8 or 12 inches, it will randomize beautifully. Because every face and every edge is dissipating a uniform amount of energy, they provide equal access to all faces.

How well does the d7 perform?

The d7 was invented by Bernard Beruter. When I first got the d7 in stock, I mailed it back to the guy who made it. I said the 6 and 7 faces are too large; they do not have enough size to balance out 1-5 around the edges. He mailed it back and said, “No, when I first made the die I made it thicker than now. After I did 10,000 test rolls, I milled 1/10,000th of an inch off, and tested again. Then I milled another 1/10,000th of an inch off, and did more test rolls. Then I milled some more and kept going until it rolled 1-7 equally.”

So every time I took my 7-sided dice to a convention, people would say the same thing to me as I said to him: “The 6 and 7 faces are too large for it to randomize properly.”

Well it really does a good job, so I decided to prove it. I was flying to a con in Las Vegas. I asked the guy next to me on the plane if he played D&D. He said, yeah, I used to in college. But he didn’t have time anymore. Well, I said, I’ve got some 7-sided-dice and let’s roll them since we have nothing else to do for 4 hours. I had him roll the die and call out the result, which I recorded. He rolled 100 times, and the results were evenly distributed, as I recorded them.

That gave me courage to make a sign for my booth at the Vegas con. The sign said: “If you roll this 7-sided die, I will pay $2 for every 6 or 7 that comes up, if you pay me $1 for every 1-5 that comes up.”

A young boy came to my table and wanted to bet. I told him it was a trap. Then I rolled 6 dice at once, and showed him that if he had bet, he would have lost $2. He said I wasn’t throwing the dice correctly, so I rolled all 6 of them again. Again, he would have lost another $2. He insisted on rolling the die and betting his dollar. So he rolled and lost. It was like watching lemmings throwing themselves in the ocean.

That’s hilarious. I guess it only works if the die is truly random…and I guess it worked!

Yes.

Do you have any tips for inking Gamescience dice?

In the old days, people who didn’t know any better would do what *The Armory* said you should do, which was buy Crayola crayons and rub them on dice and then work like a devil to get rid of the marks you didn’t want. The problem is, if you leave the die in a car or any other hot place, the wax will melt and run out of certain numbers. Or if you are up north and it’s wintertime, the wax changes shape according to temperature at a different pace than the dice material. Over time, the wax will work free on some numbers, and you’ll have an uneven distribution of numbers. The die shrinks from the cold, faster than the wax in the digits, so the wax numbers fall out of their grooves.

I use a Sharpie brand pen. The ultra fine tip will get into the crevices of most dice. If you use the paint-based one and it stops working, pull the tip off and fill the cavity with lighter fluid. Take toothpick and push down. There is a trap door that opens. The lighter fluid goes into the pen, mixes with the pigment, and makes the pen usable again. If the pen makes a blob, pull its tip out, and clean it with lighter fluid.

For water-based inks, you do the same thing with the pen: take the point out and fill the pen with water. I have been using my current pen for years and resurrected it 6 times, and I ink a lot with it. I am very pleased with the performance of that inking pen. You have to go to an art supply or business supply store to get these pens; they are metal, and come in a variety

of different colors. I like white. The water-based pen's stock number is #7164135574.

If you want a black die with red digits, you have to ink it twice. You have to ink first with white, then put red on so the red stands out more. When *Vampire the Masquerade* was new, everyone wanted black dice with red numbers. They didn't know why I charged more and got upset! I had to ink every one of those dice twice, once with white and once with red. They didn't want to pay more for that second inking coat.

Do you have a favorite die?

I have a lot of things I want to do with the 100-sided die. And I want to make the D-Total die even better. I own the tool that makes the shape of the D-total. I make the shape and send it to another company to print it.

Do you have a lucky die?

No, and the worst of it is I don't get much time to play. Gaming is a great hobby. When you said you couldn't do our interview on Monday because you were gaming, I thought, "I wish I could do that."

Mostly I am a wargamer. I was on Avalon Hill's playtest panel, from the earliest days. I playtested *Bismarck* and *Stalingrad* and quite a few others. I really like those games and the way they play. My math skills were much better from playing those games, because you needed to regularly multiply 6x7 or 6x9 or other factors to build up odds for an attack against someone else.

That reminds me of a story. Everything sold in Canada has to be printed in French and English. It's the law. Avalon Hill games never sold a French version of their games, so the Canadian government called Avalon Hill in to explain why their games didn't have French rules. So Tom Shaw went up there and met with the official responsible. He told them how odds worked, 3:1 or 6:1, and how the rules worked, and how to play the games. These games are complicated. When he finished explaining it all, the official said, "That's so complicated, no one speaking French could understand it. You can leave it in English."

France had the same rule. You could not import books printed in English into France. Lots of French kids were learning to play D&D in English, and wanted to learn the game. The French government was going to ban D&D but a bunch of English teachers organized and told the government, "Our kids are learning to speak English because of that game, we think you should leave it in English." The government gave in.

"When Vampire the Masquerade was new, everyone wanted black dice with red numbers. They didn't know why I charged more and got upset! I had to ink every one of those dice twice, once with white and once with red."

You know that Gary Gygax was partners with the Blume Brothers. Well one day, Toys R Us made a math mistake on the discount they got from paying within 30 days. The math error resulted in them sending $20 less than what they should have sent to retire the bill. Along with that check they also sent along a purchase order for a million dollars worth of new games. When Gary walked by the order desk, the worker said, "Gary, I want to show you something. These people didn't pay what they owe. I am going to teach them a lesson. I am going to sit on this million-dollar order until they pay that twenty dollars." Then Gary pulled out a 20-dollar bill from his wallet, slapped it on the worker's desk, and said, "Fill that order."

Did you know Gary well?

I think I got along with Gary, but I didn't know him that well. I didn't get to game with him. He had his own thing. Running a company as big as TSR got to be a tremendous challenge. Gamescience at one time had 35 employees. At that point, I spent all day every day dealing with people problems instead of selling to customers and filling orders. Bigger is not necessarily better.

Do you know Duke Seifried? He invented a line of paints he took to TSR. Gary hired him as Vice President. He was one of the guys who got TSR to go into lots of places. Gary and the Blumes had an idea that if there was a penny to be made from D&D, it's their penny and no one else should take it. Well, they hired Duke and he said, "Here you are collecting a royalty from Humbrol for D&D paint, and I know how to make paint, so why don't we make paint and get 100% of the sale instead of a royalty?" They went along with him. Duke said, "I used to sculpt figures. You're getting a royalty from Ral Partha. I can sculpt figures. Why don't we buy this company in Chicago and make our own minis?" It was one thing after another. Duke repeatedly figured out how to make money for TSR.

When Duke worked for Heritage miniatures, the owner sent him out and said, "Don't come back until you have $10,000 in orders." Well, a week later Duke came back with the orders. The owner sent him out again for $20,000. A week later Duke came back with the orders. Then the owner said "$40,000," and kept doubling each time. Each time, Duke met it. Finally Duke said, "You haven't even filled the first $10,000 in orders I made! Fill those orders then I'll go back out!"

Duke used to run seminars at stores on how to paint miniatures. One time, Duke drove his RV to a store to give a talk. He got to the store after it had closed. So he parked in a nearby lot and went to bed. Thirty minutes later an 18-wheeler crashed into his motor home. It was 6:30 in the PM, still daylight. Duke jumped out of his RV and started berating the truck driver, and screaming at the top of his lungs out of frustration. A crowd naturally gathered. When Duke paused for a deep breath, the driver said, "Do you realize

you're totally naked?" From that, we discovered that Duke sleeps in the buff.

I understand you have a seminar at many conventions called "Gaming Industry Inside Hearsay Tales." Are these some of the stories you tell?

I have over 212 stories I can tell about hearsay in the gaming industry. I call them "hearsay" because I wasn't there for all of them; many of the stories are hearsay. It takes me two hours to tell 50 of the stories, so I can never tell them all. If they have me doing two seminars, I tell another 50. I do the seminars at Gen Con and Origins.

I have a new seminar I am doing called, "How to Roll Winning Numbers." You have to make sure the die tumbles eight or more inches across the tabletop to randomize properly.

What was the first convention you attended?

The first gaming con I attended was held in a high school gymnasium in a Chicago suburb in 1972. It was run by Spartan International. I don't remember what they called it. There is a very successful hobby shop in that suburb now. They sell used games in that store once a year in an auction, and the auction takes 4 days to run because they have so many things to sell. I can't remember the name of the store.

Is that *Games Plus* in Mount Prospect, IL?

Yes! That's the one.

It's one of my favorite game stores.

That first convention was held in Mount Prospect, IL. I was stationed at George Air Force base at the time. I was friends with Russell Powell who had an organization called Spartan International. They would playtest games for the Avalon Hill game company. They decided to start running conventions and this was the first one they ran. A guy named Tony Adams was the first one to run the con.

What was the earliest Gen Con you attended?

1976. I retired in 1975. I've been out longer than I was in. I retired from the air force, on April 1, 1975. And they gave me credit for 21 years service. I wasn't keeping track of how much time I'd put in. One day, I said, "This seems about right. I'd like to retire." I walked over to put in my papers. The guy said, "You're at 20 years and 1 month." In the Air Force,if you work half a year they give you credit for the whole year in retirement benefits. I said, "I'll be back in 5 months."

They call you Colonel Louis Zocchi. How could you retire from the Air Force after 21 years of service as an E-6 Technical Sergeant, and now call yourself Colonel Louis Zocchi?

When war was declared on Iraq the first time, I couldn't sleep. I kept the TV on all night long, and kept watching newscast after newscast after newscast. A friend of mine said to me, "You know, if you were to join the Mississippi State Guard, they would let you come in as a first lieutenant." I always wanted to be an officer. So I joined the state guard as a first lieutenant. The State Guard is not the National Guard. Congress passed a law authorizing every state governor to create a militia that would be activated when you needed help surviving a hurricane or a man-made disaster. So we learned how to do first aid, run a shelter, and pass out MRE's and ice and water and other things people need when people don't have electricity.

After I had served with the Mississippi state guard for six years, the commander of the State Guard got into an argument with the adjutant general. Because he wouldn't do what the AJ wanted done, the AJ stopped all promotions. I should have been promoted to major after 2 years. But I had served 4 years as a captain and still couldn't get promoted. So one day Keesler Air Force Base Hospital had an open house day and I looked at that and thought it would be a good opportunity to recruit for the state guard. Three of the guys who wanted to join were people who drove over from Mobile, Alabama. State regulations say if you live in Mississippi you can serve in Mississippi but you shouldn't be from Alabama. So I got in touch from the guy who was running the Alabama state defense force and I said, "I have 3 prospects and I will mail you their applications."

They invited me to attend one of their drills. I saw that their brigade commander was promoting people. So I told him, "I have four years in grade as a captain and I can't get promoted to major. If I transfer over, will you promote me to major?" So the rest of the time I served with the state of Alabama and worked my way up to full bird colonel.

Should I start calling you Colonel?

Well, you could. Some people do. Other people call me Lou.

Just to set the record straight, how exactly do you pronounce your name?

Zocchi is pronounced ZOCKEY. It rhymes with "jockey," the guys who ride horses in races. It's an Italian spelling. In Italian, Zocci is pronounced "ZO-chee." If there is an H after the C's, it is pronounced "zockey."

Tell me about the old days of selling D&D first edition from the trunk of your car.

Well, I really didn't sell it out of the trunk of my car. I had purchased a station wagon and I loaded it with games that had been privately published. D&D was one of the games that had been privately published. I had designed a game called Alien Space, which I told you about. When I sold through my first printing, the guy who laid it out said to me, "You know, you've got 3 blank pages here." I said, "So?" He said, "The printer will charge the same amount of money to run that blank page as if it was printed." I said, "So?" He said, "Well, I have three games I designed, and if you will advertise those games on the blank pages it will work well for you." I said, "Why should I do that?" He said, "Well, all you have to sell is Alien Space now. But once they see the ad, they'll order the other games from you and you'll make money from selling them." Then people started calling me and asking to advertise in those pages. When I went to game conventions, everyone was selling the latest release from D&D. There would be 9 or 10 local hobby shops selling D&D. People were hip-deep in D&D stuff. I would be there with products privately published. Nobody knew about them. And since you couldn't get them through hobby shops, they sold very well.

How did *Zocchi Distribution* get started?

There was a distributor in Los Angeles I tried to get as an account. He wrote an irate letter saying I had no right to sell these games and I should get out of business. I thought, "Who empowered him to do this and why should I obey his instructions?" I kept doing it. As I did it, the number of clients I had kept growing. It grew to the point where I couldn't run it out of my house any more. I had to get a 5,000 square foot building to run it out of. Eventually I had 35 employees. But that was a big mistake. I spent every day dealing with employee problems instead of doing game design.

So what you like best is designing games.

I consider that time to be the best time.

What do you most miss about the game industry in the 70s?

I miss *Dragon Magazine*. It was the one publication you could turn to, and you could read about all the cons that would be held over the coming months. It also had descriptions of all the newest games that had come into the marketplace. And it had a lot of stories about how to play Dungeons & Dragons better. It had the biggest circulation of all the magazines devoted to our field of interest.

Have you heard of *Gygax Magazine*?

I have not seen it, but I have been in correspondence with Ernest Gygax, Gary's son. He gave me several really good stories about what it was like in the early days and information from the early days.

I don't play D&D. I just thought that on the whole, when you thumbed your way through an issue of *Dragon,* you had a feel for what was happening in the industry and where things were going.

In the early days, I did a lot of stupid things. You know I make polyhedron dice, which are used by people who play D&D. I wanted to advertise. I called up *Dragon* and they said an ad was $500. So I called Steve Jackson and he said I could run an ad for $250 in his *Space Gamer* magazine. At that time there were only 1 or 2 space games in print. Traveller was the most popular and it used only 6-sided dice. My ads for polyhedron dice in *Space Gamer* produced almost no results whatsoever. Then I got a buy on a bunch of science fiction games from Task Force Games. I called *Strategy & Tactics* and $250 was what they wanted for an ad. I paid $250 to *Strategy & Tactics* to sell 1 science fiction board game. How stupid can you get? I was looking at how much it cost me rather than who will be reading this ad. Obviously the D&D guy would have been reading the ad in *Dragon* but not in *Space Gamer*. If I had taken the sci-fi games and advertised them in *Space Gamer* I would have sold more than through *Strategy & Tactics*.

"There was a time when we looked around and said, "What should we call ourselves?" Some people said wargaming. But war doesn't have a good reputation. Duke Seifreid said we should call ourselves the adventure gaming industry."

What do you like most about the game industry today?

The fact that it has grown. It has pleased me to see that it is so much larger now than when I was doing missionary work to help it grow.

There's a couple of people who I am afraid the hobby no longer remembers. I want to use this opportunity to make sure these guys get recognized.

The first one is Duke Seifried. Before Heritage Models, he had his own company in Dayton, Ohio. Duke was the first figure manufacturer to sell miniatures in blister-carded packages of 6 figures per pack. Before Duke, miniatures were sold by the eaches, one at a time. The name of that company was *Der Kriegspieler*. A lot of people won't remember this, but there was a time when we looked around and said, "What should we call ourselves?" Some people said wargaming. But war doesn't have a good reputation. Duke Seifreid said we should call ourselves the adventure gaming industry. "Adventure" covers a whole host of things, but war focuses on destroying and wounding and maiming. That term, "adventure gaming," comes from Duke Seifreid.

I want to make sure that people don't forget the major things he did for the hobby. Duke used to manufacture minis. When he went to Origins or Gen Con, he would put together several ping-pong tables and do a massive campaign with all the terrain and painted soldiers that were necessary to run the adventure. He was first person to publish a set of Napoleonic rules based on historical accuracy rather than TLAR.

TLAR? I haven't heard that before.

"That Looks About Right." Everybody who designed an air fighter game other than me used TLAR.

The other person I want to mention is John Mansfield. John Mansfield comes from a store in Canada called the *Little Soldier Hobby Shop*. Right at the very first Origins, John was the first one to start giving out awards for the best game of the year, and things of that nature. He did it for 4 or 5 years before there was a con held in Detroit, MI where the Detroit gamers took the helm and held the Origins that year. I remember passing the room where John was being told that he should cease and desist from giving out awards, because GAMA was going to give the awards from now on. They just took it away from him. Nobody looks over their shoulders and says, "If it wasn't for John, those awards may have waited another 5 or 10 years before they ever transpired."

Is it true you are a professional magician, as well?

I plead guilty. I started doing magic in June 1949. I've always been interested in magic. It's been a way for me

Some of the many news articles that accompanied the creation of the 100-sided die.

Patent and production followed three years of math nightmares

By TED O'BOYLE
SUN HERALD YOUTH EDITOR

Polyhedron dice have always intrigued Lou Zocchi, designer and manufacturer of wargames and sophisticated roll-playing adventure games.

He tackled the problem without spherical trigonometry, but used algebra and kept running into blind leads. "Like Euler (pronounced oiler) who developed the formula F+V=E+2 ("faces" + "vertices" = "edges" + 2). Since I knew

SUNDAY, JUNE 29, 1986

"So then I thought wait a minute, golf balls! That's the answer. I ran out and bought every kind of golf ball that was made, and I counted the dots on the golf balls with the view that obviously these dots are equidistant and all I have to do is find a golf ball with 300 dots, divide by three and I have the answer. What I discovered was that the golf ball

SUNDAY, JUNE 29, 1986

Zocchi creates 'impossible' die with 100 faces

By TED O'BOYLE
SUN HERALD YOUTH EDITOR

Numbers, equations and patterns rolled around in Lou Zocchi's thoughts for an agonizing three years before he finally came up with a solution.

What he had envisioned was a sphere, upon which was projected 100 faces of equal size, equidistant each from the other. They would wrap around the globe with the number 1 centered at one pole, and the number 100 centered at the opposite pole.

Zocchi said his "solution" is the newest and most revolutionary die in his collection of dice, manufactured for a Gulfport gaming industry Zocchi owns.

The 100-sided die presumably is mathematically correct, but that has yet to be proven by a formula or law. Creation of the pattern and then the sphere was considered impossible by at least one of the several mathematicians and professors from the U.S. and abroad who were consulted during development of the "Zocchihedron," the trademark under which the die is being patented and produced. It was also one of the "impossible" tasks of a Cadcam computer (computer assisted design/computer assisted manufacture) at a Chicago trade show, Zocchi said.

Mathematically precise or not, the 100-sided die fulfills a dream of many experts in the gaming field which indulges in rulebooks that contain variables heretofore arrived at only by using of multiple dice and then multiplying units from the randomly generated numbers.

Most notable of these games, and the one recognized by the largest segment of the population, is *Dungeons and Dragons*, which became popular in the 1970s. The die is suitable, though, for any of the sophisticated wargames which require numbers of greater value than the 4-, 6-, 8-, 10-, 12-, 16-, and 20-sided polyhedra dice already patented and manufactured by Zocchi's firm.

"One of the *Dungeons and Dragons* source books is called *The Dungeon Master's Guide*, Zocchi said, "and it has more than 100 tables that read out 1 to 100. The premise is that you should be rolling a 100-sided die to get the answer, but there was no such die when the tables were created.

"So what you would do is roll two 10-sided dice and you would designate one 10 to be the units, and the other to be the 10 indicator. You would roll the two 10s and agree, before the game is started, to read the red one before reading the white one. So if you had a red three and a white four, it would be a roll of 34," he said.

"There will be times when you'll be playing a game and you say before the game is started 'we are always going to read the red one before the white one,' and for some reason or other you get an inkling something is going to come up bad so you say 'I'm going to read the white one before the red one this time and, sure enough the numbers do come up favorable because you've transposed the readout.

"And the guy you're playing against feels a little strange because what you've said is open and above board, except it's contrary to the arrangement you've made prior to the start of the game. And you can't explain yourself why you've had this hunch . . . they just do come along," Zocchi said.

Creation of the ping-pong-ball-sized 100-sided piece, which requires a special braking compound to end the roll before traversing an unacceptable distance, solves that matter once and for all. It brought immediate reaction from regular buyers in the industry who knew Zocchi was working on it.

"Keeping quiet about this thing until we got a mold and were in production was the hardest part of it," Zocchi said. Production started six weeks ago, but Zocchi did not announce that fact. "I was getting calls from all over . . . people saying 'Come on, we know you've got it,' " he said. An estimated 7,000 of the die were manufactured of which Zocchi has fewer than 1,000 left to take with him this week to "Origins," a national strategy and adventure gaming convention expected to draw about 4,000 industry representatives from all over the world to Los Angeles over the Fourth of July weekend.

This year's convention is being dedicated to Zocchi, in part to recognize his new creation. The director of the convention sent Zocchi a note this week announcing the intention of the staff and crew of the L.A. Origins '86 to dedicate the event to "everybody's 'Uncle Lou,' who has been building up this hobby since the siege of Troy, and never shirks from hitting the road to go to yet another convention to meet the gamers who make it all worthwhile.

Zocchi is a native of Illinois and was designing war and role-playing games and selling them through the mail while serving in the U.S. Air Force. He was the designer of the *Battle of Britain* for The Avalon Hill company.

It was in the late 1960s that Zocchi came to the Coast and started the Gamescience corporation which published *Battle of Britain*, his first game design.

After retiring in 1975, Zocchi devoted full-time to the banner under which his games are copyrighted and sold, and Zocchi Distributors, a second operation.

Zocchi Distributors supplies games and accessories to approximately 350 hobby shops all over the U.S. and in several foreign countries such as Australia, Japan, Germany, France, Switzerland, England and Sweden.

Zocchi said he frequently is called by other game companies to provide dice for the various games on the market. "That's one of the reasons we've got so many different shapes, because many game designs are now using 10-sided, 20-sided dice and other shapes in addition to 6-sided dice which, up until recent years, was the only kind of dice you would find in a game.

In 1981, during the national British gaming convention, Zocchi's *Star Fleet Battle Manual* won first prize as the best miniatures rules of all time periods. His *Fighter Combat* game also won the H.G. Wells award as "All time best Air combat Rules."

Zocchi also is a magician, ventriloquist and entertainer. In the 1970s, he entertained on Sundays at the Sugar Mill Marina, played six nights a week on WLOX radio, and he was the 1980 emcee for the Louisiana Magic Day, an international convention of three combined magicians' associations.

He traveled with the Air Force Tops and Blue group in 1965, then in 1971, won the international Air Force talent competition by playing his musical saw. He also plays the trombone and bass with the Gulf Coast Jazz Society.

Says Lou Zocchi of the "impossible" creation he holds in his right hand, 100-faced die, "Keeping quiet about this thing until we got a mold and were in production was the hardest part of it. I was getting calls from all over . . . people saying, 'Come on, we know you've got it.' "

KELLY HARRINGSUN HERALD PHOTOGRAPHER

FIG. 1.

FIG. 2.

FIG. 3.

FIG. 4.

to earn extra money. When I was in the Air Force, in 1971 I competed in the air force talent contest. I won the worldwide air force competition for instrumental solo. I played *Exodus* on an 8-point cross-cut carpenter's hand saw. Like you cut wood with. And since that time I have learned to play a number of weird, strange, and bizarre musical instruments, including a 22-foot garden hose, and a snoot flute, which I cram up my nose and if the audience is lucky, only music comes out of my mouth.

To see an edited edition of my magic show, enter "A-1 Magician ventriloquist-google+" in your web browser and then select the first Google+ paragraph.

So what's your favorite magic trick?

I just learned one a couple months ago. You take a pencil or straw and shove it up your nose then turn your head and pull it out of your ear. I like it because it is so fast and people act disgusted as it goes up my nose.

Nowadays, there are all kinds of dice on the market. Do you think we live in a "golden age" of gaming dice?

No, not yet. I haven't finished doing the other shapes that I know my competitors are not going to do anything with. And so, I guess it was last year that another company, Koplow, brought out a 3 sided and 5 and 14 and 16 and 24. Alright. Well, what a lot of people don't remember is that way back when, like in 1985, I brought out a 5-sided dice and people yawned. They were not real thrilled with the fact that I had taken a 10-sided dice and changed the numbering so it read 1-5 twice on a ten sided shape. In 2002, I brought out a true 5-sided dice. It was 2005 when I brought out the 14 and 1993 when I brought out a 16-sided dice. I brought out a true 5-sided dice and all of a sudden the sales kicked off on that one. The original 5 that was just 1-5 numbered twice, hardly anyone ever

bought those. It was just the fact that the new 5-sided dice had an unusual shape. We gave the new 5-sided dice more than 100,000 test rolls to make sure. It rolled all 5 sides equally.

Tell me the history of the *Zocchihedron*, your patented 100-sided die.

Well, I was at an Origins convention in Baltimore at a college. One of my friends came up and said to me, "Do you know the Armory is bringing out a 30-sided dice at Gen Con?" I said, no, I hadn't heard about that. When I went home I cut a lot of hexagons and pentagons and squares and triangles and tried scotch-taping them together to see if I could create a 30-sided dice or something else. I failed wretchedly.

When I went to Gen Con, there was this 30-sided die that Roy Lipman from the Armory was selling, and I was stunned at how well it was put together. He smiled and bowed and said thank you, thank you. And that was about all. But later on, I discovered a doctor who teaches polyhedron shapes and I told him about the 30-sided die. And he said it was designed in 1862. He told me Eugene Catalan created it. A kid found this drawing and took it to the Armory and they took it to their tool-and-die maker and they took the credit. Earlier they were selling Gamescience dice and putting their name on them and saying they designed them. When I created gem dice, Roy Lipman called me up and chewed me out. "I am busy getting credit for inventing these dice, and now you came up with something I don't know about and it's embarrassing because I can't tell them the secret behind how it's made!"

At one time, TSR got tired of making the people in Taiwan wealthy, so they decided they would make their own dice. They went to a tool-and-die maker in Milwaukee, and the guy said they'd have the dice molds ready in 6 months. TSR believed it, but at the end of 6 months he didn't have the molds ready to deliver. TSR had already cancelled their orders from Taiwan. At the end of 6 months they had no dice, so they gave out coupons in their D&D boxes that you could redeem at local hobby shops for dice. This guy that did the tools, he ran TSR around the block quite a few times. In the end, TSR lost $8 million trying to make their own dice tools before they finally went to Taiwan to get someone who could do it right.

Well, I knew there were 350 uses for a 100-sided die in the first edition of D&D. I thought I should come up with a 100-sided die. I carried in my breast pocket a spiral notebook. Any time I had nothing else going I would sit down and write down how many numbers I would put on the equator, and just above the equator, and in the row above that, and so on. I kept trying to make a 100-sided die. All of which was wasted effort. Then my wife said, "Here's something called Euler's Formula. You could use it to make a 100 sided dice." I don't speak math so I called up the tool-and-die maker. He said, "I don't give a damn about any formula. How many elements are at the north pole, how many on the ring around that, then the ring around that, and the next ring, and so on?" Well, I couldn't get the formula to work, and I don't speak math, so that didn't work.

I had another friend who said I should get a hollow sphere, and put in 100 ball bearings, then spin it at high speed and take a high-speed photo to see where the ball bearings end up on the inside of the sphere. It was interesting but impossible. How do you know you have 100 ball bearings that take up the exact surface area of the interior of the sphere? At what velocity do you spin to make sure centrifugal force spins the balls to exactly the right space? And getting a high speed camera to take a photo at just the right time, these were all things I couldn't do.

The more I thought about it, the more I realized there was a magic trick I perform that I could take some shortcuts with to get the 100-sided dice worked out. I thought, "It seems too simple." Later on a Sunday, when I had nothing else to do, I tried the shortcut and discovered I had found out how to make a 79-sided dice. I thought, "Nobody wants a 79-sided die, but if I change this one element to something smaller, I might me able to make a 100 sided die come out." It worked. I sent the parts to my tool-and-die maker and told him how to lay it out so he would have a 100-sided die.

It was a magic trick that created the 100-sided die? How mysterious! Can you tell us what the trick was?

No, I am not going to tell, because the approach can be used to make a 99, 98, 97, 96, and 95 sided dice, and every other number you want to use. I want to keep that element of information secret because as you saw, this last year two more people jumped into the dice business. Why should I make it easy for them?

The first guy I told about the 79-sided-dice was Steve Jackson. The number rolled on a 79-sided dice is always facing down, so you can't see the result. Steve believes only in 6-sided dice. All his games use 6-sided dice. Well, Steve said you then have to sell them a $400 glass table to go with the die. And then you need to sell them an $800 French mirror to put under the glass table so they can read the result without having to bend down. So you charge them $400 for the table and $800 for the mirror and $2 for the dice!

When I publish this interview, we will need a contest to create uses for the 79-sided dice.

There's no current need for a 79-sided dice. I would hate to see people knocking themselves out pointlessly. They have enough to do figuring out what to do with a 22-sided dice. At the moment I don't think any of the adventures you have designed require a 22-sided die. The people who bought that did so just because they don't have one and God bless those people because they made it possible for me to survive when I had a 14 and 16 and so on.

Well, if I ever need an 82 or 79 or 94-sided die, I know the guy to go to.

At the time, I said if I just change this one thing in the magic trick, I could make any size die. I asked myself, to make a 1,000-sided die, what would it take. Well, it would be the size of a soccer ball. I tried to visualize someone who managed to stuff one of these into a pocket. And he gets on board the bus and he has to fish the change from underneath the damn soccer ball in his pocket!

Thanks for your time, Lou. I really enjoyed hearing your stories!

CRANKING UP THE FUNK IN DCC DICE ROLLING

By Terry Olson

"The dice are your tools. Learn to use them properly, and they will serve you well." – Gary Gygax

In the first AD&D *Dungeon Masters Guide*, Gary Gygax wrote a section entitled "Dice." Here he explained basic probability curves, introduced the d4, d6, d8, d10, d12, and d20, and discussed various ways to use them. While the Dungeon Crawl Classics RPG employs these same dice, it also incorporates Zocchi "funky" dice, the d3, d5, d7, d14, d16, d24, and d30. Many DCC players have been playing RPGs for decades, and know numerous ways to use a regular gyroelongated pentagonal bipyramid (that's a d20). However, for some, the funky dice are less familiar.

The goal of this article is to inspire you, dear reader, to think of new ways to incorporate Zocchi dice into your game. We discuss generating PC ability scores, invoking the die chain to replace "fiddly" bonuses and penalties, "fixing" the critical hit probabilities when attacking with a d24 (attention Warriors and Dwarves!), increasing the chances of getting extreme mercurial magic effects, and alternatives for generating skill check DCs at the table. To compare different methods, we review some basic concepts of probability and statistics, but these are only for informative purposes. One can use any of the funky dice alternatives below without worrying about the associated math.

A "FAIR" DISCLAIMER

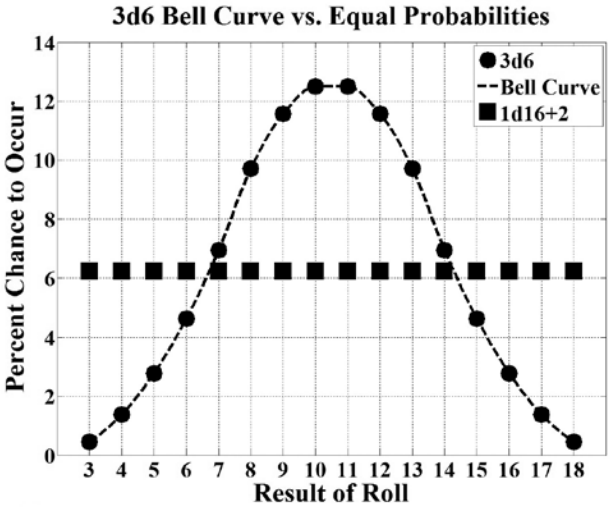
As we discuss dice and their associated probabilities, we are assuming that each die is ideal or "fair," meaning that it is as likely to land on one face as any of its others. In reality, many things can ruin this assumption, such as the shape of the die, imperfect edges or corners, an uneven weight distribution of the faces due to etched numbers, or even a "trick roller" who has developed the skill to throw the dice in a predictable way.

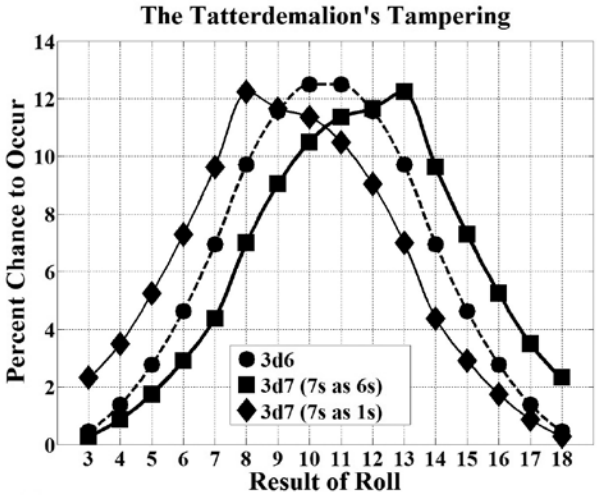
THE BELL CURVE VS. EQUAL PROBABILITIES

Before discovering some hidden powers of the funky dice, let's review the difference between a "bell curve" and equal probabilities (also known as a "uniform distribution"). This section is not essential (feel free to skip it), but it does help motivate the rationale behind the suggestions below.

Consider rolling a d20; getting a 10 is just as probable as getting an 18. The odds for each are 1/20 = 5%. Thus, rolling a single die generates equal probabilities for all numbers on the die. If a different range of values is required, then reroll undesired numbers. For example, to generate numbers 3 through 18 with equal probabilities, roll 1d20 and reroll 1s, 2s, 19s, and 20s. In this case the probability to roll a 10 is still the same as it is to roll an 18, but the odds for each are 1/16, or 6.25%. A simpler way to accomplish the same goal is to use the "funky" 16-sided die; roll 1d16+2 for equal probabilities ranging from 3-18.

Now consider generating results of 3 through 18 with 3d6. There is only one way to get an 18 (6+6+6), but there are twenty-seven different ways to obtain a 10 (2+3+5, 3+2+5, 6+3+1, etc.). There are two hundred sixteen (6*6*6) possible results for the 3d6, so the odds of obtaining a 10 are 27/216, or 12.5%, while the odds for an 18 are 1/216, or 0.5%. This is why it is so tough to get an 18 the "old school" way; on average, we'd have to roll 216 ability scores just for one to come up 18. Of course, the chances of getting a sum of 3 are the same 1/216 as for an 18, and the chance to get an 11 is the same 27/216 as that of a 10 (though that may not be as obvious). The probabilities are equal, and smallest, for sums of 3 and 18, and they are equal and largest for sums of 10 and 11. The shape of the curve describing these probabilities looks like a bell, symmetric about 10.5 (the "mathematical" average result for 3d6), hence the name, "bell curve." Note that rolling 3 or more dice will usually create a curve with similar properties; two identical dice make a triangular distribution of probabilities (see "Funky DCs" below).





To protect us against the Dark Lords of Statistics' wrath, we must recognize that we are using a "curve" just as a visualization aid; since we are rolling dice, our probabilities only apply to integers rather than any number. In other words, the probability to obtain 10 is 12.5%, but the probability to obtain 10.1 is 0 (not possible with 3d6); this is not accurately represented by a bell curve. What about the average result of 10.5? Here, "average" means rolling the dice many times, adding them up, and dividing the sum by the number of times rolled (the "arithmetic mean"); this may result in non-integer numbers.

FUNKY ABILITY SCORES

While the bell curve of 3d6 is the original method of ability score generation, many others have been developed. Here we'll consider a few alternatives that use funky dice, rather than 3d6, to generate PC abilities. We already discussed 1d16+2 in the previous section; this is a viable method if you do not mind 3, 10, and 18 being equally probable!

The Tatterdemalion's Tampering

The Tatterdemalion, also known as the Herald of Chaos, is rumored to occasionally tamper with the creation of adventurers, reavers, cutpurses, heathen-slayers, and tight-lipped warlocks. His method makes ability scores more "swingy," with increased odds of obtaining higher and lower values. To apply The Tatterdemalion's Tampering, roll 1d5 and 3d7 for each ability score, or skip the d5 and choose either 7s as 6s or 7s as 1s.

1-2 on 1d5:	Roll 3d7 and count any 7 as a 1.
3 on 1d5:	Roll 3d7 and reroll any 7s (same as 3d6).
4-5 on 1d5:	Roll 3d7 and count any 7 as a 6.

Incorporating the d5 creates a bell curve with 8-13 less likely than 3d6, and with the lower and higher rolls more likely. When rolling 3d7 and counting 7s as 1s, the bell curve associated with 3d6 is shifted asymmetrically toward lower results. The average roll is 9.4, and the chances to end up with a -3, -2, or -1 ability modifier are 2.3%, 8.7%, and 29%, respectively. Rolling 3d7 counting 7s as 6s applies these same probabilities to +3, +2, and +1 ability modifiers with an average roll of 11.6; the bell-curve is shifted asymmetrically toward larger results. The 3d6 method (equivalently, rolling 3d7 and rerolling 7s) obtains 0.5%, 4.2%, and 21.3% for these modifiers, and the average score is 10.5, halfway between the 9.4 and 11.6 of the two "biased" methods.

The Sezrekan Method

It is said that when Sezrekan was made flesh, a different set of rules was followed. Some speculate that the Old Master applies the same techniques today to aid his avatars in dominating the multiverse. The Sezrekan Method will generate ability scores that some may consider "overpowered":

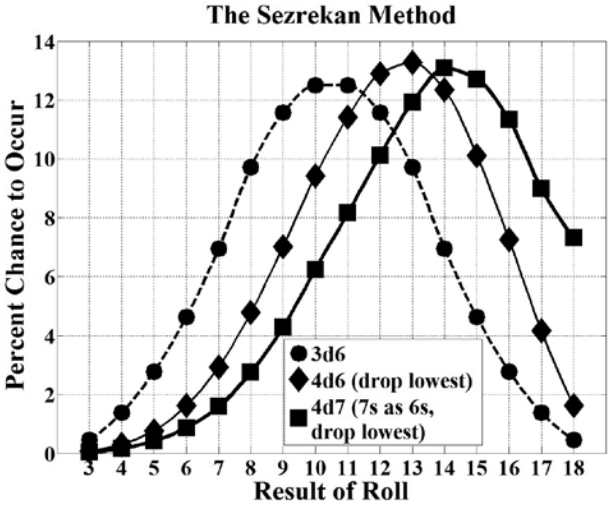
Roll 4d7, count any 7 as a 6, and discard the lowest die.

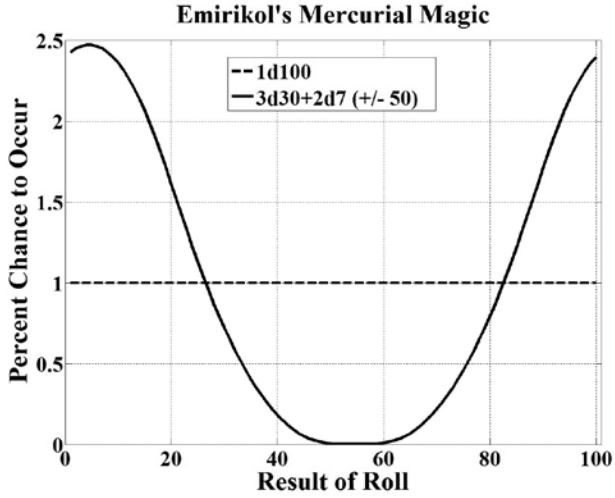
The average score for this method is 13.5. This yields a 7.3% chance to get an 18 (+3 modifier), a 20% chance to get scores from 16 to 17 (+2 modifier), and a 38% chance to get scores from 13 to 15 (+1 modifier). Note that the probabilities for the ubiquitous "4d6, drop lowest" method are 1.6%, 11%, and 36%, respectively, with an average score of 12.2.

UNDERSTANDING THE DIE CHAIN

One of the exciting aspects of DCC RPG is moving up and down the die chain. It's always a thrill for that d20 attack to become a d24, or better yet, a d30! On the other hand, it's an entertaining complication for one's d20 to be reduced to a d16, or worse yet, a d14. Understanding what moving along the chain actually "does" can inform one how to use it to replace the "fiddly" +/- 2 die roll modifications that are prevalent in so many published adventures. Going from a d20 to a d24 changes the range from 1-20 to 1-24; it also changes the average result from (1+20)/2 = 10.5 to (1+24)/2 = 12.5. What about d20+2? That changes the range from 1-20 to 3-22, changing the average from 10.5 to 12.5. So, going from a d20 to a d24 has the same average result as d20+2, but moving up the die chain has a slightly large range of possibilities. In the spirit of DCC RPG, it is "swingier."

Moving down the die chain is a little different. When going from 1d20 to 1d16, the range changes from 1-20 to 1-16,





with the average changing from 10.5 to 8.5. Rolling 1d20-2 has the same 8.5 average, but the range is -1 through 18. So, when we move down the die chain the range is narrower. A key point is that a +/- 2 corresponds to a step along the die chain where the number of sides changes by 4 (e.g, d20 to d24). Likewise, a +/- 1 corresponds to a step along the chain where the number of sides changes by 2 (e.g, d16 to d14). Remember, if you need a d22, then you can roll a d24 and reroll 23s and 24s; if you need a d18, then you can do a similar thing with a d20. In general:

+n modifier to a roll: move to a die with 2n more sides (e.g., +2: d20 to d24); this has the same average result, with increased chances of awesome (larger range).

-n modifier to a roll: move to a die with 2n less sides (e.g., -2: d20 to d16); this has the same average result, with decreased chances of awesome (smaller range).

Hugh's Critical Hit System

Let's face it; nobody becomes more annoyed with missing a crit than Hugh the Barbarian. What does this have to do with funky dice? First, let's review the DCC RPG rules as written (the "RAW") regarding critical hits and the die chain. On page 81 of the core rulebook, it says, "When rolling dice greater than d20, a crit occurs based on the die's highest possible results. For example, when attacking with a d24, a crit occurs on a 24. A warrior with an improved threat range adjusts accordingly. For example, a threat range of 19-20 while rolling on a d24 becomes 23-24, with only the result of 24 being an automatic hit." This is a point of controversy among adventurers in the DCC community, because many feel that if their attacks move up the die chain due to having some advantage, they should not have a smaller chance of getting a critical hit (or an automatic hit, for that matter). On a d20, the odds of rolling a 20 are 1 in 20, or 5%. However, on a d24, the odds of rolling a 24 are 1 in 24, or 4.2%. Now, dear reader, you may be thinking, "Geez, that's just 0.8%; so what?" Well, if it's your gongfarmer on the line, you might have a different opinion. How can funky dice help?

Make the following house rule: if you are rolling a d24 and you need a 24 to crit, then if you happen to roll a 23, follow with a d5. If the result comes up 5, you get the crit. How does this work? The odds of getting a 23 are the same as getting a 24, 1/24. The odds of getting a 5 on a d5 are 1/5. The odds of either getting a 23 on a d24 and a 5 on a d5, or getting a 24 on a d24 are 1/24*1/5 + 1/24 = 1/24*6/5 = 1/20, the same odds as getting a 20 on a d20. Thus, using the d5 in this way avoids the "penalty" of moving up the die chain. Of course, this trick can be applied for automatic hits as well as crits.

Consider a threat range of 19-20. On a d20, the odds of getting 19 or 20 are 2/20 = 1/10, or 10%; on a d24, the odds of getting a 23 or a 24 are 2/24, or 8.3%. (Notice the "penalty" is twice as large for the increased threat range; can you hear the high-level Warriors grumbling?) For this case, if the d24 roll comes up 22, then we roll a d5. If that comes up 4 or 5, then we get the crit, because 1/24*2/5+2/24 = 12/5*1/24 = 1/10. Here is "Hugh's Critical Hit System" in general terms.

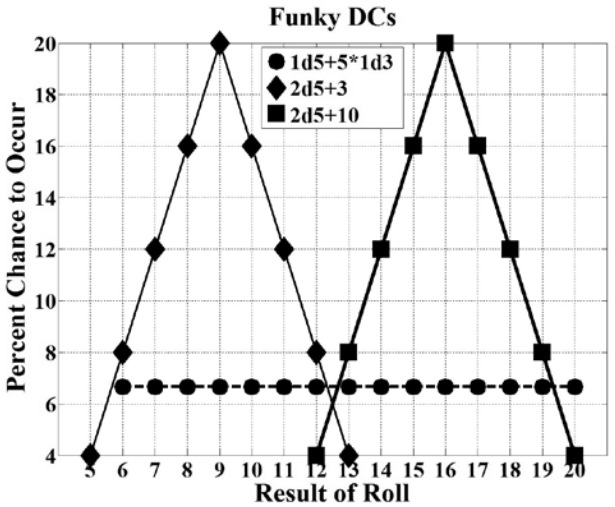
Crit Range on 1d20	Crit Range on 1d24 (w/ d5 option)
20	24, or 23 and 5 on d5
19-20	23-24, or 22 and 4-5 on d5
18-20	22-24, or 21 and 3-5 on d5
17-20	21-24, or 20 and 2-5 on d5

What about the dual-wielding Halflings who move up the chain from a d16 to a d20? What happens to their crit and auto-hit on a 16? The odds of getting a 16 on 1d16 are 1/16, or 6.25%, while the odds of getting a 20 on d20 are 1/20, or 5%. Here we use a similar trick, but with a d4. If we roll a 19, then we still crit if we roll a 4 on a d4, since 1/20*1/4+1/20 = 5/4*1/20 = 1/16 (the odds of getting a 16 on a d16).

Crit Range on 1d16	Crit Range on 1d20 (w/ d4 option)
16	20, or 19 and 4 on d4

Emirikol's Mercurial Magic

It is whispered among cabals of wizards that when Emirikol the Chaotic spurned the sorceress Leotah for allegiance to the Lords of Chaos, his mercurial magic effects were made more extreme. No one knows for sure what happened, but it may have been something like the following: When a



fledgling wizard determines mercurial magic effects, there is a 20% chance (results 41-60 on d%) that a newly-learned spell has no mercurial effect (see page 113 in the core rulebook). This is certainly safe, but it does lack the certain panache expected of a master wizard. Consider rolling 3d30+2d7-4; this gives a bell curve that ranges from 1-100 and is peaked at the average value of 50.5. For this combination of dice, the odds of getting 41-60 are 47%. However, consider "shifting" the distribution by 54 (adding 50 to the dice rather than subtracting 4), so that results over 100 are "wrapped around" from zero (e.g. 101-150 would be counted as 1-50). This may be stated simply:

Roll 3d30+2d7 (Add 50 if result is less than or equal to 50. Subtract 50 if result is greater than 50)

This makes the "fun" extreme mercurial effects very probable, though slightly biased toward the dangerous smaller numbers. What did you expect from the Lords of Chaos? It leaves only a 0.6% chance to roll in the range of 41 through 60 (no mercurial effect) on the mercurial magic table.

FUNKY DCs

Funky dice come to the rescue when a DC is needed for some unexpected task a PC attempts. The d5 and d3 may be combined to provide equal probabilities for DCs 6-20, while 2d5 can provide "triangle" probabilities for easier DCs, as well as for hard DCs:

Desired DC range	Method
6-20, equal probabilities	1d5+5*1d3 (e.g. 4 on d5 and 2 on d3 results 4+5*2=14)
5-13, triangle peaked at 9	2d5+3
12-20, triangle peaked at 16	2d5+10

Letting the dice determine the DC can be fun at the gaming table. Let the player roll the skill check first, wait a moment, and then roll the DC out in the open. Now that's suspense!

CLOSING REMARKS

We've just "scratched the surface" of the many additional ways to incorporate Zocchi dice that go beyond those covered in the DCC RPG rulebook. Ability score generation, avoiding "fiddly" die roll bonuses, adjusting critical hit probabilities, making a more "swingy" determination of mercurial magic, and generating DCs, all of these can be house-ruled with funky dice. Think of more examples; for ability scores, you could roll d5+d6+d7, 3d3+d10-1, 3d7 rerolling 19-21, 4d7 with 7s as 1s and dropping the largest die (the low-rolling version of the Sezrekan Method), etc. Try your ideas and refine them, making the game your own. Do this, and the funky dice, as Gary says, "will serve you well."

TABLE OF PROBABILITIES

Ability Score	Modifier	3d6	1d16+2	3d7 (7s as 1s)	3d7 (7s as 6s)	4d6 (drop lowest)	4d7 (7s as 6s, drop lowest)
3	-3	0.5	6.3	2.3	0.3	0.1	0.04
4-5	-2	4.2	12.5	8.7	2.6	1.1	0.6
6-8	-1	21.3	18.8	29.2	14.3	9.3	5.2
9-12	0	48.1	25.0	42.6	42.6	40.7	28.8
13-15	+1	21.3	18.8	14.3	29.2	35.7	37.7
16-17	+2	4.2	12.5	2.6	8.7	11.4	20.3
18	+3	0.5	6.3	0.3	2.3	1.6	7.3

TWENTY FUNKY DICE TABLES

By Ken St. Andre • Art by Chuck Whelon

If you're like me, your idea of a good time is rolling some funky dice and comparing them to a bunch of tables. It's always fun to see what turns up. And an imaginative table with a couple good dice rolls can yield all sorts of great inspiration. I asked Ken St. Andre, creator of Tunnels & Trolls, to send along some ideas for fantasy RPG tables using funky dice. Ken has a wild imagination, as you'll see in the tables that follow. Enjoy! — Joseph Goodman

D2: RANDOM MONSTER ENCOUNTERS

Get two 2-sided dice and roll/flip them. (Flying Buffalo has 2-sided dice available.)

Die 1	Die 2	Result
Heads	Heads	Two-headed monster of your choice (troll, dragon, goblin, etc.)
Heads	Tails	Smart monster of your choice (you can talk to it/reason with it/ bargain with it)
Tails	Heads	Dumb monster of your choice (Attaaaaaaaaack!)
Tails	Tails	Cowardly monster of your choice (Should be scary-looking, but flee in terror at first sign of resistance from characters)

D3: THREE THINGS YOU MIGHT SAY TO A TROLL IF YOU SUDDENLY MET ONE

Roll	You say:
1	"Hello, nice day/night/storm/battle, isn't it?" (Just pick the right occasion.)
2	"Please don't kill me..."
3	"Keep on rocking!"

D3: THREE THINGS THE TROLL MIGHT SAY TO YOU IF IT SUDDENLY MEETS YOU

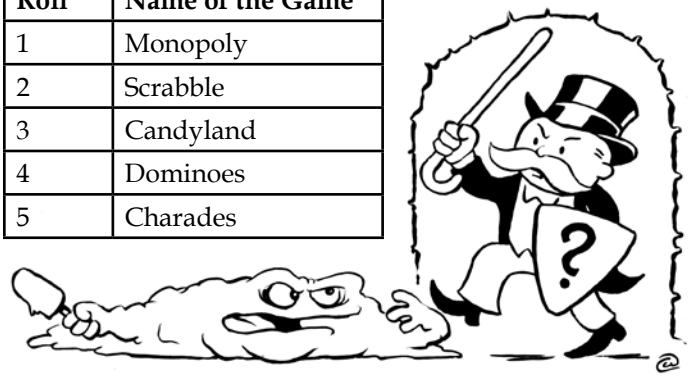
Roll	Troll says:
1	"Hello, little thing, do you know any good jokes? (Try to tell him a funny one.)
2	"Are you crunchy?" (Say no.)
3	"Ugh!" (Sometimes trolls don't have that much to say.)

D4: HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR NEXT LOVER

Roll	Who to Choose
1	The next stranger to smile at you
2	The next person to feed you
3	The person with the best hair
4	The last non-relative who actually liked/loved you

D5: FIVE GAMES YOU CAN PLAY WITH YOUR PARENTS

Roll	Name of the Game
1	Monopoly
2	Scrabble
3	Candyland
4	Dominoes
5	Charades



D5: Five Games You Should Never Play With Family Members

Roll	Name of the Game
1	Truth or Dare
2	Pass Out
3	Chicken
4	Doctor
5	Russian Roulette

D6: Unlikely Dragons for Children's Cartoons

Roll 4d6 or 1d6 four times. (Example: a roll of 1, 5, 1, 4 would produce a malachite colored, fish-headed dragon with butterfly wings and silky fur.)

Roll	Color	Head	Wings	Body Feature
1	Malachite	Frog-Headed	With Butterfly Wings	And Fuzzy Patches
2	Gamboge	Cat-Headed	With Dragonfly Wings	And Feathers
3	Fallow	Human-Headed	With Bat Wings	And Spikes And Horns Everywhere
4	Razzmataz	Sheep-Headed	With Eagle Wings	And Silky Fur
5	Feldgrau	Fish-Headed	With Dragon Wings	And Shining Feathers
6	Xanadu	Snake-Headed	With Rigid Airplane Wings	And Long Slimy Tentacles

D6: How Old Is That Player or Non-Player Character

This table works a bit differently from other tables in this article. We are going to use 5d6 to generate the numbers involved, but we will use the actual race of the character type to arrive at our final answer. You as the player need to understand the principles of DARO and TARO. (These terms come from Tunnels and Trolls, but can be applied to anything, or any game.) DARO stands for Doubles Add and Roll Over. TARO means Triples Add and Roll Over. So, if you were rolling 3D6 and got 5, 5, 6, you would start with a total of 16, roll the double 5s again, getting perhaps 1, 3 and your final total would be 20. If you rolled 5d6 and got 3, 3, 3, 1, 1, then you would roll the 3s again, and the 1s again. Start with a total of 11. Reroll, the 3s getting 2, 2, 4 bringing your total to 21. Reroll the 2s getting 1, 5, bringing your total to 27. Set those dice aside because you are finished with them. Take the two 1s and roll them, getting 4, 4, bringing your total to 35. Roll those 4s again getting 1, 6, bringing the final total to 42 for the series. The principle works with any number of dice with any number of sides. As long as you have multiple occurrences of a single number on different dice, pick them up, reroll and augment the total.

Now that you understand the principle behind the table, take 5d6, roll them using the DARO/TARO rule and get a starting number. Then find the race of the character type you are creating and check the following table to determine its age.

Race	Age Multiplier
Human	X 1
Elf	X 10
Dwarf	X 5
Ogre	X 7
Troll	X 20
Goblin	X 1/3
Dragon	X 100
Centaur	X 3/4
Minotaur	X 5/4
Kobold	X 4
Naga	X 6
Skeleton	X 4/5
Werewolf	X 2
Fairy	X 1/4
Giant	X 3
Angel	X 20
Demon	X 26
Gnome	x 9
Orc	X 2/3

D7: SOME TYPICAL NAMES FOR NON-HUMANS IN FRPGS

Roll 1d7 and cross-reference under the name of the race.

Roll	Elves	Dwarves	Orcs	Goblins	Ogres	Trolls	Dragons
1	Elrond	Sleepy	Argg	Oingo	Shrek	Rarrk	Smaug
2	Khazan	Grumpy	Urgg	Blinky	Smasher	Dimm	Vermithrax
3	Legolamb	Sneezy	Gack	Greenose	Klodd	Rawki	Dargon
4	Wakkawanuviel	Thorin	Duum	Phisher	Heyu	Shudder	Red
5	Tanis	Bashful	Blekk	Eek	Bambam	Brakk	Green
6	Drixxt	Doc	Snarf	Dingle	Smith	Bert	Blue
7	Willy	Shorty	Harvey	Chad	Bobby	Ernie	Puff

D7: RANDOM DUNGEON NAME GENERATOR

Roll 3d7 or roll 1d7 three times.

Roll	Type	Descriptor	Creatures
1	Dungeon of the	Crepuscular	Snollygosters
2	Castle of the	Rugose	Chonchons
3	Labyrinth of the	Tentacular	Skinwalkers
4	Temple of the	Squamous	Cannibal Dwarves
5	Tower of the	Vertiginous	Chupacabras
6	Caverns of the	Delirious	Squonks
7	Ruins of the	Monogamous	Skunk Apes

To find the name of your next dungeon or adventure location simply roll the d7 three times and combine the columns. Thus a roll of 3, 7, 5 would be The Labyrinth of Monogamous Chupacabras.

For those unfamiliar with these particular monsters from American folklore I include the following brief glossary:

- Snollygoster: A clever unscrupulous person.
- Chonchon: A horrible flying human head with huge ears for wings and bird-like claws.
- Skinwalker: A shapeshifter.
- Cannibal Dwarf: Hungry dwarves who don't care who they eat.
- Chupacabra: Literally "goat sucker" – probably malformed goblins.
- Squonk: A hideous four-legged pig-like beast, covered with warts, wrinkles, and blemishes with large weepy red eyes. It can dissolve into a puddle or reform from one very quickly.
- Skunk Ape: Large, hairy, foul-smelling ape-like creature.

One could easily substitute adjectives and monsters of choice in this table. As a judge, one should make a point of using the adjective whenever describing the monster. For example, a chupacabra might be bad, but a tentacular green chupacabra would be truly horrible.

D8: JEWELS THAT YOU MIGHT FIND IN THE OGRE'S HOARD

Roll 3d8 or roll 1d8 3 times. The first roll tells you how many, the second roll gives you the general description, and the third roll tells you the type of jewel.

The description generally refers to the shape of the cut stone. Most of them are obvious but you may have to look up radiant and cushion to have some idea of how the jewels are cut and shaped. So a roll of 3, 4, 5 would be three oval bloodstones.

Number	Description	Jewel
1	Uncut	Diamonds
2	Round	Rubies
3	Square	Emeralds
4	Oval	Sapphires
5	Radiant	Bloodstones
6	Pear	Amethysts
7	Heart	Fire Opals
8	Cushion	Citrines

D9: NINE DEMONIC PLANES

Where does the wizard get those weird demonic servants? What is the magic word or ceremony that allows him access to other planes of reality?

Roll 1d9 and consult the table below. The universe of magic consists of very strange places.

Roll	Name	Description	Key/Magic Word	Demon Description
1	Agi	Purple-skied jungle world of feathers.	gakushisuklash kupa piirnar gimkhiishurkelir anakhuu iikhu	Ape-like bodies with iridescent feathers instead of fur.
2	Ugiishkudig	World of unbearable grayness.	ukiga khakigduna rudar gaakukdir	Transparent geometric forms with big eyes and bigger teeth.
3	Rimigimak	The world where everything rhymes with "mak".	danu mak kuslaglasishuu mak	Four-legged metallic creatures that clack when they mak.
4	Aakhummikanu	Ziggurats in the ocean of blood.	u a mirgukankekimgii dash shigigii	Emaciated naked humanoids with butterfly wings.
5	Renumkigleshdush	The world of living numbers.	ralukhi	Prime apes and square roots.
6	Miishagdakas	The world of ochre fumaroles.	damkimisi u arishigi	Olive-scaled hopping things with hippo heads.
7	Sagumgi	The world where everything stretches.	shakhaarkibipa keluusugusu	Spaghetti monsters in search of meatballs.
8	Ukiirkuliku	The liquid world of intoxicating fluids.	likhir sha khuginsiir	Delirious drunken fishthings that swim through time and space.
9	Laasargammirkiimi	The hell of a billion lasers.	kuuzungershush kumkhisikgugin i aku	Packeted beings of coherent energy (light).

D10: MAGIC WORDS

The working of magic is often accompanied by a magical word, and even when it isn't, the wizard may subvocalize something for precise timing of when the spell goes off. First choose whether your magic user is good, evil, or neutral, then roll 1d10 to determine your wizard's favorite magic word. (For those of you who figure out what I've done in this table, it is the sound I'm going for, and not the accepted spelling or transliteration. Feel free to share your knowledge of any of these words that you recognize when you are out of character and good luck finding those you don't.)

Roll	Good	Evil	Neutral
1	Qing!	Yiu!	Abracadabra!
2	Meepaytoss!	Dommnay!	Presto!
3	Bittuh!	Ferdammt!	Mekkalekka!
4	Bevekshah!	Wahfokree!	Allakazam!
5	Seevooplay!	Maudeet!	Bibbidyboppidyboo!
6	Koodasai!	Che!	Sayoo!
7	Amaabow!	Koweetoostay!	Hokuspokus!
8	Porfavorr!	Maldeeto!	Simsalabim!
9	Pozalujsta!	Chyort!	Meeskamooska!
10	Please!	Damn!	Shazam!

D11: COOL BUT USELESS TREASURES

Roll 1d11 and then read both columns that follow that number.

Roll	Treasure	Why It's Useless
1	An unlimited supply of ice.	You found it by going through a one-way teleport gate to the Arctic.
2	A diamond the size of your head.	It has so many flaws and discolorations it looks like somebody attacked a block of quartz with a hammer.
3	The Golden Statue of Gaxgy.	It's fool's gold.
4	The Demon's Heart Ruby.	The demon lives inside it and transports anyone who touches it to the Ruby Hell.
5	A lifetime invitation to eat with the monarch.	The monarch has sworn to kill you if he ever catches you.
6	A ring of goblin control.	It only works on one goblin at a time.
7	Your own pegasus steed.	It's magical and refuses to ever land on the ground, preferring to rest in the clouds.
8	A cloak of invisibility.	It's invisible, but you're not.
9	7 league boots.	Every step you take covers 7 leagues. If you even twitch your feet you're in the next county.
10	A torch that never goes out.	It never goes out, even if you want it to.
11	A hoard of amazing games to play.	They are cursed. They all smell like limburger cheese and if you touch any of them you smell that way, too.

D12: WHEN GOOD MAGIC GOES BAD

Roll 1d12 and check the result. Wizards under pressure sometimes make mistakes. One misplaced syllable, or failure to properly calculate the phase of the moon, can have disastrous consequences. Judges should use this table when they run into an obnoxious high-level mage of some sort.

Roll	Spell Gone Wrong
1	Target falls madly in love with the first being of another race than itself. If the target is not a living creature, the spell affects the caster instead.
2	Target bursts into magical flame – hurts like fire, but is never consumed or actually burnt.
3	Target melts into a puddle of whatever it mostly consists of.
4	Spell opens a gate to Goblin Hell, and a horde of goblin ghosts comes pouring out.
5	Spell rebounds on the caster with double its normal effect.
6	Spell is cast at the highest possible level, draining the wizard's spellcasting ability for the rest of the day/week/year.
7	Spell turns the target into a petunia.
8	Spell rebounds on the caster and puts the wizard to sleep for a year.
9	Spell does exactly the opposite of whatever it was supposed to do.
10	Spell shrinks the target by 50% every 10 minutes and never stops shrinking it.
11	Spell turns its target inside out – that's usually fatal for living beings.
12	Spell produces an amazing light show but has no other effect at all.

D14: IT FOLLOWED ME HOME. CAN I KEEP IT?

Roll 1d14 to see what has started following you around.

Roll	Follower
1	Koogle the Cleaver (the butcher's apprentice).
2	An affectionate skunk.
3	A whole hive of hornets.
4	Klippart, the big red dawg.
5	The ghost of your dead grandmother.
6	A demon kitten with polka dots.
7	A thirsty vampire.
8	A mangy werehamster.
9	An importunate frog. (Kiss me, you fool!)
10	Broomhilda the What, not a witch or a which, but a true what.
11	A gelatinous trapezoid.
12	A creepy clown.
13	A flying squid.
14	The little black raincloud of almost-doom.

D16: SWEET SIXTEEN

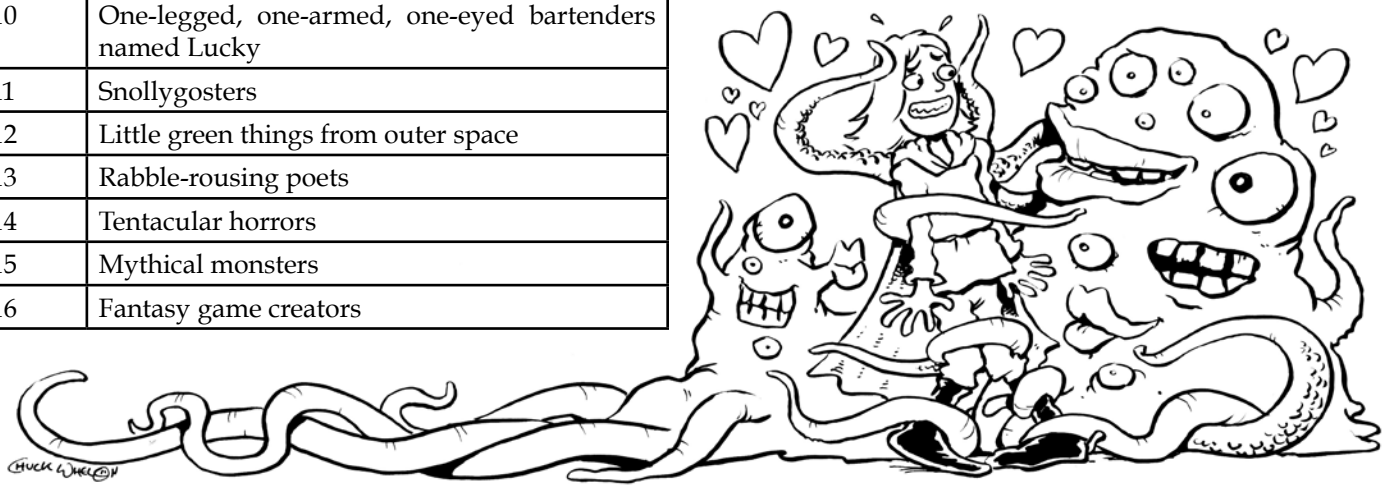
Roll 1d16 to learn who truly loves you.

Roll	You have am amazing attraction for
1	Teenagers of the opposite gender
2	Teenagers of the same gender
3	Gremlins
4	Centipedes
5	Horseflies
6	Card sharks
7	Bridge trolls
8	Tax collectors
9	Drunks
10	One-legged, one-armed, one-eyed bartenders named Lucky
11	Snollygosters
12	Little green things from outer space
13	Rabble-rousing poets
14	Tentacular horrors
15	Mythical monsters
16	Fantasy game creators

D20: CURSES AND OATHS

Roll 1d20 for things to say when you're really too angry, disgusted, enraged or astonished to be polite.

Roll	Curses (say out loud, like you mean it!)
1	By the scaly left eyebrow of Sluggoth the Slimy!
2	Zebras! Zebras! Why does it always have to be zebras?
3	Frakkin narf-dinged shubblebottomed frakkity frakks!
4	Oddzooks, Old Chap, what the haggis are you doing?
5	Scumsnorting Snollygosters!
6	Gleep! Gleepity gleeping gleep gleeps!
7	Gonna barf you and the stinking bandersnatch you rode in on.
8	By the stinking stewpots of the Elder Gods!
9	Crom! Kromm! Craam! Ghromm! and Crompton!
10	Roll me in panda fur and call me Ting-Ting!
11	Zounds! Mounds! Mounds of Hounds!
12	Batpoop!
13	Well, I'll be a Beholder's eyebrow!
14	Ding-dang-dongety dung-diving dragons!
15	Simmer! Sputter! Fume! Burble! Explosively Decompress on you!
16	Malodorous malingering mothermulching mugwumps!
17	Have it your way... and dieeeeeeeeeeeeee!
18	May you spend eternity in a jelly-bean factory... as a jelly bean!
19	Sticks and stones will break your bones, but after that comes volcanic eruptions and nuclear explosions... just sayin'.
20	I curse you to have painful pimples on every precious part of you.



D24: Dinosaurs You Might Meet in Jurassic Park

You never know who or what you might meet when you go on safari to the past. Roll 1d24 and see how (un)lucky you are.

Roll	Dinosaur
1	Utahraptor
2	Suchomimus
3	Majungasaurus
4	Coelophysis
5	Acrocanthosaurus
6	Tylosaurus
7	Giganotosaurus
8	Allosaurus
9	Troodon
10	Tyrannosaurus Rex
11	Pteranodon
12	Triceratops
13	Apatosaurus
14	Stegosaurus
15	Dimorphodon
16	Parasaurolophus
17	Metriacanthosaurus
18	Gallimimus
19	Ankylosaurus
20	Velociraptor
21	Steven Spielberg
22	Steve Chenault
23	Aldo Ghiozzi
24	Ken St. Andre

D30: Unfriendly Creatures You Might Meet in the Enchanted Forest of Evil Magic

The creatures in this forest all grow up to ten times their normal size. That makes even the insects fierce. Roll a d30 three times. The first time is the number of creatures you will encounter from 1 to 30. The second time you will go to that number in the first column, but read the second column for a brief description. The third time you will go to that number in the first column but read the third column to see what you have found. For example: if you rolled 7, 1, 28 you would meet seven blue woodpeckers.

Number	Description	Creatures
1	Blue	Armadillos
2	Tentacled	Bears
3	Scabrous	Chinchillas
4	2-Headed	Dingos
5	Howling	Egrets
6	Disgusting	Flamingos
7	Crimson	Giraffes
8	Decrepit	Hyenas
9	Carnivorous	Iguanas
10	Slithering	Jaguars
11	Humpbacked	Kangaroos
12	Mottled	Lions
13	Emerald	Monkeys
14	Screeching	Nightingales
15	Slimy	Ocelots
16	8-Legged	Penguins
17	Bloated	Quails
18	Skeletal	Raccoons
19	Amorphous	Snakes
20	Rabid	Tapirs
21	Berserk	Umbrella Birds
22	Starving	Vultures
23	Ebony	Wombats
24	Ferocious	Wallabies
25	Hopping	Yaks
26	Cowardly	Zebus
27	Scaly	Dragonflies
28	Fire-Breathing	Woodpeckers
29	Poisonous	Wasps
30	Horrible	Fleas

The Black Feather Blade

A LEVEL 1 ADVENTURE

By Daniel J. Bishop • Editor: Rev. Dak J. Ultimak • Interior artists: Brad McDevitt, Stefan Poag
Cartographer: Mark Allen

Playtesters: Morgan Clayton, Mike Bishop, Heather Bishop, Ramona Ross, Anders Consack, and Garett Oliver

BACKGROUND

Over a century ago, Bran Corvidu ravaged the Northern Kingdoms. Known as the Feast-Lord of Crows for the bodies left in his wake, and the *Carrion-Eater* for his unsavory devotion to the Crow God Malotoch, Corvidu bore the *Black Feather Blade*, a magical sword buried with him upon his death. Many have sought Corvidu's tomb, but none have found it, for it was long hidden by the Scions of Law.

In the everlasting conflict between Law and Chaos, time has wrought new conflicts and seen the resurgence of ancient enemies, but even the mightiest cannot attend to all things. When the vigil of Law waned, Malotoch's agents discovered where the tomb lies, and the Crow God has set in motion a plan to bring the *Black Feather Blade* into the world once more.

Scavengers hunger; a new reaver must be found to lay the feast.

GETTING THE PCS INVOLVED

The judge may have the PCs hear of Bran Corvidu and the *Black Feather Blade* in many ways. The easiest is to include a treasure map in a previous adventure. Malotoch has many agents spreading rumors of the tomb and blade, though, and the PCs could learn of it through seemingly loose tavern-talk, overheard scraps of conversation, or even through the agency of a Chaotic patron or deity. Clerics of Lawful gods may be tasked to recover the *Black Feather Blade* to keep it from falling into the wrong hands. Any rumors the characters hear should emphasize the blade's powers while minimizing (or ignoring) its drawbacks.

THE OTHER PARTIES

The PCs are not alone in having heard these rumors. Two other parties arrive at the burial mounds seeking the *Black Feather Blade*. Although the PCs might be able to beat either party, and either party might be able to defeat the other, so long as each must face two other parties, they must work together, each seeking to put the others into a vulnerable position.

One of the parties is comprised of the local brigand, Selden Esh, and his six thugs. The other consists of the yellow-robed shaman, Duani, and three acolytes from the Temple of Bones, worshipers of Ahriman from the distant town of Thrombottle.

Selden Esh is a little man who appears very much a dandy fallen on hard times. His boots have holes in them, of which he complains often, and he is always interested in replacing them with those of a fallen comrade (although a disgusted "Too big!" is the usual result). He is patient, and may seem like a perfect ally against Duani (who Esh refers to as "that reptile"), but as soon as he is in a position of power, his vicious nature is revealed. Not content to slay foes, Selden Esh feels a need to gloat which may prove his undoing. Esh

carries a longsword, studded leather, gold ring worth 20 gp, and a diamond earring worth 45 gp. His six thugs are called Jacko, Dog, Raymond, Little Joe, Sunny, and Pip are equipped with short swords, javelins, and studded leather armor.

Esh learned of the *Black Feather Blade* from a waylaid merchant, whom he promised to spare in exchange for the information. He lied. The "merchant" was a demon sent by Malotoch, which arose after its "death."

Selden Esh: Init +4; Atk longsword +1 plus Deed Die melee (1d8+1 plus Deed Die); AC 15; HD 2d12+2; hp 19; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP Deed Die (d4), critical range 19-20; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +0; AL C.

Thugs (6): Init +2; Atk short sword +2 melee (1d6+1) or javelin +3 ranged (1d6); AC 13; HD 1d8; hp 5, 8, 4, 3, 2, 1; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +1; AL C.

Duani is a tall man who wears yellow robes bearing the demonic black-horned visage of Ahriman upon the right breast. He is very straight and stiff in his movements, cold in his speech, and he seems to blink far less often than he should. He is dispassionate and deliberate in his actions and words. Ahriman calls upon the Deathbringer to seal vows, and he does not break his word. Duani carries a dagger, pouch of 45 sp and 3 gp. His acolytes, whom he calls Alayha, Dewan, and Ranit, are silent even when casting spells. They seem even stiffer than Duani, and their skin has an unhealthy pallor.

Duani serves the Hierophant of the Temple of Bones, who learned of the *Black Feather Blade* in a dream. Duani was dispatched to obtain it, and has sworn to either return with the blade or die in the attempt. Both Ahriman and Malotoch had a part in sending the dream.

Duani: Init +0; Atk dagger +1 melee (1d4); AC 10; HD 2d4; hp 7; MV 30′; Act 1d20; SP spells (+3 spell check); SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +3; AL C.

Spells: *Charm person*, *chill touch*, *detect magic*, *magic shield*, *ward portal*.

Acolytes (3): Init –1; Atk dagger +1 melee (1d4); AC 11; HD 1d8; hp 8, 1, 4; MV 30′; Act 1d20; SP charm 1/day (DC 11 save or affected for 1d4 hours), harmful spell 2/day (50′ range, 1d6+1 dmg, DC 11 Will save for half); SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +2; AL C.

ENCOUNTER LIST

Area	Type	Encounter
Any	C	Selden Esh and 6 thugs
Any	C	Duani and 3 acolytes
A	C	6 corpse eaters
C	T	Barrow entrance/crow's beak trap
C3	T	Falling block
C4	C/T	1 Raven-headed horror/locking door and gas trap
C5	C	8 Jabbering skulls
C6	C	Swarm of corpse parts
C7	C	1 Giant dire mole
G	C	Demon shadow

ADVENTURE START

You find yourselves several days from the nearest village, north into the pine-shrouded, raven-haunted Marchlands. Before you, the dark evergreens open to reveal a fog-shrouded bowl containing a rough ring of six burial mounds. A dark stone monolith towers in the center of the ring. Although the fog makes details difficult to pick out, you can see the top of the monolith seems to be carved into the head of a crow. The croaks and calls of ravens drift through the fog from the higher branches around the bowl. Surely this is the final resting place of Bran Corvidu.

The mist within the area of the barrows reduces clear vision to 10′, and conceals objects and creatures beyond 30′. Large ravens croak, their cries ominous in the mist. They fly through this region, startling characters as they appear and disappear in the mist. Jackals slink in the mist just beyond the edge of vision, appearing like shadows when the curtains part, and then disappearing again. These creatures are not dangerous to the PCs, but any who kills one loses 1 point of Luck due to Malotoch's anger.

All of the barrows in this area are made of uncut fieldstone blocks, laid dry without mortar. The entrance to each faces inward, toward **area D**. Characters must search for the barrow entrances, which are hidden behind decades of tangled growth. Opening sealed barrows requires great strength or the appropriate tools (sledgehammers, pickaxes, shovels, etc.). This may give NPCs and PCs alike the opportunity to sneak off and make sacrifices at **area D**.

THE BARROW FIELD

Area A – Corpse Eaters: *This heaped mound is covered with rank weeds. The entrance to the burial chamber within lies open on its southern flank. The stones forming its threshold lean at an alarming angle, as though the mound has shifted over time. The air that drifts out is chill, with a lingering unwholesome odor of the grave.*

Within, a passage slopes down 5′ to a chamber made of rough stones, 30′ in diameter and rising to a domed height of 15′. Three of Corvidu's marshals were buried here; now it is the lair of six corpse eaters. These are small cockroach-like humanoids with two elbows on each arm and two knees on each leg. They have six limbs (four legs and two arms) and brownish-gray carapaces.

Corpse eaters (6): Init +0; Atk bite +2 melee (1d3); AC 14; HD 1d8+3; hp 11, 9, 8, 8, 8, 7; MV 30′; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60′; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +0; AL C.

There is still a heaped treasure in the mound, untouched by the corpse eaters: 15 golden rings worth 5 gp each, 12 short swords made of bronze (reduce the damage die by –1d on the dice chain each time a natural "1" or "20" is rolled) with begemmed scabbards worth 30 gp each, 354 scattered silver coins, 215 gold coins, and a serviceable suit of chain mail.

If this hoard is uncovered, Duani suggests that the PCs and Selden Esh divide it between themselves, and leave the *Black Feather Blade* to his master.

Area B – Buried and Sealed Tomb: *Whatever lies beneath the heaped mound here is unclear. Grass and weeds grow over it all, with no sign of entrance.*

This barrow is buried and sealed. If opened, the stone doorway gives way to crude stairs leading 10′ downward to a 30′ diameter domed chamber. Seventeen skeletons are buried within, along with 5 large clay urns, each of which contains 1,000 amber beads worth 1 sp each. Each urn requires two hands to carry. Several of the skeletons have filed teeth.

Area C – The Tomb of Bran Corvidu: *This low mound is covered in coarse grass and brown weeds. A gaping hole enters the mound from one face, going downward to the northeast. A tangle of old roots near the entrance would force anyone taller than a halfling to crawl in order to enter here, but the roots look brittle and easily removed.*

A shortened *bec de corbin* (or "crow's beak") has been worked into the archway, and the roots both conceal it and keep it from swinging down. Any working to remove the

roots is subject to an attack (+4 melee, 1d6 damage) as the trap is released (DC 10 find trap check to locate and DC 10 disable trap to remove).

The passage goes downward after the first 5′ at a steep 30° angle, entering area C1 after another 15′. The interior of this tomb is fully described below (see The Tomb of Bran Corvidu).

Area D – Stone of Ravens: *This dark stone rises above the mists, crudely carved in imitation of a curvaceous woman's body, with the head, legs, and feet of a monstrous crow. Her arms hold a flat stone before her, stained dark with ages of sacrifice, although nothing is upon it now. She faces to the northeast.*

Any who examines the stone notes faint runes carved upon it, reading "For Malotoch's Favor, Her Children Must Be Fed." If the smallest piece of carrion is placed upon the stone, a raven will come there to feed and the character placing it there will gain 1 point of temporary Luck, which is lost as soon as the adventure is over (if not used). By making a larger sacrifice, another character can add +1 Luck to the pool of temporary Luck, and shift it to himself. This can happen as often as characters are willing to make the sacrifice. Use the following chain to indicate when a greater sacrifice has been made:

> Any carrion < small mammal < large mammal < domestic farm animal < dog < horse < sentient being < human < companion < lover or family member < part of oneself

Larger sacrifices draw more ravens.

Area E – Sealed Barrow: *This round green hill is sealed with a stone door.*

After a short flight of uneven steps, the barrow opens out into a 30′ diameter space, in which three skeletons lay on stone slabs. Two chests of heaped triangular bronze coins (worth ½ of a copper piece each) contain 4,125 coins in total. One of the skeletons still wears a golden necklace with a jet stone carved to resemble a raven (25 gp).

Area F – Buried and Sealed Barrow: *This round hill is green-gray with grass and weeds. Small pine saplings dot the mound. The barrow entrance is unsealed.*

Within it is a rough trio of chambers, each about 10′ in diameter and forming a triangle of sorts. Each chamber contains heaped skeletal remains, some of which have filed teeth – brigands who followed Bran Corvidu in life, and fell with him in death. There is no treasure here.

Area G – Demon Shadow: *The mound here is covered with weeds and grass, as well as ancient stones like rotting teeth poking up from green gums. The barrow hill itself sags unevenly, creating a slight depression at its top.*

This barrow is collapsed within. Although Malotoch wishes the *Black Feather Blade* to be found, her malevolence can be felt here – any who spends even a small amount of time searching here will uncover a tarnished silver whistle carved with intricate designs and images of crows. Blowing this whistle summons the shadow of a demon, who will stalk the character that blew the whistle until another does so, or the character dies.

The demon shadow is incorporeal and immune to non-magical weapons. It is capable of creating auditory illusions at will, which can only be heard by the character it is stalking. It can possess small or light normal items, using them to make attacks doing 1d3 damage (or more, at the judge's discretion). Its touch drains life energy, causing 1d3 points of Strength damage. In addition, it has all the abilities of a Type II Demon.

Demon shadow (1): Init +3; Atk possessed item +0 melee (1d3) or draining touch +5 melee (1d3 Strength); AC 17; HD 6d12; hp 36; MV fly 40′; Act 2d20; SP illusions, possession, incorporeal, immune to non-magical weapons, demon traits; SV Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +8; AL C.

The demon shadow enjoys playing with its victims. It may stalk, attack, and frighten its victim through many adventures before either it or the PC dies. Alternatively, the PC may find another to blow the whistle – or even have some enemy receive it as a gift! If Selden Esh blows the whistle, he will be visited by illusions related to the "merchant" he recently murdered.

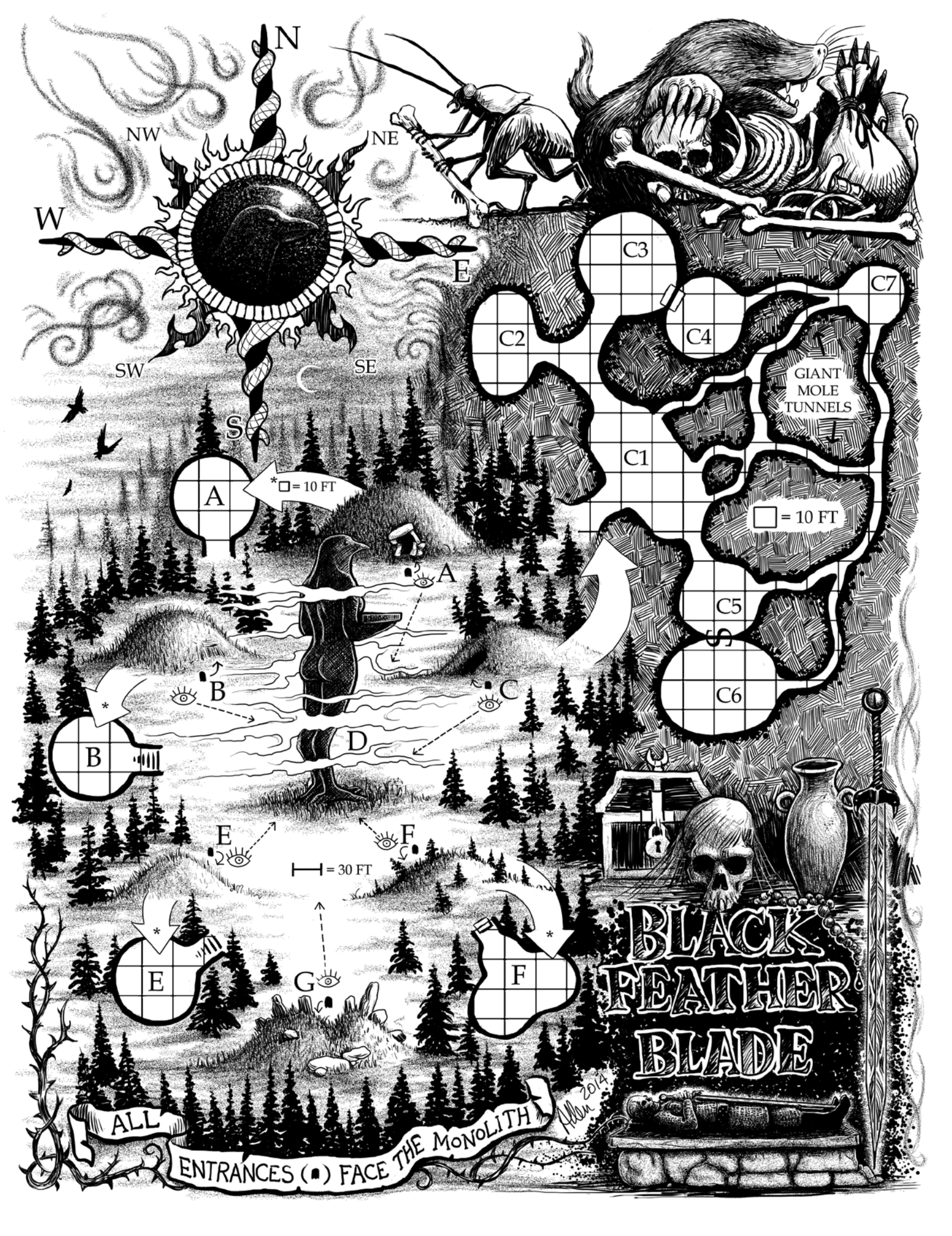
THE TOMB OF BRAN CORVIDU

Area C1 – Entry Chamber: *The passage enters into a rough stone chamber, wide and low, with an exit both to the right and left. Something has dug out holes in the far wall, pushing stones into this area. These are three irregular tunnels, each about 3 feet in diameter, entering from the northeast. The floor is scattered with old bones.*

The bones are human. The rough tunnels were dug by a giant dire mole (see area C7). The judge may have this creature attack PCs (or NPCs) who spend a long time in any given area, so long as it can be reached by the mole's tunnels. The ceiling here is only 8′ high, and the ceiling in the tunnels to the east and west are 6′ high, forcing tall characters to duck.

MALOTOCH'S FAVOR

Malotoch 's favor can play an important role in this adventure. The author recommends placing a bowl on the table and using poker chips (or some other tokens) to indicate the increased Luck that it contains. Each time an acceptable sacrifice is made, add a chip to the bowl, and shift the bowl to indicate which character now holds Malotoch's accumulated favor. Luck spent from this bowl does not return, but even NPCs can make use of its bounty to modify their rolls if they are the last person to make a sacrifice. When the adventure is over, the bowl is removed from play.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BLACK FEATHER BLADE
ALL ENTRANCES (∩) FACE THE MONOLITH
Allen 2014

Halflings can fight in the mole tunnels without penalty. Other characters have a –1d penalty on the dice chain to both attack rolls and damage, and cannot use two-handed weapons effectively.

Selden Esh is caught between a desire to avoid danger and a fear of being beaten to treasure, and dithers about sending his men in first. Duani will always suggest that others go before his faction.

Area C2 – Blind Chamber: *This tunnel passes into a dank chamber with water trickling down the rough stone walls to the north. Several bodies lie here. Although originally mummified, they are putrid and encrusted with fungus and mold from the damp. No exits are visible.*

Eight bodies are thrown here. They are trussed hand and foot. Each has a tattoo of a crow still visible upon its back and filed teeth.

Area C3 – Falling Stone: *This round chamber is eight feet high before being capped by a rough dome reaching another 8 feet beyond that. The floor is two feet below the floor of the passage. To the right, an ancient wooden door still stands, sealed with a thick bar of oak.*

The bar is on this side of the door, set into bronze braces, and requires a DC 12 Strength check to move. Examination (DC 5 find trap check) shows that the bar is attached to a wire that releases a stone block over the door, which drops upon whoever moves the bar (+6 to hit; 1d7 damage). The door has bronze hinges and a lock, which is currently unlocked.

Area C4 – Killing Ground: *The door opens into a round chamber about 25 feet in diameter. A small glass globe on a stone pedestal in the center of the room contains a swirling purple gas that lights the room with a flickering luminescence. You can see a three-foot diameter hole in the east wall, made by some burrowing thing. About two score golden coins are scattered on the floor across the room from the door, apparently spilled from a leather satchel lying nearby.*

An invisible horror lurks in this room, becoming visible as soon as it attacks. It appears as a humanoid jackal with a raven's head, and attacks with beak and claws. When characters are drawn into the room by the gold, it uses its initial actions to slam and lock the door (automatically gaining surprise), and its first action on the next round to smash the globe. The door can be opened with a DC 10 open locks check or by recovering the bronze key from a gold chain (20 gp value) around the creature's neck.

The globe contains a gas which renders mortal creatures groggy. Each round, characters must succeed on a DC 10 Fort save or take a cumulative penalty of –1d on the dice chain to their attack and damage rolls. The horror is immune. Ten minutes breathing clean air clears this grogginess.

If slain, the horror simply fades away, leaving the key and a dark stain upon the ground. If it survives, the horror can re-form the glass globe and gas over the course of a week; it appears on the plinth.

Raven-headed horror: Init +2; Atk beak +1 melee (1d6) or claw +3 melee (1d3); AC 15; HD 4d8; hp 26; MV 30'; Act 2d20; SP infravision 60'; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +4; AL C.

There are 40 gp on the floor; the satchel is filled with stones.

Area C5 – False Tomb: *The passage leads into a round chamber about 25 feet in diameter. Within the center of the area, a stone slab holds a human skeleton wearing ruined chainmail, its bony hands still clutching a black-bladed longsword. Eight skulls lie heaped at his feet. Several urns line the walls. To the east, a 3-foot diameter tunnel has been dug into this chamber, and some of these urns have been smashed aside, revealing the glint of gold and silver coins.*

There are 20 urns here, each holding approximately 400 worthless lead slugs painted gold and silver (dwarves may note that the coins don't smell like gold). The black-bladed sword, likewise, is only a rusted blade covered with black enamel, which is obvious in good light.

If the body or blade is touched, the eight skulls begin to jabber and screech. They fly about the room, biting their victims with dry rotted teeth. The jabbering noise and erratic flight cause confusion, and characters must succeed in a DC 10 Will save each round, or take a –2 penalty to their attack rolls.

Jabbering skulls (8): Init +2; Atk bite –1 melee (1d3); AC 12; HD 2 hp each; MV fly 40'; Act 1d20; SP un-dead traits, confusion; SV Fort –2, Ref +6, Will +0; AL C.

The secret door to the south is cunningly hidden among the dry set field stones, but can be noted because there is actual mortar in its construction (DC 15 Intelligence check; a dwarf, mason, or similar professional rolls 1d24). One of the stones in the door is a hidden catch that allows it to swing freely into area C6.

Area C6 – True Tomb: *Beyond the secret door you can see a larger oval space. Here also a skeleton lies upon a stone slab, but it holds a black-bladed two-handed sword, the blade etched with feathers and the pommel ending in a jewel that looks uncannily like a crimson eye. Bags and urns line the walls, but the floor is heaped with mummified body parts – arms, legs, hands, torsos, heads – in a hideous display.*

The various urns and bags contain 120 silver rings with 5 gp each, a total of 900 sp, 355 gp, 789 cp, a jeweled cup worth 120 gp, and a string of pearls worth 45 gp.

The sword is the *Black Feather Blade*, a strongly Chaotic weapon created by a portion of Malotoch's malice. It acts as a +2 weapon at all times, but any Lawful character attempting to wield it suffers an immediate and permanent –2 penalty to Luck each day the sword is used. In the hands of a Chaotic character, the blade has an extended critical range of +1 (i.e., 18-20 for a level 1 warrior) and restores 1d4 hit points of damage every time the blade slays a foe with 1 HD or more. After some time, the blade encourages its owner to drink human blood, withdrawing its restorative powers on any day when the character has not done so in the past 24 hours. Eventually, it demands that its wielder

consume cooked, then raw, human flesh, as Malotoch is also a deity of cannibalism. Crows, jackals, and other scavengers tend to follow whoever holds the *black feather blade*, although they do not attack unless attacked themselves.

When the blade is touched, the body parts animate, attacking as a swarm which can fill twelve 10′ squares. Anyone in the area is automatically attacked by the swarm at the beginning of each round. The swarm will relentlessly pursue characters into the barrow field.

Swarm of corpse parts: Init +0; Atk swarm +1 melee (1d3); AC 8; HD 10d12; hp 65; MV 20′; Act special; SP un-dead traits, half damage from non-area effects; SV Fort +4, Ref –4, Will +0; AL C.

Area C7 – Mole's Den: *This is a small cramped space, littered with sticks, dark tufts of fur, and old bones. The ceiling is a mere 5 feet high.*

This is the lair of a giant dire mole, a 5′ long creature which moves with a "swimming" motion through the tunnels it has dug here. It can sense movement and vibrations within 120′. Its velvety black fur is studded with bone nodes, and can be turned into a cloak granting +1 to AC. The fur is otherwise worth 40 gp.

Giant dire mole: Init +0; Atk bite +4 melee (1d6); AC 14; HD 5d8; hp 25; MV 40′; Act 1d20; SP sense vibrations 120′; SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will +0; AL N.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If the swarm pursues the PCs beyond the barrow, jackals, crows, and ravens will appear to finish it off.

If any NPCs have survived, ownership of the *Black Feather Blade* must still be determined. If it is given to Duani, the PCs gain allies in the Temple of Bones. If it is given to Selden Esh, he uses it against the PCs immediately if he outnumbers them.

XCRAWL APOCALYPSE: THE ATHLETE

By Brendan LaSalle • Art by Brad McDevitt

Lightning in the skies! Blood on the moon! The prophecy is true – Dungeon Crawl Classics and Xcrawl come together at last! Get ready for the unholy spawn of Dungeon Crawl Classics, the dark RPG of glory and gold won by sword and spell, and Xcrawl, the game that's nastier than a Type II demon with Type III herpes. Welcome to Xcrawl Apocalypse!

In strange eons the world of Xcrawl falls to a great global calamity. Some say a great war shook the land and burnt the sky, leaving mankind a scurrying and fearful shadow of its former self. Some say the Gods fought a war amongst themselves, and that the civilization of the thinking peoples of the world was simply a casualty. Some say disease brought down that once-glorious civilization, others say an outbreak of madness caused by some terrible event in the stars beyond the comprehension of mortal man. None can say what is truth, but from the twisted wreckage of the Golden Age of man's civilization comes the Age of the Sorcerer Kings. And these Sorcerer Kings have brought back the popular death sports of their predecessors in a bit to return the glories of the ancient world to the ravaged world of the apocalypse.

Here is a preview to whet your appetite for Xcrawl Apocalypse mayhem. The athlete class is one of the new classes featured in Xcrawl Apocalypse. Athletes are a game-changing force on the battlefield.

What'cha gonna do when the Xcrawl Apocalypse comes for you?

ATHLETE

The athlete is a highly-trained Xcrawl arena competitor. Trainers spot slaves with raw athletic potential and put them through a grueling training regimen – running, wrestling, leaping, weapon combat, and acrobatics. Athletes learn to be canny and unpredictable combatants, and can turn the tide of a crawl by immobilizing and incapacitating opponents.

Xcrawl audiences love athletes, cheering on their favorites as they dodge, weave, and wrestle their way to victory. They make for spectacular crawlers, and often find themselves to be the most popular personality on any team.

Hit points: An athlete gains 1d12 hit points at each level.

Weapon training: Athletes are trained in the use of the spear, club, dagger, quarterstaff, and javelin. They may wear any armor, but wearing armor with greater than a +3 bonus negates their movement bonus and their ability to critically hit with a grapple check. They can use shields, but must drop them in order to use their special grapple abilities.

Alignment: Athletes can be any alignment. Lawful athletes tend to be heroic examples of the best of humanity, or obsessive self-actualizers out to prove that they are the most fit to survive. Chaotic athletes might be schemers and cheats, doing whatever they need to do to dominate and triumph, or could be unpredictable heroes who won't let a coach do the thinking for them. Neutral athletes may be narcissists, radical fitness advocates, physically gifted idiots, Zen monastic disciples, or simple victims of the totalitarian system that keeps the Sorcerer Kings in power who are ready to choke slam whoever gets in their way.

Training: Athletes constantly train to keep themselves at the peak of physical condition. At 1st level, the athlete gains one point in one of his physical ability stats: Strength,

Agility, or Stamina. Athletes are considered to be in constant training in their off-times between adventures. At every level, the athlete gains one point in one of these statistics, raising them to a maximum of 18. If they increase all of their physical stats to 18, they instead gain an additional 1d4 hit points per level. Also, through training and careful nutrition, athletes can heal back damage to their Strength, Agility, or Stamina, at a rate of one point per day of physical therapy, in addition to the normal rate of healing (per DCC RPG core rulebook, page 94).

Grapple: Athletes are master grapplers. Athletes add their class level to any Strength check made for grappling, whether it is to engage or break a grapple. In addition, large creatures only get half their normal size bonus against grapplers: creatures twice as large as the grapplers only get a +2 bonus, creatures triple their size get +4, and creatures quadruple their size get +8.

Athletes can move a grappled opponent around the battle field. Any combat round in which the athlete begins engaged in a grapple with an opponent, he can make a Strength versus Strength check (adding his class level) against the opponent. If he succeeds, he can move five feet, dragging his opponent with him. For every factor of 4 that he defeats his opponent by on this check, he can move himself and his opponent an additional five feet, up to the extent of his movement rate. If the athlete scores a total of 20 on this check and his opponent has a 12, he can move his opponent 10'.

In addition, once the athlete has established a grapple, he can do damage to his opponent. This damage comes from constriction, joint locking, grinding, or close-quarter blows. The athlete decides if he wants to inflict standard or subdual damage. Any combat round in which the athlete begins in a grapple, he may make a Strength versus Strength check against his opponent (adding his class level as above). If successful, he inflicts grapple damage as listed in table 1-1. The athlete is capable of a critical grapple success on this roll: at 1st level, any athlete who rolls a 20 on the opposed Strength check scores a critical. (The grapple critical threat range increases as he levels up, as listed in table 1-2.) The athlete can then roll on table 1-3 to see the additional damage or effect he inflicts. The grappler may choose to take a lower result on their critical result if he feels it would be more advantageous. For example, an athlete who scores a 14 on a crit check might decide that a shocker is better for the situation than a sleeper hold, and may downgrade his critical as he sees fit.

Xcrawl athletes train to grapple creatures with natural weapons, such as claws and fangs. An athlete quickly learns to gain the advantage over foes with natural weapons. The athlete makes a Strength versus Strength check against the grappled creature (adding his class level to his check). If this check is successful, he has gained advantageous positioning and the creature cannot bring its natural weapons to bear against the athlete. The creature must break out of the grapple to once again use its natural weapons against the athlete. The judge may rule that this maneuver is impossible for athletes to perform against certain monsters, such as a creature covered in dangerous quills or an outer dimensional horror entirely composed of tentacles.

Weave: Athletes learn to weave unpredictably in combat, in order to make themselves more difficult targets. The

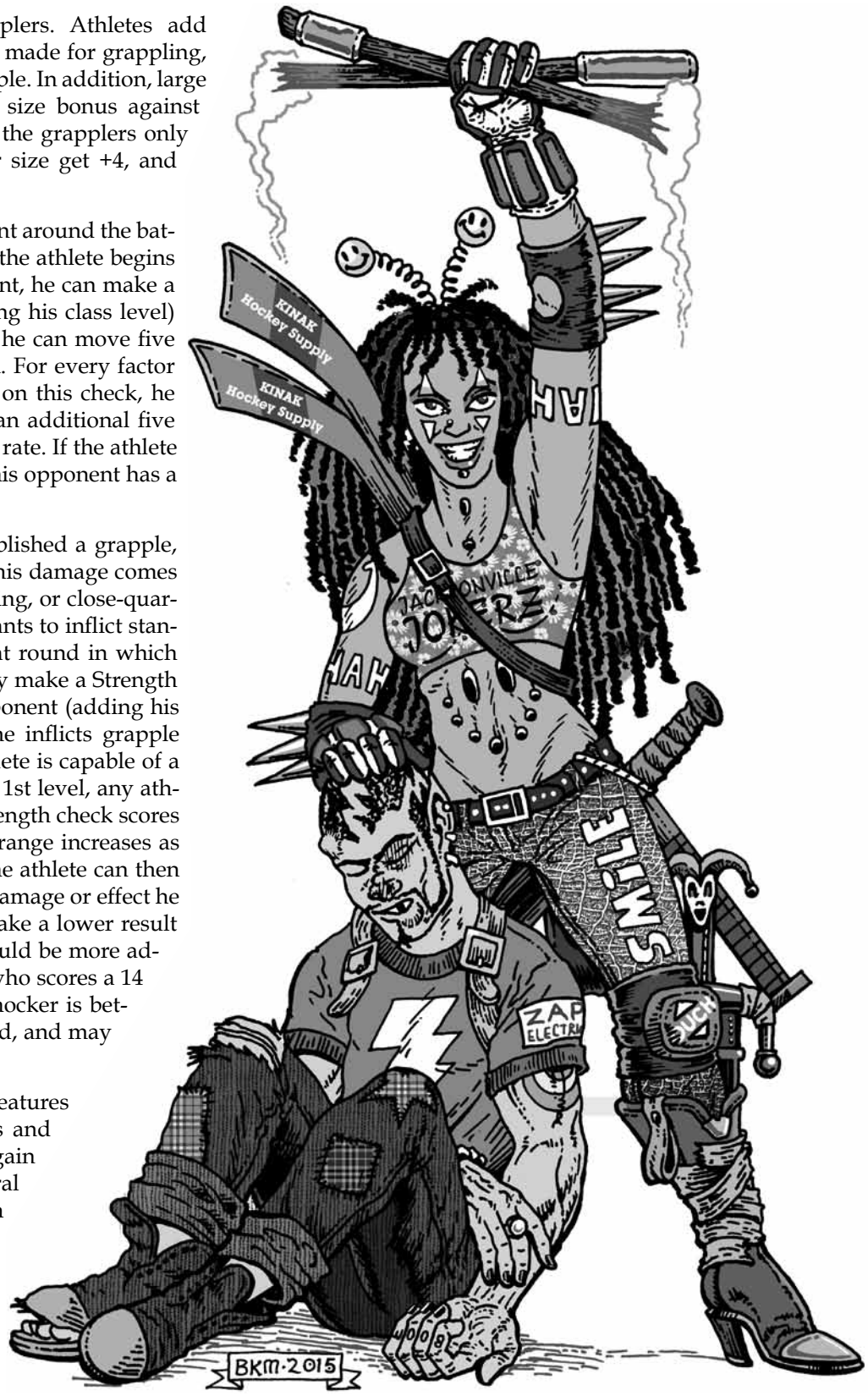


TABLE 1-1: THE ATHLETE

Level	Attack	Crit Die	Action Die	Grapple Damage	Weave	Move	Fort	Ref	Will
1	+0	1d8/III	1d20	1d5	+0	35	+1	+1	+1
2	+1	1d8/III	1d20	1d6	+1	35	+1	+1	+1
3	+2	1d10/III	1d20	1d7	+1	40	+2	+2	+1
4	+2	1d10/III	1d20	1d8	+2	40	+2	+2	+2
5	+3	1d12/III	1d20	1d10	+2	40	+3	+3	+2
6	+4	1d12/IV	1d20+1d14	1d12	+3	55	+4	+4	+2
7	+5	1d14/IV	1d20 +1d16	1d14	+3	55	+4	+4	+3
8	+5	1d14/IV	1d20+1d20	1d16	+4	55	+5	+5	+3
9	+6	1d16/IV	1d20+1d20	1d20	+4	55	+5	+5	+3
10	+7	1d16/IV	1d20+1d20	1d24	+5	60	+6	+6	+4

weave bonus may be added to an athlete's AC as long as he is able to keep moving. Athletes retain their weave bonus while prone or grappling, but not when paralyzed, tied up, or are otherwise unable to move.

The Zone: Athletes strive to enter The Zone, a Zen-like mental state where they leave all conscious thought behind and simply become the actions they perform. Any time an athlete rolls a natural 20 on an attack roll, grapple check, or a Strength, Agility, or Stamina check, they are considered to be in The Zone. All of their action dice go up by one step on the die chart until they fail an attack roll, grapple check, or physical ability check. This ability improves for higher level athletes: 5th-level athletes go up two steps on the dice chain while in The Zone, and failing one check only drops them down one step (two failures drop them from The Zone entirely).

Fast movement: Athletes constantly train at running. Their movement rate increases as they gain class levels, as listed in the athlete class chart. In addition, their climbing and swimming movement rates are increased by 50%.

Luck: Athletes always add their Luck modifier to Strength, Agility, and Stamina checks.

Action dice: The athlete's action dice can be used for attacks or skill checks.

TABLE 1-2: GRAPPLE CRITICAL HITS

Level	Threat Range	Crit Die
1	20	1d6
2	19-20	1d7
3	19-20	1d8
4	19-20	1d10
5	18-20	1d12
6	18-20	1d14
7	18-20	1d16
8	17-20	1d20
9	17-20	1d20+1
10	17-20	1d20+2

TABLE 1-3: GRAPPLE CRITICAL HITS

Roll	Result
0	Badly-placed headbutt inflicts +1d4 damage to opponent and 1d4 damage to the athlete.
1	That had to hurt! Elbow to the throat does +1d3 damage. Opponent loses one round to choking / gasping.
2	Takedown! Athlete and opponent are prone. Opponent takes +1d6 damage.
3	Face smash! Opponent takes +1d3 damage, loses 1d3 teeth, and can't speak for 1d3 rounds.
4	Bear hug! Athlete does +1 grapple damage, and opponent automatically takes +1 point of grapple damage every round until he escapes the hold or dies.
5	Headbutt to face! Victim takes +1d6 damage and is stunned and unable to act for one round.
6	Body slam! Athlete keeps his feet. Victim takes +2d6 damage and lands prone.
7	Savage attack! Athlete bites off body part [roll 1d4]: (1) nose; (2) ear; (3) bit of opponent's cheek; or (4) eyebrow. Grapple inflicts +1d4 damage and victim bleeds for 1 point of damage per round until wound can be tended.
8	Choke hold! Athlete does +1d6 damage, plus automatic +1d6 grapple damage every round until opponent escapes or dies.
9	Somebody call momma! Huge throw, opponent lands prone ten feet away from athlete and takes +2d6 damage.
10	Shocker! The athlete delivers a nerve pinch, rendering one of the opponent's limbs useless for 1d6 rounds.
11	Signature Move! Double grapple damage .
12	Suplex! Double grapple damage, victim falls prone and must make a Fort save (DC 12 + athlete's level) or be stunned for 1d5 rounds.
13	Half Nelson! +1d6 grapple damage, plus victim takes automatic +1d6 grapple damage every round until he frees himself (-4 penalty on grapple checks to escape). Creatures with natural weapons (i.e., claws and fangs) may not bring them to bear until they escape the grapple.
14	Sleeper hold! Victim takes standard grapple damage and must make a DC 15 Fort save every round until he escapes the grapple or fall unconscious for 1d6 rounds.
15	Clavicle snap! Athlete fractures opponent's shoulder. Victim is at -4 on all attack rolls until fully healed.
16	Crrrr-ack! Opponent's limb is broken [roll 1d4]: (1) right arm; (2) left arm; (3) right leg; (4) left leg. Attack does +2d6 damage and limb is useless until healed.
17	Savage eye gouge! Victim takes +1d6 damage and loses an eye permanently.
18	Full Nelson! +1d10 grapple damage and victim takes automatic +1d10 grapple damage every round until he frees himself (-8 penalty on grapple checks to escape).
19	Face smash! Victim takes double grapple damage, is stunned for one round, and permanently loses 1d4 points of Personality.
20	Foot stomp! Victim takes +1d12 grapple damage and is stunned for one round. Movement rate is cut in half until entirely healed.
21	Advanced Signature Move! Triple grapple damage.
22	Body rend! Victim takes double grapple damage and loses 1d6 points of both Strength and Stamina. Lost points return at a rate of one per day.
23	Acrobatic slam! Victim takes double grapple damage, is stunned for 1d3 rounds, and lands 1d3x5' feet away from athlete.
24	Savage double eye gouge! Victim takes +2d6 damage and is permanently blinded.
25	The Whip! Victim is flung in a straight line (athlete chooses direction), stumbling along 2d3x5 feet, taking double normal grapple damage if he strikes a surface or other individual. The victim might take extra damage if he runs into another hazard
26	El Kabongo! Victim takes standard grapple damage, is knocked prone, and the athlete gets to make an extra melee attack against the prone opponent with an unarmed strike that does the athlete's grapple damage if the strike is successful.
27	Mary, bar the door! Move cracks opponent's spine, doing +3d6 damage, and the victim must make a Fort save (DC = 15 + athlete's level) or be permanently paralyzed.
28	Double arm snap! Victim takes triple grapple damage. Both arms are broken and useless until fully healed.
29	Somebody stop the fight! Bear hug crushes ribs into organs; after grapple damage is figured, victim loses half of remaining hit points.
30+	It's all over but the shouting! Snap opponent's neck. Victim is permanently paralyzed and unable to speak; death occurs in 1d4 rounds.

APPENDIX F: THE YTHOTH RAIDER

An expansion of the Purple Planet Author's Edition Glossography

By Harley Stroh • Art by Stefan Poag

You are a gaunt, blue-skinned raider, ranging across the multiverse in your quest for the ythoth mushroom. Any desire for food, love or power has faded like the memory of a forgotten dream. Friends, allies and lovers are reduced to mere tools to be discarded when they are no longer useful. Now there is only the endless quest for the bloom, a hunger that can never be sated.

The raider class is taken by a PC after the character succumbs to the power of the ythoth mushrooms. There are only five levels in the class, reflecting an increasingly greater reliance on the mushrooms.

Once a character becomes a thrall to the bloom, all subsequent advancement must be in the ythoth class. The character's previous abilities and powers are not lost, but – apart from divine or diabolic intervention – the character can no longer advance in his original class.

The raider's bonuses to attacks, action dice and saves are cumulative with the PC's prior class. The character takes the best of the two classes' crit dice and tables.

Hit Points: The ythothian raider retains his original hit points and gains 1d5 hit points with each new level.

Weapon training: The character retains any previous training. If part of a ythothian raiding crew, the PC quickly learns the use of the longsword, two-handed sword, javelin and war-grapple. The character gains no new armor training.

Alignment: The desire for the bloom overrides any moral impulse or philosophy; a raider's belief system is secondary to acquiring the coveted ythoth. Lawful raiders are often calculating commanders, demanding strict and immediate obedience from their crews and peers. Neutral raiders are soulless automatons, completely indifferent to the world and the harm they cause. Chaotic raiders are wild-eyed, desperate junkies, fomenting disorder and tumult to achieve their ends.

Thrall to the Bloom: Ythoth addiction becomes increasingly worse the longer the character survives. There is no escape for the PC save death.

This descent is represented by the character's bloom die and how often he must partake of the space fungi. At 1st level, every week that the PC fails to consume a ythoth mushroom, he suffers stat damage equal to his bloom die to his Strength, Intelligence, and Personality.

Consuming a single mushroom is sufficient to return his weakened stats to their original scores plus the character's bloom die for one week, after which the stat loss begins anew.

If any of the character's stats fall below 0 or are elevated above 24, the character collapses, dead. Luck can be burned to increase or reduce the result. Attempts at divine healing are fruitless, but the body can still be recovered, per the core rules.

As the character advances, the period of time shortens, and the blessings and curse of the ythoth increase.

Consuming multiple mushrooms within this window has no additional effects, save for sating the raider's desire. Due to the character's increased tolerance, he enjoys none of the ythothian mushrooms' special powers.

Action dice: A ythoth receives a second action die at 1st-level. This is in addition to any action dice from the PC's original class. Ythoth can only use this extra action dice for mental powers.

Cosmic Mind: Regular consumption of the weirdling mushrooms exposes the PC raider's mind to alternate realities; this knowledge of higher worlds manifests as mental powers. With each level gained, roll once on the following table.

TABLE 1-1: DIMENSIONAL RAIDER

Level	Attack	Crit Die / Table	Action Die	Bloom duration / Die	Ref	Fort	Will
1	+1	1d8/I	1d5	1 week / d3	+0	+0	+1
2	+2	1d10/I	1d7	6 days / d5	+1	+0	+1
3	+3	1d12/I	1d10	5 days / d7	+1	+0	+2
4	+4	1d14/I	1d14	3 days / d10	+1	+1	+2
5	+5	1d16/I	1d16	2 days / d14	+2	+1	+2

TABLE 1-2: MENTAL POWERS

1d14	Mental Power
1	Force manipulation (as the 1st-level wizard spell).
2	Ventriloquism (as the 1st-level wizard spell).
3	ESP (as the 2nd-level wizard spell).
4	Resist cold or heat (as the 1st-level cleric spell).
5	Magic shield (as the 1st-level wizard spell).
6	Levitate (as the 2nd-level wizard spell).
7	Lotus stare (as the 2nd-level cleric spell).
8	Shatter (as the 2nd-level wizard spell).
9	Consult Spirit (as the 3rd-level wizard spell).
10	Gust of wind (as the 3rd-level wizard spell).
11	Haste (as the 3rd-level wizard spell).
12	Planar step (as the 3rd-level wizard spell).
13	Transference (as the 3rd-level wizard spell).
14	Roll twice and select one.

Treat the character's raider level as his caster level. When a character activates a power, roll his action die, adding his CL and any Personality modifier.

While the raider has no ability to spellburn, a character with multiple action dice can add them together for a single mental power roll.

Example: Ameri Beni is a 3rd-level warrior and a 1st-level raider. He receives a d20 action die from his former class, and a d5 from his raider class; by forgoing any other actions, he can combine both action dice in a single mental power attempt, rolling, d20+d5.

A character can continue activating a mental power until failing on the power roll. On a failed check, roll on the following table, modified by the PC's Luck:

TABLE 1-3: POWER FAILURE

1d7	Result
-1	Character's head explodes from the mental effort. Instant death.
0	Character collapses into unconsciousness for 1d3 rounds. All mental powers lost for 1 day.
1	Character's eyes, ears and nose weep blood. Mentalist suffers 1d5 damage per round until the character succeeds on a DC 10 Fort save. Attempted power lost for 1 day.
2	A wave of agony and despair washes over every character within 50', affecting friends and foe alike: DC 10 Fort save or 1d5 damage. Attempted power lost for 1 day.
3	The mentalist's maddening thoughts are made visible, in a communal hallucination that affects all creatures within line of sight: as per the *phantasm* spell (spell check 1d30 + CL), however the illusions are not controlled by the caster. Attempted power lost for 1 day.
4	Power takes effect, but not in the way the character intended. Judge adjudicates a twisted version of the power.
5-7	The mental power attempt exhausts the PC. For the next 3 rounds all actions are attempted at -2d.
8+	A bright, colored aura surrounds the PC like a halo. If the character attempts the same mental power the next round, he may add the previous power check. *Example: Ameri Beni attempts a power and fails on a roll of 5. The next round he may add 5 in an attempt at manifesting the same power.*

As the powers are mental and not magical, raiders do not suffer corruptions or take mercurial magic effects.

Suggested Reading:

Burroughs, William S.: *Junkie; Naked Lunch;* the "Nova Trilogy"

Crowley, Aleister: *Diary of a Drug Fiend*

DeQuincey, Thomas: *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*

Moorcock, Michael: *Elric of Melniboné;* and the original saga (esp. the first three books)

Evil Reborn

A LEVEL 4 ADVENTURE

By Jon Hook • Editor: Rev. Dak J. Ultimak • Interior artists: Brad McDevitt, Stefan Poag • Cartographer: Mark Allen
Playtesters: Hugh Ashman, Adam Metz, Troy Wilson, Kadon "Kman" Price, Aaron Hancock, Ashley McKay, and LameGamer72

INTRODUCTION

This level-4 adventure is a stand-alone module, but can also be played as a sequel to DCC #13: Crypt of the Devil Lich. Following the destruction of the *Shadowstone* by the paladin Valinus, the devil-lich Chalychia was trapped within an *instant fortress* for hundreds of years. Chalychia actively pursued a plan by using her crystal ball to seek out and corrupt a soul that could set her free, but at the same time she implemented a back-up plan. Drawing upon her demonic heritage, Chalychia used her crystal ball to scry The Nine Hells for a solution to her imprisonment. And she found it in the remote frozen wastes of Stygia.

BACKGROUND

The town of Cillamar is being raided by a small army of devils led by Vathgard through the new gate connected to Stygia. They sweep into the town at night to steal children from their beds. Fathers, mothers, and brave adventurers pursued the devils as they fled north with their children into the nearby woods, but none returned.

Days passed, and the citizens of Cillamar explored the woods for evidence of the missing children, the band of adventurers, and the devils themselves. They discovered a strange cave that seems to contain a north wind, but no other signs of their missing people. Cillamar then sent messages to all of the nearby towns and cities pleading for help to find their children. A fortnight after the raid, Vathgard and his devil horde returned to steal even more children. Cillamar is cloaked in despair, and is pleading for someone to defeat the infernal army and save their children.

ENCOUNTER LIST

Area	Type	Encounter
A	T	Wind Trap
C-1	C	1 Arctic Gorgon Bull
C-2	C	1 Arctic Gorgon Cow & 2 Pups
C-3	T	Fungus Trap
D-1	C	12 Type I Frost Demons
D-2	C	4 Type I Frost Demons
D-3	C	3 Type I Frost Demons
D-4	P	Magical Mirrored Room
D-5	C	1 Gelatinous Fiend
D-6	C	Vathgard (Elder Hollow One Wizard) 4 Type I Frost Demons
D-7	C	Chalychia (Drow Demi-Lich Doppelganger)

Chalychia discovered a new ally in Vathgard, a demonic sorcerer of the blackest arts, honing his craft in a secluded tower of ice. With Vathgard's aid, Chalychia began the process of transferring a portion of her consciousness into a demonic doppelganger. Vathgard is using the doppelganger to create a clone of Chalychia, one that would allow her mind to live again in a new body. The ritual to finalize the preparation of the doppelganger's body to permanently house Chalychia's formidable mind requires many virgin blood sacrifices. To that end, Vathgard created a gate between Stygia and the Known Realm in order to raid it for the blood of innocents.

STARTING THE ADVENTURE

The background for this adventure is scripted for adventurers traveling in the Kingdom of Morrain in or near the town of Cillamar, but this scenario can be transplanted to any human-centric village or town with nearby woods, hills, or mountains. The cave containing the gate to Stygia can be located in any of those terrains. This adventure is for five or six 4th-level adventurers.

It is assumed that the adventurers arrive in the town the day after the second raid led by Vathgard to steal children. The adventurers may either be visiting the town by chance, or they could be responding to the plea for help that the town publicized after the first raid resulted in the disappearance of several would-be rescuers.

All of the citizens of Cillamar are constantly assessing anyone who visits their town. They're hopeful that they are the heroes that will return their children. Any citizens the adventurers encounter eagerly question them regarding this. The citizens will gladly guide them to Lord Aric Bollen, their local lord and master of arms for the town militia. Lord Aric is a distant cousin to King Stormwarden, and is a good and loyal servant to the crown and kingdom of Morrain. Cillamar's militia is mostly comprised of farmhands and retired adventurers, and under normal circumstances they are strong enough to repel a typical orcish hoard. But the demonic nature of the raids, and the strange wizard that is leading the devils, have proven to be too much for the local militia.

Lord Aric and the town of Cillamar have little to offer the adventurers in payment. Lord Aric does offer fresh horses, if they need them, or two draft horses to carry their gear. Lord Aric also offers to provide them with fresh leathers and packs for their horses. The local smithies offer to repair any armor or weapons they have that may be in need of repair. Lord Aric does have a coffer of ten gold coins that he can pay the adventurers. If the adventurers accept the quest, Lord Aric and a couple of his men ride out and show them the strange cave with the north wind inside.

If the adventurers think they need help on this quest, four men step forward to volunteer to help. They are each a father to a child that was abducted the night before, and they will do the work for no pay and no share of the rewards Lord Aric offered to the adventurers. They just want their children back. Each man is a 1st-level warrior. Because the four men are not sure if the adventurers need or want their help, they only volunteer to help if there is a call put out for hirelings.

If the adventurers ask the townsfolk about the raiders, they describe skull-faced devil apes with white fur, red hands, feet, and bellies, and a long red pointed tail. Whatever the devil apes touched became covered in frost. The devil apes were commanded by a tall wizard in black robes trimmed in silver and red that spoke in tongues; nothing he said was comprehensible. The villagers tell the adventurers that thirty-five of their children have been taken; fifteen a fortnight and a day ago, and twenty more just last night.

Area A – The Cave of the North Wind: Read or paraphrase the following when the adventurers approach the cave entrance:

A light blanket of snow drifts over the grass before the dark entrance of the cave, as an eerie wind is felt blowing out from the cave.

There is no wind this day, but a substantial arctic wind is blowing out from the cave. The cold air steadily spews snow out from the cave. This previously unremarkable cave used to be the den for a pack of wolves, but now sorcery has transformed this cavern into a tunnel of ice and snow and wind. The cave width varies between 10′ and 15′ with a 12′ ceiling; the cave is 50′ long with a gentle five degree downward slope. At the mouth of the cave, the arctic wind blows at a gentle 5 mph. All surfaces within the cave are covered in a thick sheet of ice. Traversing down the length of the cave becomes more difficult the further the adventurers go because of the combination of the slick ice and magical wind.

The magical wind is designed to increase in strength and intensity as people move deeper into the cave. The source of the magical wind and ice, and the key to activating the gate to Stygia, is a large sapphire in the center of a stone plaque mounted on the back wall of the cave. The sapphire glows with a soft azure light that fills cavern tunnel. The cave is 50′ long, with the wind blowing at only 5 mph at the mouth of the cave.

Wind Speeds in the Cave:

- Mouth of Cave: 5 mph
- 10′ into Cave: 10 mph
- 20′ into Cave: 20 mph
- 30′ into Cave: 40 mph
- 40′ into Cave: 80 mph
- 50′ into Cave: 160 mph

Hazards of the Cave: As the adventurers move deeper into the cave, they will have to contend with both the stinging, biting arctic wind and the slick icy surfaces.

- At the mouth of the cave and 10′ into the cave: No significant hazards, no skill checks, so no consequences for failed checks.
- At 20′ into the cave: DC 5 Fort save, with 1d4 wind damage for a failed save.
- At 30′ into the cave: DC 7 Ref save, with 1d4 wind damage and the adventurer falls and slides back 2d6 feet for a failed save.
- At 40′ into the cave: DC 10 Ref save, with 1d6 wind damage and the adventurer falls and slides back 3d6 feet for a failed save.
- At 50′ into the cave: DC 12 Fort save, with 2d6 wind damage and the adventurer falls and slides back 5d6 feet for a failed save.

If an adventurer successfully makes his DC 12 Fort save at the end of the cave, he resists the wind long enough to touch the sapphire. Touching the jewel activates the gate. When touched, a wave of magical energy bursts from the sapphire and cascades through the cave on the wind. Anyone in the cave, or on the snowy ground just outside of the mouth of the cave, is bathed in the magical energy and is instantly transported to Stygia.

Area B – The Wastelands of Stygia: The transportation to Stygia is a sudden and violent one. Everyone must make a DC 6 Fort save or begin retching. Anyone who fails their save is so disorientated that they suffer a -1d penalty on all attack rolls and checks for 1d4 +1 hours.

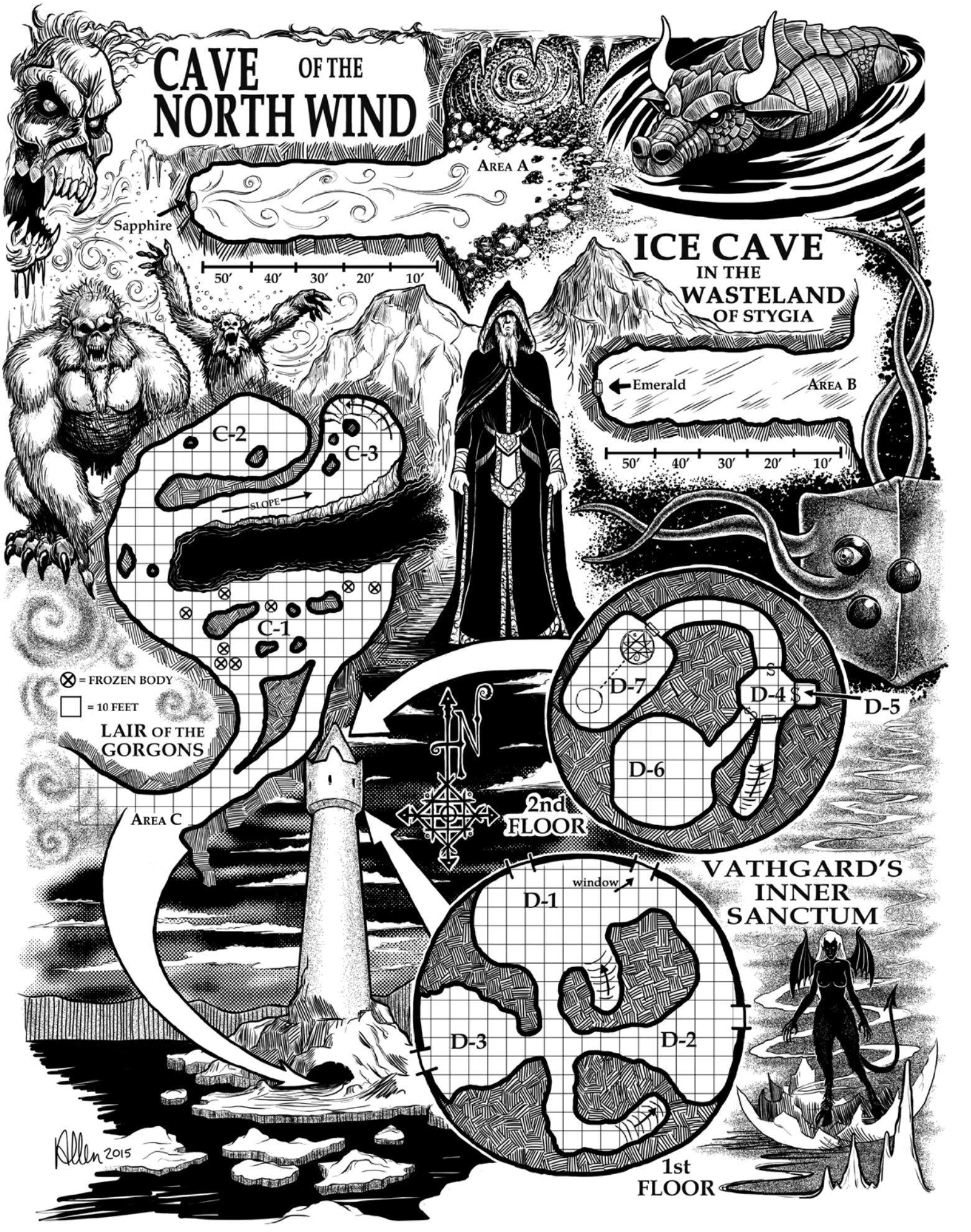
The adventurers appear in an exact copy of The Cave of the North Wind described in area A, but the jewel in this cave is a large emerald. This cave is a true ice cave in the face of a glacier. The winds momentarily increase to 320 mph, blowing everyone out of the cave like grapeshot from a cannon. Depending on how deep into the cave the person was when transported, they take a variety of damage:

- Mouth of Cave: 1d4 damage
- 10′ into Cave: 1d4 +2 damage
- 20′ into Cave: 1d6 damage
- 30′ into Cave: 1d6 +2 damage
- 40′ into Cave: 1d8 +2 damage
- 50′ into Cave: 1d10 +2 damage

After everyone has been ejected from the Stygian cave, the winds return to the same speeds as in The Cave of the North Wind. Adventurers can return to the Known Realms by braving the hazardous winds of the Stygian cave to touch the emerald exactly like how they touched the sapphire.

Read or paraphrase the following once the adventurers have been ejected out of the Stygian glacial cave:

Cold. You've never been so cold. Your fingers and toes are begin-


CAVE OF THE NORTH WIND
AREA A
Sapphire
50′ 40′ 30′ 20′ 10′
ICE CAVE
IN THE
WASTELAND
OF STYGIA
Emerald
AREA B
50′ 40′ 30′ 20′ 10′
C-2
C-3
SLOPE
C-1
= FROZEN BODY
= 10 FEET
LAIR OF THE GORGONS
D-7
D-4
D-5
D-6
N
2nd FLOOR
AREA C
VATHGARD'S INNER SANCTUM
window
D-1
D-3
D-2
1st FLOOR
Allen 2015

ning to ache as an uncontrollable shiver runs down your spine. Before you is a vast black sea; you see that you are on a huge glacial island on this sea. Ice floes dot the water before you, creating a precarious path to a nearby iceberg. Standing tall on the ice berg is an immense tower that looks like it was shaped out of pure ice. A large cave can be seen at the base of the tower, and there are windows at the top of the tower that glow with a cold blue light.

Vathgard chose to erect his tower in this distant corner of Stygia because of its remoteness. This sea is actually a portion of The River Styx, typical denizens of this plane are rarely seen here. Leaping from the ice floe to ice floe between the glacier and the ice berg requires a DC 7 Agility check. Failing this check means the adventurer has fallen into the icy water.

A DC 10 Fort save is required once per round to avoid instantly freezing to death. Adventurers that fall into the water must be rescued within two rounds, or they will freeze to death on the third round (no saving throw). As the adventurers begin to cross the ice floes, they notice three bodies of villagers who were part of the first rescue attempt are bobbing in the water fully encased in ice.

Adventurers that spend a great deal of time exposing themselves to the Stygian winds that cut across the icy sea must succeed against a DC 7 Fort save once per hour, or take an additional 1d3 points of damage from the cold. No amount of furs or bundling seems to be enough to stave off the bitter cold wind of Stygia. This should be enough motivate the adventurers to get out of the cold and into the cave at the base of Vathgard's tower.

Area C – The Lair of the Gorgons: Read or paraphrase the following after the adventurers have crossed the ice floes:

At first glance, the cave entrance looks like a giant maw filled with deadly pointed teeth. Stretching high above is the tower of ice. The tower seems to gently sway with arctic breeze, and you can hear the sound of ice popping and cracking.

The cave in this iceberg was fashioned by water cutting through the ice, so the walls are smooth and semi-translucent. The floor is mostly flat and is covered in snow and ice "gravel" from all of the foot travel it has had. Each footfall crunches on the ice.

Area C-1 – Frozen Food: *The sound of lapping water echoes through this cavernous chamber. The chamber has several twisted columns of blue-white ice, but huddled near a couple of columns are some figures standing stock-still. Upon closer inspection, you discover that the figures are men and women of Cillamar searching for their children. The people are frozen solid through; the looks on their faces suggest that death was frightening and instantaneous. Two of the bodies are missing limbs and huge chunks of meat that look like they were broken off after they were frozen to death.*

This is the hunting grounds for the arctic gorgons. Whenever Vathgard and his legion of devils need to pass through here, Vathgard chants a song that the gorgons have been conditioned to cower from. The gorgons will either stay in their lair, or continue to swim beneath the water in the chamber until the chant can no longer be heard.

The gorgons have excellent hearing and sense of smell. If the adventurers make any noise above a whisper, or if they spend more than three rounds in this chamber, then the gorgons will be alerted to their presence. When the adventurers first enter this chamber, the arctic gorgon cow and her two pups are in **area C-2**, and the arctic gorgon bull is just below the water. The bull is positioned to attack the adventurers first, with the cow and pups waddling in later.

Arctic Gorgon – Bull (1): Init +1; Atk claw +4 melee (1d6 +4), or breath weapon (special); AC 18; HD 6d8 +8; hp 37; MV 5′ or swim 20′; Act 1d20; SP ice breath usable twice a day; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +2; AL C.

A fully grown arctic gorgon uses its ice breath to freeze and preserve its prey. The breath weapon is cone shaped, 1d3×10′ wide, 1d4 +2×10′ long, and does 2d6 damage, reduces speed by half, and inflicts -4 to all actions for 2d4 rounds. Those affected must make a DC 12 Will save or be frozen solid.

The frozen villagers carry an assortment of 0-level weapons, but one large warrior has a long sword in good condition. And a frozen woman has well-crafted dagger. Anyone attempting to retrieve these weapons must spend one action to do so.

DIRECT ASSAULT ON THE TOWER

Some adventurers may be equipped (magically or otherwise) to climb sheer surfaces or may be able to fly, and they may choose to go straight up to the windows at the top of the tower.

Climbing the Tower: The face of the tower is smooth, slick ice. There are no natural finger or toe holds; climbers will have to be equipped with climbing gear if they attempt to manually scale the ice. The tower is a little more than 100′ tall, and a DC 18 Agility or climb sheer surface check must be made every 25′. It takes four successful climbing checks to manually climb to the tower windows. Any failed climbing check results in a fall for the climber. In addition to the standard falling damage, the falling climber must make a DC 10 Ref save to avoid falling into the water.

Flying: Adventurers capable of flying need only to succeed at whatever requirements must be met to take flight.

Any adventurer able to gain access to the tower windows can access any room on the 1st floor of Vathgard's Inner Sanctum.

Area C-2 – The Lair: *This area of the ice cave smells of decayed meat. There are piles of discarded clothing and other articles around the edges of the chamber.*

If the adventurers have successfully snuck into this chamber without the arctic gorgon cow and pups being alerted to their presence then read or paraphrase the following: *You see a large white tusked creature that is nursing two of its offspring.*

Arctic Gorgon – Cow (1): Init +0; Atk claw +3 melee (1d6 +2), or breath weapon (special); AC 17; HD 5d8 +8; hp 33; MV 5′ or swim 20′; Act 1d20; SP ice breath usable twice a day; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +2; AL C.

Arctic Gorgon – Pups (2): Init -2; Atk claw +1 melee (1d4); AC 13; HD 3d8 +8; hp 22, 26; MV 8′ or swim 25′; Act 1d12; SP none; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +0; AL C.

After the gorgons break off a chunk of meat, they drag it back to their lair where they use their claws to strip away anything that is not edible and shove it to the side of their lair. They then gnaw and worry on the frozen meat for their nourishment. If the adventurers search the heaps of discarded clothing and armor, they find a leather pouch with 12 silver boar's head coins from the Kingdom of Morrain. They also find a bamboo scroll case with a copy of *ropework*, the 1st-level wizard spell, inside.

Area C-3 – The Stairs: *Before you is a flight of stairs hewn out of ice. The same layer of snow and ice "gravel" in the cavern floor is also on each step, and appears to give the stairs a semblance of traction for your boots.*

The first 20′ of the stairs are exposed to the gorgon's chamber, but beyond that the stairs ascend through a tunnel that winds up through the tower of ice. The tunnel is also an excellent environment for sound to be amplified and carried up to Vathgard's Inner Sanctum. The full flight of stairs is approximately 80′ long, and some of the stairs are trapped to give Vathgard an early warning in case of intruders. The snow and ice gravel on the stairs is frozen and ground onto each step; the steps cannot be swept clear. Each footfall crunches on the ice.

Vathgard has cultivated and grown a white fungus that looks very similar to the snow and ice gravel that is on the stairs. For simplicity's sake, each 1′ of the stairwell is a single step. The white fungus trap is located sporadically between the 40′ and 50′ steps of the stairwell. Each patch of white fungus is designed to grow only on the top of the step, not dripping down the face of the step, or creeping up to the next step above. Specifically, there are patches of white fungus on steps 41, 43, 45, 46, 48, and 50 (DC 15 Intelligence check to spot).

White Fungus (per step): Init nil; Atk special (See below); AC 2; HD 1d8; hp 4,4,7,2,5,6; MV 0′; Act 1d20; SP double damage from fire, sonic screech, *choking cloud* (spell check +1); SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0; AL N.

Any physical contact with the fungus results in a 200 decibel screech for 20 seconds, DC 12 Ref save or suffer hearing

loss and -2 to all action rolls for 1d4 turns. Contact may also release a cloud of spores (as *choking cloud*, spell check 1d20+1). White fungus takes double damage from fire. If the sonic screech is sounded, five frost demons will race down the stairs to attack in three rounds. See below for the frost demon stats.

Area D – Vathgard's Inner Sanctum: If the white fungus was not triggered, read or paraphrase the following as the adventurers approach the top of the stairs: *As you approach the top of the stairs, you can hear the soft weeping of children and the occasional grunt from something inhuman. The chamber at the top of the stairs seems to be lit with a cold blue light.*

If the white fungus was triggered and has put the frost demons on alert, read the following instead: *You hear cries for help from children! There is a chamber at the top of the stairs lit by a cold blue light. You can also hear the howls of ape-things challenging you to enter.*

Area D-1 – Main Chamber: This large chamber is where all of the four and five year-old children are being held. The children are not physically restrained, but the constant presence of the frost demons keeps them cowering in fear. Vathgard has given explicit instructions to the frost demons that none of the children are to be harmed. Not one scratch. They may scare and intimidate them (which they do very well), but they may not harm them – for they must be pure and perfect if the ritual to create Chalychia's doppelganger is to work. To this end, if a clever adventurer was to threaten the life of a child, the frost demon's first instinct will be to back off – because the frost demon will be confused on what ac-

tion to take if the adventurers threaten to harm the children.

The room is lit by several torches of cold fire, a blue fire that emits light, but no heat. There are seven 1-hp children in this room, and twelve frost demons. If the white fungus was sounded, five of these frost demons scurried down the stairs to confront the adventurers. Reinforcement frost demons have not yet been called.

Type I – Frost Demon (12): Init +3; Atk bite +4 melee (1d6 +3), or tail grab +3 melee (1d6 +1 and choking hold); AC 14; HD 2d8 +4; hp 17, 17, 8, 10, 12, 9, 13, 9, 11, 14, 15, 12; MV 30' or climb 40'; Act 1d20; SP demon traits, choking hold; SV Fort +7, Ref +12, Will +3; AL C.

Frost demons create a light layer of frost on every surface that they touch; it is not cold enough to damage flesh. Their tail grabs choke their victims for 1d6 damage per round (DC 13 Strength check to break free). Frost demons can climb smooth vertical and inverted surfaces just like a spider without fail. One of the rescued boys begs the adventurers to find his sisters: *"The bad man took them away earlier today."*

Area D-2 – Side Chamber I: *There are several children crying in here as demonic ape-things stand guard over them.*

Four 1-hp children between the ages of two and three are held in this room. Four frost demons guard them.

Type I – Frost Demon (4): Init +3; Atk bite +4 melee (1d6 +3), or tail grab +3 melee (1d6 +1 and special); AC 14; HD 2d8 +4; hp 9, 17, 15, 12; MV 30' or climb 40'; Act 1d20; SP demon traits, choking hold; SV Fort +7, Ref +12, Will +3; AL C.

Area D-3 – Side Chamber II: *Infants can be heard crying in this room, and a trio of skull-faced ape-things confronts you.*

Six 1-hp children of one year old or less are in this room; three frost demons guard them. One of the frost demons is currently nursing an infant, and cannot attack until it has put the child gently down. It takes a full round to put the child down. Any adventurer who witnesses the care the frost demon shows for the infant may make a DC10 Intelligence check. With a successful roll, that adventurer feels confident that the demons won't harm the children.

Type I – Frost Demon (3): Init +3; Atk bite +4 melee (1d6 +3), or tail grab +3 melee (1d6 +1 and special); AC 14; HD 2d8 +4; hp 10,16, 13; MV 30' or climb 40'; Act 1d20; SP demon traits, choking hold; SV Fort +7, Ref +12, Will +3; AL C.

Area D-4 – Mirrored Octagon Room: *As you enter this room, you are struck by the perfectly smooth mirrored surfaces on the other seven walls of this room. Within each of the seven mirrors is an image of a hooded man in a black robe trimmed in silver and red. Other than his grim mouth, the hood hides all of his facial features. Even the floor is smooth as glass and polished to a high reflective shine. In the center of the room is a 3' diameter ebony circle.*

If someone stands on the ebony circle it will begin to slowly turn clockwise. As it turns, only the adventurer standing on the ebony circle can see the hooded figure (an image of Vathgard) move in the mirror he is currently facing. As each mirror is viewed, the hooded image of Vathgard raises his right hand. The player must state which mirror he initially views.

MIRRORS IN AREA D-4

Mirror	Hand Sign	Description
#1	"V" formation – Index and middle finger tight together as one branch of the "V." Ring finger and pinky tight together as the other branch of the "V." Thumb is folded tightly into the palm of the hand.	When activated, this mirror dissolves to expose the corridor beyond that goes to area D-7.
#2	A tightly closed fist held up near his temple.	When activated, Mirror #3 dissolves to expose area D-5.
#3	A tightly closed fist held up near his temple.	When activated, Mirror #3 dissolves to expose area D-5.
#4	A tightly closed fist held up near his temple.	When activated, Mirror #3 dissolves to expose area D-5.
#5	No Mirror – No Hand-Sign	The door on this wall leads down to Level 1 of Vathgard's Inner Sanctum.
#6	Index and middle finger are held up tightly together. All of his other fingers are curled into his palm.	When activated, this mirror dissolves to expose to corridor beyond that goes to area D-6.
#7	A tightly closed fist held up near his temple.	When activated, Mirror #3 dissolves to expose area D-5.
#8	A tightly closed fist held up near his temple.	When activated, Mirror #3 dissolves to expose area D-5.

Each magical mirror is activated by the adventurer mimicking the hand-sign displayed by the image of Vathgard in the mirror. The table on the previous page describes the hand sign the image of Vathgard displays. To activate the magic of an individual mirror, the adventurer must be standing on the ebony circle, facing the mirror he wishes to activate, and then mimic the hand-sign being displayed by the image of Vathgard.

Area D-5 – The Fiend's Cell: *The mirror dissolves, and out glides a huge cube of transparent jelly. In the center of the cube is a cluster of three black orbs. As the cube approaches, a pair of transparent tentacles extends from the cube, reaching out for you!*

Vathgard uses the gelatinous fiend to clean up the gore that remains after the blood sacrifices.

Gelatinous Fiend: Init +1; Atk tentacle +2 melee (entanglement), or eye beams (spell check +5); AC 8; HD 6d8+4; hp 39; MV 8'; Act 2d20; SP entanglement (DC 10 Ref save to avoid entanglement from a successful tentacle attack, digestion: victims trapped inside the cube take 1d12 +4 damage or DC 10 Fort save for half), eye beams (blue eye casts *lightning bolt* spell, brown eye casts *paralysis*, and green eye casts *color spray* with a spell check of 1d20+5); SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +3; AL C.

The three 1"-diameter black spheres in the center of the jelly fiend are giant eyeball orbs. The fiend can push an eye to the surface of the cube, as the eye is about to breach the cube, the jelly parts like eyelids. As the black orb is exposed to air, it changes to look like a giant human eye, in blue, brown, or green. The jelly fiend can deploy all three eyes at once, but only one eye may be deployed per surface of the cube. Also, each surface of the cube can deploy a maximum of two tentacles.

Area D-6 – Vathgard's Laboratory: If the white fungus has alerted Vathgard to the adventurer's presence, then he is in area D-7, so read or paraphrase the following: *This large room is furnished with a variety of tables and stools. The walls are lined in bookcases and shelving. A tripod in the center of the room holds a dark orb; tendrils of smoke rise off of the orb. A quartet of ape-things screeches at you as they leap to attack.*

If Vathgard has not been alerted to the adventurers, then he is in this room, so read or paraphrase the following: *This large room is furnished with a variety of tables and stools. The walls are lined in bookcases and shelving. A man in dark robes trimmed in silver and red is in the center of the room. He is scrying over a dark and smoking orb mounted on a tripod. A quartet of ape-things hiss at you before looking to their master for orders.*

If Vathgard is in the room, he is currently in a conversation with Chalychia through the crystal ball on the tripod. This laboratory is a wizard's dream sanctuary. The judge is encouraged to stock this room with whatever wizardly goodies would best suit the campaign. Vathgard does have a couple of interesting things on his person… including his person itself, for Vathgard is an Elder Hollow One.

Vathgard – Elder Hollow Man: Init +1; Atk dagger +2 melee (1d4+1); AC 12; HD 3d8; hp 16; MV 30'; Act 1d20+1d16; SP spells as 6th level wizard (spell check +9); SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +7; AL L.

When the adventurers first encounter Vathgard, they see him with his hood pulled back so his entire head is exposed. Vathgard has a sorcerer's sigil branded across his face and bald head. His right eye was plucked out at one time, and replaced by a demon's hellish red eye with vertical pupil. Vathgard has a small silver chain connected from an earring in his left ear to a silver loop that was pierced into his left cheek.

Vathgard knows the following spells:

- 1st Level: *chill touch, feather fall, magic missile, magic shield, sleep*
- 2nd Level: *ray of enfeeblement, scorching ray*
- 3rd Level: *consult spirit, slow*

Vathgard carries a wicked looking *+1 dagger* in the sash around his waist. He also wields a crooked wand; the wand is stored in a secret pocket inside the left sleeve of his robe. He is skilled at quick-drawing his wand.

Wand of Force: Vathgard's wand was gifted to him by his demonic patron. The wand was crafted from a withered limb fallen from Yggdrasill. The wand is imbibed with the spell *force manipulation*, and can be used up to five times per day. Use of the wand grants the caster the ability to cast *force manipulation* with a spell check +6, or the caster may use the wand to fire a volley of three force spikes up to a range of 100', at up to three different targets, for 1d10 damage per spike. Possession of the wand bonds the user to Vathgard's demonic patron. The wand is charged weekly with a 5 point Strength blood sacrifice from the wand's possessor.

Crystal Orb of Seeing: Chalychia has telepathically instructed Vathgard on the ritual to create a scrying orb so that they may communicate directly. Chalychia can sense and communicate with any mind within 10' of the orb. Chaotic spell casters in possession of the orb, or within 10' of the orb, gain a +1 bonus to their spell checks.

If Vathgard's hollow man persona should fall, then the ancient hollow spawn will emerge.

Vathgard – Elder Hollow Spawn: Init +1; Atk tentacle +8 melee (1d6); AC 16; HD 3d8; hp 19; MV 30'; Act 2d20; SV Fort +7, Ref +3, Will +2; AL L.

The tentacular mass that is the elder hollow spawn flops and rolls across the floor screeching in hate and rage as it attacks the adventurers. It has numerous tentacles available to attack almost any number of opponents.

Type I – Frost Demon (4): Init +3; Atk bite +4 melee (1d6 +3), or tail grab +3 melee (1d6 +1 and special); AC 14; HD 2d8 +4; hp 11,14, 9, 13; MV 30' or climb 40'; Act 1d20; SP choking hold (additional 1d6 damage on subsequent rounds after successful tail grab); SV Fort +7, Ref +12, Will +3; AL C.

Area D-7 – The Ceremony Chamber: If the white fungus has alerted Vathgard to the adventurers' presence, then he is in this room in the beginning stages of the ceremony to add more blood to the spell to have Chalychia reborn into a demonic doppelganger. Read or paraphrase the following:

You hear the sounds of children crying for help. As you enter this room you see a bald wizard in black robes seated on the floor in the center of an arcane magic circle. The wizard is chanting as he holds a dagger into the air. A line of candles leads from the magic circle to a dais at the far end. The ceiling is draped with iron chains; three young girls are bound in chains and are suspended from the ceiling above the dais. The large round dais features a huge semi-translucent egg. The egg looks to be nearly 4' tall; it is stained with old blood that had been drenched over it, and inside the egg the silhouette of a crouching figure can be seen.

If Vathgard has not been alerted to the adventurers, then he is in area D-6 – Vathgard's Laboratory, so read or paraphrase the following:

You hear the sounds of children weeping as you enter this room. A large arcane magic circle is etched into the floor at the entrance to the room. A line of candles leads from the magic circle to a dais at the far end. The ceiling is draped with iron chains; three young girls are bound in chains and are suspended from the ceiling above the dias. The large round dias features a huge semi-translucent egg. The egg looks to be nearly 4' tall; it is stained with old blood that had been drenched over it, and inside the egg the silhouette of a crouching figure can be seen.

The demonic doppelganger of Chalychia is incubating in the egg. She is already fully aware of her surroundings and thirsts for more blood to make her stronger. If the adventurers attempt to rescue the girls chained above her egg she will burst out of the egg and begin attacking the adventurers. If Vathgard is in the room, Chalychia will bide her time, for if he can successfully dispatch the adventurers, then he'll be able to continue the ceremonies to solidify her psychic transference into the doppelganger.

Chalychia Doppelganger: Init +4; Atk claw +3 melee (1d6 +1); AC 13; HD 5d8 +2; hp 34; MV 30'; Act 1d20 + 1d20; SP demonic immunities and spellcasting as an 8th-level wizard (spell check +10); SV Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +5; AL L.

Chalychia emerges from the egg nude and covered in gore. She is a half-demon, half-drow doppelganger. Her skin is such a dark red that it borderlines on black, and her hair is stark white with a pair of jet black streaks starting at her temples. Her eyes glow with an inner sickly yellow, and a pair of short black horns protrudes from her forehead. From the waist-up, she is a drow woman with immature bat wings on her back, but from the waist-down she has goat legs and a pointed demonic tail. The fur and hooves on her legs are jet black in color, but her tail is the dark red of her flesh. Because her wings are underdeveloped, she is incapable of flight. She is immune to non-magical weapons and natural attacks from creatures of 3 HD or less. She takes half damage from fire, acid, cold, electricity, and gas.

Chalychia is "born" with the arcane knowledge of an 8th-level wizard. She knows the following spells:

- 1st Level: *charm person, chill touch, color spray, comprehend language, magic missile*
- 2nd Level: *locate object, monster summoning, spider web*
- 3rd Level: *demon summoning, lightning bolt, planar step*
- 4th Level: *control fire*

Chalychia wants to stay in the egg as long as she can; she wants Vathgard to continue the ceremonies, but if he is slain, or if the virgin blood she needs is going to be taken from her, she will burst forth to slay the adventurers. Once she has emerged from the egg she can never return, so she no longer needs Vathgard or his ceremonies. Chalychia will want to destroy the adventurers out of spite, but if things are looking bad for her, she will try to escape with *planar step*.

Ambitious wizards may want to collect some of the embryonic demon goo inside of Chalychia's egg because it can be a powerful catalyst for the creation of potions.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

The scenario is moderately successful if the adventurers can rescue the twenty children and return them to Cillamar. It is heroically successful if they are able to destroy the demonic doppelganger of Chalychia. The destruction of Vathgard and his menagerie are a bonus to either successful outcome.

If Vathgard and his horde are able to defeat the adventurers without Chalychia being prematurely birthed from her egg, then the blood sacrifices continue, and Chalychia is reborn more powerful than ever. If Chalychia breaks out of her egg to confront the adventurers, she does so at the cost of her ultimate maturity into a creature of ultimate power. But if she can defeat the adventurers, or escape defeat, then she can spend the next several hundred years maturing back into her prime. Someday, she will return to the Known Realms to reduce them to cinder and ash.

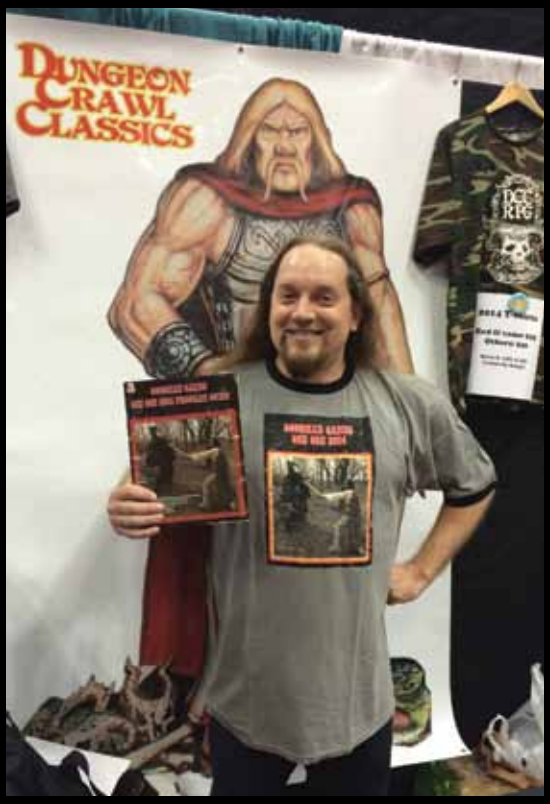
DCC RPG
WORLD TOUR 2014

2014 SCENES FROM THE ROAD

GEN CON

Indianapolis, IN
www.gencon.com

Group photo right before the exhibitor hall opened. Prepare for the horde!



Dieter as Hugh in his shirt showing Dieter as Hugh, holding the program guide with Dieter as Hugh, in front of a painting of Hugh.

Keith as Hugh, using our Hugh cut-out.

Part of the Purple Planet creative team: Harley Stroh, Edgar Johnson, Tim Callahan, Doug Kovacs.

Mike and Harley continue the Great Debate: would you rather die in the Shudder Mountains or the Purple Planet?

Gauthan Nijkashepu, lead Road Crew player from Pakistan, talks to Joseph and Mike about translating The Chained Coffin into Hindi.

"Is it over yet?" Left: Keith, Brendan, Mike, and Steve help tear down the booth. We don't remember what Brendan was laughing about, but he's always laughing about something. Above: The traditional post-con dinner. Joseph, Doug, Keith, Mike, Steve, Brendan, James MacGeorge.

Gen Con 2014 featured the first-ever tournament funnel, Harley Stroh's Seven Pits of Sezrekan. Featuring Doug's sinister postcard art, the tournament was a rousing success and established a completely new format for RPG tournament games! Here are some photos of the fun. Elsewhere in this book you can find two other tournament funnels you can play at home.

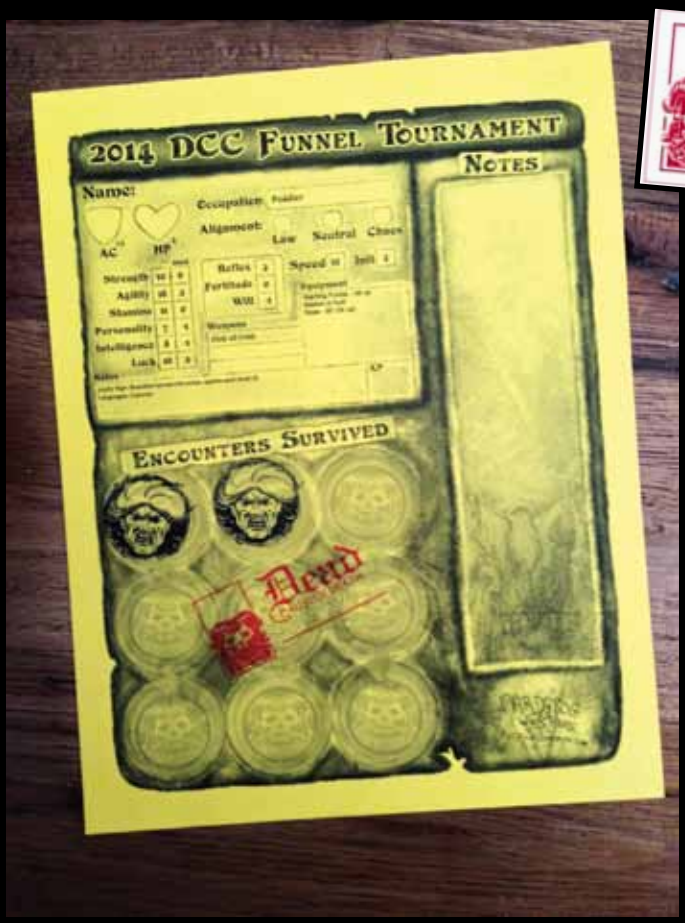
An animated Harley slaughtering zero-level characters on behalf of Sezrekan. We feel sorry for the guy crying on the left. Actually, no, we don't. He knew what was in store when he signed up!

"Hmmm...who should I kill next?"

The official tournament trophies.

The Seven Pits of Sezrekan tournament funnel ended in a three-way tie! Three players survived an amazing eight encounters with their zero-level characters. Below left: the dice-off for first place. Below right: the three winners! Travis Lelore, Tad Gilgore, and James Smith (subbing for winner Wayne "WayneCon" Snyder, below right, who came by later to claim his trophy).

The Seven Pits of Sezrekan featured a special mechanic for recording the characters' success. The official character sheets could be generated online (see purplesorcerer.com). A pair of custom-made stamps allowed for recording each encounter that was survived...and marking when a character had officially died. See page 79 for a blank version of the character sheet.



Escape from Catastrophe Island was an unofficial DCC RPG gathering every night at Gen Con. Held in a secret location (you had to be on site to be told where), it was a huge multi-judge game whose plot advanced from night to night. And it featured Doug Kovacs' home-made giant wooden Spinner od Doom for determining certain special events! Here are a few photographs from the gathering.

Four tables of the multi-judge game being run at one time! Events from each table interacted with each other, and the plot progressed over four nights.

Left: Bob Brinkman wins the Catastrophe Island event!

Mike runs the 1st public game of DCC Lankhmar!

Winners of the first-ever Hypercube of Myt tournament! Left to right: Tim Murly, Beth Gobli, Tim Wadzinski

Doug runs Lankhmar!

The secret behind Brendan's judging skills: homemade wine!

The divine light of God shines bright as Troll Lord Games and Goodman Games sign an April Fool's pact to publish DCCC&C.

Jobe's demon skull tattoo. Look familiar?

From our seminar, "How to Write Adventure Modules That Don't Suck": Left to right: David Kenzer, Jim Wampler, Brendan LaSalle, Steve Chenault, Joseph Goodman, Michael Curtis, Jobe Bittman, Doug Kovacs.

Fiendish scheming over a steak dinner. Left to right: Tim Burns, Jim Ward, Steve Chenault, Joseph Goodman, Tom Tullis

COASTCON

Biloxi, MS
www.coastcon.org

ORIGINS

Columbus, OH
www.originsgamefair.com

Above: Brendan's Neon Knights game. Left: A new DCC RPG fan is made! Below left: Edgar Johnson helps set up the booth. Below right: Brendan LaSalle and Brett Brooks at the beach. Yes, CoastCon really is held on the coast!

Above: So many great games! Below: Team Origins. Dan Conley, Brendan LaSalle, Roy Snyder, Jeffrey Tadlock, Rick Hull.

BIG BAD CON

Oakland, CA
www.bigbadcon.com

Terry Olson playtests one of his adventures with a custom judge's screen and dice tower!

CON ON THE COB

Brecksville, OH
www.cononthecob.com

Above: Eric Daum (center) judging a group including Rob Conley (light blue shirt on right), author of Points of Light.

Below: Team Cob! Roy Snyder, Doug Kovacs, and Eric Daum.

KINGDOM CON

San Diego, CA
www.kingdom-con.com

Rev. Dak and Mario Torres created laser-etched wooden placards for their tournament winners!

Tournament winners: Chris Helm, R.S. Tilton, Andrew Poirier

Above: The Reverend Dak preaches the gospel. Below: Mario Torres runs a diverse group of gamers through a DCC RPG adventure.

U-CON

Ann Arbor, MI
www.ucon-gaming.org

Top: Jim Wampler running Mutant Crawl Classics. Above: Team U-Con! Stefan Poag, Roy Snyder, Adam Muszkiewicz, Doug Kovacs. Left: One of Roy's Games — and "Hugh Junior"!

GAMEX

Los Angeles, CA
www.strategicon.net

Winners of the Hypercube tourney: Paul Madison, Tara Leederman, Caleb Nelson

Dak takes care of business at the booth.

GAMEHOLE CON

Madison, WI
www.gameholecon.com

Top to bottom: Games by "Manly" Mike Curtis, Brendan LaSalle, and Doug Kovacs. Doug is running his "spine wizard" game, based on the adventures of the wizards illustrated on the spines of the DCC RPG books.

Gaming luminaries visit the booth! Jim Ward (left) and Ernie Gygax (right).

NORTH TEXAS RPG CON

Fort Worth, TX
www.ntrpg.com

Edgar Johnson runs his newly-released DCC #87: Against the Atomic Overlord.

Winners of the first Death by Nexus tournament: Eric Hoffman (right), Chad Dodd (left), and Michael Bolam (bottom right) with organizer Jim Wampler (bottom left).

NTRPG is a collector's paradise. Pictured here: an original TSR retailer point-of-purchase display in pristine condition, with original shrink-wrapped copies of D&D!

STORE GAMES

DCC RPG at Odyssey Games (Kalamazoo, MI).

DCC RPG at Game Kastle (Santa Clara, CA). Left to right: Stephen Newton, Terry Olson, Chris Fassano, Maxwell Spann, Thom Hall, Darren Peech, and Ray Wisneski. They are playtesting Stephen's upcoming DCC module.

Bottom: Team Grandcon! Brad McDevitt, Roy Snyder, Adam Muszkiewicz.

And there were many more great games around the world!

You can find a complete list of cons at goodman-games.com/worldtour.html! Run a game near you and get free swag and free adventures!

ART FOLIO: DOUG KOVACS

See page 120 for the complete Doug Kovacs art folio. On this page are the first two color pieces that Doug completed for Goodman Games: the back covers to DCC #33: Belly of the Great Beast, and the back cover to DCC #35A: Halls of the Minotaur (included in DCC #35: Gazetteer of the Known Realms). On the following page is the cover to the Random Estoeric Creature Generator, shown at full size.

ART FOLIO: WILLIAM MCAUSLAND

See page 153 for the complete William McAusland art folio. On this page are several of the full-color back covers that Will completed for the 3E DCC line. Top: from DCC #19: The Volcano Caves. Middle: from DCC #7: The Secret of Smuggler's Cove. Bottom: from DCC #12.5: Iron Crypt of the Heretics.

On this page are two of the full-color images that William McAusland completed for the 3E DCC line. Top: interior illustration from DCC #13: Crypt of the Devil Lich. Bottom: cover of DCC #17: Legacy of the Savage Kings.

The Seventh Pit of Sezrekan

A LEVEL 0 ADVENTURE

By Harley Stroh • Editor: Jen Brinkman • Interior artist: Peter Mullen
Cartpgrapher: Mark Allen

Playtesters: (SW FL) Jen Brinkman, Mark I. Collins, Bob Brinkman, Kristin Pennisi, Laura Pennisi, Michelle Arana, Jim DelVasto, Crista Megee, William Porter, T.C. Carter; (Gary Con 2015) Jim Skach, Michael Bolam, Dave Crimm, J.V. West, David Baity, Aaron Koelman; Scott Mathis, Tony Hogard, Andrew Trent, Kari Banta, Paul Wolfe, Brenda Wolfe, Kevin Searle, Amanda Searle, Charlie Scott, Ryan Northcott, Mike Erwin, Dorian Snider and Son; Marc Bruner and the Austin Free RPG Day gamers.

In a desperate bid to escape his own doom, one sorcerer plots to bring about an end to all creation…

Hosted at Gen Con 2014, the Seven Pits of Serzrekan was the first Dungeon Crawl Classics RPG Funnel Tournament. Each player was given a single 0-level PC, and success in the tournament was judged by the number of encounters a PC survived. Over the course of four sessions, 136 PCs met their fate in the fell pits. The tournament ended in a 3-way tie, with each PC surviving no less than 8 encounters, and was decided by a dice-off on the last day of Gen Con. (See photos on page 53!)

Not all of the Seven Pits were explored during the convention. Submitted for your consideration: two areas that saw the least exploration, and the seventh and final pit of Sezrekan.

THE EPIC FUNNEL & CONVERSIONS

The express intent of the epic funnel is for each and every PC to perish – hopefully in a manner that is entertaining for the player and the table. There is no escape from the funnel and no shame in a PC's death. Rather, players are to be applauded for meeting their characters' doom with resolve, humor, and creativity. By embracing the doom that lurks around every corner, the PCs might even outwit dread Sezrekan.

With each player receiving only one PC, the epic funnel works best with several players standing ready to cycle in new PCs. However, without at least 10 or more players, the endless series of deaths risks becoming boring and stale. For judges hosting smaller events, we've included notes for running the adventure for a party of 3rd-level adventurers. The converted adventure will still prove deadly, while not requiring a constant stream of new PCs or players.

PLAYER CHARACTERS

The tournament used Purple Sorcerer pre-generated characters for PCs. Traditional 0-level PCs work just as well. See www.purplesorcerer.com for a host of DCC tools and generators.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The doom of Sezrekan is writ large in the stars. However – perverse to the end – the warlock refuses to accept fate's decree and will do everything in his power to escape his doom, even if that means bringing an end to the multiverse.

Crucial to his plans are three artifacts: the Crown of the Seraphim; Tyrving, the cursed foebrand; and Tarnhelm, the dragon-helm.

All three relics can be discovered through the course of the adventure, and turned against the Master's servants. However, the artifacts' powers come at a price: activating the relics courts disaster.

Running the Adventure: Each time a new PC joins the adventure, issue the player a single 0-level pre-gen and a randomly selected chit. (See page 81 for chits.)

Any time an artifact is activated, roll 1d6. If the result matches the color/number of a PC's chit, that PC is instantly and irrevocably slain, his soul used to fuel the dread artifact. (In the tournament we used a die with colored faces that matched the colors of the chits. The same result can be created by assigning each PC a number 1-5, or consulting the following table. On the roll of a 6, or black, the entire party is slain.)

Roll a number of dice equal to the number of times a PC has activated a relic. The more often the relic is used, the more deadly it becomes. (Clever parties can reduce their risk by passing the relics around, but entrusting other PCs with nigh-absolute power carries its own risk.)

Roll	Color
1	Red
2	Yellow
3	Green
4	Blue
5	Purple
6	Black – All PCs are instantly slain

Characters claimed by the artifacts are immolated in a pillar of black fire, consuming all the PC's gear and leaving a charred, oily corpse in its wake. With each death, welcome in a new or returning player with a new PC and chit.

In the event that all the PCs are slain, the entire party begins anew at Player Start. The previous exit will have been sealed, forcing the PCs to explore another of the Seven Pits of Sezrekan. See Sidebar: TPKs (page 69) for more information.

※ *While a TPK is plausible for parties of 3rd-level adventurers, they should not be slain outright by an artifact use roll. Instead, each time a 3rd-level PC's number/color (or black/6) is rolled, the PC takes 1 HD damage (based on their class hit dice).*

THE CROWN OF THE SERAPHIM

The crown is cut from polished bone and carved with unholy sigils in pierced relief. Its name courts ambiguity: the relic is not a seraphim's former crown, but was rather cut from the skull of a living angel. The crown radiates a faint heat, and flares into divine (non-damaging) flames when activated. Any creature wearing the crown instantly knows its powers.

Activating the crown allows the user to activate one of the following powers:

- *Fire resistance* (d20+level) as the 2nd-level wizard spell
- *Scare* (d20+level) as the 2nd-level wizard spell
- *Dispel magic* (d24+level) as the 3rd-level wizard spell
- *Fireball* (d24+level) as the 3rd-level wizard spell
- *Control fire* (d30+level) as the 4th-level wizard spell

NOTES FROM THE ROAD: THE EPIC FUNNEL

The original Epic Funnel, the Seven Pits of Sezrekan, was a huge hit at Gen Con 2014. The adventure itself exists solely as a collection of notes, scrap paper, and brain waves within the skull of Harley Stroh. He has penned several additional Pits for this Program Guide, but the gory glory of the original Gen Con experience can never truly be captured in print – "you had to be there" is all we can say. For those who weren't there, here we present a brief history of the DCC Tournament Funnel. If some clue or hint can be gleaned from this simple treatise, players should employ them at their own risk, for who is can say what traps lie in wait within the next funnel…

Born in the wake of Gen Con 2013, the DCC Epic Funnel was conceived as a return to the storied DCC Tournaments of yore: a brutal game where success relied upon player skill, cunning, and no small degree of luck.

Unlike previous tourneys, the funnel's measure of success was as simple as it was grim: Survive as many encounters as possible before dying.

Our first playtest was held at the Thanksgaming game day at Total Escape Games, with mixed results. Eight stalwart playtesters sent their PCs bravely to their deaths. Again. And again. Halfway through the session it became glaringly apparent that in order for the tournament to be a success we would need hordes of players. Anything less would reduce the tournament to a slogging grind.

Gen Con brought the tournament into stark focus: Seven Pits, each with dozens of encounters; relics seeded throughout the dungeons, each powerful enough to save a party from certain death; and all fueled by the souls of the PCs. And finally: hundreds of pregenerated Purple Sorcerer PCs.

The first session was quiet. A dozen or so hardcore DCC players showed up, eager to plumb the depths of the first Pit. The crowd drew other players, who set up camp at a nearby table and subbed in new PCs as their fellows perished. The explorers discovered their first relic, and – flushed with their hard-won power – promptly TPK'd the entire party. Subsequent groups were more judicious in their application of might. In those first few hours characters were spitted and skewered on dwarven spears, consumed by mists of unmaking, plunged into boiling pools of mud, and dropped hundreds of feet to their doom.

By the second session, word had spread. Players showed up early to secure their spot at the table, and a line formed out the door and down the hall. Veteran players volunteered to serve as guides on the road to Hades, orienting newer players, and preparing them for a quick doom and the inevitable red death stamps.

By the end of the weekend, three players had distinguished themselves, having each survived a miraculous eight encounters. The final ranking was decided by dice-off on the last day of Gen Con.

The death stamps didn't have long to rest. A scant two weeks after Gen Con, David Baity debuted his "Carnival of the Damned" at Dragon Con 2014. Improving on the original design, Baity brought a cohesive plot and overarching mystery to what was previously a funhouse dungeon.

One month later, Jim Wampler, James Smith, and Marcos Sastre raised the tournament to new levels, with two tables and three judges as they ushered 79 players through Wampler's "The Dying Áereth."

Refusing to rest on his laurels, Wampler immediately launched into designing the next funnel, summoning a cohort of devious designers that would come be known as the Cabal. Wampler combined his talents with Stephen Newton, Daniel J. Bishop, Dak Ultimak, Adam Muszkiewicz and Jeffrey Tadlock to create the dread "Hypercube of Myt."

Launched to instant acclaim at Gary Con 2015, the Hypercube was later released to the DCC Road Crew, permitting thousands of players the world to pit their wits and skill against the deadliest of funnels.

Now, one short year later, the Epic Funnel returns to the place of its birth, with the Second Annual DCC RPG Open Tournament. This year we are expecting record numbers of players, the slaughter of hundreds of 0-level peasants, and a tourney that none will soon forget…

Join us in the funnel!

– *Harley Stroh, May 2015*

See page 81 for color chits

TYRVING

The greatsword that will come to be known as the Cursed Foebrand is not yet fully forged. The blind giant smith Surtr continues to fold souls into the damned blade, annealing the sword in hellfire. At the time of the adventure, the greatsword is an unfinished rod, red with heat. Wielded in battle, the blunted rod inflicts a mere 1d5 damage.

Activating the relic immediately grants the PC immunity to heat or fire-based damage, and transforms the unfinished rod into a blazing sword of flame. Activated, the sword inflicts 1d12 damage and sets targets ablaze for an additional 1d6 damage (DC 10 Ref save to avoid). Both effects last for 1d7 rounds.

In addition, activating the foebrand allows the user to activate one of the following powers:

- *Strength* (d20+level) as the 2nd-level wizard spell
- *Haste* (d20+level) as the 3rd-level wizard spell
- *Dispel magic* (d24+level) as the 3rd-level cleric spell

TARNHELM

Set with gems and forged in the shape of a rampant dragon, the fabled great helm is blackened, as if scorched by fire. Donning the great helm grants the wearer +2 AC. In battle, the helm's gems flare with ghostly light.

Activating the Tarnhelm grants the PC the ability to use one of the following powers:

- *Lay on hands* (d20+level) as the cleric power
- *Invisibility* (d20+level) as the 2nd-level wizard spell
- *Polymorph (self)* into a dragon with these abilities:

Average-sized black dragon: Init +5; Atk claw +6 melee (1d8), bite +6 melee (1d12), and spell (see below); AC 15; HD 5d12; hp 33 hp; MV 50′ or fly 50′; Act 2d20+ 1d20(spell); SP spell, breath weapon, snatch attack, plant growth (see below for all); SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +5; AL as PC.

Spell (+2 spell check); Level 1: *runic alphabet-mortal*

Breath Weapon (1/day): Poison (1d3x10′ radius cloud, aimed up to 90′ away); DC 15 Fort save or death.

Snatch attack: The dragon can snatch up to one target per successful claw attack and cannot make the corresponding claw attack while a creature is snatched. A snatched creature takes 1d6 crushing damage each round. The dragon can fly with snatched creatures and can drop the grabbed target from any height, causing 1d6 damage per 10′ fallen. Snatched creatures can attempt to escape with a Strength check (DC 15).

Plant growth (1/hour): All plants within 100′ grow to twice their current size in 1d4 rounds; targets within growth are entangled (half speed, -2 penalty to attacks).

THE DWARVES OF NIDAVELLIR

In his youth, Sezrekan tricked a clan of dwarves into swearing their fealty so long as the sorcerer should live. Today over fifty generations of the demi-humans have been born into the deathless warlock's service, and the dwarves have lost nearly every notion of freedom.

Religion is their sole remaining act of rebellion. The dwarves have dug a hidden chapel off of their quarters, where they hold their masses in furtive silence. But their god demands sacrifices.

In the event that one of the PCs fall in battle, the dwarves immediately swarm the character, wrapping him in gauze and foul ungents and healing him 1d5 hit points. (These hp may or may not be sufficient to save the character's life.)

The trapped PC is borne to the Chapel of the Sheol where he is offered up in sacrifice. See area 1-4b for additional details.

THE PITS OF SEZREKAN

Except where noted, the caverns and passageways are carved from coarse black stone. The caverns are lit by torches placed in sconces dug into the walls.

Torches, lanterns and the like cast a hazy, limited light stretching no more than 15'. Beyond this, creatures can be seen moving in the haze, but it is impossible to discern details. Thieves receive a +5 bonus to Hide in Shadows checks, and even non-thieves are granted 1d16 checks to move about unseen in the dense smog.

PLAYER START

At the start of the session and following any TPK, the PCs all begin in the central pit. Read or paraphrase the following:

You awaken as if from a heavy sleep. The air is oppressive with the stink of molten metal.

The chamber is ten paces across and lit by a dull red light that emanates from a faceted gem set at the peak of the ceiling, some 30' above. In the crimson light you can make out seven rusty, iron-plated doors. All are closed, save one.

In the very center of the chamber stands a large stone block, shaped like a primitive altar.

There are two exits from the chamber, one obvious and one hidden. The first is through the open door, the other beyond the gem.

The doors are composed of sheets of rusted iron, hammered, bolted, and welded together. Each of the doors bears scorch marks, but none are warm to the touch. All of the portals open out towards the pit, and six of the doors are bolted from the inside. Only the seventh door is presently open. Attempts to batter down the doors end in failure.

Peering through the open door reveals a dark stone stairway. Characters can hear the clang of hammers on anvils, and feel heat wafting up from below.

The Gem: Investigation of the walls reveals a coat of greasy soot, concealing a mass of blackened bones. Diligent (or desperate) PCs can dig hand and footholds into the "walls," allowing the PCs to ascend the arched walls, climbing all the way to the gem at the peak of the roof (DC 10 Climb or DC 13 Strength check, 3d6 damage on a fall).

The gem is a large ruby that radiates heat and a flickering light, as if lit by an inner flame. Inspected closely, PCs can make out a circle of flames inside the gem. The jewel is readily dislodged by a strong blow, causing the ruby to pitch to the ground. The climber can catch the gem (DC 5 Ref save, but leaving the climber holding on by a single hand); otherwise, PCs on the chamber floor can attempt to catch the gem (DC 10 Ref save).

If the gem is shattered (either by striking the floor or through the PCs' investigations), the jewel unleashes a wave of flame. Any PC caught on the chamber floor must succeed on a DC 10 Fort save or take 1d6 fire damage.

In the wake of the dissipating fires, surviving PCs discover a circlet of polished bone: the fabled **Crown of the Seraphim**.

Above the gem is a crawl space, opening to area 1-1.

The Altar: Characters investigating the crude stone block find it is cut with the relief of a greatsword (matching Tyrving, found in area 1-7). If the cursed foebrand is placed within the relief, the door to the 7th pit closes, and the portal to area 2-1 is opened. Similarly, if Tarnhelm is placed atop the altar, the portal to area 3-1 opens. Note that the relics do not have to be left in place to keep the doors open.

※ *In the original tournament no escape is to be had. However, in campaign play, if the PCs place all thre artifacts in the reliefs, an 8th portal is revealed, offering the PCs escape from the pits.*

Area 1-1 – Above the Jewel: *The low chamber's floor sweeps to the hole set in the center of the floor. Each cautious step threatens to send you sliding to your doom. A thick coat of oily soot covers the ceiling just a few feet above your head.*

A single narrow crawl space leads from the chamber. Heat, the stench of burning metal, and the sounds of ringing hammers emanate from the narrow passage.

Investigation of the chamber offers little in the ways of clues or resources. Characters insisting on scraping the soot free from the ceiling discover a series of ancient frescos depicting astrologers gazing upon the night sky. The stars blink out, one by one, until the universe vanishes from existence, leaving only one astrologer: Sezrekan.

Each of the stars is a small colored diamond; there are 53 in all, each worth 25 gp. Recovering the gems requires standing precariously over the hole in the chamber's floor. Freeing a single gem requires a DC 10 Climb check or Ref save. On a failed check the PC slips and pitches down through the hole, plummeting to the floor 30' below and taking 3d6 falling damage.

Crawling down the passage leads the PCs to area 1-2.

TPKS

If the entire party is slain exploring level 1, the second party awakens at Player Start. The first portal will have been sealed, opening the portal to level 2. If the entire party dies a second time, the third group awakens again at Player Start. The door to level 2 will have been sealed, opening the door to level 3.

SEVENTH PIT OF SEZREKAN
= 10 FEET
TO HELL
PLAYER START
1-1
1-2
1-3
LEDGE
WOOD PLANKS
1-4a
1-4b
1-5
OPEN PITS
MOUND OF BODIES
TO 1-7
TO 1-6
HUNDREDS OF SKULLS
1-6
1-7
ANVIL
1-7
BELLOWS
Allen 2015

Scarcely 2′ across and 2′ high, the narrow passage forces PCs to travel single-file.

Area 1-2 – Ore Chute: *The greasy metal chute is six feet across and continues both above and below, as far as you can see. The air is choked with smoke, and the stones lining the walls are hot to the touch. The rhythmic clang of hammers on anvils sounds below.*

Any smith, ironmonger, or the like will recognize that the chute funnels ore down to a forge. (The PCs will note a curious absence of coal dust.)

The unsettling distinction is that the ore being used is human bodies. Every 1d5 rounds a body drops through the chute, falling past area 1-2 and down to the sorting platform (area 1-5).

Characters leaning into, or climbing the chute, risk being struck by the falling bodies (DC 15 Ref save to avoid). Those struck tumble down into the chute, sliding down to land atop a mound of bodies in area 1-5.

Characters can descend the chute with a DC 5 Climb Sheer Surfaces check or Ref save. It takes 10 minutes of climbing to descend to area 1-4.

Ascending the chute is more challenging (DC 15 Climb checks every 50′). After a mile, the PCs ascend into the first ring of Hell, where souls of the wicked are being herded towards the chute. Every 1d5 rounds, the mocking devils force a wailing soul into the chute, hammering and tamping it down, pitching the soul down to the sorting platform (area 1-5).

Area 1-3 – Lift: *The passage ends at the top of a vast cavern. A cacophonous din echoes through the chamber and the air is thick with smoke. Through the greasy plumes you can make out crimson forge-fires far below.*

A lift hangs in the smoky air, supported by a thick iron chain.

The lift swings perilously when weighted, but is otherwise safe for those inside the cage. Those *outside* the cage are not so lucky. Any time a character atop the cage is struck in combat, he must succeed on a DC 5 Ref save or fall to his doom.

When the PCs enter the chamber, roll 1d30 and begin silently counting down. When the count reaches 1, the dwarves below begin to haul on the chain, lowering the lift to area 1-4.

The PCs have but a single round to leap into the lift cage once it begins its descent. On the second round, PCs can attempt DC 10 Agility checks to leap onto cage roof. By the third round, the DC increases to 15 to leap onto the chain.

Characters missing the jump or sliding off the roof of the cage plummet to their doom at the base of the cavern.

Those inside the lift can arrest the lift's descent with the chain brake, but ascending requires the PCs to best all the dwarves in area 1-4 on contested Strength checks.

It takes the lift 3 rounds to reach area 1-4 and 8 rounds to reach the base of the shaft.

Treasure: On either side of the platform is a barrel. Both barrels contain 50 gallons of highly flammable lamp oil. Three dwarf skulls rest at the base of the first barrel. Saturated with oil, each skull can be lit and used as a thrown missile for 1d6 damage.

Area 1-4 – Quarters: *Wooden catwalks are built into the stone wall, connecting a series of tunnel maws. The worn planks are blackened with soot and grease, and look like they could give way beneath the slightest weight. Ominous flames flicker in the smoke below, casting the caves in crimson light.*

The short, squat-mouthed tunnels serve as sleeping quarters for the dwarven smiths. At any time there are 1d12+5 dwarves resting in the alcoves.

Alerted to the PCs' presence, the dwarves swarm the catwalks. If the PCs pass by on their descent, the dwarves give chase via the ladders and ropes, arriving at the base of the lift shaft in 1d5+10 rounds.

The dwarves are armored in thick, soot-crusted leather (+1 AC) and fight with hammers or picks. The dwarves leap to the lift with DC 10 Ref saves or rain down stones. (Characters inside the lift enjoy +4 AC from ranged attacks.)

Characters inspecting the dwarves' tunnels find a series of small bunks carved into the rock walls. The bunks are layered with sooty rags, motley furs and leftover rations.

※ *In the 3rd-level conversion, increase the number of smiths to 1d20+10.*

Dwarf Smiths (1d12+5): Init +0; Atk hammer or pick +2 melee (1d4+1) or stone -2 ranged (1d3-1); AC 11; HD 1d6; hp 3 each; MV 20′; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref -1, Will +2; AL C.

Area 1-4a – Storeroom: *The squat passage rises into a low chamber. Several oak barrels line the walls, crowding the chamber.*

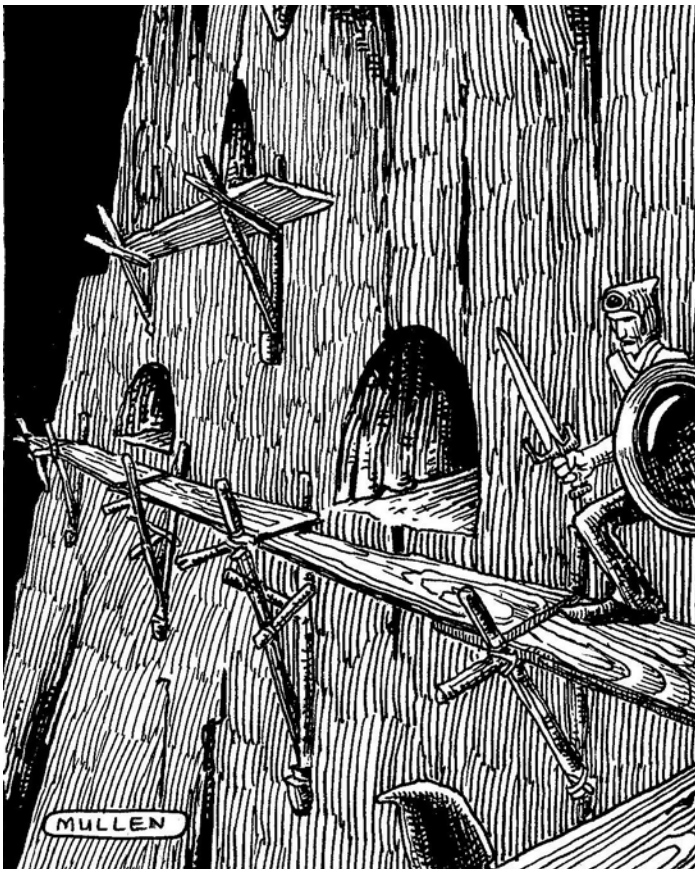
The barrels contain iron rations packed in salt and watered wine.

Several of the barrels are empty and placed to conceal a hidden passage at the rear of the chamber. All told, seven of the empty barrels must be removed for PCs to discover the secret tunnel: a narrow passageway burrowed into the back of the chamber.

Area 1-4b – Chapel of the Sheol: *The crawlway opens into a low, narrow chamber carpeted with woven prayer mats. A ropey curtain hangs over the rear of the chamber. The air is thick with smell of incense and foul-scented oils.*

The mats are flayed dwarf skin, dried and woven like thatch. The mats are crushed flat from centuries of worship and rustle on the stone floor like snake skin.

The ropey "curtain" is made of dwarven beards, braided with elaborate knots and anointed with holy oils. Pass-



ing through the curtain smears the PC with the sticky oil, rendering the character especially vulnerable to any flame damage. Until the PC has the opportunity to bathe or otherwise cleanse himself of the oils, he automatically catches fire when exposed to direct flame or intense heat, taking 1d10 damage instead of the usual 1d6.

Furthermore: the chamber is a veritable tinderbox. If flames are brought into contact with either the oiled curtain or the dried prayer mats, the entire chamber catches fire. Characters caught within the chamber suffer 1d16 damage per round (DC 5 Ref save to flee the chamber before taking damage). The dwarves will not intentionally set fire to their chapel, but the chaos of combat (falling torches or lanterns, spells) make this a very real risk.

Behind the curtain are a silver knife, a hammered copper bowl, and a gold-tipped iron rod. All are stained with blood. The rod is worth a mere 15 gp. Stealing any of the implements from the chapel curses the thief with a -1d penalty to all his saving throws. (Treat as a minor curse for purposes of *remove curse*.) Surviving the curse grants the god-defying PC +1d4 Luck.

Captured PCs are brought to the chapel and offered up to the Sheol (see "The Dwarves of Nidavellir," page 68). The mystic ritual takes 5 rounds to complete, culminating in the living victim's body hovering in the air as its blood is drained into the bowl and drank by all the participants.

※ *If the 3rd-level party has suffered significant losses, the judge can permit the PCs to discover captives hidden behind the curtain. The characters are bound, wrapped in oiled gauze and utterly devoid of weapons or gear. The characters are 3rd level with half their hit points.*

Area 1-5 – Sorting Platform: *A trio of squat, muscular dwarves scurry about the small chamber, agilely avoiding a pair of large pits. The first pit is lit from below and gouts black smoke. Rhythmic clanging escapes the second pit, the sound of hammers on anvils.*

Each dwarf wields a blackened military fork and wears a leather apron spattered with blood.

The dwarves are sorting the souls that come falling down the chute. Every few minutes a body tumbles onto the platform and the dwarves scurry to drive it into one of the two pits. Souls pitched down the first pit vanish in a roar of flame, fueling the fires in area 1-6. Those forced into the second pit tumble down into a pile in area 1-7, where they are met by Surtr, the giant smith.

The dwarves are intent on their task, only noticing the PCs if the characters make their presence known.

In combat, the dwarves put their skills to work. On a successful attack the dwarf's target must succeed on a DC 10 Ref save or be pushed into one of the chutes. The quick-footed dwarves can likewise be pushed into the chutes, but escape with DC 5 Ref saves.

※ *In the 3rd-level conversion, increase the number of sorters to 5.*

Dwarf Sorter (3): Init -2; Atk military fork +3 melee (1d10+2); AC 12; HD 3d6; hp 10 each; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP trip into chutes; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +2; AL C.

Area 1-6 – Furnace: *Blackened stone walls open to a bed of blazing coals. Heat from the furnace threatens to sear skin and set hair aflame, and you have to shield your eyes from the heat.*

A pair of blackened dwarves stoke the hellish furnace, pumping the giant bellows.

Note that characters investigating the furnace, or falling into the coals from above, have a far more dramatic experience. See below for details as the PCs are immolated.

The furnace's "coals" are the flaming skulls of the damned, cast down the chute to fuel the forge. The skulls spit and flare with the regrets of their misspent lives, and will burn for thousands of years. Jaw bones cast wide, eyes ablaze, the souls howl with undying agony.

Characters falling into the bed of skulls must make a DC 10 Will save every round or catch fire, taking 1d6 damage. Individual skulls can be thrown as missile weapons to the same effect (though hurling a skull without setting oneself aflame will require PC ingenuity).

A pair of dwarves works the massive bellows, fanning the flames. The bellows are hung from a great pair of chains. In battle, the dwarves swing the bellows around the back of the furnace, blowing flames into the forge in a cone 20' long and 10' wide at its furthest. Characters (including the dwarven smiths) caught in the conflagration take 2d4 dam-

age as their hair and flesh are seared from their bodies (DC 15 Ref save to avoid). Surtr, the Giant Smith, takes only half damage from the blaze.

So long as the PCs keep the furnace between them and their foes, they can use the bellows against the giant and the dwarves. The damage dealt depends on the efforts of the PCs hauling on the bellows in synch with one another. Each PC inflicts 1d4 damage *if* the PCs can all haul together. (Two PCs on the bellows would inflict 2d4 damage. If seven PCs managed to pull in unison, they would inflict 7d4 damage.)

This can be resolved in one of two ways: a DC 10 Ref save for each PC involved, or – more interestingly – by having all the PCs' players stand about the game table, holding objects out at arms' length. Ask the players to formulate a plan and then drop the objects. If the players' objects strike the table at the same time, their PCs succeed in hauling on the bellows at once. If there is an audible difference, the PCs foil one another in their efforts and the no damage is inflicted.

※ *In the 3rd-level conversion, increase the number of bellows dwarves to 4.*

Bellows Dwarves (2): Init +0; Atk shortsword +2 melee (1d6+2); AC 12; HD 3d6; hp 7 each; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP bellows; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +2; AL C.

Area 1-7 – Forge: *A forge-scarred giant stands in the center of the soot-blackened pit. In one leather glove he holds an unfinished greatsword, red with heat. In the other glove, he holds a pair of tongs gripping a pale, limp body. Dwarves stand to either side of him with great stone mauls.*

The giant places the searing sword over a great anvil and flops the body on top. At a sign from the giant, the dwarves hammer the sizzling flesh with their bloody mauls. With each ringing blow the body vanishes further and further into the blade.

The giant Surtr is blind and mute, his eyes burned by forge sparks, and his tongue cut out by the King of Elfland. Consumed by hatred, the master smith labors for Sezrekan in return for the promise that the wizard will bring about the end of the world.

Towards that end, Surtr is smithing **Tyrving**, folding the souls of the damned into the blade and filling the sword with their hatred and regrets.

A mound of bodies – souls cast down from area 1-5 – rests behind the giant and dwarves. Every few minutes another pale, limp soul is cast down from Hell. The stone anvil is as large as an elephant, forcing the dwarves to stand atop platforms in order to strike the blade.

Surtr takes little notice of the PCs – his task is a great one and beyond the scope of their small-minded world. To Surtr's mind, the characters present no threat, so the giant risks nothing by "conversing" with them. The mute giant doesn't speak, per se: After centuries of assisting the giant, the dwaven smiths are so in tune with their master that they speak for the mute giant, chanting his "speech" in unison.

If the PCs anger the giant by threatening to undo his work or waste his time with nonsense or obvious lies, the giant snatches up the offending characters in his tongs, lays the PC on the anvil, and roars his tongueless laughter as the dwarves hammer the unfortunate soul into the searing blade.

In battle Surtr wields the blade and tongs to terrible effect. Each strike of the flaming blade inflicts 1d12 damage and threatens to set the target alight (DC 10 Luck check to avoid).

With his second attack per round, the giant snaps out with the tongs; on a successful strike the target is gripped and held (DC 15 Strength check to squirm free). On the following round the giant hurls the target atop the anvil, pinning the target and reducing its armor class by -4.

The dwarves act in unison, always taking their initiative one count after Surtr. They hammer on characters trapped against the anvil, or – if the PCs have evaded Surtr's tongs – do their best to defend their master.

Surtr's stat block already accounts for his blindness. If the PCs *silence* the chamber, the giant's attacks suffer an additional -4 penalty.

Surtr the Blind: Init -2; Atk flaming sword +0 melee (1d12+4) or tongs +0 melee (1d8+4); AC 16; HD 4d8+4; hp 32; MV 30'; Act 1d20+1d16; SP tongs; SV Fort +10, Ref +5, Will +6; AL C.

※ *In the 3rd-level conversion, increase the number of strikers to 5.*

Dwarf Striker (2): Init (following Surtr); Atk hammer +2 melee (1d6+2); AC 12; HD 3d6; hp 10 each; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +2; AL C.

Area 2-1 – Into the Earth: *The carved stone steps quickly give way to an uncut, natural stone slope, slick with condensation and crusted with white mounds. The cave walls are intercut by cave formations that glisten and sparkle wetly in the dim light. The air is cool and the smell of dank moisture hangs in the air.*

The slope quickly opens onto a high ledge overlooking a grotto and pool. The ledge is canted towards the pool and there is nothing preventing incautious PCs from slipping off the ledge and pitching into the pool, 20' below. Character caught in combat on the ledge, or trying to run between areas, must make DC 7 Agility checks each round or fall from the ledge, taking 4d4 damage when they strike the water below (DC 10 Ref save to avoid damage).

The mounds are guano from the giant bats that haunt the cavern. The mounds glow with a faint green light that is only visible in the absence of other light sources. If the characters' vision is allowed to adjust to the gloom they see a vast, gloomy cavern lit by stalactites and stalagmites, streaked with glowing guano. The base of the cavern shimmers with reflected light; clever PCs may correctly deduce that pools of water cover the cavern floor.

Area 2-1a – Cache: A small nook is carved in the stone wall and easily missed by careless PCs. Sezrekan's dwarves keep a handful of tools here, to help navigate the caverns' threats.

Inside the nook PCs discover three bat-skin half cloaks, two polished steel mirrors, and a single pitted crowbar. The bat-skin cloaks permit passage over the doom arch (area 2-2) while the mirrors allow characters to track the movement of the lantern fish (area 2-4) without succumbing to its enchantments. Finally, the pitted crowbar can be used to pry open the jaws of the lantern fish, may be used as a club in combat, and is sure to find any number of uses in the hands of creative PCs.

Area 2-2 – Doom Arch: *A natural stone arch curves high above the inky darkness. At its peak, the stone arch is a scant 3' in width and mounded high with a crumbling white crust.*

Characters with sufficient light can see leathery forms clinging to the cavern ceiling: scores of giant bats. The bats perceive the PCs as prey, picking them off as the characters attempt to cross the arch.

As each PC crosses the arch, call for a Luck check (DC 15). On a failed check, the PC is attacked by a giant bat: the bat drops from the ceiling, swooping down towards the bridge. On a successful attack, the bat inflicts bite damage and hoists the PC into the air, carrying its prey away to be devoured by a host of young.

The first PC to be targeted is automatically surprised unless the party has noticed the bats. Subsequent PCs anticipating the attack have a choice: attack the diving bat, leap to either side of the arch, or leap towards the bat. All other options (subject to the judge's discretion) simply result in the PC being targeted by the attack bat.

- **Attack the bat -** If the PCs inflict more than 10 points of damage on a bat in a single round, the bat wings away, no longer interested in pursuing its deadly meal. Note that this does not deter other bats from hunting the PCs.
- **Dive for safety -** With suitable forewarning, a PC can attempt to dive free from an oncoming attack. With a Ref save (DC 15) the PCs leaps to safety, evading the attack.
- **Dive for the bat -** With suitable forewarning, a PC can attempt to leap *onto* an attacking bat. This is easier than evasion, for the simple reason that the bat is coming directly for the PC. With a Ref save (DC 7), the PC has succeeded in evading the attack by leaping onto the bat. Over the next three rounds the bat attempts to free itself by diving and spinning throughout the cavern. The would-be rider must make three Ref saves (DC 10) to maintain his hold; failing a check sends the PC pitching through the air to fall 1d5x10', taking 1d4 damage per 10' fallen. If the PC succeeds on the checks, the exhausted bat settles to the rocky shore of area 2-4.

From the peak of the arch, it is a 30' fall to the water below (3d4 falling damage, DC 10 Ref save to avoid).

Giant Bats (various): Init +5; Atk bite +3 melee (1d6) or snatch +5 melee (1d4); AC 13; HD 5d8; hp 20; MV fly 40'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will -2; AL C.

Area 2-3 – Pit Trap: Cautious characters may observe that the stone that composes the walls, ceiling, and floor of the passage passes through a vein of weak sedimentary rock. Clumps of the sandstone come away at a touch, and crumble into wet grains of sand.

There is little chance of a cave-in (a fact readily confirmed by dwarves or miners). The threat comes from below: an abscess in the earth covered by a thin crust of sandstone. Characters crossing over the pit must attempt Luck checks (DC 10). The first PC to fail the check falls 20' into a soupy mix of sand, water, and black algae (2d4 damage, DC 5 Ref save to avoid). Characters in the marching order immediately adjacent to the PC must also make Luck checks (DC 5) to avoid being sucked in after their fellow.

The sludge is 10' deep; PCs need to make DC 5 Strength checks to stay afloat. The PCs must attempt the Strength checks each round they remain in the pit.

The walls of the pit crumble at the slightest touch, but escape is relatively easy: a narrow tunnel empties out into area 2-4. However, if the PCs' light sources were extinguished in the fall, finding the escape tunnel becomes markedly more difficult, requiring either a successful Luck check (DC 10) or the aid of an ally who knows the way.

(Alternately, the judge may consider drawing a circle with 8 equal sectors. Secretly choose the correct one, and then have the players designate which way their characters swim. Without relating whether the character was successful or not, remove the PCs' markers as their characters escape or drown.)

Area 2-4 – The Bleak Shore: *A narrow ribbon of stone runs the length of the cavern. Black waters lap at the barren shore.*

The floor of the cavern is submerged in an inky pool of water. The pool is home to a lantern fish, a massive creature nearly 15' in length, with sharp spines along its dorsal fin. The foremost spine sports a translucent sac that pulses with a mesmerizing light. Characters within 30' who gaze upon the "lantern" must succeed on Will saves (DC 5) or become entranced.

If the fish succeeds in drowning a PC, it spears the unfortunate victim on its spines. In the gloom it can appear that the corpse is treading on water, holding a lantern aloft.

The lantern fish's actions are driven entirely by hunger: it seeks to kill as many characters as possible to be consumed at a later date. The fish can lunge as far as 6' from the water. Characters along the shore can only find safety by retreating into one of the infrequent niches dug into the cavern walls.

On a successful attack the lantern fish locks its massive jaws on the target and drags its victim into the water. Escaping from its powerful jaws requires a DC 15 Strength

LEVEL 2
PLAYERS START HERE
= 10 FEET
2-1
2-1a
2-1
LEDGE
200 FEET
2-2
2-4
2-5
2-6
SIDE VIEW
THE SEVENTH PIT OF EZREKAN
TO 3-5
2-2
2-4
3-1
TO 2-6
Ropes
A Bajillion Bones
LEVEL 3
3-2
3-4
Mud
Fountain
3-5
3-3
Allen 2015
= 10 FEET

check. Characters failing to break free begin to drown, per the core rules.

※ *In the 3rd-level conversion, increase the number of lantern fish to 3.*

Lantern Fish (1): Init +1; Atk bite +4 melee (1d3) or spine +3 melee (1d5); AC 10; HD 3d10; hp 18; MV swim 40'; Act 1d20; SP glow-sac, locking jaw; SV Fort +2, Ref -1, Will +0; AL N.

Area 2-5 – Three Pools: *The narrow passage opens into a larger cavern dominated by a trio of glowing pools. Each is ringed with a circlet of scarred and pitted iron. Two of the pools glow with lurid light – one crimson, the other emerald. The central pool sits dim.*

Resting on the floor of the cavern is a pair of large iron dippers.

Each of the pools is 10' deep and filled with a clear viscous liquid. The source of the light is the liquid itself. Investigation reveals that the pools dissolve organic materials at a rate of 1d6 hit points per round. Non-magical metals are eaten away at a rate of 1d3 hp per round. Characters investigating the center pool spy a great helm resting at the base of the pool: the **Tarnhelm**. Set with gems and forged in the shape of a rampant dragon, the helm is blackened, as if scorched by fire.

In order to safely reach the helm, the pool's acidic power must be neutralized. Using the dippers, the PCs can add liquid from the other two pools; however, both liquids must be poured into the central pool at precisely the same time. Failing to do so causes the pool to erupt into a weird, attacking as a mighty plume. The plume attacks for 1d5 rounds, or until it is "slain," collapsing back into the pool. Failing to mix the liquids simultaneously, or in any other sequence, causes the pool weird to reanimate. The weird returns each time the mixing is done improperly, no matter how many times it is "slain."

Once animated, the pool weird can move between the three pools: seeming to subside into one, only to erupt from another. At the judge's determination, this can result in a surprise attack. Targets struck by the weird's wave-like pseudopod are instantly engulfed in the viscous liquid and begin drowning, per the core book.

Judge's Note: The "pouring test" can be performed in one of two ways. The first is to call for a Ref save, DC 10, from both PCs. If one or either of the PCs fails on the check, the weird animates.

There is, however, a much more enjoyable means of testing the PCs: At Gen Con 2014 we required the players to hold mint tins at shoulder height and drop them onto the table. If the tins struck the table at the same time, it was ruled that the PCs succeeded in pouring the liquids simultaneously. If the players agreed that the objects struck at different times, the pool weird animated.

What ensued was a series of practice drops, nervous failures, and desperate planning ("Is it drop on three or three **then** drop?!") that heightened the drama at the table and turned what could have been a boring skill check into a tournament highlight.

Pool Weird: Init -1; Atk pseudopod +4 melee (1d6 plus drowning); AC 10; HD 3d8; hp 12; MV 5', climb 5'; Act 1d20; SP drowning, half damage from slicing and piercing weapons; SV Fort +6, Ref -2, Will -6; AL N.

Area 3-1 – The Deathwatch: *The stone steps descend to a high balcony. A handful of ropes are tied to the stone railing, and hang into the darkness below. The smell of sulfur rises on a warm breeze from below.*

It is a 60' descent to the base of the wall. Most light sources only hint at rough, broken terrain below. Characters lowering light sources or somehow finding a means of illuminating the base of the wall discover that the floor of the chamber is covered with bones.

Climbing: There are seven ropes hanging from the railing. All are frayed, worn with time, and nearly eaten through with a sulfuric crust. Any character relying on a single rope must attempt a Luck check (DC 10); on a failed roll, the rope breaks, dropping the PC 1d5x10' to the bone-covered floor below. However, should characters think to weave the ropes together (as few as three will suffice), there is no risk of the combined ropes breaking in the descent. It takes a character 5 rounds to descend to the chamber floor. Ascending the ropes takes twice as long and requires a successful Strength check (DC 10).

(The wall is smooth stone. Attempts to descend without the ropes requires a great deal of ingenuity or DC 17 Agility checks. Judges should reward creative, practical plans for descending the wall. The reward for foolish and impractical attempts is a quick and merciful death.)

Chamber Floor: The bones at the base of the wall range from 2' to 3' in depth. All are dried and brittle, and crack and turn under every step. Most of the bones belong to humans and humanoids. Many of the bones bear tooth marks. Why the victims were unable to climb back up the rope is initially unclear.

When the first PCs reach the base of the chamber, and every 5 rounds following, call for a modified Luck check from all PCs, applying the worst result rolled:

Roll*	**Result** ** 1d20 + Luck mod*
0-3	**Greater Cloud**: A dense cloud of noxious gasses rolls up from below. All PCs on the chamber floor must succeed on Fort saves (DC 15) or fall unconscious. Cave lizards (see below) creep from the mounds of bones to gnaw on the unconscious.
4-7	**Lesser Cloud:** A persistent cloud hangs over the chamber floor. Characters must make Fort saves (DC 10) or suffer a -1d penalty to all physical actions (i.e., climbing or combat) for the next 1d5 rounds.
8-10	**Minor Cloud**: A sulfurous cloud passes through

the chamber. Characters must make Fort saves (DC 5) or suffer a passing moment of weakness. This poses little danger to most PCs, but those descending the wall are in peril. On a failed Fort save, the PC in question must make a Luck check (DC 10) or lose his hold and fall.

10-14 **No effect.**

15+ **Lizards:** The PCs are aware of the cave lizards moving in and among the bones. This could be as simple as the sound of shifting bones, the sight of a scaled tail, or eyes watching the PCs from the darkness.

A pack of 1d12+4 cave lizards make their home amid the bones. Three feet in length, with oversized jaws and teeth like knives, the lizards attack at any sign of weakness (notably, PCs succumbing to the effects of the gasses). It takes the pack 1d5 rounds to render a body before moving on to new prey.

Astute PCs might note the curious absence of any material other than bone. The voracious cave lizards have taken all metallic objects for their treasure horde (area 3-5) and consumed all the rest.

Cave Lizards (1d12+4): Init +1; Atk bite +2 melee (1d4); AC 12; HD 1d5+2; hp 5; MV 35' or climb 15'; Act 1d24; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will -3; AL N.

Area 3-2 – Choices: *The stone steps, walls, and ceiling are coated in a thick forest of brittle crystals that break with the slightest touch. The air is choked with the stench of sulfur and brimstone, and your lungs sting with every breath.*

A 2' hole is dug into the base of the wall. The walls of the small tunnel are smooth to the touch.

The PCs are faced with a grim choice: descend the steps to the sulfur halls and risk asphyxiation, or dare the lizard lair.

Characters investigating the steps find that the air grows more poisonous with every step. A bloody light shines from below, and character can hear bubbling of a thick, viscous liquid. The mineralized crust covers every surface, and is readily crushed into powder.

Those exploring the narrow lizard tunnel can confirm that the walls, ceiling and floor have all been worn smooth (by the passage of the cave lizards). Characters entering the tunnels are forced to crawl on their bellies, and can only use one-handed weapons.

Area 3-3 – Brimstone Halls: *The encrusted stairs open into a hellish gallery cast in bloody reds. The chamber is dominated by boiling mud that pours from a hole in the ceiling, splashing down into a fountain and spilling out into channels carved into the stone floor.*

Enormous bubbles rise to the top of the thick, viscous mud, and then pop in a flash of crimson light and choking gases.

Characters proceeding this far are plagued by the threat of asphyxiation. Every breath causes searing pain, the PCs' eyes sting, and blood seeps from the soft tissue in the mouth and nostrils. For each round spent in the chamber, the PCs must make a DC 5 Fort save or suffer a cumulative -1d penalty to all physical actions; if a PC is reduced to -4d, he falls unconscious and begins to die, per the drowning rules in the core book. Leaving the halls permits a weakened PC to regain lost dice.

The fountain depicts a squat horned-ape with a gaping maw thrown wide to catch the cascade of boiling mud. Mud spills from his lips and into searing channels that line the floor; each channel is 5' across and lined with baked mud.

Crossing the room would be a relatively simple act, were it not for the noxious gasses. A PC must simply leap from square to square, avoiding the bubbling, boiling mud. Leaping from one square to the next requires only a DC 3 Ref save. However, for each subsequent square a PC tries to cross in a single round, his action die is reduced by one.

Example: Mad Marc attempts to cross 4 squares in a single round. On his first leap he rolls 1d20 + Ref save mod. On his second leap, he rolls 1d16 + Ref save mod. On his third leap, he rolls 1d14 + Ref save mod, and so on. Each leap is DC 3. If Mad Marc fails any of the checks, he slips and falls into the boiling mud.

Any creature so unfortunate as to even touch the superheated mud suffers 1d3 damage; characters falling into the channels die instantly. Any character dying from the mud erupts from the boiling channel as a mud zombie the following round.

Following a successful attack, a mud zombie can attempt to pull its victim into the mud. The zombie attempts an opposed Strength check (+5). If successful, the target falls into the boiling mud and emerges the next round as another mud zombie.

Fountain of the Horned-Ape: If a character makes an offering to the horned-ape, there is a chance that the devil answers the character's prayer. The devil accepts offerings worth 10 gp or more, or the sacrifice of sentient lives (i.e., other PCs).

Following a successful sacrifice, the PC should make a modified Luck check:

Roll*	**Result** ** 1d20 + Luck mod*
0 or less	The horned-ape comes to life, devouring the PC.
1-5	The horned-ape demands an additional sacrifice.
6-10	The horned-ape comes to life, devouring the rest of the party, but leaving the PC untouched.
11-15	The horned-ape conveys the PC (but only the PC) across the chamber on a platform of animated mud.
16+	The horned-ape stills the mud and its zombies, permitting the PCs to pass without incident.

Mud Zombie: Init -4; Atk grasp +2 melee (1d3); AC 9; HD as original character; hp as original character + 1d5; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP un-dead, +5 Str check to pull target into mud; SV Fort +4, Ref -4, Will +2; AL C.

Area 3-4 – Shadow & Scale: The maze of narrow caves is inhabited by dozens of cave lizards. Characters attempting to press their way through the tunnels are harassed at nearly every turn.

The caves are 2' in diameter, permitting cramped movement. The lizards, of course, can move through the passageways with ease.

Any time the lead PC passes a juncture call for a Luck check (DC 10). On a failed check, the PC is attacked by 1d3 cave lizards. The same check applies for the *last* PC in the marching order, though the situation is far more grim. Unable to turn around or fight in the tight quarters, the PC is likely devoured alive by the ferocious lizards.

The lizards are ravenous. If one of their own is reduced to 1 hp or slain, the others lizards fall on their brother. Their cannibalism buys the PCs 1d5 rounds to escape.

Cave Lizards (various): Init +1; Atk bite +2 melee (1d4); AC 12; HD 1d5+2; hp 5; MV 35' or climb 15'; Act 1d24; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will -3; AL N.

Area 3-5 – Lair of the Lizard: As the PCs approach the cavern, they begin to hear a low, rhythmic rumbling. As they draw nearer, the rumbling can be felt in the stone of the floor and walls. The rhythmic breaths of the dragon shake the world to its core.

Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs reach the cavern proper: *The passageway opens into a cavern extending out beyond the reach of your light. A mound of trinkets – bits of metal, wood, and polished stone – rests in the belly of the cavern, spilling out to the walls. Sprawled atop the mound is an enormous serpentine beast that shakes the cavern with each sonorous breath.*

The slumbering dragon is the source of the cave lizards. The dragon's back is covered in large scales that conceal birthing sacs; when the dragon rubs its back against the cavern walls, dozens of cave lizards crawl free from the pods.

The mound of "treasure" is composed entirely of trinkets collected by the lizards – offerings to their mother-god. Characters inspecting the mound find thousands of polished, shiny stones, sparkling crystals, bits of gold and silver stolen from the corpses in area 3-1, and a handful of useful metal items. On a successful Luck check (DC 15) a character can find any mundane metal object the size of a dagger or smaller. The search takes 1d20+10 minutes.

The mound spills out to the very edge of the cavern, making it nearly impossible to circumnavigate the cavern without awakening the dragon. Successfully sneaking through the cavern will require a great deal of creativity (as demonstrated at Gen Con 2014) or incredible luck: for every 10' travelled, a PC must succeed on a DC 15 Agility check.

On a failed check, make a Luck check (DC 5) modified by the party's collective Luck modifer; if this Luck check fails, the dragon awakens. Increase the DC of the Luck check by +5 for every failed sneak attempt in a single round.

Example: Mad Marc, Lady Lynch, and their dwarven hireling, Strohdor, are attempting to sneak through the cavern. Mad Marc and Lady Lynch succeed on their Agility checks, but Strohdor fails. They need to make a collective Luck check against DC 5 or awaken the dragon. If two of the PCs had failed the check in the same round, the Luck check would have been against DC 10. If all three had failed, the collective Luck check would have had a DC of 15.

Characters must act quickly once the dragon is awakened. Unless the PCs provide a compelling reason for the dragon to act otherwise, she attacks at the end of the first round (and rolls initiative normally for subsequent rounds). Pretending to be devoted cultists (with appropriate offerings) is sure to appeal to the dragon's ego, giving her pause. Threats to the drakaina's young are meaningless. (She eats them just as quickly as she devours PCs.) Creative players are sure to come up with any number of solutions; it is left to the judge to adjudicate their odds, guided by the dragon's greed and arrogance.

The dragon is grudgingly allied with Sezrekan, and will only knowingly betray the wizard in exchange for one or more of the relics.

Bagadreki, Large Demon-Dragon: Init +7; Atk claw (x3) +8 melee (1d8), bite +8 melee (1d12), tail slap +8 melee (1d20), crush +8 melee (3d12), and spell (see below); AC 17; HD 7d12; hp 67; MV 60'; Act 7d20+1d20(spell); SP spells, breath weapon, hypnotic stare, birth spawn, change shape (see below for all); SV Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +7; AL C.

Spells (+4 spell check); Level 1: *ropework, spider climb;* Level 2: *levitate.*

Breath Weapon (4/day): Fire (1d4x10' radius, aimed up to 60' away); 34 hp damage (DC 17 Fort save for half).

Hypnotic stare: The dragon can gaze into the eyes of one target per round by using one action die. A creature that meets the dragon's gaze must make a Will save (DC 17) or stand stupefied as long as the dragon holds its gaze.

Birth spawn (3/day): The dragon scours 1d12 cave lizards from her body.

Cave Lizards: Init +1; Atk bite +2 melee (1d4); AC 12; HD 1d5+2; hp 5; MV 35' or climb 15'; Act 1d24; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will -3; AL N.

DCC Funnel Tournament

Name:

AC HP

Occupation:

Alignment: Law Neutral Chaos

		mod
Strength		
Agility		
Stamina		
Personality		
Intelligence		
Luck		

Reflex	
Fortitude	
Will	

Speed **Init**

Equipment

Weapons

Notes

XP

Encounters Survived

Notes

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HOW TO RUN A DCC RPG TOURNAMENT FUNNEL

he DCC RPG tournament funnel differs from the typical character funnel in several notable ways. It is not intended to function as an adventure through which players will run multiple characters, hoping to level-up the survivors at the end of play. The tournament funnel's primary purpose is to provide an ready format for competitive play, and to give new players a taste of playing in the DCC RPG system.

TOURNAMENT FUNNEL RULES AND FORMAT

The DCC RPG tournament funnel is designed for 8-10 players, each running a single level-0 PC. The tournament is played for a pre-designated amount of time. Players are scored in the tournament as follows: for each encounter survived, stamp the player's character sheet once with the "I Survived!" stamp, or simply make a large check mark with a blue pen. Unless otherwise noted in the adventure text, an encounter is defined as any time in which initiative is rolled to begin a combat. This includes inter-party combat.

When a PC dies, likewise stamp that player's character sheet with the "Dead" stamp, or make a large red "X" with an appropriate pen. As each PC dies, the controlling player taps out of the game, and a new player rotates into the game with a brand new PC. Players who tap out of the tournament are welcome to re-enter at anytime with a fresh PC when another seat at the table opens up. Remind players to hang onto their character sheets for later event scoring at the end of the tournament.

At the end of the event, the players with character sheets that show the most encounters survived stamps will be ranked, and the top three numerical survival totals will be awarded 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place respectively. Any ties will be settled by a d20 dice-off between the tying players, with the player losing the dice-off falling back to the next placement in ranking.

TOURNAMENT FUNNEL LOGISTICS

Use a team of judges — When run as an event at a convention or friendly local game store, the tournament funnel can be challenging to facilitate for a single judge. Even with a single table of players, having an extra volunteer on hand to manage the line of incoming players and to dole out fresh character sheets will help the event run much more smoothly. If there are multiple tables, consider having a team of co-judges, with one judge per table plus a floating judge who ensures that rulings between tables are adjudicated as consistently as possible.

Make the event special — It's not really a tournament unless there are prizes to win! Aside from the usual DCC swag sent out for Road Crew games, trophies and plaques for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place, displayed before and during the event, really get the players competing with each other. And the prizes need not be lavish. Even more economical prizes, such as homemade award certificates or ribbons make all the difference. Most FLGS owners will, if asked, also donate tournament prizes or gift certificates to the event.

Keep the action rolling – The wise tournament judge is prepared to keep the action moving at a brisk pace. Adventures that have been specifically written for the tournament format will aid in this by being specifically constructed in a way that discourages parties from splitting up, or that do not challenge players to engage in emergent role playing (normally a worthy goal in a typical adventure scenario).

Later this year, Goodman Games will be coming out with special tournament swag awards that you can also use at these events, such as special tournament pins and buttons. Watch for the kickstarter announcement for these items at goodman-games.com.

CUSTOM CHITS FOR THE SEVEN PITS OF SEZREKAN: The customized chits on this page can be perforated and removed for play at home. See page 66 for details on how to use them. These are the same chits that were used in the Gen Con tournament.

Do you have a problem with life, love, or your D20 combat matrix? Archmage Abby is here to help! Every day she uses her powers of divination to answer questions from all walks (and slithers) of life. Here is a selection of her missives since last publication in Level Up #3. If you need advice on your own personal matters, do email her at abby@goodman-games.com.

Dear Archmage Abby,

I recently powdered the diamond from my wife's engagement ring to use as the material component for a Stoneskin spell. The spell worked great (she couldn't get past my damage reduction when she tried to beat the tar out of me) but now she's not talking to me and I'm afraid she's upset. Help?

Signed,
Peeved in Punjar

Dear Peeved,

Peeved, you wouldn't happen to be of the Gully Dwarf persuasion, would you?

Okay you screwed the blink dog big time. If I were you I would strike out on a quest to find her a diamond so big she'll need a strength spell to raise her man-slapping hand. Remember, nobody ever said "If you liked it then you should have put a spell on it."

Be sweet!
AA

Dear Abby,

I am a huge fan of Dungeon Crawl Classics. I was wondering if Goodman Games has ever considered doing a Dungeon Crawl Classics TV series? There are so many new platforms for original shows, like Netflix and Amazon. With the success of fantasy shows like *Game of Thrones*, the time might be right for a show based on "the band" and their adventures.

Any chance we might see one?

Sincerely,
(Random Roll for Pen Name) Whyfore Wherefore

Dear Whyfore,

Sounds wonderful! The Archmage supports any and all efforts to bring her darlings from The Band to the big screen. You never know! But I don't really give it much thought.

(Aaron Paul as Ratface, Eliza Dushku as Farrah, Artie Lange as Bobugbubil . . .)

I mean, obviously this would be a huge step. We would have to really give it some serious thought if we were going to go forward with a plan like this.

(Don Rickles as Great Cthulhu, Dieter Zimmerman as Hugh Heftblade, Aisha Tyler as Shana Dahaka . . .)

Which, at the present moment, we have not. But thank you so much, sweetheart! The Archmage always loves this kind of question, even if they are so far-fetched as to be beyond any serious consideration.

(Neil Patrick Harris as the King of Elfland, Prince as the Mad Prince . . . okay, gonna stop now. Breathe, Abby, breathe.)

Whew! Be sweet!
AA

Next up: I rescued this question from a time vortex. I just hope the answer is not too late!

Dear Abby,

I have been given the chance to play a Velociraptor Warrior in a d20 fantasy game, but only provided that they can speak common. Well, unless I overlooked anything in *The Complete Guide to Velociraptors*, I was unable to find anything to answer my question. So, my question is: is it possible for Velociraptors to speak English? Please reply before 5PM pacific time on Nov. 25th, 2002, if at all possible. Thank you so much for taking the time to read this and for your prompt reply.

(Random Roll for Pen Name) Shydonno, The Interlocutor From Other Space

Dear Shydonno,

Ooh a tricky one!

Okay, the Archmage dusted a few books off and did some research. The rules state that the Velociraptors speak their own language – Raptor. It also mentions that they are capable of creating potions, casting shaman spells, and allying themselves with humans, all of which speaks to advanced linguistic ability. If they can speak one language, and there is no specific prohibition in the text that they can't learn/ speak other languages, then they can learn to speak common. So join the party, sharpen your claws, and set your sights on some Jurassic ass whooping. Have fun Velociraptting the dungeon!

Dear Abby,

I've seen the image of Yaksha (Human-Rakshasa half-breed) image from *The Complete Guide to Rakshasas*. It is such a cute image of a yakshini! I find it truly beautiful and wonder if you could share with us a colorized version of that image. Please if possible!

Thanks,
(Random Roll for Pen Name) 空の質問

Dear ***空の質問****,*

Thanks for getting in touch.

I am glad you enjoyed that image! Yes, Yaksha is just too cute!

Since you asked so politely, the Archmage has pulled a few strings and had a colorized image of that picture crafted, and placed here in this program guide for the world to share and enjoy! Unfortunately, budget constraints forced us to go with an untested but extremely talented artist, illustrator and wall magic marker-er, Haven Goodman. Enjoy! (Publisher's note: further budget constraints mean we have printed the colorized image in B/W. Now it looks remarkably like the original B/W image! Imagine that.)

Be sweet!
AA

Dear Archmage Abby,

I collect Dungeon Crawl Classics modules. I noticed that throughout the 3E era, there is a stretch of modules there where a chain devil appears in almost every one. What's the deal with all the chain devils? Any suggestions on other monsters to sub out for them?

Sincerely,
(Random Roll for Pen Name) Al Upinyabizzness

Dear Al,

First of all – FOR YDDGRRL'S SAKE DO NOT SUBSTITUTE ANYTHING FOR THE CHAIN DEVILS!

Secondly – there was a very good reason for the preponderance of chain devils. Back in the early days of the DCC line, we received a chain devil in the mail, with the instructions to keep putting them in every adventure. If we used 13 chain devils in 13 adventure modules, the letter went on to say, we would receive great luck and fortune. If we broke the chain, the letter went on, there would be dire consequences.

Unfortunately, designer Brendan J. LaSalle turned in an adventure, DCC#33: Belly of the Great Beast with zero chain devils. Nada. Goose egg. Bupkis. Joseph pleaded with him, but the poor sap dug in his heels. Three weeks later he found himself stuck in an elevator for eight hours while the Eagle's "Seven Bridges Road" played on a constant loop. He's never been the same.

Please note that should you decide to sub out chain devils for your home games for any other monster or hazard, Goodman Games IS NOT RESPONSIBLE for any calamity, such as demon possession, not getting cell service in that remote cabin you rented to go party in with your teenage friends, wardrobe malfunctions, or any and all similar and suchlike misfortunes. You have been warned!

Be sweet!
Abby

Hey Abby,

I'm playing a hybrid 1E/2E AD&D game; with 3E death rules [i.e.: unconsciousness at 0 hp, and Death at -10]. My party's paladin was attacked by a sheet phantom, which is a weird *Fiend Folio* monster that envelops the victim, and suffocates him until he dies, at which point the PC turns into a sheet ghoul 12 hours later.

At what point should I consider the PC "dead"? Isn't it moot, as the PC takes any damage other characters inflict on the sheet phantom while trying to free him? And if anyone can save the character before he's rendered undead, what becomes of the sheet phantom? Do these rules apply across the board for most undead?

Thank you,
(Random Roll for Pen Name) Dunknooww, Bearer of Inquiries from Beyond Time

Dear Dunknooww,

You are sweet to remind me what they are, but the Archmage was mopping up bloodstains with fallen sheet phantoms since before you were born.

To business: your paladin is alive, as per the 3rd Ed rules, until he hits -10, at which point the sheet hits the fan. He becomes a sheet ghoul, and is free to shoot acid out of his nose at former allies. And my, but it makes the Archmage's little heart happy that 1981's Fiend Folio is still weird!

And trying to save him isn't moot at all. The Archmage can think of an easy half dozen ways to get rid of that nasty thing – including turning undead, hitting it with holy water, a holy word spell (certainly) or raise dead spell (possibly) – that can destroy undead without harming your pal. The paladin might try turning it himself, if he is high enough level, or slaying it if he had a small

weapon at hand when it dropped. Also, if the paladin has his lay on hands ability left, he can heal himself while his allies beat the thing to death.

If one of his allies saves the paladin before he dies, he recovers and the sheet phantom – unless saving your pal meant incapacitating or turning it – is free to go after another target. It should probably go after the paladin again, since he is already wounded.

Be sweet!
Abby

"Dear" Archmage Abby,

I was very disturbed when I read "The Beast of Barren Hill" in DCC #29 (*The Adventure Begins*), specifically the second player's hook, which would send the players after the bear to collect its gall bladder. I assume this reflects an awareness of the curative properties attributed to bear bladder in traditional Chinese medicine. The fact is, many bears are facing extinction (at least in parts of their traditional range), and others are kept in inhumane conditions to meet the demands of the TCM market.

That Goodman Games would sanction this barbarous practice, even unintentionally, and especially in this cavalier manner, is very disturbing. I have bought the majority of the DCCs you have published to date, and have used/ was planning to use many of them for the D&D campaign I run. I now find myself reconsidering this plan, reassessing whether to continue to support Goodman Games with future purchases.

Yours,
(Random Roll for Pen Name) Confoundus Querrysmith of Hmmmntown

Dear Confoundus,

Gamers are smart folks – smart enough to tell fiction from reality. We here on Goodman Mountain are confident that our audience is wise enough to know that they shouldn't really kill endangered bears for their gall bladders, just like we are confident that they know not to actually hit people with swords, worship strange gods, farm gong, or perform in real life of the other of the million things that adventurers in fantasy role playing games do. We feel there is nothing cavalier in our attitude – we simply trust our audience.

However, we also absolutely condemn the practice of bear farming, and the use of bear bile in medicine, as cruel and 100% unnecessary in the world of modern pharmaceuticals. While this vile practice is certainly on the decline across Asia, it is still business as usual in far too many places. We encourage our fans to speak out against this and other barbaric "traditions," and to support evidence-based medicine. Confoundus, your heart is in the right place and we salute you!

Dear Abby,

My wife and I met at a gaming convention. Our relationship is based on trust, communication, and a deep abiding love of RPGs. Now its ten years later, and our kids – eight year old girl and six year old boy – are starting to ask about the wall of RPG books in the basement, and what their mother and I get up to on our Saturday gaming night.

She wants me to start teaching the kids to play. I'm torn – gaming has always been a couple thing for us, and its nice to have that one night when the grownups get to be grownups. On the other hand I'm proud that my kids are interested.

Suggestions?

Yours,
(Random Roll for Pen Name) Lemmie Googledatforya

Dear Lemmie,

It does the archmage's heart a world of good to see a new generation of gamers is getting into the hobby.

To your question: the Archmage recommends you do both. Keep your gaming date night with your wife and the grownups, but start teaching your kids how to play. There are several excellent games out there designed for children ages eight and younger – Meddling Kids, Happy Birthday Robot, and Faerie's Tale, just to name a few. Why not pick one up and start playing with your kids, but starting off with the understanding that the adult game is going to be off limits until the kids are old enough to chip in for pizza? That way your kids get to learn the game, you get to spend more time with the kids, but you keep your grown up game grown-up, and you are contributing to a new generation of RPG players who will keep our hobby alive? That's what the Archmage calls a Win Win Win Win.

Be Sweet!
AA

Dear Archmage,

Who would win in a fight: Hawk the Slayer, or Hugh Heftblade? I think it would be a great fight!

Yours,
(Random Roll for Pen Name) Carlos Danger

Dear Carlos,

Wow.

Okay, I'm going to type this slowly because judging by your question you can't read very quickly.

Now honestly: do you think that the man who outlived Alamanter, Chuck Plimpton (twice!), Flitcher Took, Grag the Gatherer, Gronan, Ming the Barber, Nihla Darkleben, and Ratface Slipshot can be taken down by somebody who couldn't even take out the Smoke Monster?

Take a -1 until the Archmage feels like you had enough.

Be sweet!
Abby

PS. -1 lifted. I can't stay mad at you sweetheart!

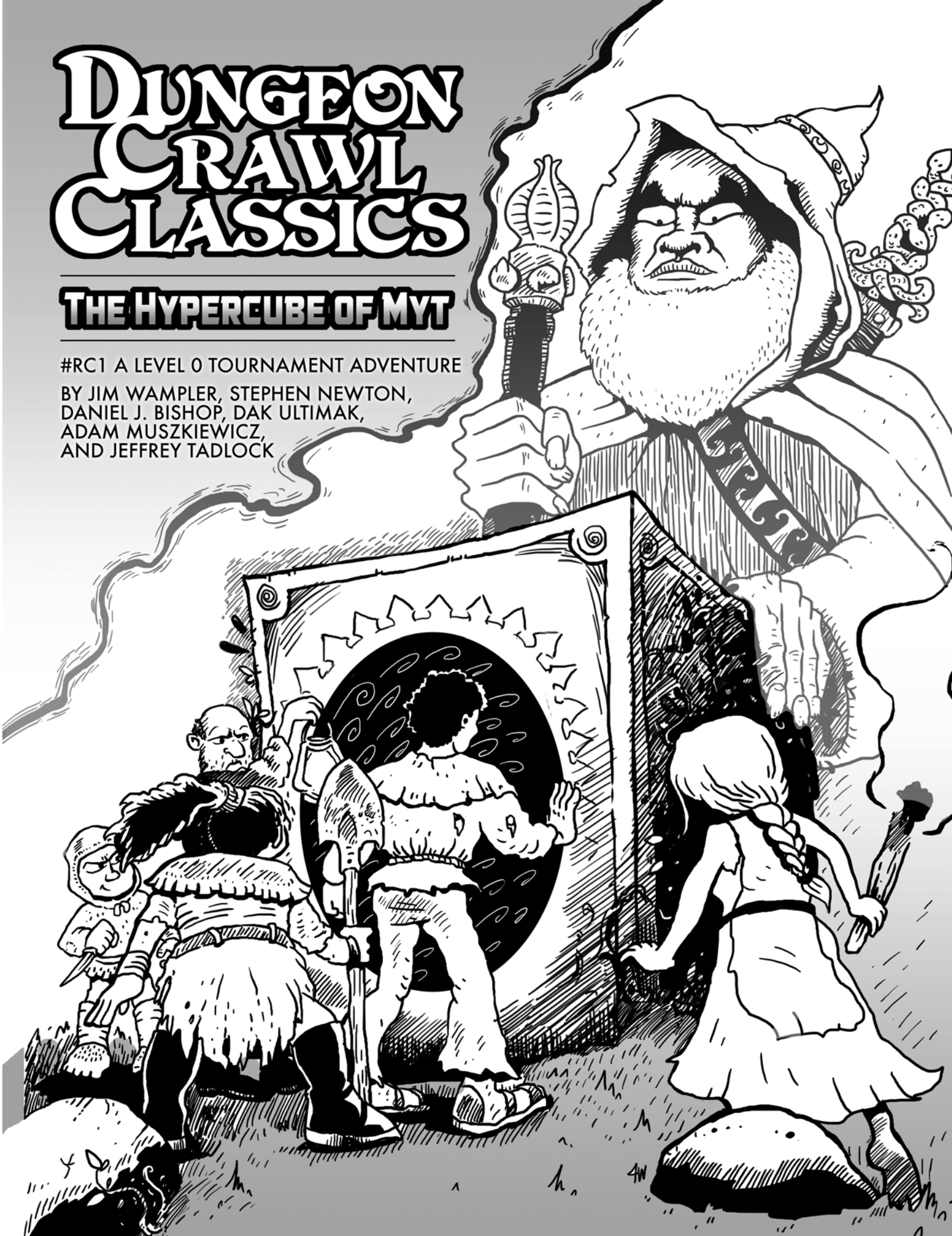
Need some gaming advice? Send your questions to Archmage Abby! Email to abby@goodman-games.com. We reserve the right to edit letters for size and content. Letters are posted anonymously, and if you do not provide us with a topical nick name for yourself one will be generated for you by rolling randomly on Table 15-9: Archmage Abby's Pen Names for her Darling Gamers. Sending a letter to the Archmage does not guarantee publications. All content becomes property of Goodman Games. If you wish a confidential reply, please let us know and we will do our best to accommodate you.

Dungeon Crawl Classics

The Hypercube of Myt

#RC1 A LEVEL 0 TOURNAMENT ADVENTURE

BY JIM WAMPLER, STEPHEN NEWTON,
DANIEL J. BISHOP, DAK ULTIMAK,
ADAM MUSZKIEWICZ,
AND JEFFREY TADLOCK



THE HYPERCUBE OF MYT

A Level 0 Tournament Adventure

By The DCCabal • **Cover artist:** James V. West • **Editors:** Jim Wampler & Stephen Newton • **Copy editing:** Jen Brinkman
Layout and Cartography: Jim Wampler

Originally run at Gary Con VII • Judges: Roy Snyder, James Smith, Jen Brinkman • **Winners:** Beth Gorbi (1st place), Tim Wadzinski (2nd place), Tim Murly (3rd place)

Concept and Design: Jim Wampler
Additional Writing: The Endless Hallway - Daniel J. Bishop • The Altar of Chaos - Dak Ultimak
The Vault of Fools - Stephen Newton • The Metamorphic Menagerie - Adam Muszkiewicz
The Biblioteca Dementia - Jeffrey Tadlock • The Arcane Arsenal - Jim Wampler

Playtesters: JoAnne Newton, William MacDougall, Susanne MacDougall, Chris Meyer, Catherine MacDougall, (The Mutant Murder Hobos) Todd Bunn, Donna L. Davidson, Mark Hatton, Darren Long, Kevin M. McDaniel, James Smith, Robert Supinger, Niki Weber, Dieter Zimmerman.

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INTRODUCTION

The Hypercube of Myt is a DCC RPG Tournament adventure based on the character funnel format. This adventure is designed for 8 players, with each player having only 1 level-0 PC. As each PC dies, the controlling player taps out of the game, and a new player rotates into the game with a brand new PC. The tournament adventure is scored by ranking individual PCs by largest number of encounters survived. Players eliminated from play may re-enter the game with a new PC when another seat opens up at the table.

The tournament will be played for a pre-designated amount of time. Players are scored in the tournament as follows: For each encounter survived (an encounter being defined as any time in which initiative is rolled to begin a combat), stamp the player's character sheet once with the "I Survived!" stamp. When a PC dies, likewise stamp that player's character sheet with the "Dead" stamp. Remind players to hang onto their character sheets for later event scoring. At the end of the event, the players with character sheets that show the most encounters survived stamps will be ranked, and the top three numerical survival totals will be awarded 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place respectively. Any ties will be settled by a d20 dice-off between the tying players.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The player characters are peasants living in a medium-sized village. Thousands of years in the past, this area was a small portion of a vast empire — the Kingdom of Morr. Unknown to all but the most-learned, the PC's village now occupies land that was once the estate of Morr's grand vizier, the chaotic mage Mytus the Mad. Where once the Keep of Myt stood on a small rocky peninsula jutting out into the sea, the now-nameless inland sea has retreated to such a degree that the ruins are positioned inland in a grassy field just north of the village.

All that remains of the keep are a few scattered and half-buried stones and the vine-covered Hypercube of Myt. The Cube is said by some to be the Mad One's impregnable treasure vault, and by others still, his tomb. There are two circular doors positioned on opposite sides of the Cube — the southern portal being an entrance, and the northern portal apparently an exit. The northern door cannot be opened by any means. The southern door may be opened freely on only one day of the year — the vernal equinox — at which time it admits any who would enter.

Millennia of failed attempts to move, damage, or otherwise violate the Cube have reduced it to a local curiosity and the customary site of an annual Springtime fair. The peasants of the PCs' village even conduct ale-fueled contests of virility and strength to determine if any are brave (or witless) enough to enter the Cube.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The Hypercube of Myt is a six-room tesseract (4-dimensional hypercube) that does indeed contain many treasures and mighty artifacts, along with dozens of other creatures and denizens who have been trapped within, never aging, for thousands of years. Thanks to a knowledge of hyper-dimensional engineering stolen from a world in the Kasterborous Galaxy, Mytus the Mad was able to create spaces inside the Cube that are much larger than the exterior dimensions. Even more maddening, the interior geometry of the Cube is 4-dimensional, meaning that the layout of the six rooms and their connecting portals do not make sense in the normal three dimensions to which denizens of our universe are accustomed.

Additionally, time inside the Cube does not pass normally. Once inside the Cube, living creatures soon recognize that they no longer need to breathe or eat nor do they age. Any who enter the Cube are effectively granted a type of immortality, though they can still be killed by other mundane means. Thus, The Hypercube of Myt is also an extra-dimensional home and eternal prison to the remnants of any who have entered it over the passing millennia, including

the very strongest, the truly cunning, and in some cases, the most egregiously insane.

Moving Between Rooms in the Hypercube: The Hypercube of Myt contains six separate "rooms" which are folded into each other across four dimensions. Each room-space is shaped and sized differently. For purposes of running the tournament adventure, use the map to ascertain movement between "rooms."

Hypercube Doors: Although the interior doors of the Cube may differ in size, shape, and nature, all are (in effect) dimensional portals. Parties of characters entering the Cube become quantum entangled with each other. Thus, whenever a single PC crosses a door threshold, all PCs present in the room will be transported to the other side. The doors are further enchanted so that they will not open at all until a specific set of conditions have been met inside any given room. This makes it impossible for the PCs to split the party, and nearly impossible for players to "drag" PCs out of danger by opening and entering another door inside a room.

Open Cube doorways appear as a swirling miasma of rotating 4-dimensional geometry, and reveal nothing about the next room that can be perceived by 3-dimensional beings. For game purposes, consider open doorways effectively opaque to the senses and potentially sickening if stared into for too long a time.

Entering the Cube while the tournament is in progress: Because the interior of the Hypercube rotates in four dimensions, the one-way entrance portal shifts from room to room once every 10 minutes. For purposes of the tournament adventure, this simply means that new PCs who enter the Cube (as characters die off) will always show up in the room that the remaining PCs currently occupy.

STARTING THE ADVENTURE

The keep of the legendary wizard Mytus the Mad was razed, looted, and ransacked generations before your oldest ancestor was born. The only reason the chaotic sorcerer's name is still whispered millennia after his death is because of what lies half-buried amid the scattered flagstones of his long-vanished keep: The Hypercube of Myt. This ageless cube is made of adamantite, is covered in filigreed rune circles, and even at a mere 10' square is preternaturally heavy and cannot be moved. Centuries of tampering with the Cube have proven it to be too resistant to time's travails or man's meager efforts to be damaged or otherwise harmed.

Each year on the vernal equinox, the southern entrance unlocks itself from sundown to sunrise. And this is precisely why you are here now, at the annual Festival of the Fatted Calf. The festival is famous for drawing the curious, the foolhardy, and the uncautious from far and wide to ponder the mysteries of the Cube.

As the more sensible denizens of your village have begun to stagger home, you and your friends continue drinking grog-laced ale and speculating on the nature and contents of the immutable Cube. Is it a treasure vault guarded by extra-planar forces, or perhaps a gateway to another time and place? And with that, the first of you slams down your wooden mug and declares lustily, "I'm going in!" Not to be shamed by one so obviously dimwitted and undeserving, you too stand and prepare to enter the Cube. Soon, there is a unruly drunken mob of you ready to leave your dull and dreary lives as dirt farmers and hemp weavers in exchange for a chance at immortality and glory. The first eight of you rush to the vine-tangled entrance of the Hypercube of Myt and enter, with more sure to follow behind you.

The Cube has two one-way doors on opposite sides: an entrance that becomes unlocked once each year, and the other which is believed to be an exit, though no one in living memory has ever exited the cube. Above the entrance, for those who can read the spiraling script of the ancient Kingdom of Morr, is an inscription that reads, "Whosever may be worthy, can become me." Riches and power beyond measure are said to lie inside for the taking, if one can but enter, traverse to the other side, and exit the Cube of Myt.

The growth of ivy vines that cover the entrance to The Hypercube of Myt are easily pulled away from the circular door by the PCs. Minimal exploration of the door's surface (DC 8 Agility check) reveals a rounded depression that, when pressed on this one day of the year, triggers a mechanism that causes the doorway to open like an iris. Only an impenetrable darkness lies beyond.

When the first PC steps through into the darkness, the entire party of 8 villagers is drawn through the one-way portal to **Area 1-1: The Endless Hallway**. Any subsequent ingress will take additional PCs to whichever room is currently occupied by the party.

THE ENDLESS HALLWAY

Area 1-1 — The Endless Hallway: *You find yourself in a long tunnel, 20' high and 20' across. The walls, ceiling, and floor have a somewhat yielding surface, and are translucent. Beyond these walls, you can dimly see distant galaxies, stars, and glowing nebulae of light. Colorful mists provide a soft light but reduce vision to about 60 feet. Filaments buried in the walls, like nerves or veins, are lit occasionally by swiftly traveling impulses of polychromatic light.*

The Endless Hallway worms through hyperspace. Time and space have strange properties in the wormhole. If the party splits and some PCs go forward while others go back, after traversing at least 75' of the hallway (beyond vision range) it is possible for them to run into each other, with the south-bound PCs approaching from the north, and vice versa. The PCs will quickly learn that the only way to progress further than 75' in the hallway requires them to stay within sight of each other. By this means alone will they be able to make progress to the sets of metal doors that appear every 100'.

Doors in the Endless Hallway: Twin circular black metal doors can be found about every 100', on opposite sides of the hallway (facing each other), each with a stylized mouth carved on its surface. All doors on the "eastern wall" lead to Area 1-3: The Vault of Fools; while those on the "western wall" lead to Area 1-2: The Altar of Chaos.

Opening a door requires a PC to place his or her hand inside the carved metal mouth. PCs doing this find their hands stuck to the interior surface as thousands of microscopic metal teeth bite down (a DC 5 Strength check breaks contact immediately). The door requires a total of 3 hit points of blood sacrifice to unlock and open (and more than one PC may place their hand into the mouth-lock at the same time).

Reaching the Hallway Terminus: The Endless Hallway is in effect infinitely long, and the universe will end before any creature reaches a terminus by walking. The Hallway can only be traversed from end to end by a trick of quantum mechanics and arcane magic. PCs can reach either terminus simply by stating a clear desire to do so aloud. Any PC doing this will drag the entire party along with him, as the group has become quantum entangled with each other by being inside the Hypercube together. Each terminus ends in a single black metal door, appearing and operating the same as all others in the Hallway.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

For every 75′ of The Endless Hallway traversed by the party, or 1 turn spent remaining in one place, roll once for a random encounter on Table 1-1 below.

Table 1-1: Random Encounters

Roll d5	Encounter
1	**A body is found:** Roll 1d3: (1) Blue Kobold; (2) Violet Goblin; (3) Rhinorc. Though the body has been looted, some items were missed by the looters. Roll 1d100 and consult Table 1-3 on page 22 of the DCC RPG rulebook, and use that occupation's trade goods as the item or items found on the body. Though the body and equipment are perfectly preserved, anachronistic clothing indicates that the body has been here for hundreds of years.
2	**Lost Equipment:** Roll 1d30 and consult Table 3-4 on page 73 of the DCC RPG rulebook. On a roll of 25-30, see entry for Violet Goblin Special Equipment below.
3	**Humanoids:** Roll 1d3: (1) 1d4 Blue Kobolds; (2) 1d3 Violet Goblins; (3) 1d5 Rhinorcs.
4	**Dimension Hoppers:** Roll 1d2: (1) 1d3 Platoon Troopers; (2) Jane Johnson. Treat subsequent rolls of the same dimension hopper as "no encounter".
5	**Wormhole Polyp:** A bulging psychedelic polyp emerges from wall, ceiling, or floor, straining towards the PCs. It attempts to envelop any touching it. Three Strength checks are allowed to break free: DC 5, DC 10, and DC 15. Thereafter, the PC is encased for 1d5 rounds. The polyp spits the PC out, healed of all wounds, diseases, and poisons. It disappears after healing 1d3 PCs.

Blue Kobolds (1-4): Init +1; Atk tiny sword -2 melee (1d4-1); AC 11; HD 1d4-1; hp 2 each; MV 20′; Act 1d20; SV Fort -2, Ref +0, Will -2; AL N.

Searching for a way back to their own cavernous underground world, they believe a great hero ("The Titanus") will rescue them. One random PC is hailed as The Titanus, and the kobolds follow him without question. Each time blue kobolds are encountered, another PC is hailed as The Titanus. Factions and schisms develop, becoming outright war at the worst possible moment.

Jane Johnson: Init +3; Atk none; AC 13; HD 1d4; hp 2; MV 30′; Act 1d20; SV Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +0; AL N.

An 8-year-old girl from 1975 Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. She cries, loudly proclaiming, "It's not fair!" or tries to run away during encounters. Whenever both a lawful character and Jane Johnson survive an encounter together, the character gains +1 Luck (18 max). A chaotic character killing Jane Johnson gains +1d7 Luck (18 max). Both lawful and chaotic characters know this instinctively.

Platoon Troopers (1-3): Init +0; Atk plasma rifle +1 ranged (2d6); AC 16; HD 1d8; hp 5 each; MV 30′; Act 1d20; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +1; AL L.

Future humans who believe that they are dealing with an alien incursion on a generation starship circa 2475. Separated from their platoon and their commander, "Sarge," they are nervous and trigger-happy.

Molecular-Bond Armor: +6 AC bonus, -1 check penalty, no speed reduction, d8 fumble die. Armor only fits humans, and its molecular cohesion breaks down easily in the Hypercube, falling apart after being worn through the next dimensional portal.

Plasma Rifle: 2d6 damage, range 50/100/1,000, priceless. The rifle has three charges left. On an attack roll of natural "1", the rifle explodes and does 2d6 damage in a 10′ radius.

Rhinorcs (1-5): Init +1; Atk horn +1 melee (1d4) or short sword +1 melee (1d6); AC 11; HD 1d8+1; hp 6 each; MV 30′; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will -1; AL C.

These blue-green humanoid rhinoceroses with short swords immediately demand tribute. Each PC giving them something – any coin or piece of equipment – averts combat. Rhinorcs are stupid and easily tricked.

Violet Goblins (1-3): Init -1; Atk bite -1 melee (1d3) or dagger -1 melee (1d4); AC 10; HD 1d6-1; hp 3 each; MV 20′; Act 1d20; SP infravision; SV Fort -2, Ref +1, Will -2; AL L.

These violaceous demi-humans are on a pilgrimage to convert others to the worship of Ulesh, the goblin god of peace. If even one PC makes a vow of peace before the gods, the violet goblins depart tranquilly. If not, they seek to kill the group, as this will prevent the group's participation in future violence. A PC making this vow must make a DC 10 Will save or lose 1d3 Luck the first time it is broken.

Violet Goblin Special Equipment: Results for die rolls 25-30 in entry 2 in Table 1-1. Each item is unique.

Scroll of *Magic Missile*: Found in a lead scroll case and signed by Mytus the Mad. There are seven copies of the spell, cast using 1d14 (scroll property). If the spell check result indicates that the spell is lost, one of the copies disappears from the scroll. When the last copy fades, the scroll is consumed in emerald flames.

Sticky Stick: A coal-black rod 3′ long, when the Sticky Stick is grasped it cannot be put down. The Sticky Stick drops if the character dies, exits a door, or makes an oath of peace with the violet goblins. Rhinorcs love the Sticky Stick, and demand it as tribute if they see it. It can be used as a weapon for 1d3 damage.

The Raven King Card: The PC carrying this arcane ivory card depicting a Raven King can use it to recover to his full hit points and health, even after he would have been killed by damage, poison, or something similar. After use, the Raven King Card teleports away, possibly to another room of the Hypercube, if the judge so desires.

Exit Doors: All doors must be opened using the method described above. Any PC exiting through a door drags the rest of the quantum entangled party along with him or her. East Exit(s) leads to **Area 1-3**; West Exit(s) leads to **Area 1-2**; North Exit and South Exit (originally the entrance) both lead to **Area 1-4**.

THE ALTAR OF CHAOS

Area 1-2 — The Altar of Chaos: *Upon entering the chamber, the first thing that catches your eyes are the thousands of moving points of polychromatic light that fill this misty room like wandering stars. In an Escheresque display of 4-dimensional engineering, impossible stairs, ramps, and bridges criss-cross the space before you — some are upside-down and many run at incongruous angles to the polished stone balcony on which you are standing. These 4-dimensional walkways seem to lead to three other balconies in the room that each host circular doors.*

There is an iron bridge that leads directly from where you stand to a dais suspended in the middle of the room from spiked iron chains. On the dais sits an altar, above which is a slowly spinning face that reflects the many beams of light that fly about the room. Silver globes rest on the railings and banisters of the walkways, further reflecting dazzling lights across the maddening and scintillating chamber.

The dais is a 30′ diameter circular platform 50′ distant from the balcony where the PCs entered. It's suspended in the middle of the room by a series of heavy iron chains that come from the walls and ceiling. There are 3 other doors that are equidistant from the dais, connected by a series of seemingly random bridges and gangways.

Floors and Stairs: The architecture of the room appears to change when viewed from different perspectives, and many of the stairs and bridges are optical or even magical illusions. The spinning disco-like lighting and fog only add to the confusion, making navigation to the other doors a dizzying and dangerous prospect. There are 10′ x 20′ stone platforms before each of the other doors, with each crossing span to those doors appearing to be 10′ wide.

Navigating the room is best accomplished abstractly. The clearest apparent path is an iron bridge that leads directly to the suspended altar dais. If the PCs decide to head to a exit door instead, they will quickly discover that the pathways may not be what they seem. Stairs could actually be ramps, bridges may actually be pillars, gangways actually empty spans, and so on. Some pathways are even real. No matter which way they head, whoever is leading the party should roll a d20 + their Luck modifier on Table 1-2A: Bridges, Stairs, and Gangways, for every 25 feet the party moves. It takes two 25′ move actions (or 1 round) to reach any specific part of the room, be it a door or the altar.

Table 1-2A: Bridges, Stairs, and Gangways

Roll d20 + Luck mod	Pathway Result
1 or less	**Span is an illusion.** The first rank must make a DC 10 Ref save or fall off the span. Falling PCs spiral downward into the 4-dimensional matrix of the room, exiting on another plane of existence, never to be seen again. (This counts as a PC death for tournament purposes.)
2-8	While crossing this span, an unlucky PC (lowest Luck score at the table) glances at a mirror globe and 1d3 mirror people duplicates of that PC flash into existence. They immediately attack.
9-12	**Span is a false path!** The PCs encounter a wall, obstructing set of pillars, or dead end. The PCs must backtrack..
13-15	**Dimension Hoppers:** Roll 1d2: (1) 1d3 Platoon Troopers; (2) Jane Johnson. Treat subsequent rolls of the same alien as "no encounter".
16+	This span connects to a door and platform, but not the one the PCs intended (choose alternate door at random). The PCs may back-track and try again to reach their original destination, or follow the new way.

Mirror globes: Each span across the room has several globes attached to it, each tiled with mirrors like a disco ball. Any PCs that inspect a mirror globe will see multiple reflections of themselves, and with a flash and spray of sparkling light, 1d3 copies of that PC will appear and attack. Pay close attention to the number of PCs that declare they're searching or inspecting the globes, for each will also summon mirror people.

After discovering the nature of the mirror globes, PCs may declare that they are intentionally averting their eyes to avoid looking at the globes. Doing so will prevent any further summoning of mirror duplicates, but this will also cause the party leader a -4 penalty for rolls on Table 1-2A: Bridges, Stairs, and Gangways.

Mirror People: Mirror people appear to be identical to the PC who summoned them in every way. Each duplicate is essentially a mindless 4-dimensional reflection of the PC, and each duplicate will attack the duplicated PC (and each other) randomly. The duplicates simultaneously copy any movement or sound that the summoning PC makes. This means that in the chaos of combat, it will be impossible for other PCs to distinguish between friend and foe.

When a mirror copy is defeated, it explodes in a shower of mirrored shards. If the original PC dies, all surviving duplicates will move to attack the rest of the party.

Mirror People (1d5): Init +0; Atk +1 melee PC's weapon (1d4); AC 11; HD 1d4; hp 2 each; MV 30′; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +1; AL C.

Altar of Chaos: In the center of the room is the Altar of Chaos. Various candles randomly cover the table. They all gleam brighter than they should, with their illumination focused on the spinning mask floating above the altar.

Mytus' Mirror Mask: The mask appears as a glimmering theater mask (that vaguely resembles Mytus the Mad) with a frown on one half, and a smile on the other. It is covered in meticulous slivers of mirrored glass. If donned, it allows the wearer to invoke the Lord of Chaos, Eriaku. If deemed worthy, the subject may be granted spellcasting powers (see Granted Powers below). Upon donning the mask, the PC will break out in maniacal laughter, very aware of his or her newly attained powers. Each time a PC dons the mask, that PC must make a d20 + Luck modifier roll on Table 1-2B: Donning the Mirror Mask of Mytus. If the mask's wearer is killed, or if a power result is lost, the mask teleports back to the altar, where another PC may attempt to don the mask. After three failed attempts to don the mask, it teleports back to the altar and is protected by an impenetrable sphere of prismatic colors.

If a PC dies while wearing the mask in a room outside of The Altar of Chaos (Area 1-2), the mask will still teleport back to the altar.

Table 1-2B: Donning the Mirror Mask of Mytus

Roll d20 + Luck mod	Mask Result
1 or less	**This vessel is considered unworthy!** The mask explodes in a spray of broken glass and the wearer suffers 1d6 damage. Anyone within 10 feet of the victim suffers 1d4 hp damage (DC 10 Ref save to avoid). The mask will materialize back on the altar immediately thereafter.
2-11	**The bearer is denied!** The mask tears from the face of the would-be wearer, who suffers 1d4 damage as it immediately teleports back to the altar. The would-be bearer, if he or she survives, suffers a minor corruption (see page 116, DCC RPG rulebook).
12-13	**This one's mettle shall be tested!** The wearer has made contact with one of Mytus' demonic allies and shall be tested. The masked PC will be granted access to 1 spell from the Granted Powers list below, chosen at random.
14-17	**You may be of value!** The wearer is considered a potential pawn in the eternal struggle. The PC may also be able to cast 1d2 spells from the Granted Powers list below, chosen at random.
18-19	**Interesting...** The wearer is looked upon in some regard. Brother demons to Eriaku will assist the wearer in the form of secrets whispered in his ear; this will increase the PC's Intelligence checks by +2, including spell checks. The PC may also cast 1d3 spells from the Granted Powers list below, player's choice.
20+	**The chosen one!** The wearer is seen for their great potential (whether it's real or not). The spirit of Mytus himself will assist the wearer in the form of secrets whispered in the bearer's ear; this will increase the PC's Intelligence checks by +4, including spell checks. The PC may also cast any spells from the Granted Powers list below.

Granted Powers: These powers are patron spells and will give a good taste of what it's like to cast spells in DCC RPG (for better or worse). Spellcasting is performed as normal: a d20 modified by Intelligence. Any taint should use the appropriate patron's taint. Any spell that is lost immediately causes Mytus' Mirror Mask to tear from the face of the unworthy bearer, causing 1d4 points damage. The mask will then teleport back to the altar.

Roll 1d6: (1-2) *Bobugbubilz's Tadpole Transformation* (page 325, DCC RPG rulebook), (3-4) *Azi Dahaka's Snake Trick* (page 333, DCC RPG rulebook), (5-6) *Sezrekan's Sequester* (page 339, DCC RPG rulebook).

Exit Doors: All doors remain locked and impenetrable until Mytus' Mirror Mask has been donned for the first time. Any PC exiting through a door drags the rest of the quantum entangled party along with him or her. North Exit leads to **Area 1-4**; South Exit leads to **Area 1-1**; East and West Exits both lead to **Area 1-3**.

THE VAULT OF FOOLS

Area 1-3 — The Vault of Fools: *The walls of this dank chamber are made of rough stone and the entire area is dimly lit by the amber glow of multitudinous flickering candles. Each of the hundreds of differing candles are carved in the shapes of heroic adventurers in various fighting poses, each arranged in niches roughly carved into the eastern and western walls. The stone of the south wall has been chiseled into an enormous relief sculpture of the face of Mytus the Mad. The grey granite eyes in the bearded stone relief seem to eerily follow you as you move about the chamber. The nose is carved out of a bulbous rock outcropping, and beads of a viscous, ochre slime slowly drip from its right nostril. The stone on the northern wall is covered in plaster, with an elaborate series of frescoes depicting scenes of grotesque creatures and arcane battles. There are circular metal doors on each of the four walls.*

In the southwestern corner of the room, a carved recess holds an 18-inch tall glass globe with a metal stopper positioned at the top. The metal stopper is inscribed with a few words in the ancient tongue of Morr. Inside the globe, you see an amber-colored cloud of sparking mist. You also quickly notice that there is a small jeweled clockwork butterfly flitting gracefully around the room.

Wall frescoes: Similar to Egyptian tomb paintings, these elaborate and colorful frescoes show scenes of Mytus the Mad vanquishing foes in wizardly combat, conjuring demons, and bending space and time. In one particularly gruesome scene, there is a depiction of Mytus cutting off his own left hand and replacing it with the withered claw of a demon.

Soul Candles/Slime Avatars: The candles range from 6 to 9 inches in height and imprison the souls of stout adventurers that have died in the Vault of Fools. If a candle is blown out, the PCs hear a deep, aqueous gurgling, immediately followed by the squelching noise of the nose of the relief sculpture excreting a life-sized slime avatar resembling the adventurer represented by the candle. Any slime avatars so created will immediately attack the party. If a snuffed-out candle is re-lit — which takes one round assuming the PC has the necessary equipment — the slime avatar will melt into a puddle of harmless, gelatinous goo.

Judge's note: When a PC dies in this room, have each player roll a DC 15 INT check; anyone who succeeds notices that a new candle in the form of the just-deceased PC has suddenly been added to the collection of Soul Candles.

Slime Avatar: Init -2; Atk weapon +1 melee (1d4); AC 12; HD 1d8; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP will dissolve if their candle is re-lit; SV Fort +2, Ref -1, Will +2; AL C

Clockwork Butterfly/Chupacabra: The bejeweled clockwork butterfly is in fact a finely constructed arcane prison for a demonic Chupacabra that once incurred The Mad One's wrath. As an added layer of torment for the imprisoned Chupacabra, the mechanical butterfly is physically incapable of snuffing out candles on its own, and the trapped demon inside is under a geas that prevents it from willingly coming into contact with any living being. Thus, the Clockwork Butterfly/Chupacabra will attempt to taunt the PCs by flying tantalizingly about the room, but always avoiding contact at the last second. Any successful melee, missile, or grappling strike by a PC against the butterfly will free the minor demon inside.

Once freed, the Chupacabra will avoid combat and begin scampering around the chamber, grabbing candles from the ledges and blowing them out to create slime avatars. The demonic Chupacabra is wiry and quick, making it very difficult to hit. The Chupacabra can blow out 2 candles per round until it is slain.

Clockwork Butterfly: Init +2' Atk none; AC 15; HD 0; hp1; MV 30' (flying); Act d20; SP no saving throws, any touch destroys; AL C

Chupacabra: Init +2; Atk bite +1 melee (1d6); AC 15; HD 1d8; hp 6; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +1; AL C

The Glass Globe and The Malleable Soul Cloud: The stoppered glass globe contains an amber cloud of malleable souls – personalities so weak, they were not deemed worthy enough to be transformed into soul candles. The ancient inscription on the metal stopper is a proscription forbidding demons to open and consume the contents (give any PC with a literate occupation a chance to read the ancient Morr script; DC 15 INT check).

If the stopper is removed, it will release the Malleable Soul Cloud. Once released, the soul cloud will start wreaking havoc until controlled by the Demonic Claw of Influence or destroyed. The uncontrolled soul cloud randomly blows out 1d3 candles per turn (thus creating more slime avatars) or randomly bumps into PCs as an attack. A successful attack by the soul cloud does no damage but taints the victim with visions of the soul's final moments in their mortal form (e.g., the PC will temporarily think they're about to be engulfed in flames, or smote by the killing blow of a heinous beast-man). PCs tainted in this way lose their action for 1 round.

Assuming no one breaks the glass globe, a PC wielding it can attempt to re-capture the Malleable Soul Cloud by successfully hitting it with the globe.

Malleable Soul Cloud: Init +2; Atk slam +2 melee (confusion, lose action for 1 round while suffering from visions of impending death); AC 12; HD 2d8; hp 9; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP half damage from non-area attacks, vulnerable to fire; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +2; AL N; Crit Table M/d8.

The Stone Face of Mytus the Mad: The far wall is dominated by the 9' tall stone carving of the face of Mytus the Mad, complete with glaring eyes and a dripping nose. The flinty eyes, while disconcerting, are harmless. PCs searching the dripping right nostril are rewarded with handfuls of viscous slime. Those reaching into the left nostril discover the *Demonic Claw of Influence*. As the PCs pull the macabre appendage from the nose, they will notice that all of the candles briefly start flickering in unison and the cloud in the glass globe begins to swirl violently.

The Demonic Claw of Influence: This arcane object is a leathery, desiccated claw which was amputated centuries ago from a demonic adversary of The Mad One. The demon hand once had five digits, but only three remain — the other two having been snapped off some time in the past. Anyone holding the claw will immediately know its power. By hacking off his or her own own hand (an automatic 2 hit points of damage) and attaching the demonic claw on the bloody stump, the host will have the power to control the Malleable Soul Cloud via single word commands ("attack", "flee", "begone"). The enchantment is activated by snapping off a digit. The Demonic Claw of Influence also works as a *Word of Command* spell (page 268, DCC RPG rulebook) on opponents. The wielder uses a d20+5 spell check when using this power. As there are only three "fingers" left on the claw, this hand may only be used 3 times. If a PC survives the "surgery," the doors to the room immediately unlock.

Exit Doors: All doors remain locked and impenetrable until a PC attaches The Demonic Claw of Influence to his or her arm for the first time. If the players do not think to search the carved face's nostrils, the judge should entice them by having the Clockwork Butterfly or Chupacabra fly or reach into the nostrils looking for "something."

Any PC exiting through a door drags the rest of the quantum entangled party along with him or her. North Exit leads to **Area 1-4**; South Exit leads to **Area 1-1**; East and West Exits both lead to **Area 1-2**.

THE METAMORPHIC MENAGERIE

Area 1-4 — The Metamorphic Menagerie: *The rectangular room before you is bathed in a pale, sickly light, like moonlight reflected on turgid waters. There are circular metal doors on each of the four walls (including the one you just passed through), and two more circular metal doors — one embedded in the the floor, and the other at the top of a long chain-link ladder in the ceiling. All of the doors are covered by an impenetrable polychromatic field of shifting rainbow hues.*

At the center of the room, stone steps lead up to a wide dais and a broad, circular divan. In each of the room's four corners, a column of blue light pulses faintly, and within each floats a disembodied brain cradled in a fluid-filled cylinder. In two of the columns, the brains are not alone — below them float tortured, human-like forms. These forms wrench about in apparent agony, silent though it may be, and with each convulsion, their features shift, with each body growing various inhuman features. You see bat wings sprout on one figure, which then grows serpent's scales, while the other grows beast's claws and monstrous fangs. As each apparently random feature warps the body it appears on, the monstrous feature is then torn from the body and dragged downward into the bases of the transparent cylinders of light, where they vanish.

A figure clad in black robes that seem to drink in all light stands up from his seat on the divan. Its form is basically human, but its head is comprised of a small ebon sphere bisected by a broad, jagged triangle at an awkward angle. This black-robed figure seems to exist in multiple dimensions, as his slightest movement causes his form to strobe in rainbow-colored fragments. The alien creature gives you a sweeping gesture as it asks in warm, clear tones: "I assume you have come about the vacancies?"

The Incarnomatricies: The beams of light are Incarnomatricies designed to warp mortal flesh into arcane material components required for magical research — be they manticore spines or medusa tears. After harvesting the components from the flesh, the Incarnomatrix then forcibly removes the would-be components from their hosts and sends them to some time-lost laboratory. The resulting horrific residue of such transformations are the Polymorphic Chimerae (see below).

The Dreaming Brains: The Incarnomatrices are controlled by the disembodied brains — the sad remains of former acolytes that disappointed their master, Mytus the Mad. The brains float inside the shafts of light. The brains act as living computers, and their primary task is to dream up the nightmare mutations that then manifest in the bodies of the Incarnomatrices's victims.

The Curator: The being standing atop the dais is an artificial construct fabricated from 4-dimensional negamatter that Mytus brought back from a higher dying universe in its final convulsions. The Curator is charged with the maintenance of this chamber, which serves The Mad One by creating rare and dangerous spell components and unknown arcane substances. Fulfilling his programmed duties centuries after the death of Mytus the Mad, The Curator continues to create and send the results of the Icarnomatrices to a laboratory that no longer exists, as this room was torn away from the Hypercube millennia ago by a collision with a dark star.

Because The Curator is composed of 4-dimensional negamatter, attacks made by anything not comprised of metal (or magic) pass harmlessly through him.

Once the PCs enter the room, The Curator tries to convince at least two of them to occupy the two vacant Incarnomatrices, promising "splendid agony" and "gloriously ceaseless torment" if they assent. Should they resist, he will attempt to push them into any vacant Incarnomatrices using his Force Repulsion attack (see below). Once inside the light of an Incarnomatrix, a character is acted upon by its stasis field and must make a DC 12 Will save each round or be unable to act. PCs failing their saves come under the influence of the Dreaming Brain above them and cannot be freed until it is destroyed or they succeed in a subsequent Will save. Furthermore, each round that a PC spends inside the Incarnomatrix, he or she gains a Metamorphic Mutation (see Table 1-4: Metamorphic Mutations). Attempts by other members of the party to reach into an Incarnomatrix to rescue a trapped PC will likewise cause them to be drawn into it and suffer its effects.

If the PCs attack The Curator, the Dreaming Brains direct the Polymorphic Chimerae to counterattack. Though the

Table 1-4: Metamorphic Mutations

Roll 1d14	Creature (descriptors)	Mutation/Attack	Movement
1	Manticore (leonine, spines, bat-winged)	Projectile spines +2 ranged (1d6)	30′ flight
2	Dragon (scaly, serpentine, winged)	Flame breath (1d5+1 fire damage in 10′x10′ area; DC 12 Ref save for half)	30′ flight
3	Gorgon (bovine, scaly, horned)	Petrification breath (DC 11 Fort save or petrification)	40′ charge
4	Brain Flenser (humanoid, squid-faced, rubbery-skinned)	Mind blast (DC 10 Will save or 1d7 psychic damage)	30′ walk
5	Eye Tyrant (spherical, many-eyed, fleshy)	Eye rays +1 ranged (1d4); Action dice 2d20	20′ levitation
6	Troll (humanoid, leathery, long-nosed)	Claw +2 melee (1d4); SP regenerate 2 hp/round	30′ walk
7	Unicorn (equine, horned, cloven-hooved)	Horn +3 melee (1d5)	40′ charge
8	Owlbear (massive, beaked, fur & feathers)	Claw +1 melee (1d4); Action dice 2d20; SP hug (1d5, both claws must hit the same target)	30′ walk
9	Tyrannosaur (bipedal, scaly, huge-mawed)	Bite +1 melee (1d7)	35′ charge
10	Naga (serpentine, scaly, man-faced)	Constrict (1d5 Stamina damage; DC 10 Fort save for half)	30′ slither
11	Eel mermaid (piscine, humanoid, scaly)	Shock +2 melee (1d5; DC 11 Fort save for half)	10′ flounder
12	Harpy (avian, feathered, alluring)	Siren song (DC 13 Will save or immobilized)	40′ flight
13	Griffin (leonine, avian, winged)	Claw +2 melee (1d4), bite +1 melee (1d6); Action dice 2d20	30′ flight
14	Tentacle beast (octopoid, rubbery, sinuous)	Grab +3 melee (1d3; DC 10 Ref save for grappled)	20′ slither

chimerae are quite lethal, they are instructed to keep at least two PCs alive to become future companions in their endless torture. Though The Curator is incapable of inflicting damage directly, he will coordinate with the chimerae to trap PCs in the Incarnomatrices.

The Curator: Init +2; Atk force repulsion (30′ range, no damage, Fort save vs. attack DC or be pushed 1d3x10 feet); AC 14; HD 3d8, hp 13; MV 30′; Act 1d20; SP untouchable except by metal or magic; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +5; AL N.

The Dreaming Brains: Init +0; Atk none; AC 9; HD 1d6; 4 hp each; MV none; Act none; SP Warp Chimera (see Table 1-4); SV Fort +5, Ref -3, Will +5; AL N.

Polymorphic Chimerae (x2) : Init +0; Atk (see Table 1-4); AC 9; HD 4d6; 17 hp each; MV (see table 4-1); Act 1d20 (or more, see Table 1-4); SP Metamorphic Mutations (see Table 1-4); SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will -2; AL C.

Each round, on the turn of the Dreaming Brains, roll once for each Polymorphic Chimera still alive and each PC who has been forced into an Incarnomatrix to determine how their bodies will be warped by the Brains′ nightmares. PCs in the Incarnomatrices who make a DC 8 Fort save during this round survive the process, and gain features of one of the mythic creatures and strange beasts that Mytus the Mad encountered on his wanderings throughout the multiverse. A failed Fort save results in 1d6 damage as their body is mangled in error during the transmogrification process. Judges are encouraged to describe the transformations into these forms in detail, and a few key descriptors have been included to help them do so.

Exits: The doors become unlocked once a PC dispatches the Curator, which removes the negamatter filed barrier that covers them. Any PC exiting through a door drags the rest of the quantum entangled party along with him or her. North and South Exits both lead to **Area 1-1**; East Exit leads to **Area 1-3**; West Exit leads to **Area 1-2**; Ceiling Exit leads to **Area 1-5**; Floor Exit leads to **Area 1-6**.

THE BIBLIOTECA DEMENTIA

Area 1-5 — Biblioteca Dementia: *You are surprised to find yourself in an ancient but well-appointed library. Eight stately wooden staircases spiral to the top of tall, crowded bookshelves that dominate the room. The four sets of intricately carved wooden shelves line each wall of the library, all bursting with ancient, dusty librams, folios, and tomes. Carvings of concentric circles decorate the paneled ceiling 35′ overhead and the floor at your feet. An iron chandelier holding nine lanterns with citrine-hued globes hangs by a thick chain shining a warm but unnatural light.*

There are but two portals granting access to the room: the one you came in by and the one opposite that on the ceiling/floor (depending upon which entrance the PCs used). You notice a series of carvings on each depicts arcane scribes and scholars hard at work. A spiraling floor-to-ceiling wooden staircase joins them.

Short, waist-high walls surround an elevated desk at the center of the room. A polished study table sits in front of the desk surrounded by equally well-cared for chairs. A finely dressed, frail man with silver-white hair pores over a leather bound ledger. He dabs an azure-colored quill into a bottle of ink and marks the ledger. "Greetings, visitors! Welcome to the Biblioteca Dementia. Examine what you wish, but harm nothing. When you wish to leave this chamber, complete the challenges of the two books before you." With a sweeping motion of his hand, two books, one red and the other blue, appear on the study table.

The Library: While the Biblioteca Dementia assumes the appearance of an immaculately cared-for library, all of it — including the Librarian — is a well-crafted illusion. The judge should continue to describe the room as outlined above, unless the PCs take any special or extraordinary actions to investigate the room (such as burning a point of Luck or testing appearances by banging on things). At the judge's discretion, make a roll on Table 1-5A below and suddenly describe what is seen according to the result rolled. It is entirely appropriate for the judge to describe a feature one way and in the next sentence describe it as normally seen again.

Table 1-5A: Glimpses Through the Illusions

Roll 1d5	Truth Glimpsed Through the Illusion
1	The clothes of the Librarian are dingy and threadbare.
2	The bookshelf ends are layered in dust covering visages of screaming human faces.
3	The chandelier is bent and twisted unnaturally, and the light they give off is actually blood-red.
4	A thick layer of cobwebs cover the ceiling, draping down to the chandelier.
5	The Librarian's right eye has rotted out and his face is missing chunks of skin, revealing bare skull.

The Librarian: The Librarian is a former Hypercube explorer cursed with the custodial duties of the Library. After conjuring the books, the librarian returns to writing and ignores any additional questions or comments. If the PCs threaten the librarian, enter the desk area, or cause any harm to the library, he attacks the offending PCs.

The Librarian will continue to attack until any offending PCs are dead, at which time the Librarian will calmly resume writing. If the Librarian is slain, his curse is transferred to the character that killed him, who becomes the new Librarian, with the same stats and directives as the previous Librarian. Note: The player may continue to play as the new Librarian, but for purposes of the tournament this event counts as a PC death.

The Librarian: Init +2; Atk claw +1 melee (1d4) or chill ray +2 ranged (1d6, no save; 15′ range); AC 11; HD 2d8; hp 14; MV 30′; Act 2d20; SP swift (2 actions per round), curse (upon death, PC who administered killing blow becomes the next Librarian); SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +2; AL C.

Exploring the Book Stacks: The wealth of information in the stacks of Mytus' Library is well protected. Trapped books dominate the shelves unless words of dismissal are spoken by the Librarian. Without such words, the wards at each exit destroys the writing in any books carried outside

the Library. Also among the books are short-lived arcane boons which grant effects that only last while the PC remains in the room, unless otherwise noted.

The Librarian allows characters to explore the stacks of books and the conjured red and blue books on the table, and only reacts aggressively if characters attempt to harm the books or library. When a character opens a book from a shelf, use the Table 1-5B below to determine the effect.

Table 1-5B: Effects of Opening Library Books

Roll 1d12	Book Effect
1	All illusions of the Library are revealed to the opener in a single confusing moment. The opener suffers insanity and now sees the other characters as writhing demons and seeks to kill them (DC 14 Will save to resist, effects last 1d3 rounds).
2	The opener becomes a tactical combat master. Attack die becomes a d24 while in the Library.
3	The book opens to the title page of *Dostoveska's Collection of Short Stories*. The book is a series of short stories about a girl growing up in a nearby mountain range.
4	A tremendous cacophony of human screams and grotesque images of a burning town fill the opener's mind. Roll a d10 plus Luck modifier on Table 5-4: Major Corruption (page 118, DCC RPG rulebook).
5	A flash of blue light shines from the open book. All within a 10′ radius are healed for 1d4 hit points.
6	Strength courses through the opener's body. Gain Mighty Deeds of Arms ability (1d3). This effect is permanent.
7	A spellbook containing the following spells. 1st level: *Chill Touch*, *Magic Shield*, *Mending*, 2nd level: *Fire Resistance*, *Scare*. These spells may be cast directly from the book by any PC with an occupation skill of literacy, using a d16 action die.
8	The book cover explodes, sending splinters in all directions. Characters within 10′ radius take 1d4 damage (DC 12 Reflex save for half damage).
9	The corruption of a horrid demon washes over the opener. Roll a d10 plus Luck modifier on Table 5-5: Greater Corruption (page 119, DCC RPG rulebook).
10	The opener has full (albeit temporary) understanding of the spell *Magic Missile* (treat as CL3; spell check +5). This knowledge is lost to the PC upon exiting the Library.
11	A whirling ball of blades, 6" in diameter, springs from the book and darts about the room. It targets the character with the lowest Luck. **Blade Ball:** Init +2; Atk blades +2 melee (1d4); AC 13; HD 1d8; hp 6; MV 40′; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +0; AL N.
12	Divine power flows from the book to the opener. PC's alignment is changed to chaotic, and he or she gains the Lay on Hands ability (CL3; spell check +4). This knowledge is lost upon exiting the Library.

Red Book: When this book is opened, the shelves creak and the books begin to move on the shelves, as a tremendous vortex of air encompasses the entire room. The PCs are whisked into the vortex unless they immediately grab something heavy, such as a study table, bookcase, or spiral staircase.

PCs swept up in the vortex will be struck by flying books each round for 1 hp of damage (DC 10 Reflex save avoids the damage). The red book must be recovered to end the vortex's effects and restore the Library to order. A DC 10 Luck check is required to successfully navigate the vortex and "swim" through the air towards the book. The flying red book is AC 10.

Once retrieved, the wind disappears and the Library books return to the shelves in perfect order as if nothing had happened. The red book vanishes and one half of a key appears on the study table.

Blue Book: When this book is opened, the Library erupts in chaotic screams. Light from the chandelier begins flashing on and off in a strobe light effect. Screaming apparitions manifest that appear to be future versions of the PCs, aged and bearing signs of battle, such as missing limbs and great scars. The apparitions immediately attack the party.

Apparitions: Init +0; Atk chill touch +2 melee (1d4); AC 11; HD 1d4; hp 2; MV 30′; Act 1d20; SP un-dead; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +1; AL C.

When the last apparition is killed, the chandelier light returns to its yellowish glow. The blue book is replaced by one half of a key.

Keys: The key halves can be snapped together to form a single key. Upon joining them an audible click is heard from all of the room's doors and a single keyhole appears in the center of each door. The key allows the party to exit through the door of their choice.

Exits: The exit doors cannot be opened without the key. Any PC exiting through a door drags the rest of the quantum entangled party along with him or her. Floor Exit leads to **Area 1-4**; Ceiling Exit leads to **Area 1-6**.

THE ARCANE ARSENAL

Area 1-6 — The Arcane Arsenal: *You see an ornate and brightly-lit hexagonal room with cathedral-like features including a vaulted ceiling, gold leaf embossed flying buttresses, and a complex six-pointed star pattern on the marble floor. The points of the star lead to six marble pedestals on which rest treasures to satiate desires far beyond your ken. Each item found upon a pedestal is unique, and all are spotlighted by radiant beams of light emanating from gems embedded in the ceiling. The arcane craftsmanship of these exquisite artifacts convinces you that they were once the cherished personal possessions of Mytus the Mad. In fact, you have the uncanny feeling that his presence is here with you in the arsenal, watching and waiting.*

The treasures assembled on the six pedestals include a black bastard sword, a golden staff with four gems at its head, a cloak with a collar containing six gold-embroidered eyes, a dull copper ring, a pair of fine leather boots, and a red gem the size of a robin's egg.

A chain-link ladder connects the circular door you entered to another just like it on the ceiling/floor (depending upon which entrance the PCs used).

Artifact Possession Roll: When an artifact from the Arcane Arsenal is touched, the item will immediately attempt to possess and command its wielder. The artifact and the PC

Table 1-6: The Arcane Arsenal of Mytus the Mad

Item	Personality	Personality Bonus	Possession Roll
Tarragon, Sword of Serpents	21	+5	d24+5
Staff of the Tetrad	18	+3	d20+3
Mantle of Manifold Sagacity	17	+2	d20+2
Ring of Hermetic Aegis	16	+2	d20+2
Boots of Aetheraltion	15	+1	d20+1
Eye of Myt	16	+2	d30+2

must then make opposed Personality checks, with the winner gaining control of the PC's body and the abilities of the magic item. Even when an item fails to possess a PC, it will still mentally urge the possessor to attack anyone else who has control of one or more of the other magic items, with an aim towards collecting them all.

Possession rolls are made just once per artifact, but always occur when a new artifact is acquired. If more than one item is acquired by the same character, both items add their Personality score bonuses together and make a new possession roll using the higher item's action die (see Table 1-6). A non-possessed PC may choose to return an artifact to its pedestal or not; a possessed PC will always seek out possession of the remaining artifacts.

The goal of each item is to be held or worn by whoever can control the largest number of items in the Arcane Arsenal. This process is part of a complex spell set up by The Mad One in order to regain a presence in the physical world.

Artifact Possession Personality Shifts and Effects:

One Artifact: A PC possessed by one item will begin to feel all-powerful, as the benefits and knowledge of that particular item flow through his body and mind.

Two Artifacts: Should a PC gain possession of two of the items simultaneously, that PC will suddenly claim to be the reincarnation of one of Mytus the Mad's former apprentices; roll d3: (1) Kira the Fair (female human), (2) Elementus the Bold (male human), or (3) Zarquon the High (male elf).

Three or more Artifacts: If a PC manages to gain three or more items, that PC will forevermore regard himself as the living incarnation of Mytus the Mad reborn. Note that it is possible for two characters to believe that they are the true Mytus the Mad at the same time.

If a single PC gains possession of all 6 items: Any character who gains possession, however briefly, of all 6 items, will have his body turned inside-out, and from this mass of writhing flesh and tissue will emerge Mytus the Mad, fully reborn. The resurrected Mad One will take a scant second or two to scoff at the assembled peasantry before departing in an inter-dimensional flash for the outer planes, leaving all concerned in a now-empty chamber. Note: This removes the PC from play, and counts as a PC death for purposes of the tournament.

Use Table 1-6 to adjudicate possession attempts by the artifacts. In what is sure to be a blood bath, use the following guidelines to conduct the inevitable inter-party homicide.

When a PC is killed: Whenever a character possessing artifacts is slain, the artifacts are not harmed and drop to the floor for mere seconds before teleporting back to their original pedestals. A PC within melee range may grab a single dropped artifact before it teleports as a free action. If more than one fallen artifact is present, only one artifact per character in melee range may be obtained before all teleport back to their pedestals.

Spell Duels: The PCs (even one with the wizard's apprentice occupation) possess no knowledge of sophisticated magics, so spell duels may not be declared in this scenario.

Ending the scenario: With a high death toll and a steady influx of new players, it's possible for the party to get stuck in this room, stubbornly refusing to give up on ever being able to master these artifacts. You may, at your own discretion, simply allow each artifact to be taken a set number of times (1-3) before the lights projected from above changes from harmless illumination to invulnerable screens of force, preventing further attempts to obtain the artifacts.

Exits: Once the party has entered The Arcane Arsenal, both exits become wizard-locked until one of two conditions has been met: (1) All six artifacts come into the possession of a single PC, or (2) all six artifacts are returned to their pedestals and the party unanimously agrees to leave the artifacts unmolested. Any PC exiting through a door drags the rest of the quantum entangled party along with him or her. Floor Exit leads to **Area 1-5**; Ceiling Exit leads to **Area 1-4**.

ARCANE ARSENAL ARTIFACTS

Tarragon, Sword of Serpents: This sword requires an 18 Strength to wield effectively in combat. If the sword's Enhanced Strength power does not raise a PC's Strength to 18 the sword cannot be used as a weapon, but additional powers may still be accessed.

INT: 18; PERS: 21; Possession Roll: d24+5; Attack: +1d8 to hit + STR mod (if any); 2d12 damage +STR mod

Powers accessible when less than three artifacts are held: *Enhanced Strength* (+4 STR)

Powers accessible when three or more artifacts are held: *Flame Brand* (sword ignites in flame; inflicts additional 1d6 damage); *Regeneration* (regenerates 1 hit point per round).

Staff of the Tetrad: The staff causes air, fire, water, and earth-based spells directed at the wielder to fail outright

50% of the time, and adds +10 to saving throws against these type spells when they do not fail.

INT: 18; PERS: 18; Possession Roll: d20+3; Spellcheck on Staff Spells: d20+4

Powers accessible when less than three artifacts are held: *Flaming Hands*

Powers accessible when three or more artifacts are held: *Invisible Companion*; *Scorching Ray*; *Turn to Stone*

Mantle of Manifold Sagacity: When the hood of this cloak is raised, the wearer is granted perception-related powers.

INT: 18; PERS: 17; Possession Roll: d20+2; Spellcheck on Mantle Spells: d20+4

Powers accessible when less than three artifacts are held: (+4 AC), *Detect Invisible*

Powers accessible when three or more artifacts are held: *Detect Evil*; *Detect Magic*; *Word of Command*

Ring of Hermetic Aegis: The ring confers upon its wearer a high degree of protection against attacks both mundane and magical.

INT: 18; PERS: 16; Possession Roll: d20+2; Spellcheck on Ring Spells: d20+4

Powers accessible when less than three artifacts are held: +4 AC; *Magic Shield*

Powers accessible when three or more artifacts are held: *Detect Evil*; *Detect Magic*; *Regeneration* (+2 hit points per-round)

Boots of Aetheration: These fine leather and gold-embroidered boots were made from the tanned hides of wink hounds, hence their ability to enable their wearer to walk where he pleases.

INT: 18; PERS: 15; Possession Roll: d20+1; Spellcheck on Boot Spells: d20+4

Powers accessible when less than three artifacts are held: *Displacement* (+8 AC)

Powers accessible when three or more artifacts are held: *Haste*, *Planar Step* (functions as a teleport, cannot leave Cube room)

Eye of Myt: When touched, this egg-sized blood-red gem will fly into the victim's left eye socket, gouging the wretch's own eye out in the process. The eye grants the user magically enhanced vision and the ability to kill others with but a glance.

INT: 18; PERS: 16; Possession Roll: d20+2; Spellcheck on Ring Spells: d20+4

Powers accessible when less than three artifacts are held: *Detect Invisible*, *Detect Evil*

Powers accessible when three or more artifacts are held: *Death Ray* (Reflex save vs. spellcheck or instant oblivion)

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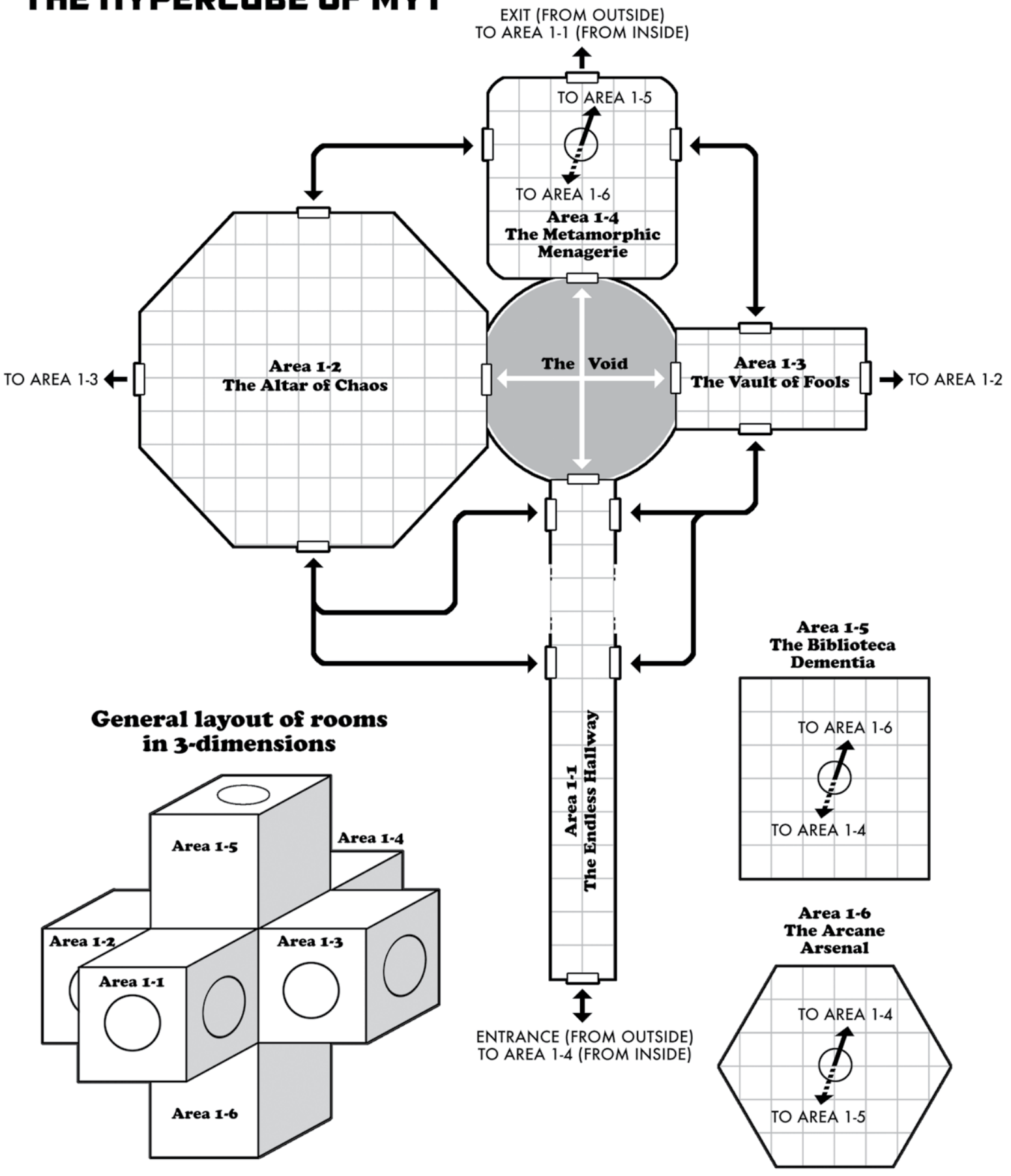
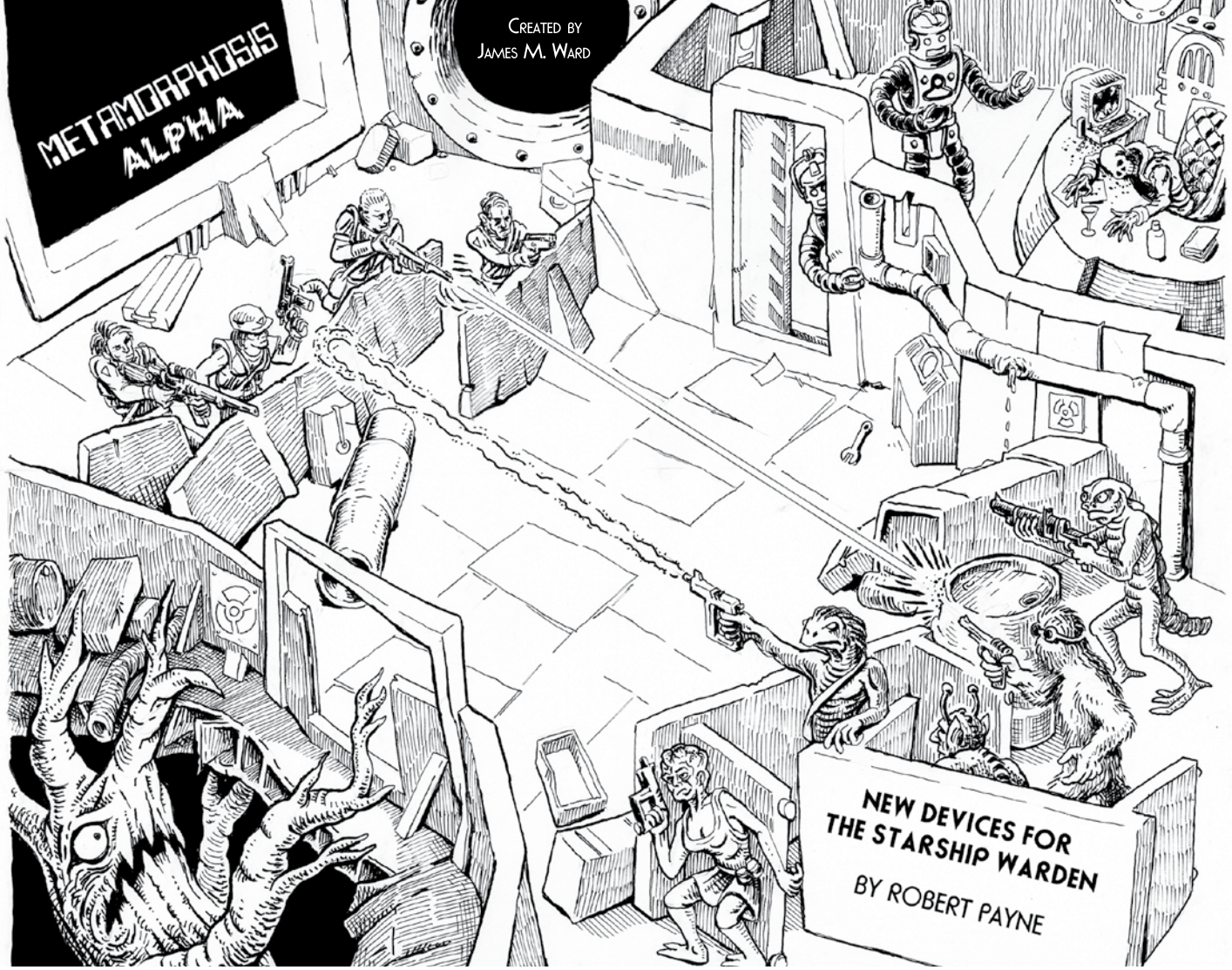
The Hypercube of Myt



General layout of rooms in 3-dimensions

Area 1-5
The Biblioteca Dementia

Area 1-6
The Arcane Arsenal



In 2290 humanity launched the greatest expedition in all of its history. The massive colony ship *Warden* set out to colonize a distant star in hopes of finding new homes for an ever-expanding population back on Earth. To ensure the success of the expedition, all manner of tools, gear, and weaponry was stored aboard the ship. To supply replacements as needed, various automated *Manufacturing Units* (MUs) were built and placed throughout the vessel.

With the disaster, most of the ship's devices were destroyed or were broken due to years of neglect or violence. As "civilization" returned and repairs to vital systems were completed, two MUs (Tan-1 and Tan-2) were accidentally reactivated, and a small number of mundane devices were created. These devices then began to appear at pre-programmed delivery sites on various decks.

What follows is a partial list of the devices created by those MUs. The referee should note that these devices were intended to assist the colonists in their everyday lives. None of the devices were *intended* to be used as weapons.

The referee could use the ideas presented for even further adventures. For example, she could have an MU periodically reactivate sending random "gifts from the gods" to the player character's tribe. An expedition could center around finding a functioning MU. Imagine the possibilities of having characters explore the "fortress of the great muse Tantoo" and watching them attempt to escape its robot guards with as much loot as they can carry.

DEVICES CREATED BY TAN-1 and TAN-2:

Adhesive
Electrophone
Hypermeds
Kinetic Cutter
Kinetic Driver
Kinetic Fastener
Magna-Board
Magnatomic Clamps
Magnification Unit
Maintenance Servo Unit
Percusonic
Personal Access Unit
Pleasure Sphere
Power Grapnel
Solvent
Survival Belt
Synthaphone
Utility Belt

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS - A wide variety of musical instruments can be found within the vessel, even antiques constructed of brass or wood. Very few of these survived the disaster and the intervening years. However, Tan-2 produced three types of modern instruments that are more durable.

Electrophone: This appears to be a slender, metallic tube about 1 inch wide and 14 inches long. It is an air-activated device that can produce a variety of tonal inflections,

staccatos, and durations based upon the air pressure exerted by the user. A wide variety of horns, flutes, pipes, or combinations of them all can be synthesized by activating any combination of the 5 small buttons found on the side of the device.

Percusonic: This object is a flat tray about 8 inches wide and 16 inches long. On its surface are three 6-inch discs. Impacts upon the touch-sensitive discs produce a variety of volumes and sounds (which are controlled by manipulating three buttons on the side of the percusonic).

Synthaphone: About the same size and shape as the percusonic, the synthaphone has 90 small rectangular pads evenly distributed along its surface. These keys can be adjusted to create millions of different sounds and a dazzling array of synthesized tones.

All instruments can play for 120 hours on a single hydrogen energy cell.

ICR – 7

Report Filed by PR-K-401 -- Public Relations Android colloquially known as "the Seer"

Day 101: "Notify MSC that sentient lupines are utilizing a synthaphone to terrorize a human community on Deck 11. Will attempt to make contact with aforementioned community to affect capture of the device."

HYPERMEDS - A small 3-inch white tube with a button on one end. This one-shot device is meant to provide emergency first-aid to victims until a doctor can treat them. When activated against a patient's exposed flesh, it delivers a cocktail of antibiotics, radiation drugs, anti-toxins, pain relievers, and healing accelerators. In short, it will heal 1-8 points of damage from any source. It is dangerous to use this item more than once per 24 hours on one person. Treat each successive use as a cumulative intensity 4 poison. The hypermed has no effect on plants and only half the effect on animals.

ICR - 4

MAGNIFICATION UNITS - This unit comes in two configurations: a strap-on pair of goggles and a hand-held version. Both have the following functions: one, a variable magnification lens (up to x25); two, a low-light enhancer; three, a range finder with internal display. An energy cell will power the unit for up to 72 hours of continuous operation.

ICR - 9

MAGNA-BOARD - This anti-grav device was a common item amongst the youth of the pre-disaster starship. It is essentially a three-foot long metallic board with a control box attached to it by a cord. The board is stood upon, with the feet and body controlling direction of flight while the box is held to control speed and altitude. The propulsion unit will move up to 200 pounds at speeds up to 20 miles per hour. It can reach a maximum altitude of 30 feet. Heavier loads will reduce both speed and altitude proportionally. One energy cell will power this device for one hour.

ICR – 5

Report Filed by PR-K-401 -- Public Relations Android colloquially known as "the Seer"

Day 56: "Self-notification: Observed three small humanoids moving at high speed aboard a single Magna-board. They were apparently in pursuit of a mated pair of 'unicorns'. The 'unicorns' tried unsuccessfully to thwart their pursuers with their beams, but the magna-board always kept the hunters at a distance just outside the effective range of the blasts. Before I could observe the outcome, they group had disappeared into the woods."

PLEASURE SPHERES - Despite being illegal to bring on board, many of these addictive devices found their way into the ship before she launched. Powered for ten hours on one energy cell, the sphere - when handled by unprotected hands - sends neural impulses directly to the brain that act like a narcotic. Within moments the person is in a hypnotic stupor, unable to do anything while in a state of absolute bliss and contentment. The sphere's safety catch will automatically deactivate after one hour, but the effects remain for two more hours. Only intense physical pain can bring a person out of this trance. A person so roused will be dazed and confused with a penalty of -3 to all actions for the remaining time period. In addition, he will always be surprised in combat. While under the effects of the sphere, the *Mental Resistance* of the person is re-rolled; this effect wears off when the pleasure sphere is deactivated. Prolonged or repeated use may create a psychological addiction, at the referee's discretion.

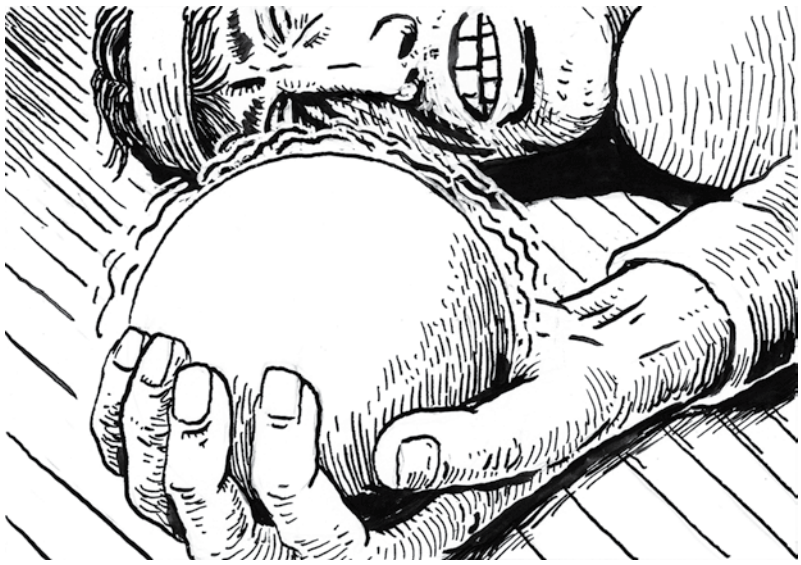
ICR - 8

KINETIC TOOLS - Kinetic tools rely on mechanical forces to get the work done.

Driver - The driver has three operations: one, a variable socket wrench; two, a cross-slotted bit driver; three, a driller/cutter/grinder. It only works on plastics, woods, and similar materials.

Fastener - This pistol shaped device is, in actuality, a magnatomic gun that drives a 1 inch metal fastener into any material except duralloy. It uses a liquid metal supply tube that attaches to the back of the unit providing enough material for 100 fasteners. If used as a weapon it is weapon class of 5, has a base range of two yards, and does one die of damage (firing twice per melee).

Cutter - Through the rapid rotation of



a circular, molecular blade this device can cut through one inch of any non-metallic material every combat round. If used as a weapon, it has a weapon class of 5 and does 4 dice of damage.

All kinetic tools are powered by a single hydrogen energy cell that provides 100 hours of continuous operation.

ICR - 7

Report Filed by PR-K-401 -- Public Relations Android colloquially known as "the Seer"

Day 88: "Recommend to MSC that TAN-1 be brought back on-line. Rationale: effectiveness of kinetic tools. Observed small community of human refugees creating a palisade and several homes using two cutters I had brought to them. They were able to understand the devices true function fairly quickly and then able to clear-cut the nearby trees in just over a day."

UTILITY BELTS - This belt contains various implements designed to ease the work of a typical crewman. A fully stocked belt will contain the following.

- Two hydrogen energy cells
- 30 feet of high-tension cable (with looped ends)
- A small **Light Tube** - It is about the size and shape of a pen and projects a beam of medium-intensity light up to a range of 50 feet. Isotopic batteries provide life for two years of lighting. ICR - 10
- An **Optical Enhancer** - This is a small tube that can act as a telescope (x5 magnification) or a microscope (x50 magnification). Both functions have low-light enhancers. It is powered for ten years on an internal isotopic battery. ICR - 8
- One **Dosimeter** - This is a simple 2 inch disc that can detect levels of radiation or poison. Each disc can only perform this function once before being rendered non-functional. ICR - 4
- A small knife

POWER GRAPNELS - Looking much like an old fashioned carbine, this device fires a bolt up to 300 feet that will magnatomically attach itself to any non-organic surface. As bolt travels to its target, it trails a high-tension cord that has a 220 pound load limit. There is a motor in the device that will retract the cord and a release switch that will deactivate the magnatomic bolt. The cable can be detached from the device if desired.

ICR - 6

ADHESIVE - This small tube contains a super-strong glue used for projects and light assembly. If used to glue a living being or robot, use the *Mental Strength Table* but cross-reference the affected being's *strength* with the glue's equivalent strength of 12. The resultant target number must be exceeded on a roll of the dice for the affected being to escape. If the glue was attached to clothing or armor, that clothing may instead be removed. A typical bottle has ten applications.

ICR - 9

SOLVENT - This small tube contains a solvent that will break down adhesives (including the above adhesive) and acids rendering them inert. A typical bottle will contain ten applications.

ICR - 5

MAGNATOMIC CLAMPS - These appear to be two boxes with large handles attached to either side. By working a simple toggle switch on both units, these clamps will adhere to any non-organic surface. Small anti-gravity generators then activate and float the object two feet off the ground. Up to one ton can be carried with relative ease. A hydrogen energy cell will power a clamp for ten hours.

ICR - 7

PERSONAL ACCESS UNIT - This unit resembles a thin, rectangular plaque measuring 6 inches by 9 inches. Once activated, it displays any information or visuals on a flat screen. It can also play back sounds through internal speakers. The unit can browse, search, and play a variety of books, movies, and music that were preloaded according to the customer's specifications.

An attached stylus allows the user to take notes onto the pad, and it has the capability to record sound and images.

Before the disaster, these units were able to patch into the Master Computer and access data and information appropriate to the user's color band clearance. Because of a manufacturing glitch, most of the existing units cannot access this function.

A single energy cell will power this device for about six months of regular usage.

ICR - 4

MAINTENANCE SERVO UNITS: This is a small spherical robotic device with limited capabilities. They were used for light maintenance in homes and businesses.

A. Basic programming circuits that allow it to respond to simple voice commands or computer / robotic control. It can also execute basic pre-programmed instructions.

B. A power cell that gives the unit the capacity to run for 48 hours before needing a new energy cell or a recharge (recharging stations are common throughout modular dwellings and in the city).

C. Basic vision and audio pick-ups.

D. A simple tool package and small cleaning tools (vacuum, disinfectant, etc.)

E. A low-powered light source (range 60 feet).

F. Low-powered anti-grav propulsion (15 mph).

This unit can be controlled by a being wearing any color band. MA

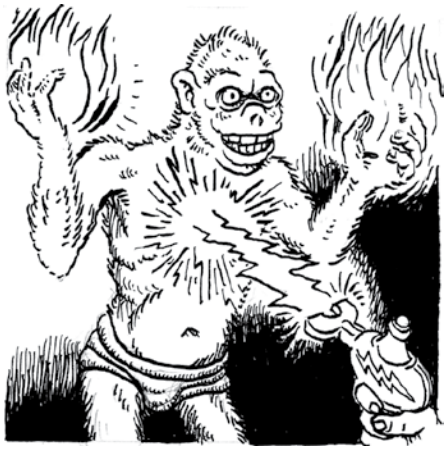
Between the original *Metamorphosis Alpha* rules and the *Mutation Manual* supplement published by Goodman Games, the *MA* gamer has well over 200 options available to him. Clearly that is insufficient! To remedy this situation and provide a few more options for your mutant characters, we hereby present 16 more mutations!

PHYSICAL MUTATIONS

ENERGY CONVERSION

Range: 10 ft **Duration:** Permanent
Damage: n/a **Area of Effect:** 10' radius

The ability to convert one form of energy into another. The mutant can only change one specific type of energy into another specific type of energy, not any type of energy into any other type of energy (for example, a mutant who can convert heat into electricity cannot convert heat into other types of energy or other types of energy into electricity). This mutation provides immunity to both types of energy, but only when actively converting them. Once the mutant ceases actively concentrating on the power or moves out of range, the energy type reverts back. A mutant that converts heat to electricity would not take damage from the electricity created by this mutation, but would if he touched exposed wiring.



MIMICRY

Range: Self **Duration:** Concentration
Damage: n/a **Area of effect:** hearing

The mutant's altered vocal cords allow him to recreate any sound he has heard with 100% accuracy. He can imitate the voices of other people, animal noises, and sounds from inanimate objects. The mutation does not give the mutant any extra volume, so the loudest sounds that can be made are equivalent to a human screaming.

MOLECULAR ABSORPTION

Range: Touch **Duration:** 10 minutes
Damage: n/a **Area of Effect:** Personal

This mutation allows the mutant to absorb the molecular structure of any substance touched, effectively transforming his body into that material. The advantages and disadvantages of specific materials vary. Transforming into harder substances can improve AC while increasing weight and limiting mobility. Becoming a liquid allows the mutant to slip through small spaces, but can be captured in containers or even drank! The mutation only works on solids and liquids; the molecular structure of gases cannot be absorbed.

OMNIPHAGE

Range: Self **Duration:** Constant
Damage: 2d6 **Area of effect:** Personal

With nearly unbreakable teeth, powerful jaw muscles, and a superior digestive system, the mutant can eat wood, stone, metal, plastic, fabric, flesh or anything else that he can fit between his teeth. A creature bitten by an Omniphage suffers 2d6 damage. The mutant is considered to have a Constitution score of 18 when resisting ingested poisons.

RADIOACTIVE PARASITES

Range: 20 feet **Duration:** 1d6 rounds
Damage: Radiation
Area of effect: 1 creature

The mutant is host to a colony of highly radioactive parasites. With a mental command, the mutant can tell the parasites to feed on another creature he is touching. The target suffers a radiation attack while the tiny parasites burrow through its body. The intensity of the radiation is equal to the mutant's radiation resistance. The parasites will only feed on the target for 1d6 rounds, and after that they are sated. They will not feed again until at least an hour has passed.

UNBREAKABLE BONES

Range: Self **Duration:** Constant
Damage: n/a **Area of Effect:** Personal

This mutation makes a mutant's bones stronger than steel, giving a better resistance to certain types of physical trauma. A mutant with this mutation takes half damage from attacks that rely on physical force (bows, crossbows, and melee weapons like swords and clubs). This resistance also applies to damage sustained from falling, being crushed, and other situations at the referee's discretion.

MENTAL MUTATIONS

APPORTATION

Range: 1 mile **Duration:** 10 minutes
Damage: n/a **Area of effect:** Personal

The mutant mentally reaches out into space, summoning an object he desires to his hand. Any object of hand-held size or smaller can be summoned as long as it exists somewhere within a mile of the mutant. The mutant cannot summon a specific item ("the sword my opponent is holding"), he can only summon a type of object ("a sword"). After 10 minutes have passed, the apported item returns to its original location. The object may or may not be functional or immediately usable, depending on its place of origin and history.

BRAIN DRAIN

Range: 50 ft **Duration:** 1 day
Damage: n/a **Area of effect:** 1 target

This mutation attacks the mental defenses of another creature. With a successful mental attack, the mutant reduces the mental resistance of the target by 1d6. This mutation can only affect a specific creature once per day, and the creature regains any lost mental resistance after 24 hours.

CHRONOPATHY

Range: Self **Duration:** Constant
Damage: n/a **Area of effect:** Personal

The mutant has an absolute sense of time. He always knows exactly what time of day it is as well as the day, month, and year (if the mutant is familiar with multiple timekeeping systems, he can instantly convert one to another). Even if the mutant is asleep or unconscious, he will know exactly how much time has passed when he wakes. If he travels though time, he will know exactly how far forward or back he traveled. If the mutant encounters someone or something that has traveled though time, he will recognize this, and know whence the traveler comes.

SUPER LOGICAL

Range: Self **Duration:** Constant
Damage: n/a **Area of effect:** Personal

The mutant has a super logical brain, so much that he thinks differently than other beings. The mutant receives a 15% bonus when attempting to how to use a technological device, and if he fails the chance of injury is reduced by 5%. This mutation gives the ability to swiftly perform complex mental mathematics. The mutant's enhanced logic also results in a reduced capacity for emotion. The mutant is completely immune to fear, emotion-based mind control, and any other emotional manipulations.

PLANT MUTATIONS

ANIMAL REPELLANT

Range: Self **Duration:** Constant
Damage: n/a **Area of effect:** 30' radius

The plant produces a foul-smelling musk that sickens creatures. Any creature within 30' of the plant must roll its Constitution or lower on 3d6. Any creature failing this roll will remove itself from the area of effect as quickly as possible. Within 10' of the plant, the stench is downright poisonous. The strength of the poison is determined by the referee, and a numerical result indicates the creature flees the area. A "D" result means the creature is completely incapacitated with retching and vomiting until it is removed from the area of effect.

BLINDING SPORES

Range: 10 ft **Duration:** Special
Damage: n/a
Area of effect: 10'x10'x10'

The plant can release a spray of brown spores into the eyes of a creature, blinding it. The spores are treated as a poison, with the strength of the poison determined by the referee. A numerical result is the number of dice rolled to determine the duration of the blindness in minutes. A "D" result means that the creature has been permanently blinded.

DESSICATION

Range: Self **Duration:** Constant
Damage: Special
Area of effect: 10' radius

The plant gets water by absorbing it from other living things. All creatures within ten feet of the plant begin to lose their moisture to the plant. Creatures lose one point of Constitution for each round spent in the area of effect. If a creature's Constitution is reduced to zero, it dies. Multiple plants with this mutation in an area can kill a creature very quickly. Once removed from the area of effect, creatures regain one point of constitution each hour, but only if they have access to drinkable water.

IRON ROOTS

Range: Self **Duration:** Constant
Damage: n/a **Area of effect:** Personal

The plant's strong roots can grow into dirt, stone, metal, flesh, wood, or any other substance. The plant's root system is such that the plant cannot be moved, uprooted, or knocked over against its will. If the plant is mobile, it can root and unroot itself at will.

SLIPPERY SAP

Range: 20 ft **Duration:** 1 hour
Damage: n/a
Area of effect: 20'x20' surface

The plant can spray an area with a slick sap that makes movement difficult. When moving through the affected area, a creature must roll its Dexterity or less on 3d6 or fall down. The plant can also directly attack a creature with a glob of sap. Once a creature has fallen or been successfully attacked with sap, it is covered in the slippery substance and must roll its Dexterity or less on 3d6 to perform any action that involves movement or holding an object. If the creature fails this roll, it falls down again or drops the object it is holding. The sap can be washed off, or dries up after an hour.

WHIP VINES

Range: 10 ft **Duration:** Instant
Damage: 1-6
Area of effect: all creatures within 10 feet

The plant has numerous vines that flail about, cracking like whips. The plant can make a WC 3 attack against as many creatures as it desires, as long as they are within the reach of its vines. An attack that hits does 1-6 damage. MA

2015 MAILING LABELS

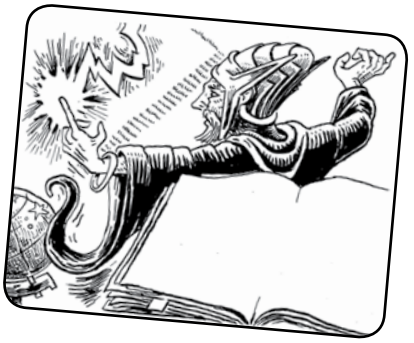
If you've ever ordered a Goodman Games product online, you've had the pleasure of receiving an order with our custom mailing labels. This year we produced a couple to/from labels that interact as part of a larger scene. Here, for the first time, are the labels shown beside their complete illustrations!

From the Chained Coffin Kickstarter

From the Purple Planet Kickstarter

See page 99 for the completed art from which these Metamorphosis Alpha mailing labels were taken.

Stefan Poag's spell duel illustration, above, was the basis for these two coordinated to / from mailing labels.



BEST POSSIBLE COMBINATION

Fiction by Brendan J. LaSalle

CHAPTER 1

The night before the 27th Annual Las Vegas Crawl, specialist William "B. Cool" Essex lay on his hotel bed, twirling his magic short sword around and talking on the phone to his girlfriend. He'd won the sword nearly a year ago but holding it still filled him with a sense of awe – double edge green metal blade with a distinctive wave pattern in the steel, cruciform hilt of grey ironwood with a spangle of tiny diamonds that shone like stardust, Friki-Choo cola logo in relief on the pommel. Billy liked holding his sword when he talked to Diana – it made him feel invincible.

"Dye, I wish you wouldn't worry –"

"Stop it. You know I can't *not* worry. And I'm not worried about you – well, you know, of course I'm worried about you. Monsters are going to try to kill you tomorrow. You know I hate it when you get hurt. But you're at least smart. It's those other losers –"

"Hey!"

"You know what I mean. José would rather be doing anything at all other than playing *Xcrawl*. Slamdog is -"

"José has really worked on his attitude this year – Fortuna came to him in a dream, said if he didn't get with the program he would never win another game of BattleClixx." Billy could feel his confidence draining out of him, like air from a punctured tire. He wrist-flicked his sword into the air, watched it slowly revolve, then caught it, after it spun. Invincible.

"Slamdog is an idiot."

"Slamdog is brilliant in his position. He's just, you know. . . not the best at. . ."

"Krystal is a selfish runt, and would burn you all down in a second if she thought it would get her a Guild award."

Somebody was knocking on the door.

"Totally not fair and you know it! Are you sure you're actually watching my team? Because the Disconauts –"

"Meena is okay when she isn't trying to make out with her whole fan club at once. And Howard is past it."

Billy threw his legs over the side of the bed and stood up. "No! Not okay! That is not okay to say. Howard saved my life!"

"You all save each other's lives! Every damn night! That's your jobs! But Howard, who I admit used to be the best guy on the team –"

Billy winced.

" – is now totally, one-hundred percent, certifiably past his prime! Ever since that thing swallowed him in San Diego he's been like a first year noob out there. He is going to slip up – *and something bad is going to happen*. I can feel it."

The knocking again, *louder*.

"Hold on!" Billy called at the door. He turned his back on it, walked away a few steps. "Diana, baby, I'm wondering – this thing you do, when we talk just before a crawl and you screw with my head, is it because you want me to die? Maybe you bet a few eagles that Outrageous Fortune would be the one who finally gets me?"

"Don't be a jerk. I don't want you to die. I want you to quit! If not The Games altogether then at least quit the Disconauts and find a better team. I get so scared."

Whoever was at the door was now steadily banging it in perfect Bossa Nova. That meant it was Meena.

"Baby, you can do so much better–"

"Diana I have to go. I'll call you after the dungeon. Wish us luck."

Billy hung up the phone. He saw that he had accidently

slashed a diagonal across the bed with his magic sword when he sat up. The cut went all the way through to the mattress, a chaos of springs poking out crazily. He shook his head, ready to chunk the damn sword out the window. He stomped to the door, threw it open.

"What?"

Meena stood barefoot in the hall in her sweatpants and ragged *Cafeteria Joe* t-shirt. "Howard's gone," she said.

CHAPTER II

Everyone stood in the hall outside Howard's room while Billy searched it. It felt like the dungeon had already started.

Billy was a decent fighter, very hard to tag in a melee. He could be a very efficient killer when he had the advantage, and he was *good* at finding advantages. He was nimble and slippery. He was a decent strategist, but not their best – that had been Howard by far. He was an excellent archer, not that he had actually had a chance to shoot his bow very much because the team most often used him for sneak attack commando raids and flanking. Overall a decent crawl fighter, but his specialty was the room sweep: searching for traps or finding clues was the reason they brought B Cool.

He didn't even know how he did it. It was partly the training, of course. He had put in hundreds of hours in search and observation, but all of that really just complimented his natural abilities. He walked into a normal-seeming room, and his eye would fall on some strange stone, or the upturned corner of a mat, or two ceiling tiles separated by a gap, that was just a hair too wide, and just like that – he would know that there was a tripwire, or some kind of pressure plate, or whatever. In training camp, Oni had called him a natural. "You have a criminal's eye and a hero's heart – best possible combination," was how she had put it.

Billy searched the room, just in case something strange was going on.

Four minutes after he entered he called his team in.

The specialist sat cross-legged on the perfectly made bed, fancy hotel stationary in his hand. The Disconauts crowded into the room: tiny Krystal first, her amazing eyebrows furrowed; José, nervously spinning the wheel of his holy symbol; Meena, head hung, only the pointy tips of her pointed ears visible under the mass of dark curls; Troy Sandler, their manager, still in his suit and yellow tie, face a knot of fury; Slamdog, having to duck his head a bit to get inside, in his *MercWear* tank top that showed off his incredible musculature and his orcish tribal tattoos.

Billy cleared his throat, and read.

"'Guys. I'm sorry but I just can't do it. It's my nerves. Borrowing the SUV. Please forgive. Howard.' The windows haven't been opened. No one used the shower. The room key is right there by the lamp, the keys to the Rover are gone, along with all of Howard's game gear, street clothes, and toiletries." Billy shrugged. "He ditched us."

"Give me that," said Troy. The team passed the note hand to hand. To Billy it looked like Troy was trying to light it on fire with his mind.

"He's a dead man," Troy said. "I'll have him killed for this."

José reached out to his manager, "Take it easy, Troy, I'm sure . . ."

Troy shoved the messenger's hand away. "We'll sue! I'll sue him for every gold piece he ever earned! He'll never do another crawl in his life!" Troy turned to stomp out, but had to negotiate his way past Slamdog.

"Troy . . ." José began.

"I have to get to a phone. Slam for the love of Apollo get out of my way!"

In the ensuing silence, the remnants of the Disconauts looked at one another, stunned. Earlier that day, Empire Sports 1 pegged The Disconauts as the second to least favored to win out of seven teams. Before Howard ditched them.

"Well," said Krystal, "I guess that saves me having to decide what to wear to our victory party."

"That bastard," said José. "What the heck are we supposed to do now? Crawl with no fighter? Fortuna have mercy."

"Don't be too hard on him," said Meena. "San Diego, holy crap. Do y'all even remember? That thing ate all of his skin. When we pulled him out you could see all of his muscles, and his eyelids were gone. I don't care who you are or how fast the healing comes, a scare like that is going to mess with your head no doubt."

"What do we do, Billy?" asked Slamdog, looking at Billy with his huge eyes.

Billy laughed with what sounded like real mirth. "Do? What do you think we do? We quit. We go home."

CHAPTER III

Troy came to their room at seven o'clock, tie askew, tiny plaits in his white chin beard where he had been twisting it.

"I called everyone I know at the Guild," said Troy, shoving an empty pizza box aside so he could sit on the bed. "Turn that off." They had been watching Empire Sports 1, to see if the media would somehow catch wind of Howard's disappearance. To no one's surprise, there was no mention of it. They were not an important enough team for anyone to watch them that closely.

"We can't get a replacement fighter. Nobody is going to jump team to join the Disconauts. Not with our record. I found another messenger who is looking for work . . ." everyone's eyes drifted over to José, who looked just the tiniest bit panicked.

" . . . but she's a messenger of Discordia. So, you know, forget that. That would be insane."

"Look," said Krystal, standing up on the bed. She was just shy of four feet tall but she had so much presence it was hard to keep her in perspective. "I can't just *not* do the dungeon tomorrow. I mean," and here she pointed to all the spots on her body that her many, many sponsorship patches covered when she was dressed for battle, "were talking a lot of money. A whole lot. And I let down a lot of people who count on me.

And, hey, forget the money. I didn't come here to hang out in a hotel and watch the crawl on that crappy little TV. I came to Vegas to fight. I know Slamdog's with me on that."

Slamdog, sitting on the other bed doing isometrics, huge right fist pushing down against his left hand, grunted agreement.

Krystal continued. "So we go for it. Obviously, if it's too much for us we find a NoGo door and get out of there. But I say we pull up our big girl panties, get in there, and do the job we came here to do."

José nodded. "Krystal is right. Like it or not, Blessed Fortuna has led us to this place. We lost Howard and nobody is saying that's not a piece of extremely bad luck, but that simply means we are due to rise again! The Disconauts ride the Wheel of Fortune, like every man and woman under lofty Olympus. I mean, we could get on that bus, start heading back to Cincinnati, get killed by bandits, and die on the road with no victory and no glory. I don't want spend eternity walking the night lands telling my honored ancestors how my cowardice became my doom."

Everyone looked askew at José, who was not generally prone to that kind of elucidation. Meena was nodding her head, looking a little more confident than she had all night.

Billy stood up. "That's great, José. Well said. Have you been rehearsing that in the mirror?"

José screwed his face up and looked away.

"Yeah, real nice. Here's the reality, folks. If you want to do this dungeon without a heavy armor fighter, that's fine. Great even. I wish you all the luck in the world. But you do it without a specialist too."

Krystal rolled her eyes, "Now there's some team spirit."

"You want team spirit? Here's some team spirit for you. Howard took the Range Rover. Did anybody bring the crate upstairs?"

The team shared a moment of horrified silence. Meena looked like she was going to cry. Even Krystal let out a long breath, and sat down hard on the bed.

"Howard has the potions," said José. He sounded lost.

"Howard has the potions," agreed Billy.

CHAPTER IV

The Crate was a steel case with foam cutouts inside, made to keep their potions snug and safe. They had taken to leaving the Crate locked in the car until the last minute. The participant's lot had twenty-four hour security including video surveillance, and no one could get close enough to mess with it.

Billy very nearly died in an incident a few years back where some total d-bag of a wizard on one of their rival teams – they never found out which one, but they all suspected that bastard Rope-a-Dope from the Goldaholics – had used some kind of artifact to neutralize all of their potions by running it along the exterior walls of their hotel rooms. In the second encounter of the dungeon Billy charged around an enemy formation, thinking he was invisible. Billy still held the Guild record for being hit with the most javelins in a single Division 3 encounter.

"As far as I can recall," said Billy, "that would be eighteen healing potions, two of my invisibility potions, Slamdog's toughness potion, those two blue ones that Meena's been saving - what were those again?"

"Charisma enhancers," she murmured.

Billy smiled and nodded. "That's them, the charisma enhancers. And that may be it. No . . . I feel like I'm forgetting something . . . oh, of course, that one that Krystal has that will let her breathe fire." He shook his head. "I have to admit, I was really looking forward to watching you use that one. Anyway, yeah, the team. You know I love the Disconauts. The Disconauts has been my life since the beginning. I'm the only original member left. Everybody else jumped ship long ago."

"Or died, Fortuna keep them," said José.

The whole team silently raised their right arms and did the Disconaut salute – point skyward to the right, point earthward to the left, point skyward to the right. Troy did it along with them.

"So we might – just might, I'm telling you – be able to survive this with no heavy armor fighter. Not win, never win, but survive. Back in the old days we lost Bonecrusher in the second room of that hideous Albany Invitational we did and we got through the entire first and most of the second level. This is a strong team, always has been. But no heavy armor *and* no potions? I mean, José is a great healer, hail Fortuna. But who here would be dead right now if it hadn't been for a healing potion at some point?"

He thought of Diana. *Something bad is going to happen, I can feel it*.

Troy threw his hands up. "Okay, I'm picking up what you are putting down. I don't want anybody dying out there because of Howard. That son of a bitch! I'll call the producer, explain what's going on. She isn't going to be happy. Kris, I totally understand about you and the sponsorships. I'll do what I can, make some calls . . . "

"If I don't do the crawl they'll revoke my visa," said Slamdog. "I'll have to go back to the underground."

Slamdog was a half-orc. His position on the team roster was listed as "athlete," but it might as well have been *one-man terror squad* or *worst nightmare of enemy spellcasters*. Slam was a brutal barehanded fighter, a fierce wrestler, and a boxer of uncommon cunning. He could outrun a hell hound, could bend a broadsword in his bare hands. He was only allowed to be above ground at all because of his work visa – it allowed him to train with the team and participate in events, but not much else. Part of his visa specified that he couldn't miss a match without some sort of written exemption from some high mucky-muck in the Adventurer's Guild who would most certainly never, ever, stick his neck out for a half-orc.

Half-orcs who left the Zura'ah'zura, the vast network of underground cities and conclaves where humanoids and monsters lived, to ally themselves with humans and, worse,

elves, weren't very welcome back in their home territories. Sending Slamdog back home to Orc City 2, or even the relatively civilized capitol of Lathonicha'ah, was a death sentence. He was fifteen years old.

Billy put his face in his hands.

CHAPTER V

The phone rang in Billy's hotel room. It had taken seven calls to get a ring back from Oni. He explained the situation, pacing between the edge of the slashed bed and the tiny writing desk by the TV stand. His eyes were drawn again and again to the neon skyline of Vegas out the window. It looked like people in the real world were having fun.

Oni clucked her tongue when he told her about Slamdog's visa problem. "Well that is truly unfortunate. Slamdog is talented. What do you want me to do?"

"I thought maybe you could ask someone to substitute for us tomorrow. What's Pecos Pete doing . . . "

"Non-starter. Even if the Guild would allow Pete, a Division *One* superstar and the Adventurer's Guild 2011 Best Axe Fight titleholder, to drop down to Division Two for your little Las Vegas romp – and they will not do so, let me assure you – he wouldn't do it just because I asked him to. He still hates me for quitting the team. Poor thing. Inflexibility is such a liability in our line of work, wouldn't you agree?"

"Yeah, but . . ."

"But nothing. You want my advice? Do not do this crawl."

"Oni, I wish it were that easy. Too much rides on this."

"Sweetheart, forget that dungeon. Here's the new plan. You disband the team right now, tonight. They are no longer your problem. I'll buy you a bus ticket to Atlanta. Come work for me. I'm about to open a new *Oni's Dungeon Mastery Academy* franchise. A few months training and you would be ready to be my Lock and Traps Master."

"Oni, I . . . "

"Think about it. Steady income. Zero danger. Pension. You lose the excitement and glamour, but I don't think that was ever the appeal for you. Am I wrong?

Billy sat there silently in his room for a moment. He could do it. He could just walk away. Sorry, Slamdog, keep your tats covered and you might live long enough to find a really good hiding spot. Billy could take a straight job that would let him use his real talent. He could teach others to be good at the whole trap and lock thing. Heck, he'd be saving lives, wouldn't he? Teaching up-and-coming specialists how not to have their heads blown off . . . it was almost noble.

But he couldn't do that to Slam. He thought about their last crawl; Slam, the consummate team player, rushing into a hail of arrow fire to peel away the two orcs that were methodically slashing Billy to ribbons. How many arrows had that fool taken? Seven? Eight? That one skewered his neck and certainly would have been fatal if José had not been there five seconds later with a healing spell. They had lost that crawl, but Billy had lived and now at night, when he said his prayers to Mercury and Apollo, he mentioned Slamdog every night. Keep that big, crazy galoot safe.

And he had another thought, a much older desire, a much more personal one.

Hanging out with Diane senior year, watching the Division V Rock and Roll Cavemen going through DJ Lesbee Real's hilariously frustrating maze. Billy asked Dye about her dreams.

"You'll laugh, my dreams are so . . . I don't know, boring."

"Come on."

"Fine. I want to go some place. Almost everybody I know has never even been out of Atlanta. I want to see some of the world before I die. I don't know how . . . I mean . . . you know. I'm not some high-born Lady who can just jet off to Paris or something but that's what I want. Just to leave the Empire one time and see a bit of the world."

Billy had stored that little bit of information away. And years later, on the day that he fell in love with Diana so hard that he felt like he would die from it, he decided to win her a vacation. Commoners couldn't leave the Empire except under the most unusual of circumstances. One of those circumstances was Xcrawlers who won vacation packages, a not-uncommon prize that somehow Billy had failed to achieve again and again and again.

Billy was still in love. Not like it had been when they were twenty years old, not the devouring, insane, psychopathic love that wouldn't let him sleep or eat until she returned his call and said *yes, I miss you too*, but it was love. She had gone a bit crazy over the years, but she was still the woman Billy had fallen in love with. She still whistled in the shower, still held his hand in bed, still got jealous of his fan mail from women, still cried whenever he came home safe from a Crawl.

Billy realized he had been quiet for a while, while his old teacher listened to a quiet phone. "Oni, thank you, that's a wonderful offer. I am grateful. But I have to do this dungeon."

"Tisk tisk. This kind of stubbornness is going to get you killed. Okay, let me see what I can do."

CHAPTER VI

Billy woke up to his phone ringing at eight in the morning, light streaming through his hotel window. He hadn't fallen asleep until almost three and felt like crap. His first thought was *this very well might be the last phone call I answer in my life.*

"Hello?"

"Yes, good morning. Lord Martin Tideswell here. Am I speaking to William Essex, known as . . . " Billy heard some pages turning. "B. Cool?" He said the name with an unmistakable tone of distaste.

"That's me, um, can I help you, uh, Lord Tideswell?"

"Actually, it seems that I can help you. This morning at three-thirty I put one of the warriors I am training on an aeroplane. He should be landing at Las Vegas Imperial within the hour."

Billy threw his blankets away and sat up. Shifting that way made the slash in the mattress expand to show its layers of fiber and springs.

"A fighter? On his way here now?"

"That is what I said. Only, let's not be hasty with the appellation "fighter." When a man *finishes* training with me you can confidently call him a fighter in the classic tradition. I'm afraid with the short notice I could only spare my most recent recruit. I hesitated to do so but your friend Oni is particularly . . . persuasive."

"But he has had some training? Heavy armor training?"

"This . . . individual is a dwarf, as it happens. Born to armor and shield and the axe. He's quite dynamic in battle. He'll serve well enough. And, not to put too fine a point on it, I'm afraid he is the only choice."

"Oh wow, Martin . . . "

"*Lord* Tideswell, thank you very much. For my trouble and expense you can at least do me the courtesy of using my rightful title."

"Of course, Lord Tideswell, I'm sorry, I didn't mean any disrespect. Thank you. Thank you! Oh, wow, we might actually live through this!"

"Apollo willing."

"Apollo willing. Sir, I have to get off the phone, I have to tell everybody. Um . . . what's this guy's name?"

"Gurnach. Gunter Gurnach." The dwarvish name sounded strange with Tideswell's crisp British accent.

Billy thought a moment, rubbing his eyes. "Forgive me, my lord, but I don't recognize the name."

"Yes . . . well, not likely you would. This will be his first event."

"He's never crawled? Woah, wait, can he even do this? This is a Division Two event – full lethal. We're about to go fight *monsters*. I don't think he can just . . . "

"Arrangements have been made. Now, if you will excuse me. Good day. Apollo keep you safe, William Essex." He hung up.

CHAPTER VII

"He's a noob?" said José.

The whole team sat around table in the hotel's bustling buffet restaurant eating breakfast. Billy took a bite of his bacon. *This might well be the last bacon I ever eat*. He chewed it very slowly before answering.

"Lord what's-his-name said he has armor and weapon training. Called him 'dynamic,' whatever that means," said Billy.

"Dynamic. You know, as opposed to one of those passive, laid-back fighters you see disemboweling death knights on Empire Sports 8," said Krystal.

Slamdog slurped up a huge clump of the whole wheat spaghetti with butter that they had talked a line cook into preparing for him. "Well that's good anyway," he said, wiping a shine of butter from his lips with the back of his huge hand. "Passive wouldn't help us at all."

Krystal took a deep breath.

"Look, last night we agreed that we would do the crawl. We were going to do it with just the five of us. Now we have a sixth guy, we can't be doing any worse, can we?" Billy grabbed his empty coffee cup, held it up in the general direction of the kitchen.

"Um, let's see . . . can a bad teammate become a total and utter liability?" Krystal waggled her fingers with shocking precision at the counter, and a pot of coffee floated its way over to the table. She made it land on Billy's plate. "Hmm, I do believe the answer is yes, indeed. We should tell him to go take a hike. I mean, it's one thing that we haven't had a chance to train with him, but this noob never done a crawl! This is Division Two, not the Sunnydale Action League semi-finals!"

"He could get killed," said Meena, squeezing a lemon wedge into her tea. "It won't be fair."

"He could get us all killed!" said Krystal.

"Fortuna didn't bring us this far just to let us all die," said José. He looked surprisingly fresh and well rested. "The Goddess has big plans for us. And now . . . " he whipped out his red holy six-sided dice.

This was a pre-crawl ritual they had performed ever since José had joined the squad two years previously. Everyone quickly cleared everything off the table, making a pristine rolling space. José handed the dice to Slamdog, who blew on them and handed them to Meena on his left. Everyone did the same until the dice came back to José.

José kissed the back of his hand and rolled.

The dice did their dance, tumbled, and stopped.

Three single pips stared up from the dice. Three ones.

No one spoke for a long moment.

There was a burst of laughter from the far side of the restaurant. It was the Huntsville Death Makers – their gnome illusionist was standing on the table doing some kind of puppet show, nimbly keeping four napkins in the air at once and having a monster she had made out of a cup and saucer eat them one at a time. They were having fun.

"Wouldn't it be funny," said Slamdog "if I died today, and so it turns out I should have gone back underground anyway?" He tucked back into his pasta.

CHAPTER VIII

The Disconauts met their newest member forty minutes before the crawl was scheduled to begin.

They were in the green room, dressed for the dungeon. This green room was actually comfortable, for a change. Plush benches, warm-up-maps, and a tiny hot buffet table with coffee and sandwiches. The AVS over the door to the dungeon played a continuous looping advertisement for all the shows currently playing Vegas, focusing on girls in feathers and dire lions leaping through huge hoops.

Billy felt numb. He didn't neglect his warm up – he wasn't suicidal – but he couldn't shake the feeling that it was all for nothing. He did handstands, splits, standing high jumps. He drew his sword right handed and his lock picks with his left, put them away, and then switched hands. He was on his nineteenth repetition of this when the door to the parking lot opened.

Two security guards came in followed by a dwarf with a dirty blonde beard who carried a massive, clunking duffle bag, the head of an off-the-rack battleaxe poking out of the top.

There had never been a dwarf Disconaut before. Krystal had worked with a dwarf cleric of Dumakrüm on her first team. "Made us pray every time we divided up any treasure," she often said.

The dwarf looked over the crew, then laughed. He yelled something at them in dwarvish, then threw down his duffel and started to unbutton his pants.

"Woah, buddy, they have changing rooms," said Krystal.

The Dwarf, hirsute and muscular, pale skin shockingly scarred, stripped town to his gruesome tidy whities, then started to dig around in his bag and assemble his armor.

"So," said Billy, "welcome to the team. When I talked to... I guess he's your trainer - Lord Tideswell, is that right?"

The dwarf looked up for a second at the name, then went back to untangling the buckles on his grieves. He was laying his plate armor out in a line on a first found, first placed basis.

"Yeah, he didn't have much to say about your training. Don't get me wrong, we are all grateful that you came on such short notice. We're just worried about your experience. This is live steel, real monsters. I mean, do you know what you are getting into?"

The dwarf found a red union suit and started to pull it on.

José cocked an eye at Billy, then addressed their new team mate. "Hey friend, we need to talk for a second and come up with a plan here. Fortuna in her wisdom put us all together and we need to talk strategy. We don't have a lot of time."

The dwarf stopped for a moment and looked José over. José was a Hispanic man in his early thirties, not much taller than his new teammate. If the messenger of Fortuna was not exactly imposing he possessed a certain quality of intensity. He had the eyes of a much older man, eyes that had glimpsed the underworld. He wore a tunic over his chain mail, and his holy symbol hung on a long, thick silver chain around his neck.

Half in his red union suit, the dwarf walked over to José until they were just a few inches apart. He gave the holy symbol an appraising look. He picked it up off José's chest, gave its wheel a spin. He looked up at José, gave him a nod. *Not bad*. He went back to his bag, brought out a beautiful picture frame of silver and oak. The picture was of their new teammate and two other dwarves - females? – standing in front of the gate of Ruby Falls. The dwarf swayed a bit as he mimed trading items.

"Jeweleyes preserve us, is he kidding?" Krystal, beautiful and resplendent in her red and black adventuring gear, for once looked like she was the one on the wrong end of life's great joke.

Meena crept up on the dwarf, sniffed at him like a cat. "He's drunk."

"No way. Are you sure?" said Billy.

Meena shrugged, struck a pose. It was almost show time, and before all of their eyes Meena transformed into her stage persona, the indomitable Double Dutch. "Elf senses and human caboose. Best possible combination, baby."

The dwarf, sensing negotiations breaking down, put away the picture with the brilliantly wrought frame back in his bag and got back to getting his armor out.

Billy felt his heart start to bang like a machine gun. "Gunter!" The dwarf looked back at them. "Is she right? Are you drunk?"

He spoke to them again in dwarf.

"Wow," said Slamdog. "I don't think he talks English at all."

They tried every language in their collective repertoire: Elvish, Gnome, Spanish, Draconic, José's high school French. Nothing.

Gunter knew a few words of Orcish, and so Slamdog tried to speak with him but they didn't get much farther than "We kill together!" and "We act now!" and "Everybody dance!" – and, of course, the last one was a joke. Everybody knew that phrase from last year's big crossover club hit from that band from Orc City 1.

The ref wandered over. "Good afternoon. I'm Albert Sands, head referee. So we're going to be starting in about half an hour."

"Excuse me," said Billy. "One of our team mates doesn't speak any English."

That stopped the ref cold. "Well, one of you is going to have to translate for him once we're done."

"We can't. None of us speak Dwarvish."

The ref looked the team over. "Then how do you train together?"

Krystal sighed, and then turned the cute on. "I know, its crazy, right? I can't believe it myself. But listen – you could really help us out if there was somebody here who could

translate for us. Or . . . " she opened her huge eyes really wide. "Maybe there's somebody who could cast a translation spell for us? I didn't practice mine." She smiled ruefully and hung her head to the left, radiating sweet innocence.

The ref smiled back. "Tell you what. I'll go and see what I can do. You just get ready and at two twenty-five line up in front of Arcane Video Screen number one, just over the in door."

The ref left. Gunter got his armor on. Slamdog stretched. Krystal went off by herself and practiced her gestures, ignoring everyone. José prayed. Meena did some vocal warm-ups, and walked around on her toes for a while.

Billy went to the ice chest and took out a soda. This might well be the last Friki-Choo I ever drink, he thought.

CHAPTER IX

Five minutes until game time. The ref had never returned with any sort of translator, and now they were about to begin.

Gunter in his armor didn't look much more impressive than Gunter in his union suit. He looked sleepy. He stood next to Slamdog, surprisingly comfortable with the big half-orc. Slamdog cheerfully reported on their conversation. "He says we are going to kill together!" "He says it's time to act now!" It wasn't helping anyone feel better.

The AVS activated and the opening ceremonies began. Billy could barely pay attention.

DJ Outrageous Fortune finally made his appearance. This year he was carried to the stage in a giant wine glass, laughing the whole while. A formal white toga covered his massive belly, and he wore a crown of laurels. Fortune was jolly and personable; really one of the few DJ's who didn't come off as a sadist or a psycho. Billy decided that he was glad he was going to die in this guy's dungeon; then he dismissed the thought. He was going to make it home. He was going to survive.

He thought of Diana. *Something bad is going to happen, I can feel it.*

He checked his equipment with his hands, never taking his eyes off the AVS: Sword, bow, quiver, arrows, two Skyfire arrows, dagger, smoke bombs, dagger, dagger, knife, lock picks, back-up lock picks, the one potion of invisibility that he had not gotten around to stashing in The Crate, rope, snap-out grapple.

The team was introduced. They showed the Disconauts clip, and one second before it began Billy realized that it still had Howard in it. Still starred Howard, to own the truth.

Their opening music kicked off with a funky 70's bass beat with a handclap. The clip opened on Howard, in that boar bristle helmet he loved so much, and had his Crawl name, Barrelhouse, in digital letters as he did an amazing maneuver with his scimitar, switching hands mid-swing to avoid a parry and slashing a bugbear down. The music swelled to full disco symphonic. They showed another crawl, Barrelhouse diving into a pool and fighting a lizard man underwater in full armor, then getting pulled out and pumping his fist to the crowd.

What the hell happened to you, Howie? thought Billy. *You weren't afraid of anything on this earth.*

The clip continued. Krystal, crawl name Zoomarang, blowing a cloud of demon bats out of the air with her spellweaver blast. Meena, the incredible Double Dutch, facing an ogre down, shouting slam poetry at it while worrying it with her Wudang sword technique. José, slicing his hand and holding it up, the blood making a pack of ghouls cower in fright. And there he was, B. Cool, diving under a blast of lightning, coming up with a roll and then looking straight into the AVS camera, face as mild as if he was getting the mail out of the box. More, lots more, all of them working together. Howard was in just about every shot. He looked awesome out there, the baddest Division 2 scimitar and shield man possibly ever. The clip ended on Billy's favorite bit – an enemy spellcaster drops a fireball on B. Cool and a bunch of his own gnolls, a sacrifice play to take out the specialist. When the smoke cleared all of the gnolls were dead and there was B. Cool, face serene, smirking as he put out a spot of fire on his elbow. No worries.

That was his thing. Troy always said that whenever you saw Billy in a dungeon he looked like he had just finished a tricky Sudoku puzzle. He didn't know how it happened, or why, but when the action started his mind went frosty and his face was just blank, with the tiny trace of a smile. B Cool.

"Okay," said José, turning his back on the AVS while Outrageous Fortune gave the final invocation. "This is bad. I'm going to smile while I say this so he can't guess what I'm saying but this drunken moron of a dwarf is probably going to die in the first room and you all just have to be ready for that, and may Fortuna prove me wrong. If he goes down don't freak out! It is not our fault! Me and Slam are going to have to take point in heavy combat and trust our luck. Keep an eye on your buddies at all times. And know where every NoGo door is, but if we have to run we run as a team, *comprende*? B. Cool. It's got to be zero mistakes today, feeling me? You can't miss a trap."

Billy nodded, impressed that José was stepping up and giving the pep talk. That had always been Howard's job.

He continued. "Zoomarang, Howard was always telling you to conserve your power, make sure we have something for the last room. Well, he screwed us, and because he did you got to cut loose, baby. We have to make it those last rooms before we can worry about having something left for them. Burn it all down."

Krystal's face lit up. She mimed shooting pistols in the air.

"Slam, you just get out there and do what you do."

Slamdog barked like a war dog. That day he was the heart and soul of the team.

"Gunter . . ." José switched to Orcish, "We kill together!" The dwarf seemed to wake up a bit, waved his crappy battleaxe and shouted something.

José turned on Meena, switched to his street voice. "Double Dutch, spare a moment for the peoples and break

them off a little sumpin' sumpin'? Why don't you let us all know . . . what. Is. Up!"

The light over the door turned green, and the ref pointed. Game on.

The half-elf tapped her wireless mic to turn it on. "Aw, you wanna know what's up?" said Double Dutch, in her amazingly thick growl. They could hear her words faintly through the speakers on the far side of the door. "Wellllllllll . . . " and she started her slam poetry, obviously improvised on the spot because she not only worked Gunter in, she wove José's pep talk through the narrative. Lyrical genius, Wudang sword master, utterly devoted to her fans – the devastating Double Dutch, double trouble when she showed up to rumble.

Billy took a knee and checked the door, feeling carefully, no rush. Everything cool. He found an unnecessary screw on the top of the doorframe. He held up his pinky and middle finger, their hand signal for trap. José touched his shoulder while he worked and he felt Fortuna's blessing course through him. He had looped the tripwire back on itself in less than a minute, and they were ready.

José the Diceman opened the door. The crowd roared. It wasn't a huge crowd, but they were making noise and ready to see some action. The room was an oval arena, perhaps one hundred feet across. The stadium probably held three thousand and was about half way full. The crowd cheered, but you could tell in a second that they were cheering for the monsters. Billy saw a jerk in a tuxedo holding up a banner that read ABANDON ALL HOPE.

Across the arena were three chariots, each pulled by two of the biggest warhorses Billy had ever seen. The horses were covered in spiked armor, and the chariots were covered in spiked armor, and each one had a crew of four humanoids, big enough to be hobgoblins or orcs but in their heavy spiked armor they could be anything. They had crossbows and glaives and what looked to be a dozen smaller blades each. They were disciplined, charging in a perfect formation.

The game was on now, nothing to be done. B. Cool saw death riding down upon them.

They crowded into the room, the original Disconauts instinctively forming a wedge. José yelled to be heard over the crowd noise "Okay, when they get close enough we have to . . ."

"No!" Mina had broken her poem off to shout and point – Gunter stepped through the wedge from behind, shoving Krystal so hard she nearly fell, and was charging the three chariots, all alone and with no plan.

Billy wondered if they would kill the dwarf with crossbow bolts, or if he would live long enough to be trampled to death under roughshod hooves and spiked wheels.

Gunter ran to the left, wound up hard, and flung his battleaxe at the center chariot. Billy thought he had aimed for the driver and bricked it, but no – he hit the yoke holding the horses to the chariot. Suddenly the two horses were free of a half ton of chariot and charioteers, and they began to run off while the chariot, now missing the third part of the tripod that kept it stable, careened in the other direction, broad siding the chariot on their right and causing an epic wreck. Horses screamed and fell, bad guys flew off at all angles. One of them couldn't jump clear and had his legs pinned under the side. They were hobgoblins – one of their helmets had flown off, and you can't mistake hobgoblins for anything else – and the one under the chariot shrieked as he tried to move

the massive thing off him but one of its wicked spikes pinned his thigh to the turf. The freed horses got in the way of the third chariot, which had to bank hard to avoid a collision.

The crowd was silent for a full second. Eerily silent. Then they roared and got to their feet.

The Disconauts shared just the merest moment of disbelief, grinning at one another like idiots, before they went to work mopping up the stragglers. One of the crossbowmen in the final upright and functional chariot had managed to put a crossbow bolt in Gunter's breadbasket, and José drew it out and healed the wound with a spell. Zoomarang hit the turning chariot with a spellweaver blast, blinding them. Slamdog ran to the downed chariot and snapped a hobgoblin's neck. Double Dutch turned to the crowd and got them all chanting along with her slam poem, now entirely devoted to Gunter and his amazing first strike. Billy ran to the confusion of downed chariots, drawing his magic sword as he went, and slashed a hobgoblin along the back of his neck.

It was over in less than a minute. The air horn sounded – they had won their first room. Billy, who always kept track, tallied it up. Exactly one injury. They used one healing spell and one spellweaver blast. A chariot had rolled over Gunter's crappy axe, and the shaft was broken, but Krystal had a spell that would mend it and she could cast it as many times a day as she liked. It was as close to a perfect first room as they could ever ask for, their best opening ever.

The crowd chanted GUN-TER! GUN-TER! Billy looked up – the scoreboard had him listed as Gunter "Gunter" Gurnach. The dwarf in question didn't seem to understand that the air horn had signaled the end of the room, and was currently playing ring around the rosy with a running hobgoblin, who kept moving to keep a referee in between him and getting killed with what appeared to be a chef's knife. Even as the announcer listed their prizes (two thousand gold, three badly needed potions, and a fat tab for them all to share at one of the local casinos), Gunter went after the hobgoblin, throwing and missing with the kitchen knife, then managing to grab the fleeing fighter by his boot. The dwarf started dragging the goblinoid over to the chariot, presumably to impale him on one of the spikes while the ref blew his whistle again and again.

"Wow, he isn't passive at all," said Slamdog.

CHAPTER X

That night the Disconauts held court at the Dragon's Hoard Casino's second floor bar, the Treasure Type D-Rinks. The low constant roar of Vegas came in through the open bar doors, chimes and bells and whistles all weaving through the happy grumble of gamblers.

The Disconauts had won a casino tab so big that they couldn't spend it in a year without gambling, and they had three days off until level two, so they were making extreme merry. They had, as one reporter had blithely put it, "exceeded all expectations thanks to their newest member, the one dwarf wrecking crew, Gunter Gurnach, no nickname as of yet." They had won a nice chunk of gold and some excellent prizes. No vacations, that was a drag, but a bunch of great stuff including a dining room set Diana was going to love, a bunch of spell scrolls that would really help with level two, some potions, a magic ring of protection, and a magic short sword that they had tried to give to Gunter, who had refused it. Meena wound up with it, and after one room named it "Slash Gordon."

Billy, José, and Gunter were at a back booth, their table filled with empty pints, tumblers, and shot glasses. Gunter snored companionably, face on the table. The fans and reporters had come and gone, and now Billy sat and sat with José, very drunk and as happy as he could ever remember being. They had passed the point of talking strategy, of making fanciful plans for the future, on their chances of going all the way to the Emperor's Cup with their new roster, and now Billy was trying to find something like chicken tenders on the fancy appetizer menu while José kept muttering, "He's one bad dwarf. One baaaaaaad dwarf. That's a bad dwarf, innit, Cool? Yesh, he's a baaaaaad dwarf."

Billy put the menu down and looked for their waitress. In one corner he saw Meena, surrounded by members of her fan club. She had an acoustic guitar and was playing something for them. Troy was at the bar – he had put the drink down years before but he was chatting with a few guys in suits, smiling and laughing big at their jokes. It had to be about a deal of some kind or other. Krystal sat with another gnome – Billy thought it might have been Carinn Seabolt, the sorcerer illusionist they called Magpie who played for the Death Makers, talking and laughing with their heads close. He didn't see Slamdog but that was no surprise – after a crawl he liked to veg out with television, so he was probably already back in his room.

Suddenly he wanted to talk to Diana. He got up, started shuffling to the outside of their semicircular booth. José pointed a finger "He's a bad dwarf! A *sheriously* bad dwarf!"

"Yeah he is, Diceman. Hey,you did good yourself today. Thanks for re-attaching my ear, that was awesome." He carefully made his way to the bank of pay phones between the men's and woman's room. The room smelled of stale cigarette smoke and gin. One of the reporters he had spoken to earlier was talking on one, reading from her little notepad. She gave Billy an excited wave, and he waved back. He picked up the phone, called home collect.

"Hello?"

"Dye! Oh Dye, baby, hey there."

"Sweetie, it's two in the morning."

"We've got three days off! I can sleep in."

"I have to work tomorrow."

"Okay, I'll let you go. But we did it!"

"You did great. I told you when you called me earlier, I'm very proud of you."

"We fought living statues, those spider things. The chariots, sweet Mercury Gunter one-wacked that chariot . . . and I didn't miss any traps! No traps did I miss! Did you see me disarm that one upside down?"

"You sound pretty drunk."

"Oh yeah, we won a tab. On the bar. A bar tab. Hey baby baby one more thing . . ."

"Sweetie, I have to go. Call me in the morning."

"Wait, I'm going to win, gonna win you –"

"Love you, Bill. Just please stay safe. I'm hanging up now." She hung up.

" – a vacation." Billy said.

CHAPTER XI

Troy scheduled a conference room in the hotel, and they had meetings all day long. Fortune had smiled on the Disconauts, and suddenly everyone wanted a piece.

They met with sponsors; a guy from a long-distance company, two women from an alchemist's wholesaler, a guy from another long-distance company, and the nephew of the CEO of WyldBurgers -who wound up not only picking up their hotel tab, but brought a tentative offer for the entire team that would be worth almost as much per crawl as all their other sponsorships combined.

They met with an equipment sponsor, who (among other things), promised to completely re-outfit Gunter (it turned out that his back-up weapon was indeed a chef's knife he had stolen from the hotel kitchen. It was at least better quality than his battleaxe).

At three o'clock they met with a scruffy wizard from the local Guild of Magi chapter. After gossiping with Krystal for a few minutes, he cast a translation spell on the dwarf.

"There," the wizard said. "You have about an hour."

"Can you make it permanent?" Troy asked.

The wizard raised his eyebrows. "Sure, if you have about three pounds of diamond dust and a wizard twice as powerful as me, no problem. Takes five minutes." He hugged Krystal and left.

"Gunter," said Meena. "Can you understand us?"

Gunter looked shocked. "Yeah, I sure can. Can you understand me?"

"Loud and clear," said Meena. She beamed at him.

"Great. What in seven hells is a 'Disconaut?'"

There followed a very brief history of the team's origin – how one of the founders, retired bard India "Groovinstein" Blair, was a disco geek who thought a theme team would make it easier to get into good events. It had not made anything easier and actually got them a lot of hurtful teasing on Empire Sports 2, but the name was already on the bank account and so it stayed.

Gunter listened, nodding. "Well, that's pretty stupid," he finally said.

Billy couldn't control himself. "Hey you better watch that. Better warriors than you have died for the Disconauts. And yes, even as I say that I hear how ridiculous it is and I don't care. Show a little respect."

Gunter looked up at Billy, interested for the very first time. "How many has the team lost?"

"We lost eleven over the years – six dead, four moved on."

Gunter nodded, thought for a moment. "Well, you have to respect the fallen warriors I suppose, so that daft name has to stay. It's just hard for me – it's very close to the dwarf word for "potato pancakes." I feel like a right idiot out there, fighting for the pancakes. And hey, can we have drinks brought in? At least a beer?"

Gunter told his story. He grew up in Telluride, working in the mines. He was only a fair miner, but a first rate drunk and when he had a few ales in him his temper got kind of hot. Like, face-smashingly hot. Over the years he became one of the most feared bar room brawlers in the history of the American Clans, spending more gold to pay back victims and their families for work-stopping injuries than the mining company itself. Finally, there had been a kind of grudge match between himself and his buddies, and a rival and her buddies. In the ensuing hour-long tavern-smashing donnybrook, they had done several hundred thousand gold pieces worth of damage to the historic Singing Shovel Tavern and hospitalized two dozen dwarves, both willing combatants and a few unlucky bystanders.

"The Clan Chiefs decided that I was the ringleader. Which . . . " he threw up his hands in a gesture that said *yeah, that was pretty much the way of it*.

The Clans Justice Council decided to make an example out of Gunter, while the same time forcing him to earn enough money to pay for all of the damages. They finally settled on The Games, which were almost universally derided by dwarves worldwide. He had been sentenced to Xcrawl, forced to play in every match he could until everyone was paid back. In the meantime he was the laughing stock of every mine from Mount Whitney to the Adirondacks. Gunter let them know, in some extremely colorful transliteration from the original dwarvish, that the good opinions of the dwarf community didn't trouble him very much. The same went for his trainer, Lord Tideswell, who had called him "an unprincipled brawler with no sense of artistry."

"I didn't even finish my stupid training with that limey idiot. Two weeks after I started at his pillow fight academy, they woke me up in the middle of the night, gave me that suit of glorified aluminum foil and put me on a plane." He took a sip of his beer. "That reminds me. How much gold have I earned so far?"

Troy got out his notebook and made some quick calculations while the team talked strategy and tactics. Gunter raised his eyebrows and nodded a lot, but Billy wondered how much was actually sinking in.

A few minutes later Troy rejoined them at the conference table. "Okay, Gunter, so far you have earned nine thousand gold in game money, minus my twelve and a half percent. You also won a bunch of prizes, including that slick hot tub and the dishware. Now for Thursday, with the deals we wrote today, you can look forward to another fifteen thousand or so in sponsorship money – mind, you can't use that for new equipment, only crawl prize money – plus whatever you win in the game. It's not superstar money but it's not chicken feed either."

Gunter looked like Troy smacked him upside the head with a frying pan. "I . . . I made seven thousand eight-hundred and seventy-five gold . . . just for *yesterday*? That's mine alone, not to split?" he looked at the group, unbelievingly. "I was earning seven gold an hour digging coal. And yesterday was the best time I ever had in all of my years!"

Krystal nodded. "Crazy money, crazy fun. Best possible combination."

Gunter put his beer down, walked up to the front of the group, scowling, brow knit. The dwarf smoothed his beard out, looked directly at Billy.

"I, Gunter Gurnach, son of Gelzer Gurnach, son of Old Kagen Gurnach, member of Clan Steel Goat of Telluride, do formally apologize for my earlier insult to the name of this honorable team. May the hallowed dead hear me from their places of glory in the underworld and forgive my rash and untrue words."

He hesitated, got just a bit red-faced, then solemnly performed the Disconaut salute – point up right, down left, up right.

"I'm a goddamn potato pancake and if anybody ever has something to say about it they had better be ready to back it up with steel!" he bellowed, raising his beer to the sky.

CHAPTER XII

Half an hour before level two began and the team was warming up, laughing with each other. Krystal's new friend Carinn from the Death Makers was there – she spoke fluent Dwarvish, and had generously volunteered to translate for them until the dungeon began.

Gunter looked amazing in his new masterwork armor, carrying his new masterwork war axe. He had braided his beard, too, so he looked like a stone carving of a clan chief.

They were sitting on the two benches talking strategy. Slamdog counted out triceps dips on the far end of the bench, working up a sweat. Billy was trying to explain the logic behind their anti-undead tactics when the door to the lot opened up and a group of men and women in suits came in. There was a dwarf in a three piece suit with them, ornamental hand axe carefully hung in a holster outside his navy jacket.

They came right up to the group and the dwarf in the suit started talking rapid fire dwarf to Gunter. Gunter raised his voice first, then the two were shouting at each other and groping for weapons.

"What the hell is going on?" screamed Krystal, as both groups held their respective dwarves back from attacking one another. Some of the suits had drawn pistols, the big .51 calibers that folks that had to deal with monsters carried.

"They say Gunter can't play the crawl," said Carinn. "They say that his guild status is in question. I guess he never earned Division Two. Wow, that's a tough break."

"This is total bullcrap!" said José . "What the hell? They can't do that halfway through a frickin' dungeon!" he rounded on Billy. "You said the Guild made arrangements!"

"That's what Lord what's-his-face told me. Hey!" one of the suits turned back as the rest escorted Gunter out, him screaming curses and yelling something that sounded like "Mean oar! Mean oar!"

"Isn't there anything you can do? We're going to die out there without heavy armor."

The man hesitated for just a moment. "Not without an appeal. We had a complaint and we had to investigate. We're on our way to go meet with your manager now, I'm sure he'll keep you updated." They frog marched Gunter out.

Krystal took a long hard look at Carinn. Carinn met her gaze for a long moment before she burst into laughter. "I'm sorry, but mighty Jakeo! That was worth it just for the looks on your faces."

Krystal drew her short sword, and the referees had to get between them.

"Oh lighten up Krys! You would have done the same thing to us if the situation was reversed!" Krystal knee slid right between the referee's legs, stood up, reversed her grip and swung a pommel strike against Carinn's chin. The blow passed through empty air, the illusion waggling its fingers with its thumbs in its ears and its tongue hanging out.

The real Carinn was already out the door to the parking lot. "Hey, we're up after you guys. Wish us luck, bitches!" she called as she jogged backwards.

"This isn't fair," said Slamdog, after a long moment.

"This is war," said Krystal. "By Jakeo Jeweleyes' pocket watch I will have my revenge."

"Sure, if we live through this," said Meena, her normal pre-crawl confidence failing to manifest.

Billy went and got a cola. It was possibly the last one he would ever have, so he sipped real *slow*.

CHAPTER XIII

Level Two started terribly, and just kept getting worse.

The first room was a labyrinth filled with orcs . . . that turned out to actually be werewolves. Slamdog got a full nelson on the first orc he caught, and then suddenly it transformed and there were massive jaws around his throat. He went down in that fight, as did Meena who was so off her game that Billy almost called for escaping right there. But they blew a bunch of healing magic on getting them both back on their feet and pressed on. In the first hallway outside the room José gave a pep talk but it didn't work – he sounded terrified.

The rooms kept getting harder and harder, and on the third there was a trap Billy found on the door, but he slipped up while he disarmed it and the door just slid into the floor. There was a giant just inside, holding his massive spiked maul like a golf club, and when the door slid down the brute swung with everything he had and hit Billy square in the chest. He flew against the opposite wall and could only watch as his team had to fight the nightmarish thing that had them stuck behind a perfect choke point.

Most of Billy's ribs were broken, along with his wrist and jaw. He didn't pass out, the pain was too great, so he could

only lay in the spreading pool of his blood, breathing through his one clear nostril while Slamdog scaled the giant like a climbing wall to get him in a choke hold. Billy laughed once – this would have been Gunter's dream fight - and that laugh hurt worse than taking a javelin to the lung.

The Disconauts finally won after an amazingly hard battle.

José came back and hit the specialist with three healing spells in a row to get him back on his feet. The Diceman had been casting spells like a madman, had to be running so low.

"How are you doing, cousin?" said José, helping Billy to his feet.

"You should have let me die," said Billy.

"Don't talk like that," whispered José. "Fortuna hears every word."

They caught one break: the level had three optional challenges, a specialist challenge, a spellcaster challenge, and a one-on-one fight between their chosen and Outrageous Fortune's best fighter. They declined all three, throwing away the chance for a lot of money and some great prizes to conserve themselves for the final room.

The final room looked awful. Outrageous Fortune gave them their instructions via a huge AVS over the door. An assault challenge – they had to fight their way into some kind of fortified space, and then hold it against attackers.

Billy found no traps or locks on the door. He stood up, looked his team over. They were exhausted and scared. They had used up most of their spells and potions. Billy had used both SkyFire arrows and half of his normal arrows, one of his invisibility potions, and all but the barest sliver of his courage.

"The door is clean," he said. "We can go in."

Nobody moved. They all looked at each other. The fact that they had made it this far was a miracle from Olympus.

"We could leave," said Meena. "Go back to the giant's room and split through that NoGo door."

They all stood, not meeting one another's eyes. It's hard for a warrior to come this far, then turn back. The mind can often reconcile death easier than giving up.

"The dice!" Slamdog said. "Roll the dice! Put it in Fortuna's hands!"

José grinned big and slapped Slam on the arm. The big guy actually winced, such were his injuries.

The dice passed from hand to hand, everyone blowing on them in turn. When they came to Billy he thought *I love you Diana* as he blew. He handed them back to José, who rolled them down the hallway.

A five, a four and a two: eleven. Non-conclusive.

They just stared for a while.

"So what, it's just up to us?" said Slamdog.

Krystal drew her sword. "Looks like it."

They had decided, somehow, without any further discussion. Do or die. Billy drew his magic sword. For just one moment he felt invincible.

"Give it to me, Double Dutch!" said José , and as they opened the door the jammer started a poem: "Party people, let me introduce my friend Death!"

They shoved the door open. A chorus of mixed cheers and boos met them – the crowds had been universally hostile today, including a memorable section in the second room that organized themselves into a chorus of "We Want *Gun-Ter*! We Want *Gun-Ter*!" that kept up until the buzzer.

As soon as the door opened they were rushed by a mob of goblins with spears. They backed up, letting their opponents file through the door, and then they went to work. Billy hung back and started firing arrows – he managed to drop one and wound another in the first several seconds. Meena – no, Double Dutch now, drew Slash Gordon and made short work of the wounded one, and cried out "Shake that groove thing, people!"

The fight raged on in a confusion of blades and spears for what seemed like forever, but must have been less than a minute. Eventually a moment came where it was just the Disconauts, hurt and ragged but still in the fight, there in the hallway. They backed up a few feet en masse. José looked at his group, shook his head, and threw his hands up. "Blessings of Fortuna," he said, and they all felt the energy. Billy felt much better, but could still feel the two wounds he had taken in the exchange. "That's it," said José . "I can't do any more of those."

"I have one potion left," said Krystal. "Healing."

"Give it to Slam," said Meena. "He's hurt bad."

Slamdog chugged the potion, while Billy covered the door with his bow. In the dim light of the glowing advertisements that lined the hallway he scanned the team. He saw fear in every face.

"Okay, this is bad, Disconauts," said José. We aren't even inside the keep yet, Fortuna help us. But we fought a good fight. There's a NoGo inside and to the far left, on the side of the Keep. I say . . ."

"Gunter!" called Meena.

Gunter, clanking in his heavy armor, was running down the hall from the direction they had come. He had his axe in one hand a half empty bottle of whiskey in the other.

Billy pointed "Best possible combination!" he shouted, a little hysterical.

"I can't believe it! What did they do, give you that appeal?"

But Gunter didn't answer. He ran right past them and into the arena. The crowd went wild.

They all looked at each other for just one second, shocked and suddenly hopeful. Gunter was back, and he was fresh. And he was so, so pissed off.

"Rally up!" said B. Cool. "Go! Follow him! Go! Go! Go!"

CHAPTER XIV

Saturday afternoon, half an hour before Level Three began. The team was in the green room.

Billy sat on a bench next to Krystal. He was lacing up his boots and only half way paying attention to the AVS. Empire Sports 1 was reporting on the morning's first event – the Death Makers had attempted Level Three and been forced to flee. They showed a clip of Carinn, head tied up in a wonky-

looking bandanna, terrified, running through the door into back stage and nearly bowling over the boom mike guy, a huge clawed arm squeezing through the door behind her, grabbing and missing.

"I wonder why she switched to that pirate look for the third level? She looks like crap, the backstabbing cretin."

"I heard that half of her hair just fell out" said Slamdog,.

"Maybe somebody switched her shampoo with her depilatory cream," said Billy.

Krystal gave Billy a hard look. "Speaking of which, where did you get to last night? You never made it to the meeting with the sports drink guys."

Billy finished tying up his second boot, then started strapping his knee pads on. He stood up, raised first one knee, then the other, then ran in place for a bit. Billy looked down – Krystal was still staring at him expectantly.

"Oh whatever. She should be grateful – I nearly put her spellbook in the shower and turned the water on. She deserved it. She could have gotten us killed. And did you see what was in that specialist's challenge I had to skip? Real Sattersala elf-boots. I've wanted a pair of those since high school."

Little Krystal jumped on the bench, pulled Billy down by the front of his armor, and kissed him. "You," she said, "are my big human hero. Thank you."

"Disconauts! To me!" called Gunter. They had brought back that scruffy wizard, and he had cast an extended version of that translation spell so it would last for some if not all of Level Three.

They gathered.

"Alright. Before José the Diceman takes the floor I have words for you all. Yesterday, the powers that be tried to snatch our rightful victory away. Those powers failed because they are a pack of cowering dogs that can't keep true warriors down."

Cheers.

"Today we have business with the rest of Outrageous Fortune's petting zoo. We will show no mercy. We will destroy all who oppose us and drag home their gold in sacks. And when it's all over and we win – and we will win, by Dumakrüm's bloody knuckles I swear – we drink to honor the fallen Disconauts, and to shame those who left this magnificent team to do whatever silly crap those losers are up to today."

Bigger cheers.

"Okay, I'm done. Slam, hand me a beer. José, I'm sure you have something to say."

The messenger shook his head. He was just a tiny bit choked up. "Nope, I believe you covered it better than I ever could. Are you ready, Disconauts?"

They all saluted – finger up right, down left, up right.

"Born to be alive!" said Double Dutch.

EPILOGUE

Diana Emmons lay on the couch under her blanket. She was terrified.

The Las Vegas crawl would be over soon and she would know what had happened to her Bill. She had been lying to him about watching the crawl on TV for years – she couldn't do it. She never missed a match for the first two years, trying to be dutiful, but the nightmares were too much. In just the first two years she had seen him poisoned, burnt nearly to death, stabbed, bitten too many times to count, and electrocuted. Once she saw him hit with so many javelins and she was sure he was dead and she had screamed and torn her hair.

How could any sane person sit through that?

She hated the games, had hated them for years. She could never tell Bill, but it was true.

She just wanted him to quit, to get a normal job. He always complained that Xcrawl was the only thing he was ever really good at but Dye didn't care. Better a crappy live farmer than a dead Xcrawl hero.

She loved Bill, had loved him since he was that goofy kid in high school obsessed with Xcrawl, and she always would. But it was so hard. She knew some of the other significant others of crawlers, they had a loose network, talking on the phone and occasionally getting together for coffee. A few were fanatics, either in utter denial at the danger their loved ones were in or maniacally overconfident of their spouses chances. But most were like her, and lived in more or less constant fear of the day they found out their crawler had died.

During a crawl, some significant others just stayed drunk; some prayed the entire time. Some of them took lovers, considering their wives or husbands or whatever already dead until they came back home alive.

Dye had her blanket. Ten minutes before the crawl started, she wrapped herself up, covering her head, and lay on the couch. She shut her eyes and tried not to think.

Eventually the phone would ring. If it was Bill she would lie and say, yes, I saw you, you were wonderful. I am so proud of you. And then she could turn on the TV and watch the highlights.

But one day the phone would ring and it would be Troy - or one of the other Disconauts and they would ask if she had been watching when Bill died. And then that would be that.

She closed her eyes so tightly. She didn't pray, in case the wrong deity heard her. She didn't wish, in case her wishes would be thrown back in her face. She just breathed quietly.

The phone rang.

She got up, looked at herself in the mirror. She fixed her hair, took a deep breath.

"Hello?"

"Baby! Did you see? Did you see us win?"

Diana breathed, said a silent prayer of thanks. "I sure did. You were great. I'm so proud of you."

Bill just laughed and laughed. "Sweetheart, pack a bag – you and I are going on vacation!"

The End

I WANT YOU!

XCRAWL

BEYOND THE CRAWL

In 2016, the first ever Xcrawl fiction anthology will be published by Pandahead Publishing, and we want YOU to be a part of it. We are currently accepting submissions from all writers--experienced or brand new--for Xcrawl: Beyond the Crawl, a new anthology which will feature ten stories set in the dynamic world of Xcrawl, each and every one of them created by pros and fans alike.

The stories MUST be based off of one of the plot threads that was left open in "Best Possible Combination," the short story presented in this program. The only limit: it can't take place in the crawl. It has to expand on the setting in some manner, while still being consistent with the world setting.

Interested? Email officialxcrawl@gmail.com requesting submission guidelines and information. This is your chance to be part of the Xcrawl world. We believe that our fans are the best, most creative fans in gaming, and we can't wait to see what you have in mind.

And remember, If you write, you write!...and we want to see it.

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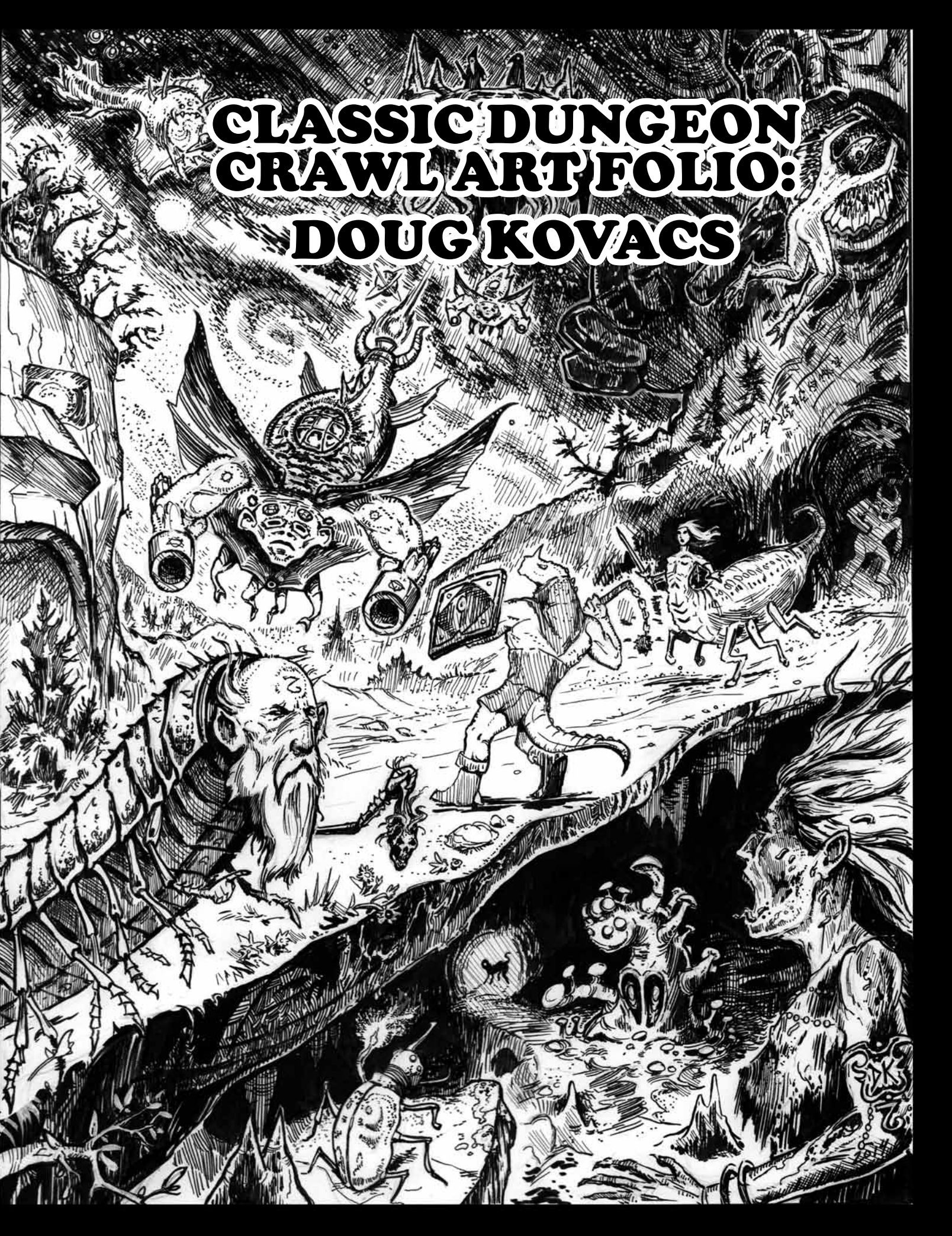
CLASSIC DUNGEON CRAWL ART FOLIO:
DOUG KOVACS

Doug Kovacs is the primary artist behind the look and feel of the Dungeon Crawl Classics Role Playing Game. Although best known for his heavy involvement with the design and playtesting since the very beginning, Doug has worked with other Goodman Games projects for nearly a decade. His first published work for the DCC series appeared, ironically enough, in the same volume as Harley Stroh's first published work for the DCC line: *DCC #17: Legacy of the Savage Kings*. Prior to that, Doug illustrated other Goodman Games works, including *Complete Guide to Fey*, his first project for Goodman Games. Over the years his work covered many styles and systems, including a distinctive grayscale look during the 4E era of Dungeon Crawl Classics modules, and a stark black and white style in the early days of the 3E DCC modules. Doug's recent "DCC style" of work is well known, but in this art folio we look back on illustrations from earlier in his career. Doug has been interviewed many times (including a couple times for other Goodman Games publications), so in lieu of a new interview, we present two "retro" interviews that give you a sense of who he is.

On this page: some of the first illustrations Doug completed for Goodman Games, originally published in *Complete Guide to Fey* in the 3E era.

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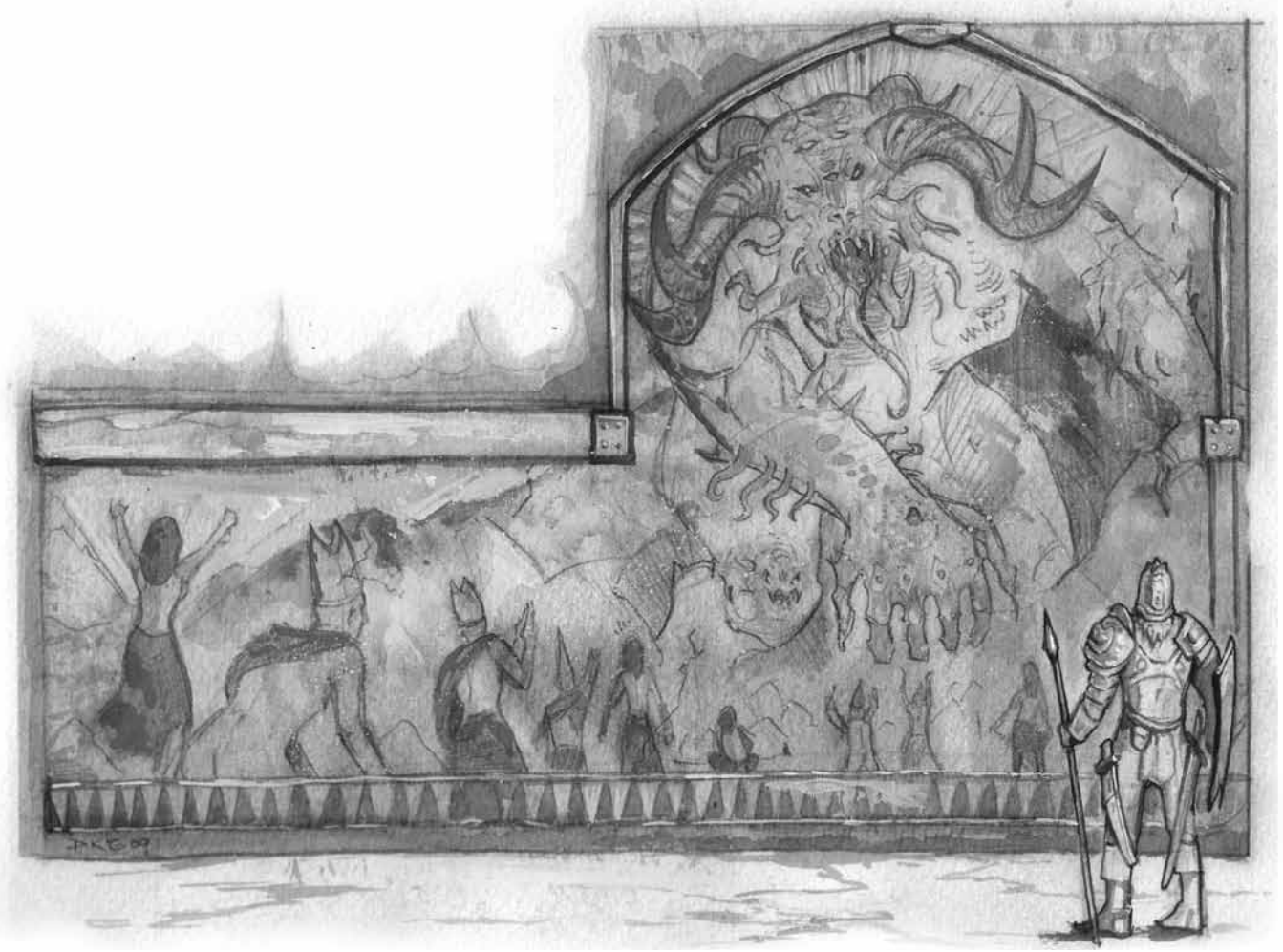
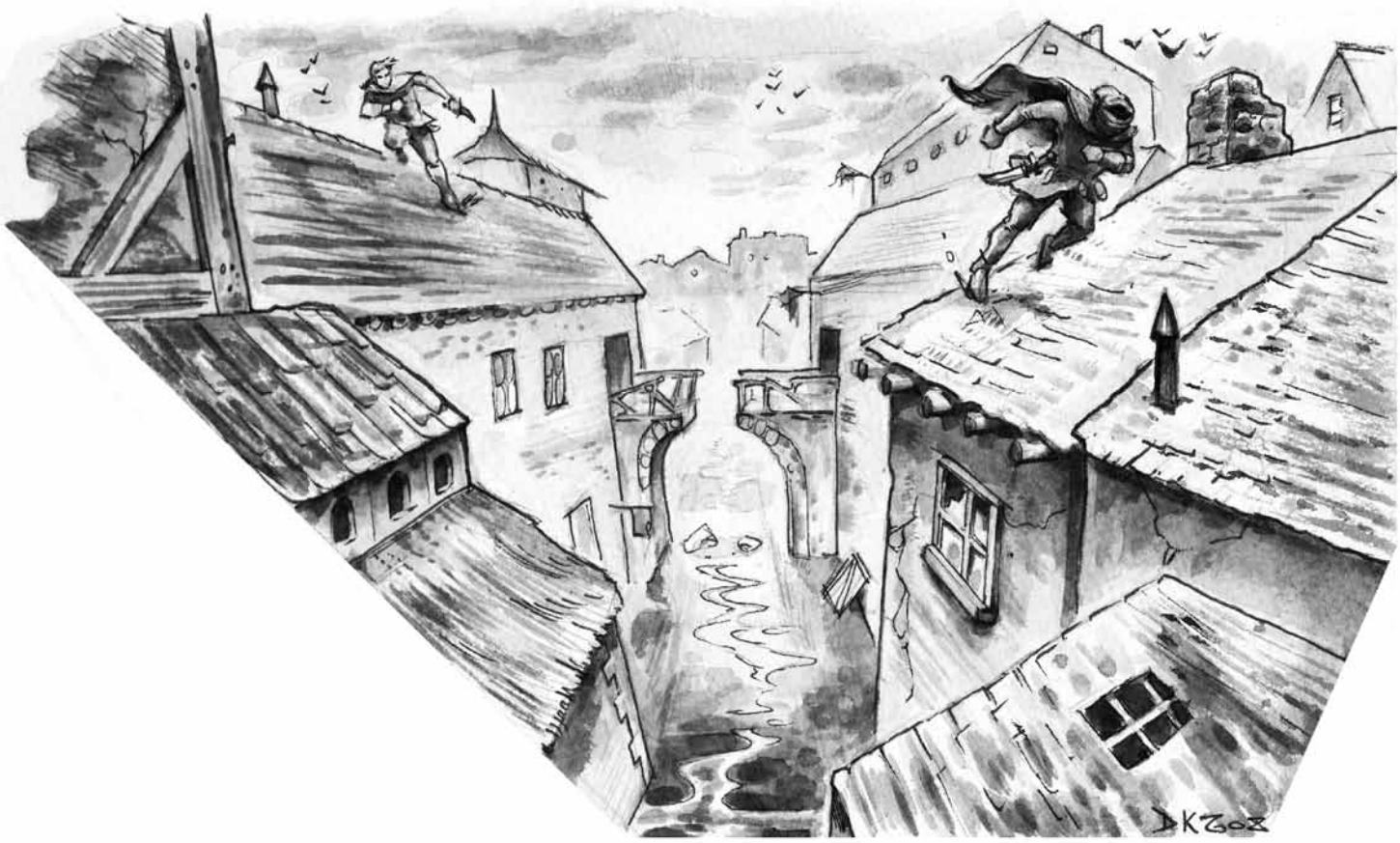




This interview originally appeared in Level Up #2, September 2009.

D20 QUESTIONS: DOUG KOVACS

20 Questions is a recurring feature in *Level Up* where we interview people of interest to those of us who roll 20-sided dice. This could be writers, designers, game masters, artists, or all of the above.

In this issue, we speak with Doug Kovacs. Doug is a long-time fantasy artist and illustrator who has worked for Wizards of the Coast, AEG, Slugfest Games, and Troll Lord Games, among others. He has also done a mountain of work for Goodman Games, and is in many ways the artistic faces of our 4E adventures, supplements, and monster books.

Doug has worked on many recent Goodman Games 4E projects, and his art can be seen throughout products such as *Hero's Handbook: Dragonborn, Blackdirge's Dungeon Denizens*, *In Search of Adventure,* and nearly every *Dungeon Crawl Classic* module published for 4E.

Level Up: How did you get started working with Goodman Games?

Doug Kovacs: I talked to Joe Goodman a few times at various Gen Cons. It was the fairly standard drill of going around to potential clients with some promotional material and letting them know who I was. I recall running into him in the security line in LAX after what I think was the first Gen Con in Anaheim. At that point, I don't think he had relocated to Chicago. Coincidentally, the first time Joe contacted me specifically to do work on the "Complete Guide to Fey" we realized that he lived ridiculously close to me, in Chicago, about a block away. We have subsequently gamed together many times.

LU: Which fantasy artists have inspired you? What about RPG illustrators?

DK: Frazetta, Arthur Rackham, and Alan Lee, to name a few. I used to be transfixed by Jeff Easley paintings at Gen Con back when it was in Milwaukee. More recent inspirations are many. When you sit in an artist's booth at Gen Con and look in virtually any direction, if you aren't completely intimidated, you are inspired.

LU: The work you did on *Hero's Handbook: Dragonborn* was really great. What was it like working on that book?

DK: There was a little back and forth about what the tiamat would look like. It was suggested that she be nontraditional, so I took that and ran with it in the sketches. It was later decided however that I took too much of a surreal "chaos god" angle. The full-page illustration of the dragonborn paladin was loosely based on the "Paladin in Hell" illustration from the first edition DMG.

LU: I know you contributed to the 4E Monster Manual. What were your contributions to that book?

DK: I worked on the flesh and stone golems, the iron cobra, the eidolon, and the clay scout. I also worked on some concepts for monsters prior to that. I just got my sample of the Ogre Pulverizer and the Ogre Warhulk miniatures in the mail from WotC. They are pretty impressive for pieces of plastic.

LU: In every edition of Dungeons & Dragons, the art and illustration has been vital in setting the tone and theme of that edition. How then, in your opinion, does 4E art differ from 3E art?

DK: To start, I would say there has been a lot of highly competent art in both editions, and it is difficult to generalize. Any general opinion of the overall art can likely be amended by comparing specific artists work, or even specific books. That said, 4E art seems to have bent in the high fantasy direction. It appeared 3E had already been heading that way even before 4E was launched. Various other online popular fantasy games, which it would be hard to have not heard of at this point, obviously pushed the overall fantasy art climate that way as well. I think it can also be said that 3E had a wider range of styles in its original form, particularly in the core books. Nods to process appear rarer in 4E.

LU: Having worked on some of the 4E core books, do you think that the artistic changes for 4E were inspired by the mechanical changes? In your experience, has it ever been the other way around?

DK: I believe both the art and mechanics where developed simultaneously, though my small part in the process probably doesn't make me an expert on the topic in any way. I personally was given no additional insight into the direction 4E would take mechanically while working on my bit. Though, it's probably not entirely necessary for an artist to play D&D to create the images. However, for me personally, I think I might have understood the direction the visuals were taking better if I would have understood the changes that had been made in the game. For instance, the focus on contest or combat over other aspects of the game could explain something like the current incarnation of the dryad.

LU: You've been a fantasy illustrator for a long time now, and you have a large list of credits. What were some of your favorite assignment, and why?

DK: One of the first serious jobs I had was work for the original Middle Earth CCG back before the films, when ICE had the license. I was so ecstatic to be working on images of Moria, Golem, Minas Morgol and the like, I somehow made myself sick for a couple of days before I could start. More recently, the concept work I did on the late Dreamblade miniatures game was really cool. I really enjoyed the bizarre surreal element. Each art order was a nice surprise; they could include anything from a Victorian woman with the head of a fly, to a demonic steamroller, or an anthropmorphic windmill.

LU: What subjects do you enjoy illustrating the most? Are you a monster guy, or a hot-elven-chick-in-leather-armor guy?

DK: I really can't deny I'm one of the many male artists that love to draw women. Anatomy, male or female, is infinitely interesting because there is always something new to learn. At the moment, I've got a bunch of pieces in progress featuring my personal version of faeries, which are essentially a surreal combination of women and plants. Monsters are fun probably because it is much easier to draw something that is "ugly." Oddly, some of the things that require a more workman-like mindset – I'm thinking particularly of architecture at the moment – please me more when the images are complete than the actual process of working on them. I'm not sure what kind of a guy that makes me…. a façade-and-portico guy or a tiny-lady-with-tail-made-out-of-vines-and-a-gourd for a head guy?

LU: What gets the creative juices flowing for you? Do you listen to music while you draw or paint?

DK: Believe it or not, I currently have a music schedule I generated randomly. Sunday: country; Mon.: alternative; Tues.: metal; Wed.: classic rock; Thurs.: classical; Fri.: blues; and Sat.: punk. I don't really take it all that seriously, though.

LU: Having talked to you at length at DDXP, I know you've been playing D&D a long time, and I know that you've been the DM for some pretty crazy groups in Chicago. Care to give the readers a taste of some of the infamous Kovacs D&D groups? You can change the names to protect the innocent, if you like.

DK: Haha. You're referring to the 2nd Edition Greyhawk campaign I ran through my late teens and early twenties. Looking back, it's obvious that our gaming group wasn't of the typical variety of immature gamers, but at the time, it didn't occur to me. You had to be comfortable with a certain level of substance abuse during the game, a lot of profanity, and a lot of ball-busting. My players would have been more appropriately labeled miscreants, punks, and metal heads, than nerds. Some *real* lives were a bit Fafhrd and Mouser, and occasionally some of that intruded on the game. Though most of the time we all got along, I recall one time being threatened with physical force to reverse a call I had made that a player's hand had been severed by a trap. The rest of the players were forced to rally to my support in order to preserve the DM's authority.

LU: Do you ever produce art specifically for your D&D game? You know, character portraits, that kind of thing.

DK: When I do find time to play these days, it's almost inevitable. I've drawn POV landscapes on the dry-erase board, provided sketches of alien archana, and numerous NPC portraits. I think most good DMs have a visual mind, but I might take it a step further**.**

LU: What are you working on now?

DK: *DCC # 64: Codex of the Damned*, a sci-fi- horror hybrid expansion for the Battlestations game by Gorilla Games, and a couple of others RPG books on the illustration front. I've got a number of new faerie/greenmen works progressing on the personal art front.

LU: Where can our readers see more art by Doug Kovacs?

DK: You can visit DougKovacs.com, and I'll be at Gen Con '09 with originals.

On this and the following pages are many of Doug's illustrations for the 3E DCC modules. Doug signed those images with a 1979 date, in keeping with the retro feel of the DCC line (even though the art was done in the 2000's).

This interview originally appeared in Meeple Monthly, July 2014.

AN INTERVIEW WITH DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS COVER ARTIST DOUG KOVACS

Doug Kovacs is the cover artist for the Dungeon Crawl Classics Role Playing Game, and associated line of adventure modules from Goodman Games. Doug's art has become the "face" of the game since it was launched in 2012. Although DCC RPG is known as an "old-school" RPG, both the game and Doug's art for it draw inspiration from much more than classic D&D. Pulp literature, Appendix N fantasy novels, heavy metal, and obscure artists are all part of the eclectic mix that power both game and art.

In this article, Goodman Games publisher Joseph Goodman asks Doug about his three most recent cover illustrations, as well as the original cover of DCC RPG. Since DCC RPG launched, Doug's covers for DCC adventure modules have picked up steam, one after another. They just keep getting better and better. And his iconic characters, including the bell-bottomed Hugh the Barbarian, have a narrative all to their own. Now fans look forward to new product announcements not just for the adventures, but to check out Doug's latest cover images! Let's find out why…

Joseph Goodman: Doug, I remember when we were working on the cover to DCC RPG. I had this idea that the main character should be unclassifiable by D&D character classes, in keeping with the Appendix N fantasy that inspired it. You translated that to art perfectly. Can you tell us about that first cover image and how it came about?

Doug Kovacs: Ah. Well Joe, I recall you specifically saying "wizards should have swords!" I replied with something like, "Well, of course!….even Gandolf had a sword." And that was set. It's also reflected in the character chapter start art, which was also one of the first illustrations done for the game. Additionally, I was specifically thinking of the character on the cover to be something of a combination of Moorcock's Elric and Howard's Conan. As for the face/door thing, it's been a motif in a lot of my art going back years, but specifically I now thinking of it as a metaphor for gamers of a certain age looking back at themselves in reflection.

JG: Since that first cover, you've painted at least a dozen more covers. How has your approach changed since 2012?

DK: Not so much in technique or materials as in context. I've been using some version of acrylic paint on paper the whole time. The actual steps to get to from idea to final seem to always be slightly different, because this always keeps art interesting to me, be it art for gaming or just straight paintings for the wall. I'm of the firm opinion that simply repeating myself is not good art, and neither of interest to the viewer, nor inspiring to me as the creator. I've thought of the "this vs. that" summary of the DCC module covers as a baseline for subject matter that can be expanded to include almost anything, but always being a recognizable theme we can return to. *(Editor's note: Doug's term "this vs. that" refers to the common fantasy cover art theme of "hero fighting monster" – the repeated motif of one creature fighting another. As you may notice, many Dungeon Crawl Classics covers break from that motif.)*

JG: One of the most popular covers to hit stores recently is the one for *DCC #81: The One Who Watches From Below*. It's definitely not the typical "D&D module cover," yet some reviewers called it one of the best fantasy module covers ever. How did you come up with that image?

DK: "Best ever" is flattering, but I hear that as hyperbole. There are just so many great pieces of art in existence. The basic ideas were handed to me, in the form of "a mage looking at a book," which I think was your idea Joe, and the author Jobe Bitman's idea to use green and black. I've kidded Jobe that just picking one of the three secondary colors is surprisingly simple for a brilliant idea, but it did work. After the rough sketch phase, I need to give you credit as well for suggesting the eyeball head, because we originally just had a crusty old mage in mind.

JG: The cover to *DCC #80: Intrigue at the Court of Chaos* is also unusual by adventure module standards. It is complex and chaotic, yet at the same coherent and descriptive. It definitely conjures up the Court of Chaos. Tell us about that image.

DK: With Courts of Chaos, I wanted to try a color scheme that seemed strange and one I hadn't used before at all, as befitting the title.

JG: The most recent DCC module, *DCC #82: Bride of the Black Manse*, has cover art with an entirely different approach. It's large, stark, direct, and frankly disturbing. The longer I star at that image, the more it bothers me. That's her own hand she's holding! Tell us more about that image.

DK: The simplicity of the single figure was my initial idea. With the intention to be in contrast with the previous two.

JG: DCC RPG fans know about "The Band," which is the fictional group of DCC RPG characters who regularly battle enemies in the page of the DCC modules. The leader of The Band is Hugh the Barbarian. With his handlebar moustache and striped bell-bottoms, he's a distinctive character. He's pictured on the DCC RPG slipcover edition, which has sold very well. Why do you think he's such a popular character?

DK: I think he just pushes a lot of nostalgia buttons while being somewhat new in the way I've rendered him.

JG: So what are you working on next for the DCC RPG line?

DK: The cover painting for *DCC #83: The Chained Coffin* has been recently finished. On the easel now are the multi-panel mega scene for *DCC #84: Peril on the Purple Planet*, as well as the foundational image for what will also be a multi-panel image of the DCC judge's screen.

AK'08

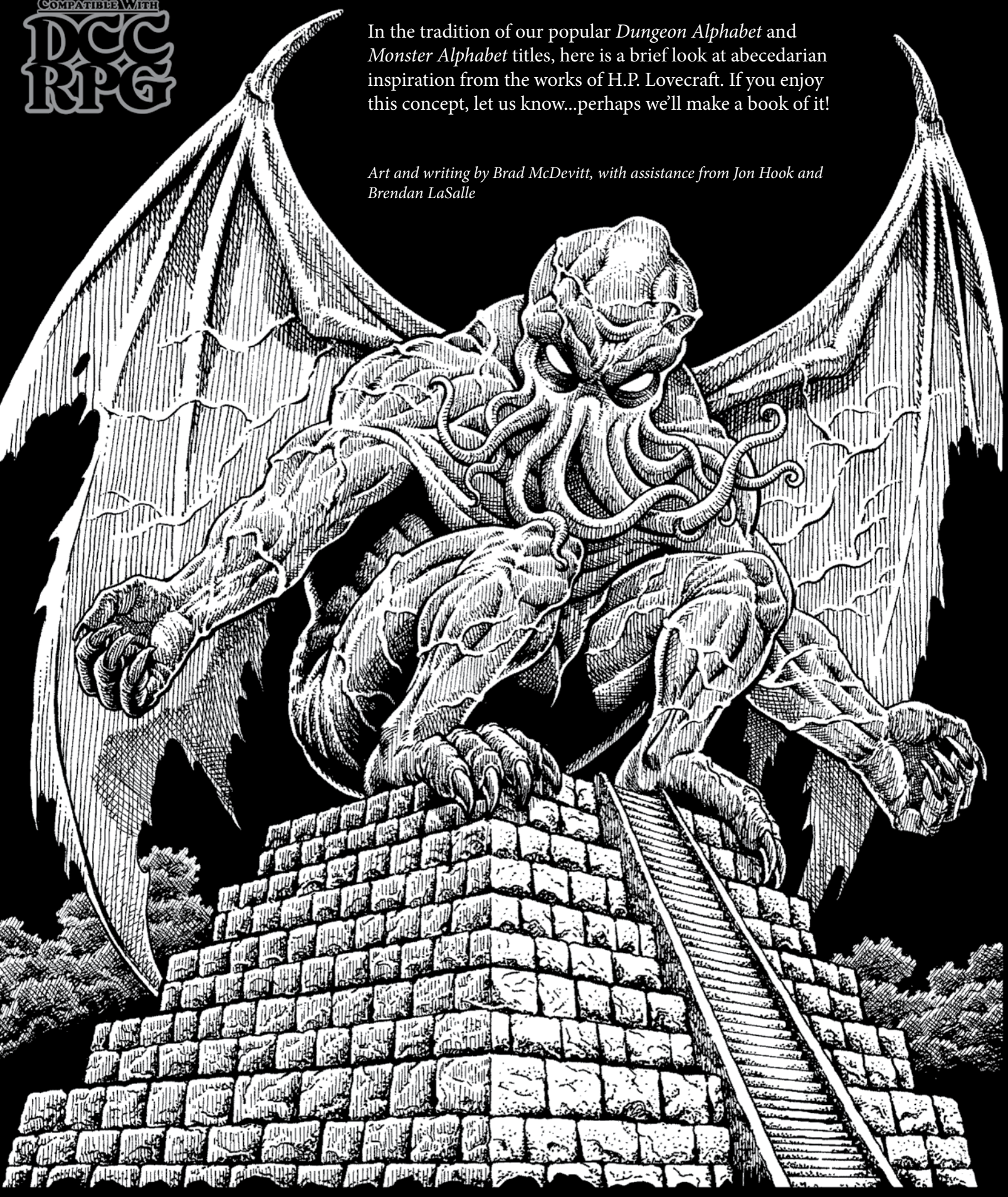
Publisher's note: This is one of my favorite pieces of Doug's art. Torgo the Eye-Gouger! From *DCC #17: Legacy of the Savage Kings* (by Harley Stroh).

THE MYTHOS ALPHABET

Compatible With DCC RPG

In the tradition of our popular *Dungeon Alphabet* and *Monster Alphabet* titles, here is a brief look at abecedarian inspiration from the works of H.P. Lovecraft. If you enjoy this concept, let us know...perhaps we'll make a book of it!

Art and writing by Brad McDevitt, with assistance from Jon Hook and Brendan LaSalle



IS FOR DEEP ONES

Besides Great Cthulhu himself, there is perhaps no Mythos creation more iconic than the race we call the Deep Ones.

Malevolent, nearly immortal, and lustful of contaminating meta-humanity with their piscine foulness, Deep Ones are devout worshippers of Father Dagon and Mother Hydra. In the name of their blasphemous religion, Deep Ones insinuate themselves into secluded coastal communities, luring the weak-willed with offers of alien gold and eternal life.

Even worse, adventurers who run afoul of these fishy monstrosities often come to awful ends. Death and insanity are only the most hopeful of outcomes of such encounters. After an adventure involving Deep Ones and their plots, the judge should secretly roll 1d10 for each PC involved. On a roll of one (1), the encounter begins bringing to light a horrible secret. The character has Deep One blood somewhere in her ancestry and is doomed to become one herself within 1d4+1 years of game time.

Wizards and those of Chaotic alignment are doomed even more hastily: subtract 1 from the initial die roll! Some unfortunate souls may begin showing signs of their polluted genes with weeks or even days of the encounter.

Stages of Deep One Transformation: The length of each of these stages will vary according to the overall length of the transformation.

1. Hazy, inchoate dreams of sunken cities and shadowy swimmers, plague the character once every few days (once or twice a week). The dreamer will awaken disturbed but only be able to remember small parts of the dreams.
2. The dreams become frequent, until they occur almost nightly, and more precise in the dreamer's waking memories. she will awaken screaming in terror most nights, and will spend some time enfeebled with exhaustion from her nightly visitations. At this point, a healing spell may stop the change, but little else will.
3. The terror and the exhaustion recede as the transformation begins in earnest. Signs of the change begin to manifest: loss of hair, roughening of skin, and a tendency for the eyes to begin to bulge. At this point, only a major healing spell, wish, or divine intervention from the gods of Lawfulness can halt the transformation.
4. The dreams become a nightly occurrence, and the dreamer actually communicates with other Deep Ones in her slumber. She will dream of swimming through the gold-encrusted streets of sunken Y'ha-nthlei to meet her hallowed ancestors who will welcome her warmly. Upon awakening, the character will show unmistakable signs of her upcoming change, with staring eyes and a drooping, fish-like countenance that will repel animals and other metahumans. At this point, only a Wish or divine intervention can save the character from her watery fate.
5. The dreamer is introduced to Father Dagon or Mother Hydra, and may see the inconceivable horror that is a Shoggoth for the first time. Screaming herself to wakefulness, she will find her transformation almost complete, she may even have sprouted gills and webbing between her toes and fingers. She will be drawn inexorably to the nearest coast to descend into the depths to find her new home. Only divine intervention can help her at this point.
6. The character enters the waters, never to return, and becomes an NPC. She cannot be saved, even by divine intervention, as Father Dagon and Mother Hydra will fight physically and spiritually for the safety of their new follower.

A DOZEN DEMONIC DEEP ONE PLOTS

1. The adventuring party is onboard a ship sailing across the deep waters when a group of Deep Ones infiltrate the ship, seeking treasure the ship's captain stole from one of their temples. The Deep Ones want the treasure back and a few sacrifices for Dagon, too.
2. Divying up an otherwise normal dungeon trove, the adventurers find an unusual tiara, heavily decorated, made of a gold-like metal that seems to be extremely hard (possibly Mithril?). The helm, in fact, provides an overall +2 AC to anyone wearing it. It also grants the wearer the ability to breathe underwater when worn. The only problem is that the tiara troubles the wearer with terrible dreams of underwater realms and shapeless monsters vaguely glimpsed through the muddied waters of the deep. What the players do not realize is that the tiara acts as a homing beacon for Deep Ones…
3. The party is travelling across the sea when their ship is caught in the middle of an undersea earthquake. When they awake from the cataclysm, they find their ship stranded in the middle of an island that has risen under them during the night. The crew of the ship has disappeared, and the only clue is some inhuman footprints leading away from the ship. Do the adventurers try to rescue the crew or simply escape on their own? Either way, they must contend with numerous Deep Ones barring their path.
4. The adventurers are hired by a disguised Mi-go to destroy a nest of Deep Ones that have infiltrated and taken over a secluded coastal town. The nest is close to the location of the Mi-gos' undersea mining operations and the Fungi from Yuggoth prefer not to have their work interrupted.
5. The adventurers acquire a scroll that reveals the location of the sunken city of Y'ha-nthlei, which the gods of Law would greatly love to see destroyed, and many others would love a chance to plunder its treasures. The Deep Ones want the scroll back before it can be translated and its secrets unlocked. To say they are willing to kill to retrieve it is a serious understatement.
6. The adventurers are hired to retrieve a rich merchant's daughter, whom he claims has been kidnapped by cultists to be a sacrifice to their awful subterranean gods. The daughter, however, has actually fled her destiny to become a Deep One, and has sought refuge within a monastery to one of the Gods of Law. Her father wants her back to force her to complete her transition…
7. The adventurers stumble upon a lake of cyclopean dimensions in the lowest level of a twisting series of caverns. Within the depths of the black waters live a tribe of albino mutated Deep Ones that have developed bioluminescence, among other even more disturbing abilities. Their lair is an underwater mine of Mithril-quality gold. if the adventurers can carry off the raid, and escape the Deep Ones and their minions, including a Shoggoth.
8. The adventurers encounter a traveling carnival of acrobats, performers, and twisted misfits. One of the attractions in the carnival is billed as a ferocious mer-man, but in reality, is a captured Deep One. The creature pleads with the adventurers to set it free. Unbeknownst to even the Deep One, because the carnival is currently traveling near an ocean coastline, Father Dagon and Mother Hydra have dispatched one of the shapeless horrors known as shoggoths to free the captive. The monstrous protoplasm does not distinguish between "friend" or "foe", recognizing only its master's servant …
9. The party discovers a large Amazon-like river while traversing the nearly impassable depths of a thick tropical jungle, They also discover a primitive fishing village that has been utterly destroyed. Strange webbed footprints can be seen all throughout the carnage, though no bodies, not even blood, can be found. Suddenly, a nearby tree shape-shifts back into the form of a frail old man; the man looks to have been the village's shaman. He is dying, and babbling in an incoherent language. He passes a strange necklace to the adventurers strung with finger bones. In the center is a large chunk of gold marbled with silver, platinum, and a strange greenish metal with a breath-taking luster. A tribe of river-dwelling Deep Ones seek the necklace and its centerpiece desperately, and will relentlessly pursue whoever possesses it.
10. A wizard the adventurers have been pursuing escapes through an arcane portal leading to the Elemental Plane of Water. He has recruited a tribe of renegade Deep Ones that manage an army of aggressive sea monsters for use in the wizard's up-coming war. The wizard pays the Deep One mercenaries with arcane scrolls, potions, and slaves for both breeding and consumption. Interestingly, the Deep Ones have not paid any obeisance to Father Dagon or Mother Hydra in many years… and those august blasphemies do not take kindly to being ignored.
11. For untold decades, a tribe of Ogres lived in relative peace near a freshwater lake in the mountains, until a tribe of Deep Ones moved into the lake. The Deep Ones have enthralled the Ogres with gold and the allure of eternal life, and have begun producing spawn with them. The lake thus is now teeming with numerous Deep One/Ogre monstrosities. The resulting creatures have been nightmarishly variable in appearance, but all are incredibly dangerous. What can the adventurers do before the region is overrun with creatures with the physical might of Ogres, and the inhuman intelligence and arcane skills of Deep Ones?
12. A terrible coven of those misshapen sorceresses known as hags, worshipers of Great Cthulhu, have summoned a teeming hoard of Deep Ones to aid them. The stars are right, and the ultimate goal of the hags is collect enough villagers to complete the unholy sacrifices that will rouse Cthulhu from His millennia-long slumber under the seas… and the ritual is nearly complete. All they need is a few more victims. Enter the adventurers…

IS FOR MADNESS

The threat and menace of insanity lurks eternally in the shadowed background of the Cthulhu Mythos. The secrets of reality revealed by dread tomes like *Unaussprechlichen Kulten*, the *Necronomicon*, and *Les Cultes des Goules* cannot help but leave scars on even the most crass and hardened of psyches. Sometimes, surcease from knowledge of those secrets comes when the mind simply shuts down and the victim slips into the welcome, endless darkness of coma. Other times, peace comes from a happily gulped vial of poison or in throwing oneself from the summit of a tall tower, into the welcoming arms of oblivion.

Any adventure that borrows from the Mythos without touching on the madness of such endeavors robs the Mythos of much of its power. Madness gives the followers of the deities of the Mythos their power, and those deities themselves defy any human definition of sanity. What is sanity or madness to beings that are kin to Great Cthulhu, Nyarlathotep, or dread Azathoth himself, who writhes at the centre of the universe, entertained endlessly by the pipings of the Outer Gods who serve him?

When confronted with the blasphemous knowledge of the Mythos, the nature of that knowledge has a corrosive effect on the Personality trait of the soul unfortunate enough to learn it. The Game master should note (in secret) the willpower traits of the various player-characters. As they learn more and more, that number will drop, and it is the GM's job to inform the player that his sanity is being chipped away at, like stone being chiseled into a new and horrific shape by a twisted sculptor.

Below are some rough charts to suggest how the secrets that can be learned from contact with the Mythos. For each, source and nature, separate Save rolls need to be made. Learning the truth about reality comes with a cost, and that cost is often very high…

Please note that the knowledge gained is not always voluntary: A character that stumbles onto a gathering of Mi-go and overhears their blasphemous plans has still learned something about the Mythos, even though she did not want to.

Source of Knowledge	Save	Minus to Will
From a book/tome	15	0/-1d2
Directly from a cultist	20	1/1d4
Directly from a Mythos creature	25	2/2d4
Directly from a minor Mythos deity	30	4/4d4
Directly from a major Mythos deity	35	6/6d4

Nature of Knowledge	Save	Minus to Will
Minor secret or 1st-3rd level spell	10	0/-1d2
Moderate secret or 4th-6th level spell	20	1/1d4
Major Secret or 7th+ level spell	30	3/3d4

For example, Azrak the Foul, seeker after forbidden knowledge (Personality of 16) manages to summon up a Servitor of Azathoth, a minor Mythos deity. After the proper obeisances and horrific sacrifices have been made (the local villagers won't miss one child, will they?), the Servitor imparts to Azrak the knowledge he lusts after (A major secret). Azrak's player rolls his dice and sums them up separately. His roll for Source of Knowledge (27 vs. the Tn of 30) fails, but his roll for the Nature (33 vs, the TN of 30) succeeds. Azrak has gained a deeper understanding of the blind Chaos that is reality, but it has cost him 3+ (4d4= 1,3,2,3) 12 Personality points… and he is that much closer to slipping into permanent madness.

Characters may choose to negate the penalty to their Personality by choosing to roll on the Madness table below, going only slightly less insane in favor of the full precipitous drop to zero. For example, Azrak from above chooses to risk a Madness. His player rolls 1d6, getting a 5 (Split Personality). Azrak, in the future may act even odder than he already does, but his is still at least semi-sane. Each additional time the character faces taking a penalty to their Personality, they may roll again, acquiring new strains of Madness

Player characters that do drop below zero in Personality become NPCs under the control of the Game-master. She should decide the fate of such unfortunates, be it screaming insanity, coma, or willing sacrifice to the gods of the Mythos, laughing as the knife descends.

Player characters that are close to that edge may attempt to reverse the situation through meditation, prayer, or even requesting the intervention of their patron deities… who may or may not help, depending on the situation or their own unfathomable whims. The efficacy of such attempts is up to the Game-master, but should require sacrifice or possible quests, and should only be worth 1d6 Personality restored.

Even the gods can only do so much in the face of the dark truths revealed by the Mythos…

1D7 MONSTROUS MADNESSES

1. **Depression:** Shaken to the core by the realization of the fundamental irrationality of the cosmos, the character loses the ability to feel any joy or other positive emotions. The character sulks, refuses to engage in conversation beyond necessary, or even eat or drink more than necessary to maintain life.
2. **Catatonia:** Overwhelmed by the horrors he has experienced, the character's mind simply shuts down. This vegetative state can subsist for up to 1d8 days, but grows worse each time it recurs: 1d8+1d4 days the second time, 1d8+2d4 the third, etc.
3. **Phobia:** the character develops an irrational fear related to the incident that required the roll. For example, an encounter with Deep Ones may result in the character developing Aquaphobia (fear of water), while discovering the blasted remnants of fabled Irem, the home city of Abdul Alhazred may instill Atephobia (fear of ruins) in the character.
4. **Mania:** the character loses the ability to regulate their emotions, swinging from gaiety to anger to sadness with no warning. To regain control, the character must make a Personality roll (DC=15+ Personality minus 10). Characters should roll 1d6 on the chart below when in the grips of mania, with a new roll being required every half-hour of game time.

   Roll of 1D6: 1. Character finds everything hilarious and lapses into uncontrollable laughter at even the slightest provocation; 2. Depression. The character sulks, refuses to engage in conversation beyond necessary, loses appetite, etc. for the duration of this mood; 3. Anger: the character is consumed with irrational rage at everything. Minor irritations become a catalyst for explosions of fury. When in the grips of such anger, attack rolls are at +1 while Intelligence rolls are at -1; 4. Current mood sustains for another half-hour; 5. Character regains control of their emotions within 1d10 minutes of game time; 6. Character regains control of their emotions immediately.
5. **Split Personality:** To compartmentalize her knowledge of the Mythos, the character develops a second or even third (or more!) personality, depending on the scope of what they have learned, willingly or not. The primary personality functions normally and probably will not even recall the events that caused the split. The secondary personalities will, however, and may have other goals, desires and even alignments.

   The other personalities manifest when the character comes under unusual stress: fighting a much stronger opponent, attempting a harrowing escape, or a serious fumble in case of spell casters. To determine when the secondary characters manifest, the judge should secretly roll vs. the characters' Personality (DC= 10+ situational severity). If the roll is successful, the character maintains his primary personality. If the roll fails, the judge should take the player aside (or pass her a note) to explain that the other personality or personalities are now dominant and allow the player to play appropriately. The other personality does not subsist for 1d8 hours or until after the character has slept, at which time the primary personality resumes control with no memory of the time lost.

   Clerics with this madness may find themselves in trouble with tier deities, depending on the actions taken by the other personalities…
6. **Suicidal:** The character realizes that oblivion is preferable to continued existence knowing the truth about the cosmos. Outward behavior is only slightly changed: the character becomes withdrawn as if suffering from depression. Her behavior, however, becomes reckless as she takes unnecessary chance in an attempt to end it all.

   If thus form of madness comes up a second time, her attempts to end it all may become more serious...
7. **Homicidal Mania:** the character develops a secret lust for taking the lives of others. While outward behavior is unaffected, the character begins plotting and looking for opportunities to kill! A disturbing side-effect of the madness is an apparent increase in the character's personal charisma: when dealing with prospective victims, the character's Personality seems to be 3 points higher then it actually is...

   Preferred Victims (Roll 1D6) (1-2) Complete Strangers: Nothing matters expect that the victim can be killed with impunity; (3-4) Casual Acquaintances: The character's favorite bartender or serving wench, the smith that shoes his horses.... any of these become enticing to the character's next victim; (5) Friends and Partners: The next time the character goes crawling with is adventuring party…; (6) Family: Old fraternal jealousies, Oedipal impulses towards mother or father figures... all are justification enough for the homicidal maniac now.

   Lawful and Neutral characters who succumb to this madness will shift alignment to Chaotic, one shift at a time, unless they make a Personality Roll (DC=20 + 3/number of murders successfully committed.)

IS FOR TENTACLES

Nothing evokes the terror of the Cthulhu mythos quite like the imagery of a score of blind and boneless tentacles erupting from the depths to snare and drag some hapless victims to their dooms. From Great Cthulhu's signature facial feelers to the multitudes that make up the head of a Chthonian's head, the sheer alien quality of tentacles drives home that the horror of the Mythos has its roots elsewhere from traditional folklore and fantasy.

Even better for the gamemaster trying to throw something different at his players, tentacles can come in all shapes, sizes, and lengths. An unwholesome stretchiness is part and parcels of the concept of tentacles, as is their ability to insinuate themselves n places the players might think perfectly defended.

Tentacles can also be added to nearly any creature, enhancing both their combat abilities, and the sheer shock of seeing them. A grizzly bear is a fearsome enough opponent by itself. A grizzly bear with tentacles capable of reaching twenty feet to ensnare prey and drag them turns a standard woodland encounter into a nightmare. Now imagine fighting a dragon or an entire tribe of lizardmen enhanced with tentacles…

Below, you will find a list of a variety of tentacles that monsters can have besides the normally creepy boneless appendages.

Roll of 1d14

1. Tentacles have barbs on them that inflict an additional 1d4 damage per round per tentacles per round it maintains a grip in addition to any constriction damage. Victims must make a Luck check, or scars from the barbs reduce the character's Personality by 1d3.
2. Severed tentacles regrow and duplicate in a manner similar to a Hydra's heads unless the stumps are seared with flame or acid.
3. Tentacles leave tiny eggs that implant themselves at the site of contact with bare flesh, doing incidental damage of 1 hp. There is only a strange red rash around the wound afterwards to show there is a lingering problem. If left undetected and untreated (bathing with alcohol, or a successful Lay on Hands used only to destroy the eggs), the eggs erupt 1d12 days later, with 2d12 two-foot long tentacles sprouting from the points of contact. Unless removed (a minimum 2d6 Lay On Hands is needed at his point) the tentacles continue to grow, draining 1d6 Constitution from the victim per day until she reaches Zero, at which she dies and the tentacles crawl away to gestate into more of the original monster.
4. The tentacle is like a parasitical lizard's tail: if severed while still in contact with bare flesh, it becomes fused to the player character unless the PC makes a successful Fortitude save (DC = 10 + monster HD). If not removed within 1d4 weeks the PC's limbs begin to turn into tentacles themselves, quickly growing incapable of fine manipulation or weapon use.
5. The creature's blood has mimetic qualities, and by extension so do its tentacles. Every time a wound is inflicted on it or its tentacles, a duplicate of the player character's head sprouts instantly at the site of the wound. While the extra heads are not very dangerous (bite damage 1d4 and at -3 to hit), the sight and experience will be very disturbing to any combatants involved.

6. The tentacles' suckers are unusually strong. The player character is at a cumulative -1 per round on Strength checks to pull free as the suckers are able to gain a stronger and stronger grip.
7. Anywhere the tentacles' suckers made contact with naked flesh, the character begins to grow eyes within 2d6 days of the encounter. The number of extra eyes is dependent on the type of armor worn: leather allows for 1d10, chain mail for 1d6, and plate usually disallows or no more than 1d4. While horrifying, the extra eyes do give the character a bonus to visual perception rolls equal to the number of extra eyes when they are uncovered.
8. The creature turns to stone instantly when it dies. This can possibly trap the weapon that struck the killing blow unless the character makes a Reflex save (DC = 10 + creature's HD) to pull it free in time. Worse, any characters entangled with tentacles at the time of death find those tentacles also turn to stone and they will have to be freed from what have effectively become rocky manacles.
9. The tentacles grow mouths when struck with sharp weapon. Those mouths begin to scream unintelligibly, attracting any nearby wandering monsters. Alternately, the mouths begin to sing, spout poetry, or to try to talk to each other.
10. The tentacles are covered with an acidic slime that inflicts an additional 1d4 damage per round when they hit or grapple a creature. Characters who strike the creature with weapons must make a Luck check; failure means their weapons are weakened by acid and break with their next successful attack. Creatures who use natural weapons against the tentacles take 1d3 acid damage if they fail the Luck check.
11. The tentacles are covered with scores of much smaller (1-2 feet in length) tentacles that interfere with characters attempting to grapple the main tentacle. The creature gets double its normal size bonus for grapple attempts (creatures twice the size of attackers now get a +8, etc). Man-sized creatures get a +4 on grapple checks.
12. This tentacles are spiritual rather than physical, and does crushing damage to the victim's Personality score rather than to her hit points. A character reduced to zero Personality or below lapses into a comatose state.
13. The tentacles' touch is necrotic: wherever it is able to grapple, the skin begins to die and putrefy immediately unless the victim makes a Fortitude Save (DC = 10 + the creature's HD). The damage is an ongoing 1d4 per day per tentacle that was able to grapple until a successful Lay on Hands, used only to remove the necrotic damage, is applied to the affected areas.
14. The tentacles' suckers have teeth and sharp proboscises. Once the tentacle has grappled an opponent, the teeth chew into the grappled character, either doing 1d6 damage per round or ruining the character's armor (1 round of chewing per 4 points of AC until AC is reduced to zero, then beginning to do 1d6 per round thereafter). Even worse, the tongues on each sucker, once flesh is exposed, darts forward, doing 1d12 total (the tongues are as sharp as small daggers). Unless the character makes a Fortitude Save (DC = 10 + creature HD), the venomous saliva from the tongues begins to liquefy the character's internal organs, doing an additional 1d3 damage to their Stamina score per round until freed. A character whose Stamina is reduced to zero will die within 1d10 rounds unless *neutralize poison or disease* (DCCRPG, pg. 277) is cast on them immediately.

IS FOR WORSHIPPERS

Frenzied dancing in remote grottoes, obeisances to disturbingly fashioned idols, grisly sacrifices and depraved rituals... these are all the hallmarks of a good, forbidden cult. While the blind, idiotic gods of the Cthulhu Mythos care little for, or are often unaware of, their worshipers, those worshipers are fanatically devoted to them. From the degenerate swamp-folk that venerate Great Cthulhu to the decadent, masked aesthetes that call Hastur their patron, worshipers come from all stripes of society, united only in their fervor for destruction, Chaos, and entropy.

Cults can spring up almost anywhere that men feel the dark allure of insanity. From the deepest, most fetid swamps to tundras too winter-blasted to support any other life, the members of cults gather to plot against the rest of humanity.

Groups of worshipers range in size from small family groups dominated by an insane patriarch or matriarch to throngs of hundreds of fanatics. The only thought that unites all cults, regardless of size, is their malevolence. To members of a cult, anyone not belonging to the cult deserves no fate better than altar-fodder, or worse. This places cults devoted to the gods of the Mythos at odds with followers of Law, Neutrality, and even Chaos.

The social makeup of a cult helps determine the nature of their temple: the wealthier and more urbane the more elaborate the temple, and the more horrifying the decorations. Wealthy cults may even have their own dungeons stocked with potential sacrifices, as well as monsters in their pay. Even more dangerously, urban cults may have members that have a lot of political power. It is one thing to run afoul of a few were-rats in a sewer... it is another to have the entire city guard be commanded to apprehend you!

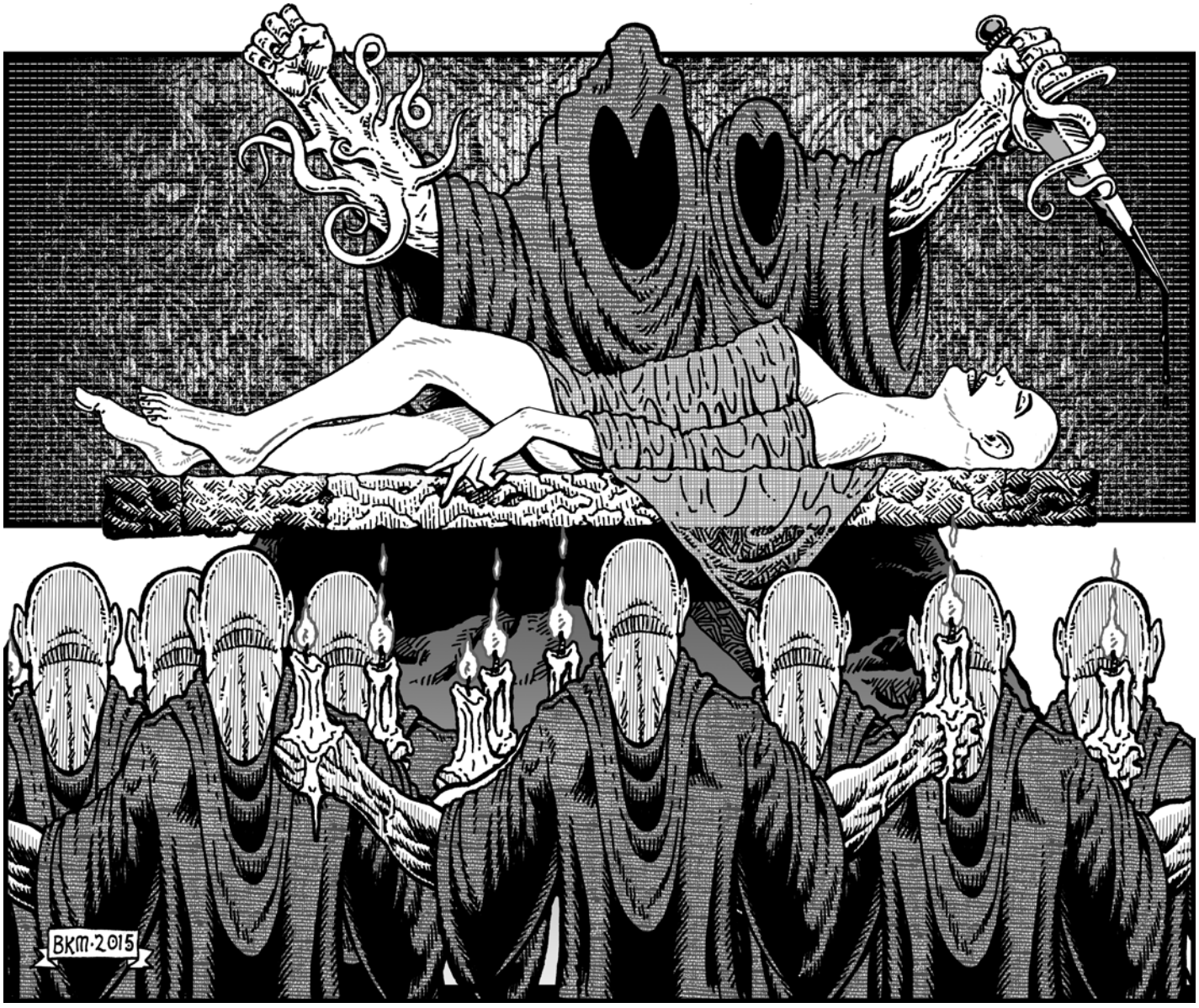
SIX FEARSOME FANES

1. **Dungeon:** Deep in a dungeon that the cultists have built for purposes of worship. Any monsters encountered in such a dungeon will be affiliated with the cult and probably worship the same foul deities. Any attacks on the dungeon by the characters will be met with resistance by more than just the cult…
2. **A fancy townhouse:** outwardly a manorial residence, inside, this lair contains a multitude of chambers of horrors, with space for worship, forbidden libraries, blood-stained alters, and dungeons stocked with virgins fearfully awaiting their turn on the altar. The leaders of these cults are often respected Lords, ladies, guild captains, or churchmen. Adventuring parties taking on such a cult may end up on the (seemingly) wrong side of the law...
3. **Abandoned church or monastery:** Generally, such lairs begin as legitimate places of worship that slowly become perverted to the veneration of Dark gods of the Mythos. While the cults that use such lairs tend to be even smaller than usual, the deities seem to favor such locales, and parties interfering with such cults activities run the fighting more than just crazed worshippers.

   Roll of 1d6: (1 – 2) Deity sends a minor servitor, up to 4 HD, to aid the cult; (3 – 4) Deity sends a servitor of up to 5-8 HD to aid the cult; (5) Deity manifests an aviator of itself, having at least 9+ HD) to aid the cult for 1D6 rounds returning to the Abyss; (6) Deity manifests in its full, awful glory, with at least 15+ HD, to teach the offending party the folly of opposing its faithful. It will remain 2d6 rounds or until the party is defeated, slain, or driven insane.
4. **Deep in the Swamp:** Preferred by the most degraded and debased worshippers, these open-air lairs are both the most remote but also easiest to invade. Such lairs, besides cultists, are often guarded by all sorts of natural hazards (alligators, swamp bears, pits of quicksand, and pools of water so befouled as to be poisonous to drink), are often also guarded by resident servitors of shrine's patron deity. Drums made of human skin, flutes made from the bones of former sacrifices, and crude instruments of torture are all hallmarks of such lairs. The horrifying idol found on the altar is the least gruesome artifact the characters may find....
5. **Catacombs:** A classic for city-based adventures, these lairs often go hand-in-gore-stained hand with the respected townhouse. Such lairs often have tunnels connecting them to the sea, abattoirs full of the rotting and rat-gnawed remains of former sacrifices and interlopers (like the adventures...), and huge caverns devoted to worship. Dungeon cells in such lairs often imprison the twisted results of experiments by the cult leaders: results too horrifying to let live, but possessed of a manical desire to kill anyone not belonging to the cult.
6. **Underwater Grotto:** The temple is actually beneath the waters of a secluded cove, in a harbor, or built into the lower parts of a devil-haunted reef. Air-breathing worshipers use minor magicks to allow them to attend. Such temples are often guarded by tamed octopuses, Deep Ones, and other submarine horrors…

SIX GRISLY DECORATIONS FOR A TEMPLE

1. The temple walls are deeply carved with niches holding the severed heads of past sacrifices to the deity. Their eyes follow the movements of everyone in the temple. Some sing, praising in alien voices the eldritch horror that cost them their lives
2. Strangely-decorated cylindrical metal containers on curiously wrought pedestals dot the room. If opened, their contents prove to be fresh human brains, somehow still alive. If hooked up to the strange machine on the far end of the room behind the altar, the brains communicate the party. Some will relate tales of strange worlds and times, some will simply babble incoherently, driven insane by their time in the containers, an some will beg to be destroyed.
3. Rats scurry around the floor of the temple in disgusting numbers, some even trying to nip at the feet of the adventurers. If examined, they are found to all be mutated in a variety of unpleasant fashions. Some have extra legs, while some have legs that bifurcate at the joints. Others have to heads, while the heads of some have no features except for mouths. And a few have features that disturbingly resemble those of the adventurers…
4. The temple walls are decorated with the flayed skins of past victims or cult members. If the adventurers try to defile the temple, the skins come to life, pull themselves free of their hooks, and seek to attack the group, slithering across the floor like macabrely alive rugs and carpets.
5. With every step the adventurers take inside the temple, the floor moans in pain, with the cries of anguish growing louder the closer they get to the altar.
6. The outer walls of the sanctuary are lined with planters. However, these pots are filled with flowers unknown to any sane mind. Some twist in their pots, trying to get at the adventurers, some exude a stench like that of a freshly-disinterred cadaver, while others make noises no plant, or animal should ever be able to give voice to.



Even as disturbing as the temples themselves tend to be, often their accouterments pale in comparison to the members of the cults themselves. Exposure to the corruptive power of the Mythos often leaves its marks on the bodies as well as minds of their worshipers.

1D7 WARPED WORSHIPERS

1. All members of the cult have skin diseases that leave them disfigured in unpleasant though not sanity-blasting ways.
2. Every square inch of the cultist's bodies are covered with obscene tattoos that move independently across their owner's flesh.
3. As part of their initiation to the cult, each member allows the flesh to be stripped off his or her face. They wear featureless masks to hide their disfigurement when out in public, but in private, expose their horrifying visages for the approval of their god.
4. As a sign of their devotion to their deity, each member has destroyed their eyes and ears. In return, the deity has granted them the ability to echolocate like a bat by shrieking.
5. Members of the cult are all covered with a bioluminescent fungus. While it makes them easier to hit in low-light environments (+2 to be hit), the spores given off by the fungus have hallucinogenic properties. The hallucinations vary in intensity according to proximity, number of cultists present, and the Judge's whim.
6. Cultists have extra limbs grafted onto their bodies. Grotesquely, these extra limbs are alive and functional. The type of limb grafted is relevant to the deity worshipped. Followers of Great Cthulhu often have tentacles grafted on, while depraved devotees of Shub-Niggurath favor goat's legs, and the insane worshipers of Tsathoggua graft the entire bodies of frogs to their flesh.
7. These cultists not only have extra limbs grafted onto their bodies, those limbs are functional enough to use in combat. Servants of Yig may have venomous snakes grafted to their arms, while those of Atlach-Nacha might sport over-sized spider-legs ending in cruel hooks (1d4 damage each), and worshipers of the foul being known as Gol-goroth have gigantic bat-wings that allow them to fly.

SIX SINISTER CULT LEADERS

What self-respecting cult of mutated and mutilated madmen would be complete without an equally revolting leader? All groups will have one or more leaders, but cult leaders devoted to the Elder Gods stand out from the pack by the sheer grotesquery of their depraved depths of devotion to their blasphemous gods.

1. A twisted mockery of a human, this cult leader is hopelessly insane from his contacts with his deity. This insanity may manifest as acts of self-mutilation (scars, amputations, eyes plucked out, etc.) or as a stunning charisma (Personality score of 14+1D4). Or as both…
2. The cult is led by a human possessed permanently by a servitor of the deity. Outward signs of the possession are variable, but generally dependent on the nature of the deity. A cult leader for Great Cthulhu might have vestigial wings and a beard that moves ceaselessly even when he is not speaking, while the body of a cult leader for Cthugua might smolder and occasionally let off small gouts of fire when she speaks. Any of the leader's attempts to contact the cult's deity are at +5 on the roll.
3. The cult leader is a small child, innocent looking, but hopelessly corrupted and indoctrinated into the sect's alien beliefs since the womb.
4. The cult leader's body is only one-half there. As a sign of his devotion to his god, he cast a ritual long ago that transported one half of his body vertically to the hellish dimension his deity calls home. While it makes the cult leader a physical invalid, it grants him much power and a form of immortality (he can only be killed if both halves of his body are reduced to zero hp). Any of his attempts to contact his Deity are at +10 on the roll.
5. The new leader of the cult has engaged in ritual cannibalism when the old leader passed on. This horrifyingly manifests in the new leader growing extra heads and faces of all his predecessors, that whisper advice to him on cult business. Through their constant tutelage, he has access to 1d8 more spells than would normally be allowed for his CL.
6. To demonstrate the depths of his love for the shapeless nightmares he worships, the cult leader had numerous magical surgeries performed to his body, systematically removing every bone. He can now only move slowly, like a slug, and must communicate telepathically with his congregation. As a sign of his deity's favor, any of his attempts to contact his deity are at +10 on the roll.

Killing a cult leader will often cause the group to disintegrate, much like slaying a hydra's central head will kill all of its other heads. But adventurers who accomplish such a task should not congratulate themselves overmuch. For the faceless and nameless deities of the Mythos are eternal, patient, and know, in their alien minds, that there will always be more willing to offer up their minds and souls to them…

8 Ways to Pass the Time in Prison

Roll	Result
1	Try to escape: An obvious choice. For more daring and impatient prisoners, this usually involves tricking the guards into opening the cell and then attacking them. Those more willing to invest time in their escape (or less willing to risk their bodies) can spend years digging a tunnel under a loose stone or working free a bar in the window.
2	Exercise: One's skills go rusty quickly when not used. A great many skills require specialized equipment to practice, but as long as one is well-fed it's an easy matter to improve one's strength and agility.
3	Draw on the walls: A sharp rock or utensil can scratch the bricks of the cell, but few artistic masterpieces have been created in jails.
4	Compose a song or poem: Some of the greatest ballads ever written were penned in the pen.
5	Make friends: If a prisoner is lucky enough to have other prisoners within the range of their voice, conversation can be entertaining and informative.
6	Catch rats: It develops speed and agility, and in some prisons is a necessary survival skill.
7	Pray: Many a criminal have found religion while in prison.
8	Go insane: Time flies when you're having fun!

10 Odd Jobs Assigned by the Thieves' Guild

Roll	Result
1	Practice thuggery. Collect protection money from (1) a pottery merchant, (2) a beggar, (3) a huntsman, (4) a prostitute, (5) a tavern owner, (6) a witch.
2	Recruit a new member. A promising burglar has shown up in town recently. If she will not join the guild, kill her or make sure she leaves town.
3	Break a guild member out of jail. Stealth is preferable to force.
4	Grease palms. Deliver bribe money to (1) the constable, (2) a farmer, (3) the mayor, (4) a riverboat captain.
5	Shadow a merchant. Discreetly follow the target, observe his habits, note who he interacts with, and look for potential blackmail material.
6	Contribute to the coffers. Pinch pouches and burgle buildings to add to the guild's available funds.
7	Run errands. Collect a package from a stash (1) in the cellar of an inn, (2) in a cave outside of town, (3) on the roof of a temple, (4) at the bottom of a well.
8	Lay low. After a high-profile job or a close call, sometimes it's best if a person isn't seen for a while.
9	Add and subtract. The thieves' guild keeps meticulous records. Sometimes it needs to call in additional help to update all the ledgers.
10	Train members. The new recruits could benefit from the experience of a skilled thief.

24 Interesting Things Found in a Stolen Pouch

Roll	Result
1	A cut gemstone. Roll 1d10: (1) diamond, (2) emerald, (3) ruby, (4) sapphire, (5) onyx, (6) garnet, (7) sphalerite, (8) topaz, (9) hackmanite, (10) chalcedony.
2	An elaborate iron key. Who knows what it might open?
3	Rocks and sand. The pouch looked nice and hefty, but it was a decoy.
4	A captive fairy. When released from the pouch, the fairy immediately (1) flees, (2) attacks, (3) demands to be returned to its owner, (4) dies, (5) offers service to its rescuer for a year and a day.
5	Piece of string wound around a rock. Everybody wants a rock to wind a piece of string around.
6	Flask of spirits. Roll 1d6: (1) terrible rotgut, (2) cheap rum, (3) decent wine, (4) smooth whiskey, (5) fine brandy, (6) 1d3 ghosts.
7	Shaving kit. One never knows when one might suddenly grow whiskers in the middle of the street.
8	Wooden carving of a frog.
9	Vial of musky perfume. A very manly scent!
10	Folded parchment with a coded message. If the code is broken, the message turns out to be (1) a love letter, (2) an assassination order, (3) an invitation to a secret masquerade ball, (4) a shopping list.
11	A silk handkerchief embroidered with vines and the initials "REH."
12	A small stone pipe and a packet of sweet-smelling herbs.
13	Packet of seeds. If planted and cared for, the seeds will grow into (1) cabbages, (2) a variety of colorful flowers, (3) juicy orange melons, (4) prickly cacti, (5) a giant beanstalk, (6) semi-sentient carnivorous plant men.
14	A sea shell.
15	A wooden coin with a two-headed eagle printed on one side.
16	A black candle. Black candles are said to ward off demons, but they can also aid in summoning them.
17	A handful of dried meat and fruit.
18	A severed finger, still fairly fresh.
19	A poorly-crafted pocket mirror.
20	Set of 13 bone dice, each with a different number of sides. The numbers are not colored in, so they are difficult to read.
21	Deck of well-used cards.
22	A collection of coins from other realms. Some are round and a few are square, but all have strange faces and creatures imprinted upon them.
23	Brass knuckles with flecks of dried blood.
24	A rabbit's foot.

Classic Dungeon Crawl Art Folio:
William McAusland

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Publisher's Note

William McAusland is an artist who can combine meticulous detail and great composition into the same picture. As you'll see in the pages that follow, his renderings are detailed, methodical, and fastidious: every gold piece is visible in the dragon's horde, every chain link is clear on the warrior's armor, every leather thong is visible on the thief's leggings, and each stone in the dungeon wall is individually illustrated. Some readers will appreciate his art simply for this. But others will zoom out and look at the page's composition, the action and scene, and be even more impressed. Will can not only execute each component of the picture, but he can combine them into an engaging scene that tells a story.

Will has been illustrating the Dungeon Crawl Classics module series for a very long time. His interior images have appeared in the series intermittently for a decade, starting with *DCC #1: Idylls of the Rat King* and up to recent publications like *DCC #84: Peril on the Purple Planet*. Will has also provided both color and black-and-white work for the Judges Guild books published by Goodman Games. Will's first color illustration for Goodman Games was the cover for *DCC #6: Temple of the Dragon Cult*, and he later had the honor of providing the cover art for the updated second printing of *DCC #1: Idylls of the Rat King*. His full-color images have graced eight DCC module covers, including *DCC #17: Legacy of the Savage Kings*, which was Harley Stroh's first DCC adventure. It is beyond the scope of this black-and-white publication to reprint Will's color work, but we hope to provide that someday in the future.

Will's strong appreciation of the fantasy and science fiction genres comes across in his art. He is a reader and a gamer, as well as an artist. As you look on the following pages, you'll appreciate his attention to historical precision in arms and armor. The interview that follows provides more insight into his inspirations.

Oh…and Will also likes illustrating beautiful women. Another reason to enjoy looking at his art!

This art folio showcases a small percentage of the work that Will has completed over the last decade for Goodman Games. Wow, has it really been a decade? Yes, I guess it has been. I've selected images that showcase Will's remarkable attention to detail – including several pages of his action-packed micro-thumbnail scenes – as well as images that show his appreciation of fantasy, through intriguing characters and creatures. Enjoy!

— Joseph Goodman, San Jose, CA, Dec. 2014

Interview: William McAusland

Where did you grow up? Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada

What aspects of your childhood influenced you to make art? While I always drew and painted, the notion to become an artist for a living didn't occur to me until I was in high school. About that time I started to spend more time with a cousin of mine who made a living as a fine artist–Thomas R. McPhee, a world-renowned gem carver. Simultaneously, I always set out to be a writer, and did art to illustrate my own RPG adventures and stories.

What comics did you read growing up? What comics do you still read? I read *Savage Sword of Conan* in my youth, but now read the *Walking Dead* series and *Heavy Metal*. Interestingly, they are both black and white comics.

What games did you play growing up? What games do you still play? These days I mainly play *The Mutant Epoch* RPG, which I created and publish through my own company, Outland Arts.com. In the past, however, I played a ton of *D&D, Gamma World, Traveler* and home created RPGs.

Who are your inspirations from an artistic perspective? The Brothers Hildebrandt, all the great TSR legends like Bill Willingham, Parkinson, Easley, Elmore and Brom, but also classics like Frazetta. James Gurney, of Dinotopia fame, is a longtime favorite, so too with Eric Lofgren. More recent artistic inspirations come from Frank Cho, whose ink art is incredible.

What's your favorite band? Does music influence your art? While working I listen to podcasts for the most part, covering such topics as history, gaming, current events, art and science. Music has always been important, however, and here I like soundtracks from movies, as well as heavy metal, classical, Celtic and of course bagpipe music.

Who is your favorite fantastic author? ("fantastic" meaning anything from the genres of fantasy, horror, sci-fi, or general adventure) I tend to read history and military books of late, but for fiction have been heavily influenced by Tolkien of course, but so too Crawford Kilian (*Greenmagic*), James Axler (*Deathlands* series), and John Wyndham, who wrote *The Chrysalids*.

When it comes to making art, what is your favorite medium? Pencil. From here I either ink over my pencil art, paint over it with acrylics, or scan and digitally paint with the colorized file. It all starts with pencil, and it is the sketchbook where the highest form of creativity occurs, and what I love most when looking at other artist's work.

Who are your favorite artists? Right now my favorite artist is Frank Cho. Have you seen his *Liberty Meadows, Jungle Girl* or his book simply-called *Women*? I strive to improve my inks daily. Ink is the hardest medium there is… other than water colours, which I give up on.

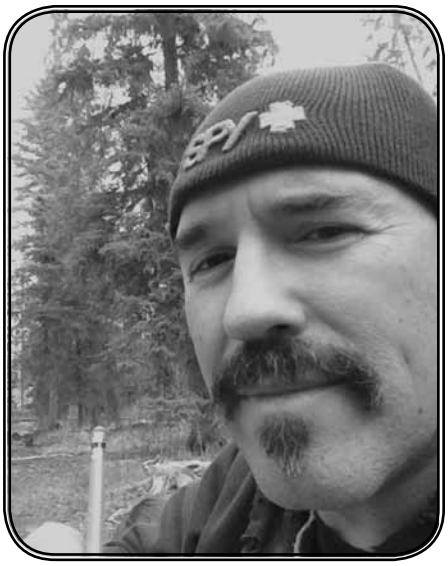
Who has most positively influenced your art-making? (Not just artistically – could include your friends or family, or your dog…) In adult life, my wife, Brooke has probably been the strongest influence on my art, and allowed it to grow by accepting it, and the feast-and-famine cycle of a freelancer and indie RPG publisher. Before I met her… I'd have to repeat an earlier answer and say Thomas R. McPhee. I studied one-to-one with him doing lapidary work for 3 years, but we also drew and went to arts shows and stayed up late into the night talking about the process and motivations of art, often drinking scotch.

What's your favorite movie? *District 9*.

What got you into doing D&D art? I always seemed to end up as the dungeon master when playing D&D, so drew countless maps, new monsters, NPCs, magic items and scenes. My first serious paid RPG gig was for Goodman Games rendering great lizards for *Dinosaurs that Never Where*. Some of those early inks are still some of my favorites.

What's your favorite location in which to make art? Sitting outside our trailer with my sketchbook on my lap, a beer nearby, crackling campfire, loons or coyotes calling in the distance and the family doing their own thing nearby.

When and why did you first start drawing? I seem to recall always being at least a grade ahead of the other kids in elementary school as far as drawing went. They used to hang around and ask me to draw stuff. My grandmother was a talented hobby artist and always bought me nice supplies and encouraged me to press on. I recall drawing a lot of war scenes, monsters, and knights.



When not drawing for commission, what kind of art do you work on for personal enjoyment? For fun, I tend to draw mutated creatures or curvaceous women… art which was meant just for fun, but which somehow ends up as a role-playing game NPC or new critter someplace online.

What brings out your best art – i.e., what makes you most inspired? This may sound silly, but I have a lot of kids and they spend a lot of time in the studio with me at their own drawing tables and work area. The stuff they come up with either with art supplies, miniatures, or found objects really charges my creative fire. Secondarily, I get inspired after seeing other people's work, either in a film, game book, magazine, on the cover of a novel, or the sketchbook of a fellow artist. A less obvious place to find artistic inspiration, at least to a non-gamer, is when I sit at a table when somebody is the game master or DM, and they are describing something. I just start to see a world unfolding before me and crave to put it to pencil and paper. Game worlds are real as far as the mind's eye and imagination is concerned. Drawing is merely a way to take a snap-shot of what otherwise would only exist between our ears.

William McAusland WM

WILLIAM
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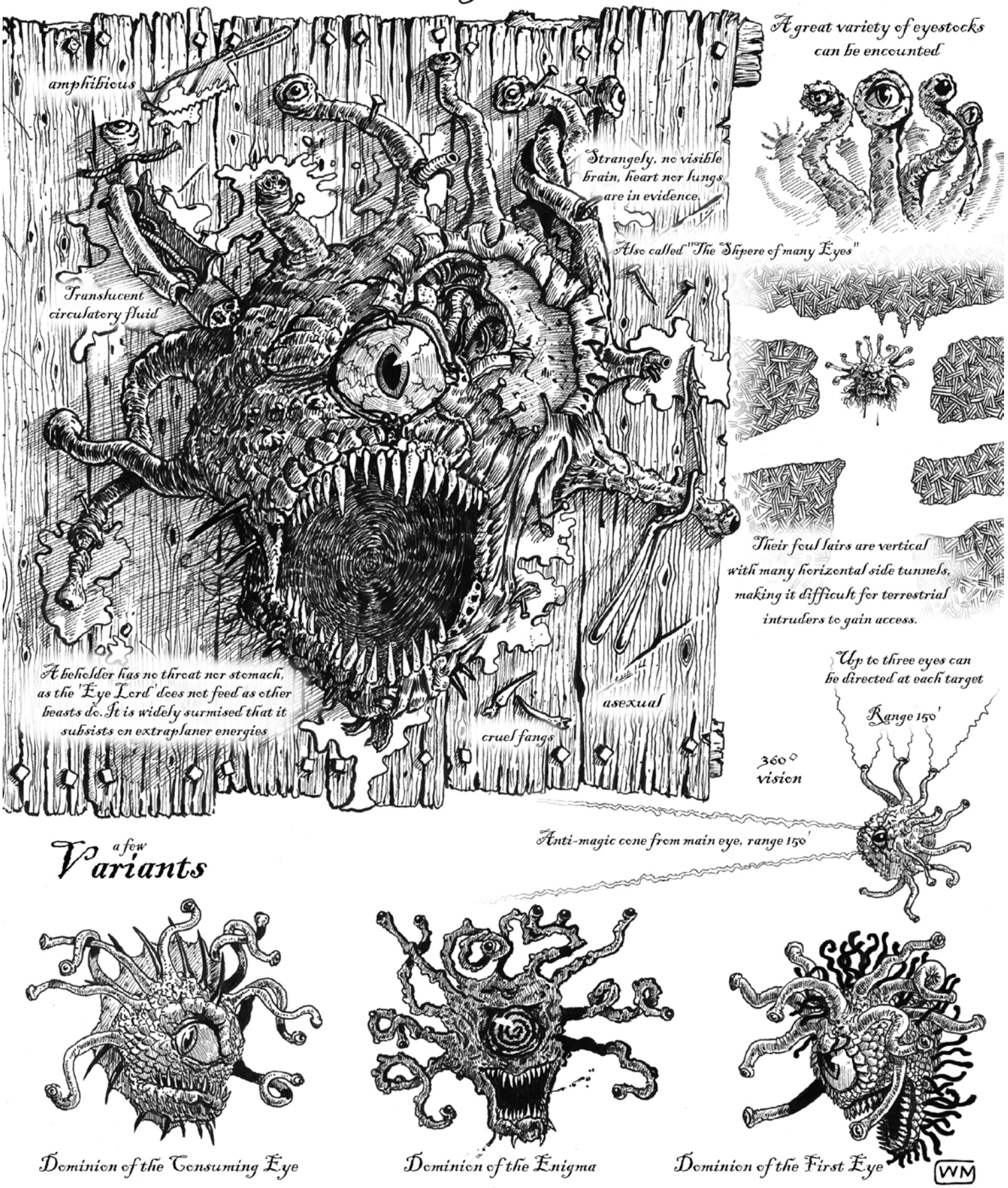
WM

The Anatomy of the Beholder



a few Variants

Dominion of the Consuming Eye

Dominion of the Enigma

Dominion of the First Eye

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William
McAusland
WM

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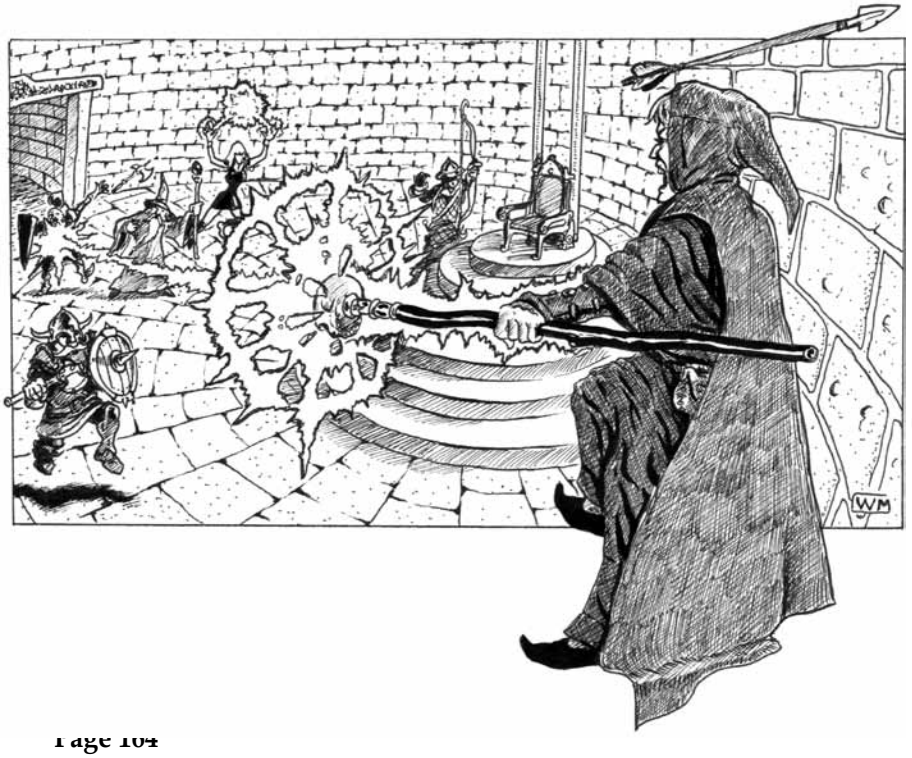
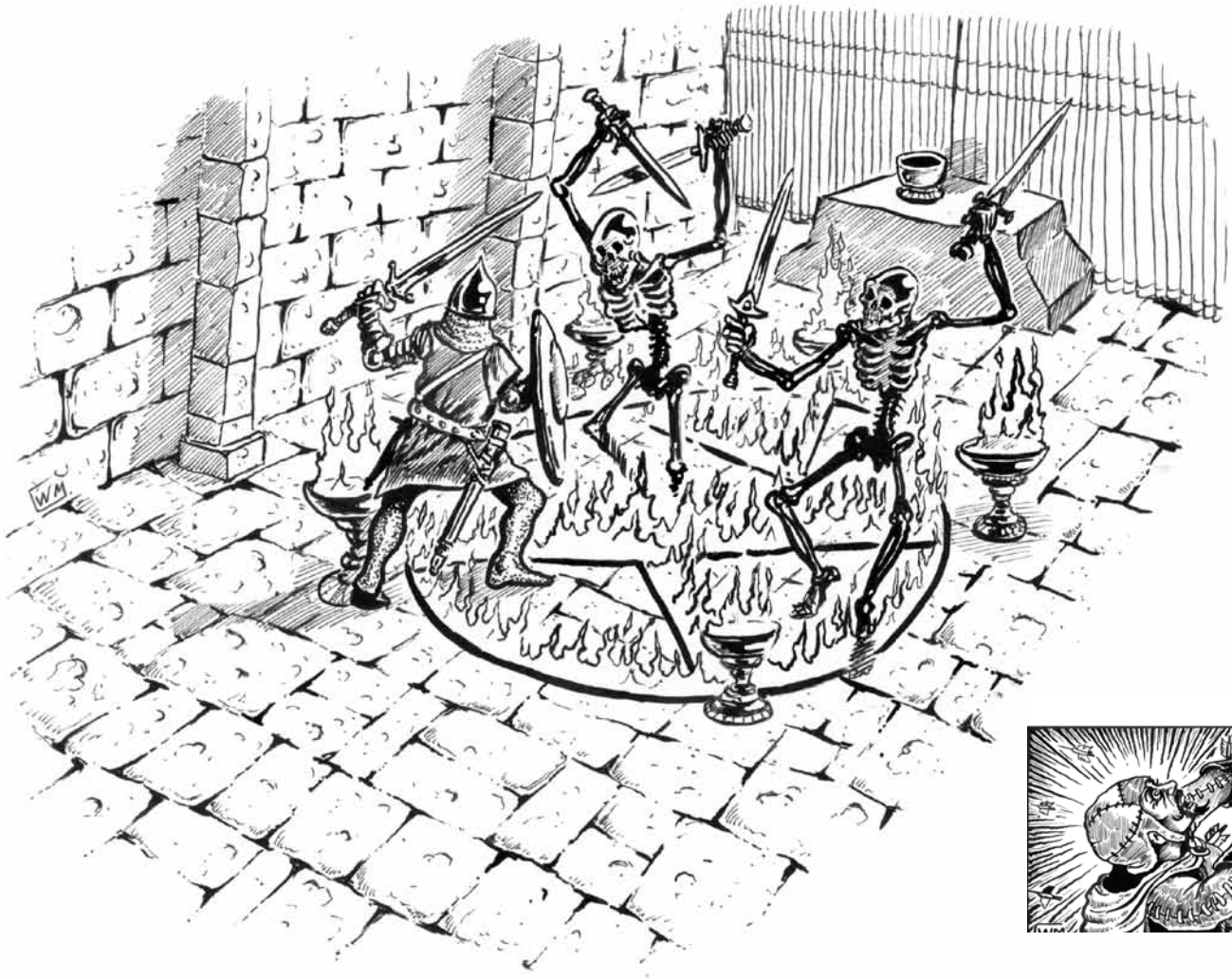
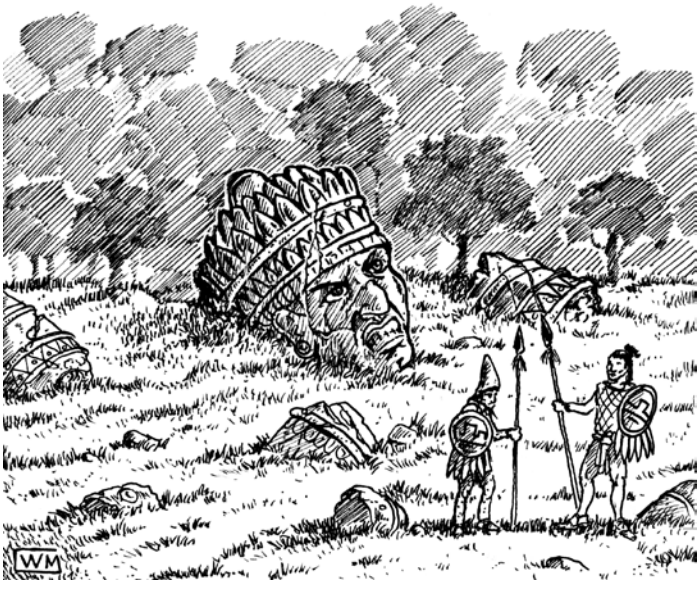
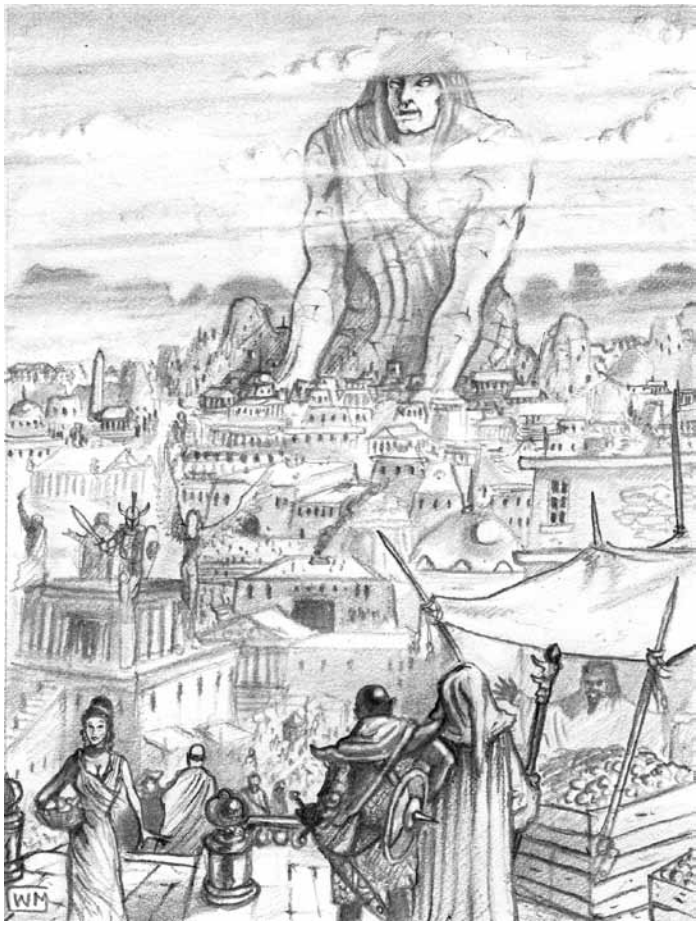
Astounding Battles



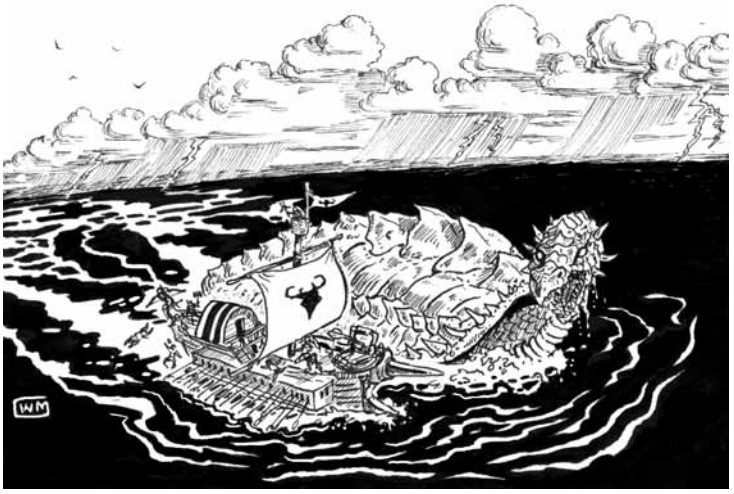


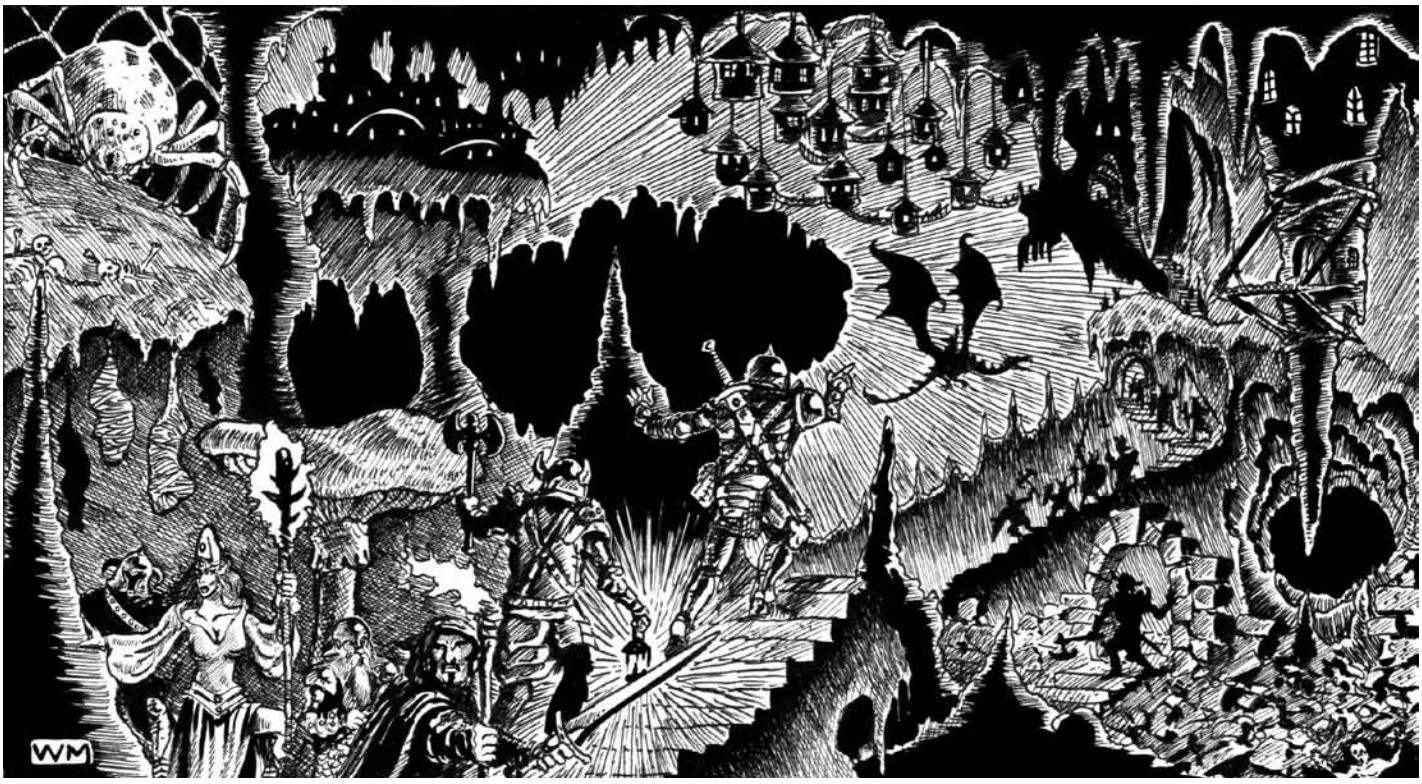
Fantastic Landscapes





More Fantastic Landscapes

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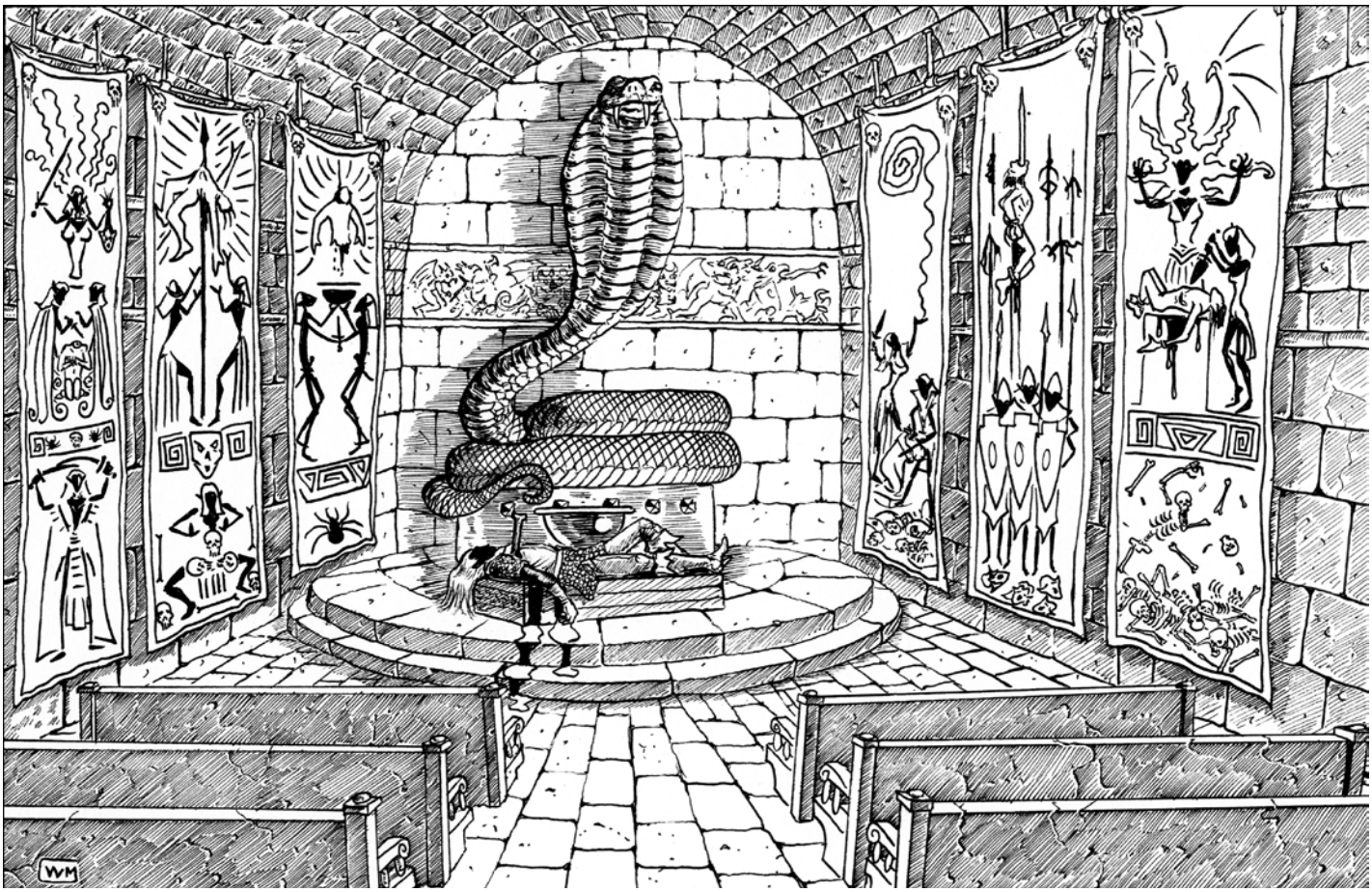
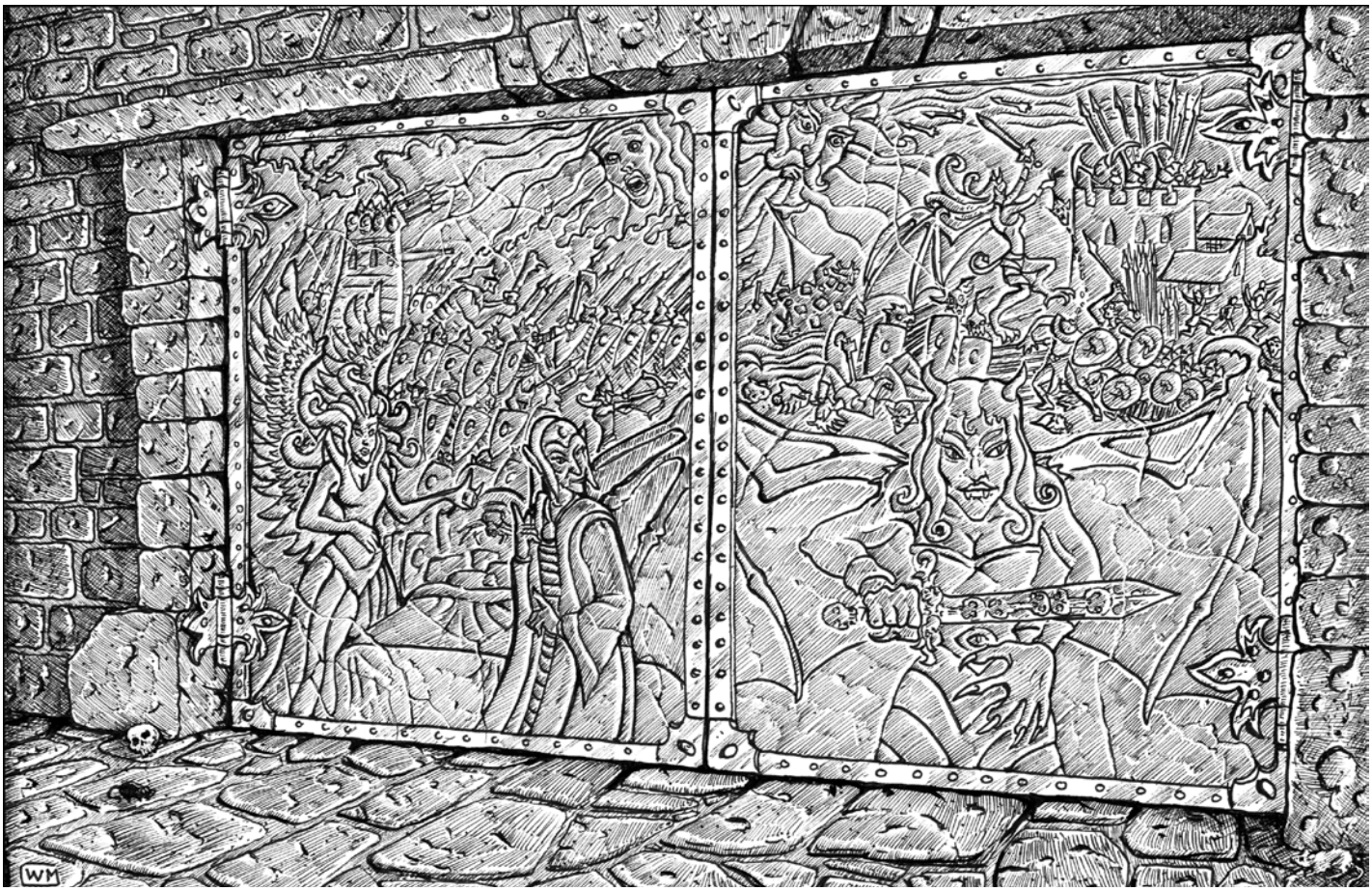
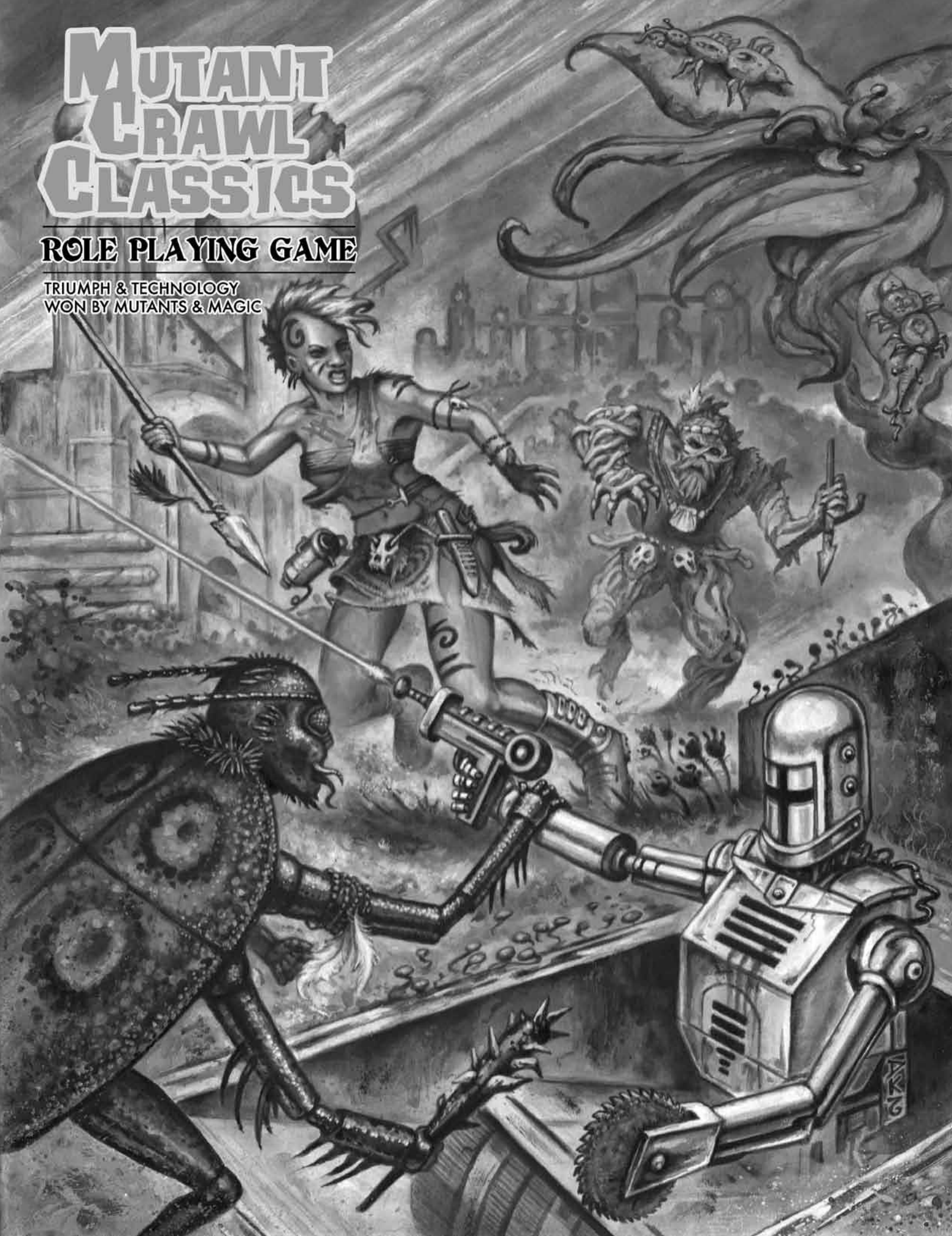





MUTANT CRAWL CLASSICS
ROLE PLAYING GAME
TRIUMPH & TECHNOLOGY
WON BY MUTANTS & MAGIC

MUTANT CRAWL CLASSICS

ROLE PLAYING GAME

TRIUMPH & TECHNOLOGY
WON BY MUTANTS & MAGIC

A special sneak preview of the upcoming RPG!

Writer: Jim Wampler • Editor: Rev. Dak J. Ultimak • Artists: Erik Lofgren, William McAusland, Stefan Poag

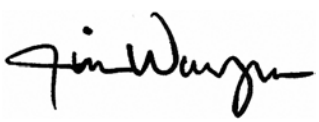
PREFACE

Welcome to my little slice of post-apocalyptic heaven. This is a preview of the game that I've wanted to write and play for over 35 years. Shortly after being introduced to the World's Most Popular Fantasy Roleplaying Game in 1979, I picked up my second RPG, a post-apocalyptic game penned by the inestimable James M. Ward, along with Gary Jaquet. That game, I would later learn, was based in turn upon an even earlier game by the aforementioned Mr. Ward. So as much as from E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson, I learned how to play and judge RPGs from James M. Ward.

In those early days of the hobby, each member of my original gaming group tended to take ownership of a particular gaming genre and to run it for everyone else. James M. Ward's brilliant combination of over-the-top super science and earnest, deadly danger grabbed me from the very start. I am of the conviction that had his work received the same publishing support and marketing efforts that were lavished upon its elder fantasy sibling — say a series of hardbound volumes and a modicum of consistent creative control — his creation would be widely regarded today as the second greatest role playing game of all time. I certainly consider it thus. It is worth mentioning that these old school games of James M. Ward are still actively played decades later in convention halls, on dining room tables, and even in the stereotypical basements of the world. Much like an extra-hardy mutant player character, they simply refuse to die.

So for me, the preview you now hold in your hands is a giant dose of long-anticipated karma. When Joseph Goodman released his canny take on fantasy role playing games, the Dungeon Crawl Classics RPG, I saw my chance to strike. Just as Joseph (along with a bevy of other like-minded and talented writers and artists) set out to re-inject the thrill of the unknown and the mysteries lying inherent in the famed "Appendix N" literature back into fantasy RPGs, I saw a golden opportunity to do the same for my favorite gaming genre.

As you will discover in the next few pages, not only is the Mutant Crawl Classics RPG 100% compatible with the Dungeon Crawl Classics RPG, it should be noted that like its predecessor, nothing is as it seems. Many of the familiar tropes and trappings lie herein to be sure, but your players will never encounter recognizable 21st century technology and treasure in MCC RPG. There's little thrill and mystery in that. This is a world of deadly ancient ruins and lost super science, of savage stone age tribesmen, and of malevolent mutations run riot in hothouse jungles and radioactive deserts. The unexpected and unknown dangers of a doomed civilization lie underneath an aging and bloated sun, and its secrets are yours for the taking, if you can but survive the attempt. That's the way the Appendix N authors did it, that's the way James M. Ward and Joseph Goodman do it, and it's worked out pretty well for millions of avid gamers so far...



Jim Wampler
Gen Con 2015

INTRODUCTION

Are you a savage tribesman sifting through the radioactive ruins of Lost Lemuria, or of a futuristic age yet to come? Is your faithful mount a wingless dragon, a dinosaur, or a gigantic mutated lizard? Is that trusty weapon strapped to your side an arcane construct from a bygone mystic age of magic and wonder, or is it the imperishable product of an advanced technological civilization long since fallen to ruin?

These questions have never bothered you overmuch — they are a needless distraction from the task at hand. You must survive. You must survive against all odds, be it surviving in the mad hothouse jungles populated by Darwin's most fevered nightmares, or in the glowing deserts and decaying ruins of the once-was. Whether your leather-bound footfall crosses blast-glass or intelligent slime, you must survive. And to do so will require all the cunning, luck, and capacity for violence that you can muster. Fortunately, you've always had these things in great abundance.

WHAT IS THIS?

The Mutant Crawl Classics Roleplaying Game is both a supplement to Goodman Games' Dungeon Crawl Classics RPG as well as a complete game in its own right. You can use these rules to run your own post apocalyptic role playing game, or simply as a way to spice up your existing DCC RPG campaign with the addition of mutants, artificial intelligences, and futuristic technology. These rules are designed to be 100% compatible with the DCC RPG rulebook, and characters and monsters from either system should mesh seamlessly into your campaign with little or no adjudication required.

THE SETTING: TERRA A.D.

The characters in the Mutant Crawl Classics RPG live in a primitive world dominated by the bizarre side-effects of an ancient holocaust known only as the Great Disaster. Millennia after this cataclysmic extinction event, the world — now known as Terra A.D. (After Disaster) — has regrown into a lush tropical wilderness. The lifeforms that survive and flourish in Terra A.D. did so because natural selection rewarded their ancestors for possessing either very plastic or very hardy genomes. Plants and animals with wild and unstable mutations permeate the ecosystem and the food chain. Though some species have settled down into relatively stable body plans and are capable of reproducing true to form, there is still the chance in any given birth of a new mutation arising.

Of these mutations, the advent of intelligence and sentience are by far the most pervasive. Never before in the history of the world has it been home to so many competing sentient species. Many animal and plant species now possess rudimentary reasoning abilities, and more than a few walk upright, communicate with each other, and make use of tools. These sentient species are collectively known as Manimals and Plantients.

What few members of mankind that survived the Great Disaster meanwhile descended into barbarism and savagery, and eventually split into two separate species: Pure Strain Humans and Mutants. Rather than surviving the Great Disaster by virtue of constantly mutating genetics, the genome of Pure Strain Humans became hardened against radiation and other mutagenic environmental effects, leaving them an especially hardy and intelligent race. The Mutant species of mankind meanwhile evolved along an opposite path, never breeding true to form even within small tribal gene pools. A mutant is always born with at least one notable cosmetic mutation, and upon reaching post-adolescence, mutants will typically manifest a diverse set of unpredictable additional mutations, making them among the most bizarre and horrific of all Terra A.D. creatures.

No existing sentient species or culture on Terra A.D. has managed to rise above the Neolithic stage of civilization. Stone tools and a tribal hunter-gatherer society dominate, with even rudimentary agriculture being a very rare occurrence. Metallurgy and even writing are unknown to most sentients.

THE ANCIENT ONES

It is generally accepted among the denizens of Terra A.D. that there once existed a legendary race of an unknown type that ruled and ordered the world with an arcane force known as technology. While nearly every sentient species makes an apocryphal claim to be directly descendant of these protean techno-wizards of millennia past, the evidence for their existence is inarguable. Though long since passed out of all memory, the imperishable artifacts and ruined haunts of the Ancient Ones were manufactured of such incomprehensibly durable substances and with such super scientific knowledge as to be virtually immune to the ravages of passing centuries. Many such devices and places may yet be discovered relatively intact by those brave enough to plumb the taboo lands of Terra A.D.

TERRA A.D. AS A CAMPAIGN SETTING

The setting of Terra A.D. is clearly post-apocalyptic, but exactly which apocalypse are we talking about? Was the Great Disaster the fall of Lost Lemuria or Ancient Atlantis, the Ragnarok of the Norse gods, an atomic holocaust, or the death throes of a Vancian Dying Aereth? These questions are intentionally never answered in these rules. Taking its cue from its elder sibling, the world of Mutant Crawl Classics RPG is an undiscovered country — wild and mysteri-

ous. Ideally, the players should never be certain whether the game setting even takes place on Earth or perhaps on some other parallel planet or plane. The artifacts of the Ancients Ones that the players encounter are the products of a super science, and never of recognizable 21st century manufacture.

TERRA A.D. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGY

The world of Terra A.D. is that of tropical hothouse climate from pole-to-pole. The sun is red and bloated, and the skies are an emerald blue-green. Dense jungles and mile-tall trees dominate the planet. This is a world still struggling to heal itself fully from a disaster now many millennia in the past, and the planet seems to have chosen to do so by undergoing an explosive evolutionary radiation of its native life forms. Some wounded lands still persist – the radioactive glow deserts and the battered and volcanic crater countries – but where there is life, there is an overabundance of it. Mega-fauna are the rule rather than the exception.

The weather systems of Terra A.D. are generally hot and often rainy, with more typical thunderstorms punctuated by occasional glow storms and meteor showers. When the skies are clear, one can clearly see that there is no moon in the sky of Terra A.D., only an omnipresent "Sky Arc" — a graceful banded curve of blue-white light that visibly glows both day and night. Is it the crushed remnants of a shattered moon, or an accretion disk from which a moon has not yet formed? None can say, but legend suggests that the Ancient Ones quite possibly went there to live when their terrestrial world was destroyed. Small moving lights can still be seen in the night time skies that are thought to be the chariots of those long lost gods.

TERRA A.D. INHABITANTS AND CREATURES

The four dominant types of sentient species in Terra A.D.: Pure Strain Humans (PSH), Mutants, Manimals, and Plantients. These groups are dominant only because they benefit from the organizing principles of a rudimentary Stone Age level of civilization. Even a primitive tribal social organization allows them to compete successfully in a world in which a great number of mutated plants and animals also possess sentience, but no society.

There are also a few among these sentient species that have joined together in secret societies called Arcane Alignments. Often being comprised primarily of those rare individuals who plunder and master the artifacts of the Ancient Ones as an avocation, members of Arcane Alignments sometimes possess more advanced, if esoteric, knowledge and technologies.

Rarest of all, the world of Terra A.D. is yet home to a small number of artificial lifeforms that remain from the pre-disaster era. These beings include androids, robots, holograms, and AIs (artificial intelligences). These beings range in intelligence and abilities from the simple-minded and narrowly-skilled, to the highly intelligent and fully sentient, to those that are considered patrons and gods. Sometimes simply referred to as "smart metal," all of these beings are considered highly dangerous and wildly unpredictable. With the right know-how and artifacts, some may be tamed and retained as servants, while the greatest of them may decide in turn that you are just barely worthy to become worshipers of their ancient might and glory (see Chapter 6: Artificial Intelligences, and Chapter 9: Patron AIs).

FROM CHAPTER 1: CHARACTER CREATION

Character creation in MCC RPG follows these steps:

1. Roll ability scores.
2. Adjust ability score modifiers, attack scores, and saving throws (see Table 1-1).
3. Roll Level-0 hit points using 1d4.
4. Roll for beginning profession and equipment (see Table 1-2)
5. Roll Birth Sign (see Table 1-3).
6. Roll twice for Beginning Equipment (see Table 1-4). Additional equipment may also be obtained by barter.
7. Roll genotype (see Table 1-5).
8. Determine genotype appearance or sub-type, if any (see Tables 1-6 through 1-8).

ABILITIES

Roll 3d6 in order for the following abilities: Strength (STR), Agility (AGIL), Stamina (STA), Personality (PERS), Intelligence (INT), and Luck. Adjust ability-derived modifiers as required (see Table 1-1). Though the normal range of ability scores is 3-18, mutations may increase an ability score to a maximum value of 24.

HOPELESS CHARACTERS

The environment of Terra A.D. is not only harsh and unforgiving, but genetic birth defects and stillbirths are common. It is therefor possible to roll up a character who dies during character creation. For example, a character possessing a 3 Stamina score would then have a -3 modifier to hit points rolled at level-0, possibly resulting in a negative hit point total during character creation. Treat this character as having been stillborn, and roll up a new level-0 character.

It is also possible for a level-0 character to start the game severely handicapped by unlucky ability score rolls during character creation. Judges should encourage players to play even these "1 hp wonders," as many things can happen to that character during the course of play — and of such stuff future legends are forged!

Table 1-1: Ability Score Modifiers

Ability	Modifier	Artifact Checks	Maximum Tech Level (by INT)
3	-3	none	none
4	-2	-2	1
5	-2	-2	1
6	-1	-1	1
7	-1	-1	1
8	-1	+0	2
9	none	+0	2
10	none	+0	3
11	none	+0	3
12	none	+0	4
13	+1	+0	4
14	+1	+1	4
15	+1	+1	5
16	+2	+1	5
17	+2	+2	5
18	+3	+3	6
19	+4	+4	6
20	+5	+4	6
21	+5	+4	6
22	+6	+5	6
23	+6	+5	6
24	+7	+6	6

LEVEL-0 CHARACTER PROFESSIONS

In the Neolithic societies of Terra A.D. there are only two possible level-0 professions — Hunters and Gatherers. Additional beginning equipment is rolled after determining profession.

Table 1-2: Profession

Roll d100	Profession	Starting Equipment
1-50	Hunter	Wood spear (damage: 1d5)
51-100	Gatherer	Large leather sack

BIRTH SIGN OR LUCKY ROLL

Each character rolls his or her birth sign at character creation to determine that character's "lucky roll." If a character's ability scores are such that they have a luck ability modifier, then that modifier becomes the character's inherit lucky roll as determined below. Note that as a character's luck score changes (either up or down), the lucky roll does not change over time.

Table 1-3: Birth Sign

d30	Birth Sign/Lucky Roll
1	Nuclear Winter: All attack rolls
2	The Roxen: All melee attack rolls
3	The Triffid: Missile attack rolls
4	The Beast: Unarmed attack rolls
5	The Millisteed: Mounted attack rolls
6	The Apocalypse: All damage rolls
7	Ragnarok: Melee damage rolls
8	Revelations: Missile fire damage rolls
9	The Hunter: Attack and damage rolls for level-0 starting weapon
10	The Gatherer: Stealth/hiding rolls
11	The Outsider: Find/disable traps
12	The Sensor: Find secret doors
13	The Genomorph: Mutation checks
14	The Alpha Striker: Mutation damage rolls
15	The Programmer: AI recognition rolls
16	The Hypospray: Healing rolls
17	The Survivor: All saving throws
18	The Multitool: Escape traps
19	The Healer: Saving throw versus poisons
20	The Scientist: Reflex saving throws
21	The Glow: Fortitude saving throws
22	The Esper: Will saving throws
23	The Bunker: Armor Class
24	The CPU: Initiative
25	The Ecobot: Hit points (applies at all levels)
26	The War-Bot: Critical hit tables (double luck modifier on critical hits)
27	The Unchanging: Defect rolls
28	The Backup Disk: Fumbles (double luck modifier on fumbles)
29	The Universal Translator: Number of languages
30	The Accelerant: Speed (each +1/-1 = +5'/-5' on speed)

Table 1-4: Additional Beginning Equipment			
d100	**Result**	**Damage / AC Bonus**	**Trade Value in Creds**
01-04	Blowgun and 12 darts	1d3	6
05-09	Bone club	1d6	3
10-13	Bow and 12 stone-tipped arrows	1d6	30
14-18	Flint dagger	1d4	3
19-21	Leather sling	1d4	2
22-25	Stone axe	1d7	7
26-29	Stone-tipped spear	1d6	5
30-33	Wooden club	1d4	2
34-37	Fur Cloak	+2 AC	20
38-41	Hide armor	+3 AC	30
42-45	Leather shield	+1 AC	10
46-49	Flint fire starter		5
50-53	Hemp rope, 50 ft.		5
54-57	Jerked roxen meat (2 weeks worth)		2
58-61	Leather rucksack		10
62-65	Torch (x3)		3
66-69	Antler hood	+1 AC	10
70-73	Bone necklace		15
74-77	Conch shell trumpet		25
78-81	Magic sticky rock (lodestone)		30
82-85	Paints and dyes		15
86-89	Bag of sea shells		25
90-93	Small shiny thing (trinket non-functional artifact)		50
94-97	Large shiny thing (trinket non-functional artifact)		100
98-00	A telepathic rat (pet)		200

GENOTYPES

Roll on the genotype table to determine character genotype. Level-0 Mutants, Manimals, and Plantients begin the game with only cosmetic mutations (see below). Additional mutations for these classes manifest at level 1, and are rolled for separately at that time.

Table 1-5: Character Genotype		
d100	**Genotype**	**Go to Genotype Sub-Type Table**
01-32	Pure Strain Human*	—
33-66	Mutant	Table 1-6: Mutant Appearance
67-88	Manimal	Table 1-7: Manimal Sub-Type**
89-00	Plantient	Table 1-8: Plantient Sub-Type**

* Only one PSH class is presented in this preview.

** Not presented in this preview.

Table 1-6: Mutant Appearance	
d30	**Result**
1-5	Skin color: Roll 1d6 (1) bright red; (2) snow white; (3) lemon yellow; (4) purple; (5) green; (6) translucent.
6-9	Skin texture: Roll 1d6 (1) is mottled; (2) is reptilian; (3) is chitinous; (4) is rocky; (5) is metallic; (6) is invisible.
10-12	Eyes: Roll 1d6 (1) have slitted pupils; (2) have no pupils; (3) glow in the dark; (4) are a single eye; (5) have compound insect eyes; (6) are covered by semi-transparent skin.
12-13	Mouth: Roll 1d6 (1) is a fanged; (2) is a featureless slit; (3) is a beak or bill; (4) is insectoid; (5) is located in belly; (6) absent, replaced by porous skin.
14-16	Head: Roll 1d6 (1) is larger than normal; (2) is smaller than normal; (3) has craggy brow and ridged skull; (4) has small horns; (5) has antennae; (6) retreats into body.
17-19	Hair: Roll 1d6 (1) stands on end; (2) grows into a lion's mane; (3) grows over entire body; (4) drips oil; (5) is made of organic metal; (6) is comprised of small leaves.
20-22	Hands: Roll 1d6 (1) have no nails; (2) have only three fingers; (3) have six fingers; (4) are prehensile claws; (5) are comprised of tentacles; (6) absent, replaced with tentacle fingers.
23-24	Feet: Roll 1d6 (1) are overlarge and padded; (2) have 12 toes; (3) have claws; (4) are bird talons; (5) are hooves; (6) absent, replaced with cilia lumps.
25-27	Body: Roll 1d6 (1) has a tail; (2) has 1d6 arms, round up to even number; (3) has 1d6 legs, round up to even number; (4) has ridged back; (5) has symbiotic twin in stomach; (6) is segmented like a worm.
28	Form: Roll 1d6 (1) is tripedal; (2) is quadrapedal; (3) is serpentine; (4) is insectoid; (5) is globular; (6) is a condensed ball of plasma that must inhabit clothes to maintain form.
29-30	Roll twice on table.

ALIGNMENTS IN MCC RPG

The alignment system in MCC RPG varies from that in DCC RPG. In the brutal post-apocalyptic world of Terra A.D., the over-arching values of Law, Neutrality, and Chaos have lost most of their meaning. The surviving sentient beings of Terra A.D. have instead organized themselves along more pragmatic belief systems tailored to their individual social needs. These social constructs are called Archaic Alignments, as the origin of many of them is thought to go back to the era prior to the Great Disaster. For more information on which Archaic Alignment options are available to player characters, see Chapter 2: Character Classes and Chapter 6: Archaic Alignments.

Wetware Programs and Spells in MCC RPG

The wetware programs granted by patron AIs in MCC RPG are mental constructs and databases of knowledge implanted by the AI in a living sentient's brain. While retained in memory, these complex equations and unified field theory concepts provide a means for the sentient to change the laws of physics in specific and prescribed ways — via concentration, spoken words, gestures, and occasionally with the aid of conducting hardware with which to channel the program.

In simpler language, wetware programs are spells.

In Jack Vance's *The Dying Earth* series, no distinction is ever made between technology and magic. One is proposed to be a synonym for the other, each term simply being the same concept seen from differing perspectives. This is also the case in MCC RPG, where the difference between a DCC RPG wizard casting a spell and an MCC RPG shaman running a memorized wetware program are essentially identical in the presentation and particular effects.

For more on the AI wetware programs available to Shamans, see Chapter 9: Patron AIs.

FROM CHAPTER 2: CHARACTER CLASSES

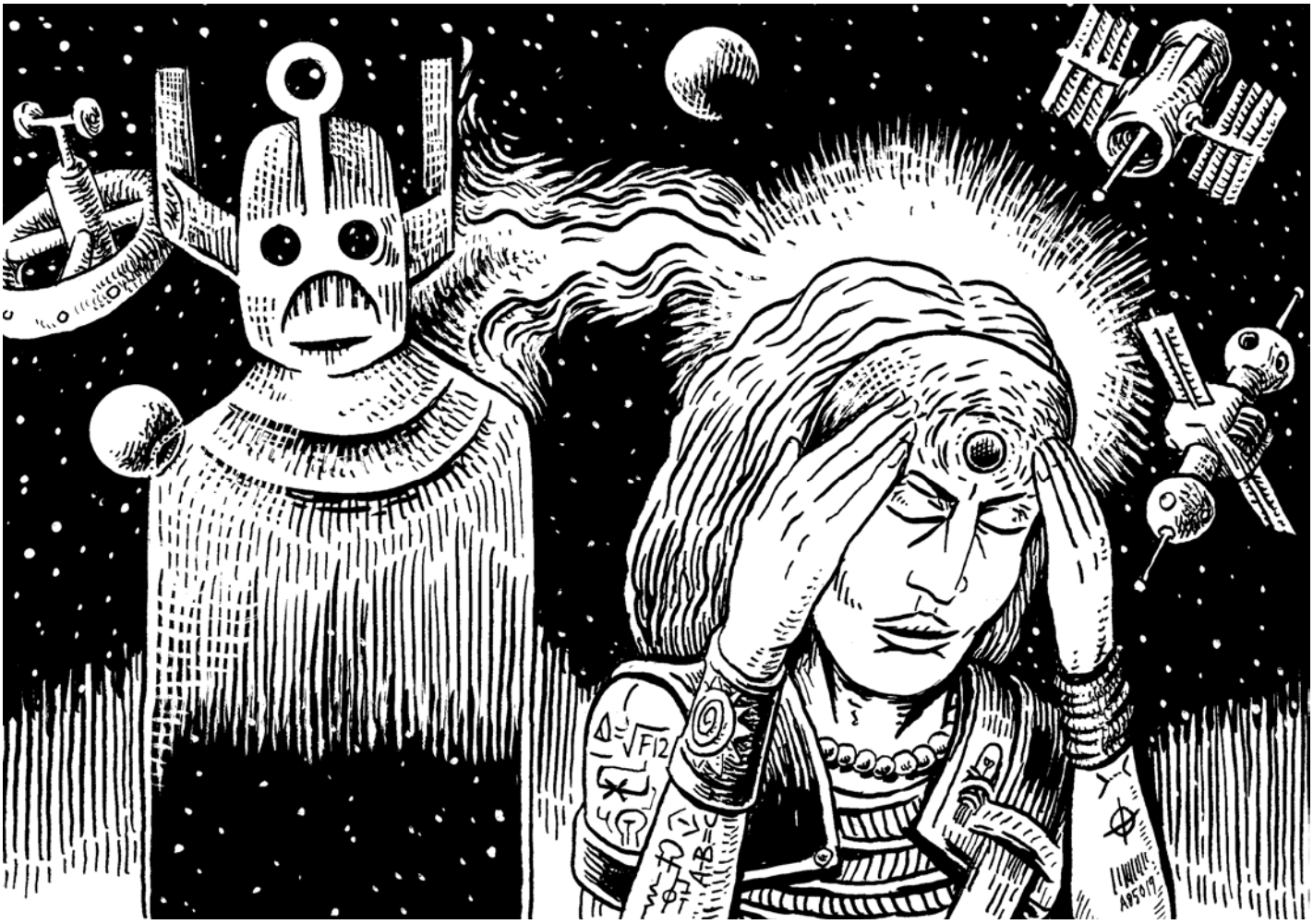
CHOOSING A CLASS

In many cases, the choice of character class will be dictated by the genotype of the player character. For Mutants, Manimals, and Plantients, their genotype is their character class — the two terms are synonymous. For Pure Strain Humans, the unknowing descendants of the longest-evolved and most adaptable genotype, the rise from level-0 hunter-gatherer to adventurer means specializing in one of four separate character classes.

Two sample classes are presented below.

SHAMAN

Pure Strain Humans of high intelligence and with a spiritual bent often become Shamans. Shamans specialize in ancient lore and knowledge, particularly focusing upon legend and myth associated with those demi-god servants of the Ancient Ones, artificial intelligences. Even without the benefit of a written language, Shamans pass along to each other an oral tradition of arcane knowledge relating to these not-so lost technological beings. This knowledge includes apocryphal tales, means to access certain patron AIs, and even the key principles that allow the mental channel-



ing of the higher mathematics and scientific concepts required to bend the very laws of physics to their will.

Hit Points: Shamans gain 1d4 hit points at each level.

Artifacts: Shamans have a natural affinity for understanding the artifacts of the ancients, resulting in an added bonus to artifact rolls (see Table 2-3).

Choosing an AI Patron: At 1st level, a Shaman selects an AI patron to serve. This patron will grant the Shaman access to wetware programs of terrible power, including the programs *patron AI bond* and *invoke patron AI*.

Darwinian Luck: All Pure Strain Humans (including Shamans) regenerate spent Luck at the rate of 1 point of Luck for each 24 hour period.

AI Recognition: Because of their close resemblance to the Ancient Ones, all Pure Strain Humans (including Shamans) gain a natural +2 to AI recognition rolls.

Archaic Alignment: Shamans may begin as members of either the *The Clan of Cog* or *The Curator*s archaic alignments.

Table 2-3: Shaman (Pure Strain Human)

Level	Attack	Crit Die / Table	Action Dice	Reflex	Fort	Will	Artifact Bonus	Max Wetware Level
1	+0	1d6/I	1d20	+1	+0	+1	+3	1
2	+1	1d6/I	1d20	+1	+0	+1	+4	1
3	+1	1d8/I	1d20	+1	+1	+2	+5	2
4	+1	1d8/I	1d20	+2	+1	+2	+6	2
5	+2	1d10/I	1d20+1d14	+2	+1	+3	+7	3
6	+2	1d10/I	1d20+1d16	+2	+2	+4	+8	3
7	+3	1d12/I	1d20+1d20	+3	+2	+4	+9	4
8	+3	1d12/I	1d20+1d20	+3	+2	+5	+10	4
9	+4	1d14/I	1d20+1d20	+3	+3	+5	+11	5
10	+4	1d14/I	1d20+1d20+1d14	+4	+3	+6	+12	5

MUTANT

Mutants are either the most cursed, or the most blessed, of all the children descended from the Ancients Ones. In order to survive the environmental rigors of the Great Disaster, the genome of their ancestors became eternally plastic and malleable, always adapting but never breeding true. All mutants are born with at least one cosmetic mutation, and upon exiting adolescence they commonly experience the "Metagenesis" as their genetic code fully blossoms and the mutant develops an additional number of random mutations.

Hit Points: Mutants gain 1d5 hit points at each level.

Mutations: Upon achieving 1st level, a mutant gains a random 1d3 physical mutations and 1d2 mental mutations (see Table 3-2).

Mutant Horror: Being among the most bizarre appearing of mutated creatures, Mutants can strike fear in their opponents, gaining an initiative bonus in combat (see Table 2-9).

Reverse Evolution: Should a Mutant ever lose all of his mutations for any reason, that character's genome hardens, and the Mutant immediately becomes a Pure Strain Human and must enter one of the Pure Strain Human Classes at 1st level. The new character cannot gain mutations again.

Artifacts: Mutants have some affinity for the artifacts of the ancients, giving them medium-ranged bonuses to artifact rolls (see Table 3-2).

Radburn: Mutants exposed to radiation or other mutagens may also develop – or sometimes even lose – mutations (see Chapter 3: Mutations).

Glowburn: Mutants may elect to use glowburn when activating a mutant power to boost that mutation's effect (see Chapter 3: Mutations).

AI Recognition: Mutants normally receive no inherent bonuses to AI recognition. Should a mutant have no visible or discernible mutations (judge's discretion), the mutant's AI recognition bonus may become a +1.

Archaic Alignment: Mutant player characters may begin as members of *The Clan of Cog* or *Children of the Glow* archaic alignments.

Table 2-9: Mutant								
Level	**Attack**	**Crit Die / Table***	**Action Dice**	**Reflex**	**Fort**	**Will**	**Artifact Bonus**	**Mutant Horror Init Bonus**
1	+1	1d6/II	1d20	+1	+0	+1	+0	1d3
2	+1	1d8/II	1d20	+1	+0	+1	+1	1d3+1
3	+2	1d8/II	1d20	+1	+1	+2	+2	1d3+2
4	+2	1d10/II	1d20	+2	+1	+2	+3	1d4+1
5	+3	1d10/II	1d20+1d14	+2	+2	+3	+4	1d4+2
6	+3	1d12/II	1d20+1d16	+2	+2	+3	+5	1d5+1
7	+4	1d12/II	1d20+1d20	+3	+3	+4	+6	1d5+2
8	+4	2d14/II	1d20+1d20	+3	+3	+4	+7	1d6+1
9	+5	2d14/II	1d20+1d20	+3	+3	+4	+8	1d6+2
10	+5	2d16/II	1d20+1d20	+4	+4	+5	+9	1d8+2

FROM CHAPTER 3: MUTATIONS

In the post apocalyptic epoch of the Mutant Crawl Classics RPG, nearly every living creature has mutations of one sort or the other. Technically, even Pure Strain Humans have evolved the mutation of being impervious to further mutation. Not since the Cambrian Explosion has the world seen such a drastic evolutionary acceleration of experimental body types, sensory enhancements, and abilities to manipulate matter and energy.

There are three types of mutations that player characters may have in MCC RPG: **physical mutations**, **mental mutations**, and **defects**. Among physical and mental mutations there are also two sub-categories: **active** and **passive**.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ACTIVE AND PASSIVE MUTATIONS

Active mutations are generally those mutations that act as at-will powers. Mutation check rolls for active mutations are rolled each time that mutation is used.

Passive mutations are those that tend to have permanent and lasting effects upon the character. Mutation checks for passive mutations are only rolled upon first acquiring the mutation, and may be optionally re-rolled anew at each level progression.

Glowburn (see below), and of course the burning of Luck, may be used whenever an active or passive mutation's mutation check roll is made.

THE "METAGENESIS" AND DETERMINING MUTATIONS AT 1ST-LEVEL

When a Mutant, Manimal, or Plantient player character achieves level-1, he or she undergoes the "Metagenesis," which traditionally marks the mutant's ascension into full adulthood in tribal society. It is common for this to happen as a direct result of surviving the Rite of Passage (see Chapter 1: Character Creation). The Metagenesis is a genetic reaction to environmental stresses (e.g.. combat) placed upon the level-0 mutated character, causing the latent potential of that character's mutant DNA to suddenly and fully express itself. This results in a number of new mutations

which spontaneously blossom. The number, type, and nature of these new mutations vary by genotype.

Upon achieving 1st level, each genotype has a different possible number of random physical and mental mutations that they may possess. After determining the number and type for a character by genotype, roll 1d100 for each mutation using the appropriate column of the Mutations Table (see Table 3-2). Then look up the relevant mutation and roll for the specific manifestation of that mutation. Note that while two mutants may have the same mutation, that mutation can manifest in completely different ways for each character.

Then determine if the mutation is in the active or passive category (see individual mutation description). As explained above, **active mutations** are used by rolling a mutation check each time the mutational power is used, then comparing the result rolled to the list of results on that mutation's results table. For **passive mutations**, the character makes a single mutation check roll upon gaining the mutation, and that result governs the effectiveness of that mutation from that point onwards.

In both cases, players may always elect to burn Luck or use glowburn to increase these results, even when gaining a defect if they so desire.

PASSIVE MUTATIONS DURING LEVEL PROGRESSION

Each time a mutant character gains a new level, the player may *optionally* choose to re-roll a passive mutation, and may burn Luck or use glowburn to increase the result. It is also possible through a poor die roll for a passive mutation to decline in effectiveness during level progression. In either case, the change in power level for the passive mutation is explained as the side-effect of accumulated exposure to background radiation over time.

LOSING OR GAINING MUTATIONS

Exposure to high levels of radiation may add or subtract mutations from a Mutant, Manimal, or Plantient character Level-1 or higher. Luck cannot change these results, as they only occur on a roll of a "natural" 1 or 20.

Whenever a mutant character is forced to make a Fortitude saving throw versus radiation-based damage, a result of natural 1 causes the mutant to immediately lose one random mutation or defect. Note that should a mutated character lose all of his or her mutations and defects, that PC reverts to a base genotype. Mutant PCs become Pure Strain Humans and can no longer gain mutations. Manimals revert to their base genotype and semi-sentience, while Plantients become non-sentient and immobile plants.

If a mutated character makes the required saving throw by rolling a natural 20, then that mutant character gains one new random mutation or defect. To determine what type of new mutation is gained, use the following chart.

Table 3-1: Radburn Results (d20)

Genotype	Defect gained	Physical Mutation gained	Mental Mutation gained
Mutant	1-2	3-13	14-20
Manimal	1-2	3-15	16-20
Plantient	1-2	3-20	—

MAKING A MUTATION CHECK ROLL

For a base mutation check roll, the player rolls the appropriate action die (determined by genotype and class level) and adds their genotype level to that die roll. For example, a level-1 Mutant would roll 1d20 (action die) + 1 (genotype level), and then compare the result to that particular mutation's results chart to determine the effectiveness of the mutation's use.

Any single mutation check roll can also be increased by either burning Luck or by employing glowburn, or both. Glowburn use must be announced before a mutation check roll is made, however, Luck use can be announced at any time including after the roll is made.

GLOWBURN

Beginning at level-1, a character may elect to use glowburn to increase a mutation check roll. Glowburn use must be announced in advance. To use glowburn, the character burns off points of physical abilities (Strength, Agility, or Stamina) and adds one point to the mutation check roll for every point burned off their abilities.

In play, this represents the mutant voluntarily ingesting any mildly radioactive material that the mutant has gathered up in his or her journeys for just this purpose – causing the mutant great pain and sickness as a side effect – but also briefly amplifying the effects of one mutation.

Glowburned abilities will heal back at the rate of one point per day that the mutant does not glowburn. Additionally, any glowburn that reduces an ability below a value of 3 requires complete bed rest and inactivity until that ability heals back to a value of 3 or above.

NOTE: Normally only Mutants, Manimals, and Plantients are able to use the glowburn mechanic. The one exception to this is the Shaman class for Pure Strain Humans. Shamans also keep small collections of random radioactive detritus and sometimes swallow these to increase the efficacy of running a patron wetware program.

PHYSICAL MUTATIONS

Two physical mutations are included in this preview. Roll a d6 to determine a random mutation: (1-3) New Body Parts, (4-6) Radiation Generation.

New Body Parts

Range: N/A Duration: Permanent Saving Throw: None

General (Passive) The mutant has additional body parts not normally found upon mutant's genotype or sub-type.

Manifestation Roll 1d4: (1) The new body parts are scaly; (2) The new body parts are furred; (3) The new body parts are skeletal or chitinous; (4) The new body parts are metallic, and appear artificial.

1 Failure, mutation replaced by a random defect.

2-11 Failure, mutation results in cosmetic change only; roll 1d3 and mutant gains a single non-functional (1) antennae, (2) tail, (3) gills.

12-13 The mutant possesses antennae that allow the mutant to sense movement in a 360º arc; mutant cannot be surprised by moving creatures or objects.

14-17 The mutant possesses a long prehensile tail that acts as an extra arm; mutant gains an additional d16 action die for melee and missile attacks only; +1 AGIL.

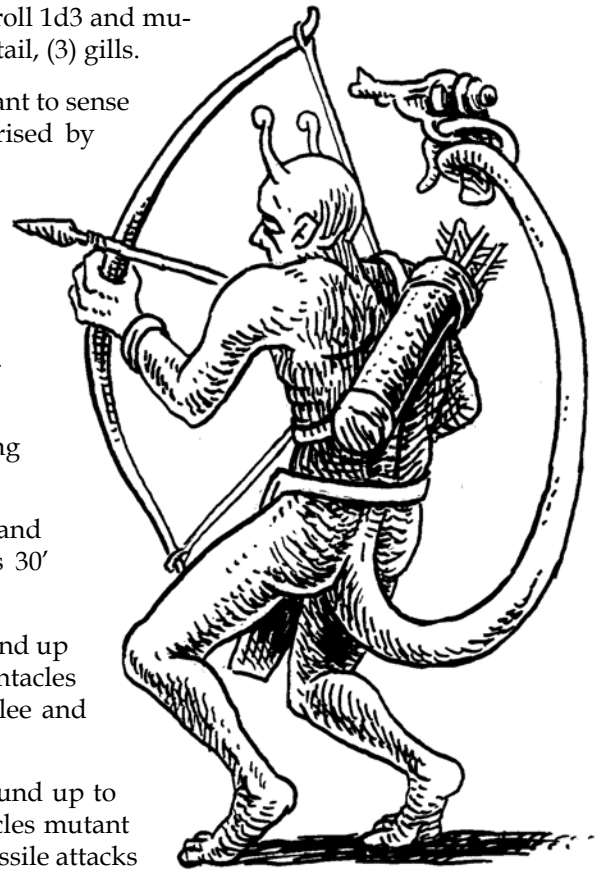
18-19 The mutant possesses gills and may breathe underwater.

20-23 The mutant possesses wings; mutant gains 30′ flying movement.

24-27 The mutant possesses gills and finned arms, legs, and back; mutant may breathe underwater and gains 30′ swimming movement.

28-29 The mutant possesses 1d6 prehensile tentacles (round up to nearest even number); for each extra pair of tentacles mutant gains an additional d16 action die for melee and missile attacks only.

30-31 The mutant possesses 1d6 prehensile tentacles (round up to nearest even number); for each extra pair of tentacles mutant gains an additional d16 action die for melee and missile attacks only; mutant also possesses wings gaining 40′ flying movement.



32+ The mutant is adapted to all environments and is equally at home on land, underwater, or in the air; mutant's functional wings, fins, tail, antennae, and gills allow mutant to breathe air or water, manipulate objects with an additional d20 action die, mutant gains 360º senses, and gains 50′ movement by air or in water.

Radiation Generation

Range: 10′/GL Duration: 1 round/GL Saving Throw: Fortitude vs. mutation check DC

General (Active) The mutant's body is capable of generating blasts of ionizing radiation.

Manifestation Roll 1d4: (1) The mutant's body glows with a bright blue halo; (2) The mutant's hands are surrounded by a blue nimbus of orbiting electrons; (3) The mutant's eyes fire twin blasts of searing blue light; (4) The mutant's body flashes blue/white for one second, and then a small mushroom Cloud roils upwards from him or her.

1 Failure, mutation may not be used again that day, roll a random defect.

2-11 Failure, mutation may not be used again that day.

12-13 The mutant fires a radiation blast, inflicting 1d6 of radiation damage to target.

14-17 The mutant fires a radiation blast, inflicting 1d8 of radiation damage to target.

18-19	The mutant fires a radiation blast, inflicting 1d10 of radiation damage to target; the target remains irradiated for 1d3 rounds, suffering an additional 1 point of damage per round.
20-23	The mutant fires a radiation blast, inflicting 1d12 of radiation damage to target; the target remains irradiated for 1d6 rounds, suffering an additional 2 points of damage per round.
24-27	The mutant fires a radiation blast, inflicting 3d6 of radiation damage to target; the target remains irradiated for 1d8 rounds, suffering an additional 3 points of damage per round; non-PSH targets must make an additional Fort save or gain one random defect.
28-29	The mutant releases a radiation blast in a 30′ radius that causes 4d6 damage to all targets within range; targets remain irradiated for 1d8 rounds, suffering an additional 4 points of damage per round; non-PSH targets must make an additional Fort save or gain 1d3 random defects.
30-31	The mutant releases an intense radiation blast in a 40′ radius that causes 8d6 damage to all targets within range; targets remain irradiated for 1d6 rounds, suffering an additional 4 points of damage per round; non-PSH targets must make an additional Fort save or gain 1d4 random defects.
32+	The mutant's body temporarily achieves active fusion, releasing a 10d6 radiation blast in a 100′ radius centered on the mutant. Effected targets missing their save are blinded for 1d6 rounds; all organic possessions and clothing are disintegrated (including those of the mutant); targets are irradiated for an additional 1d6 rounds, suffering 1d6 burn damage per round.

MENTAL MUTATIONS

Two mental mutations are included in this preview. Roll a d6 to determine a random mutation: (1-3) Absorption, (4-6) Mental Blast.

Absorption

Range: 0 Duration: Permanent Saving Throw: None

General (Passive) The mutant's body telekinetically absorbs and sometimes even benefits from specific forms of energy.

Manifestation	Roll 1d4: (1) The mutant skin ripples each time he or she is struck; (2) The mutant's complexion deepens and he or she appears healthier; (3) The air around the mutant's body shimmers when attacked; (4) The mutant is suffused in a warm pink glow.
1	Failure, mutation may not be used again that day, roll a random defect.
2-11	Failure, mutation results in cosmetic change only; mutant appears to roll with the punches exceptionally well.
12-13	The mutant absorbs kinetic energy; takes 1/2 damage from normal melee and missile attacks.
14-17	The mutant absorbs kinetic energy; takes 1/2 damage from normal melee and missile attacks and gains 1d3 hit points (up to normal hit point maximum) from each attack.
18-19	The mutant absorbs kinetic energy; takes 1/2 damage from normal melee and missile attacks and gains 1d6 hit points (up to normal hit point maximum) from each attack.

20-23	The mutant absorbs kinetic energy; takes 1/2 damage from normal melee and missile attacks and gains 1HD in hit points (up to normal hit point maximum) from each attack.
24-27	The mutant absorbs kinetic energy and takes no damage from normal melee and missile attacks; damage scores from such attacks are converted into hit points added to the mutant's total; extra hit points beyond the mutant's normal total are lost immediately after combat ends.
28-29	The mutant absorbs kinetic and electrical energy and takes no damage from these type of attacks; damage scores from such attacks are converted into hit points added to the mutant's total; extra hit points accrued that exceed the mutant's natural hit point total are temporarily retained for 1 turn after combat ends.
30-31	The mutant absorbs kinetic, electrical, and heat energy and takes no damage from these type of attacks; damage scores from such attacks are converted into hit points added to the mutant's total; extra hit points accrued that exceed the mutant's natural hit point total are temporarily retained for 1d6 turns.

32+	The mutant absorbs kinetic, electrical, heat, and radiation energy and takes no damage from these type of attacks; damage scores from such attacks are converted into hit points added to the mutant's total; extra hit points accrued that exceed the mutant's natural hit point total are temporarily retained for 1d8 hours, or optionally, the mutant may choose to immediately funnel them directly into damage delivered by a successful bare-handed melee attack.

Mental Blast

Range: 10'/GL Duration: Instantaneous Saving Throw: Will vs. mutation check for 1/2 damage or effect

General (Active)	The mutant's mind is capable of causing severe damage to the brain of other living creatures, impairing all bodily functions.
Manifestation	Roll 1d4: (1) A narrow beam of white light shoots directly from the mutant's forehead; (2) A torch of jagged white energy flares from the mutant's head; (3) Concentric rings of white light radiate from the heads of the mutant and all of his or her targets; (4) A piercing white noise whine emanates from the mutant's head.
1	Failure, mutation may not be used again that day, roll a random defect.
2-11	Failure, mutation may not be used again that day.
12-13	The mutant causes 1d4 damage to a single target creature.
14-17	The mutant causes 1d6 damage to a single target creature; creature cannot act for 1 round; target's INT is permanently reduced by -1.

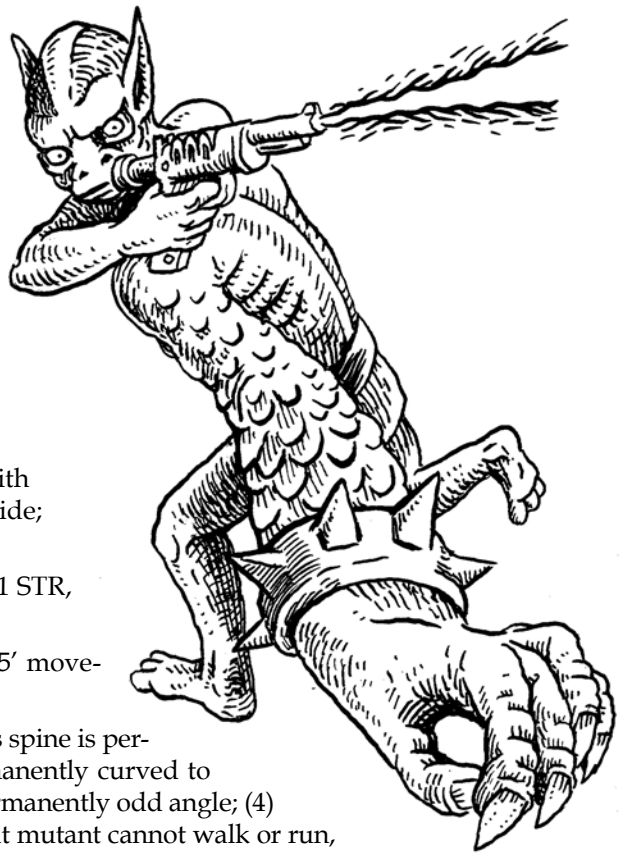
18-19	The mutant causes 2d6 damage to a single target creature; creature is stunned for 1d3 rounds; target's INT is permanently reduced -2.
20-23	The mutant causes 3d6 damage to a single target creature; creature is stunned for 1d5 rounds; target's INT is permanently reduced -3.
24-27	The mutant causes 6d6 damage to a 2 target creatures; creatures are stunned for 1d8 rounds targets' INT scores are permanently reduced -4.
28-29	The mutant shuts down the mind of up to 4 target creatures, causing them to immediately pass into deep comas.
30-31	The mutant completely shuts down the mind of up to 6 target creatures, causing death within 1 round if not properly resuscitated (CPR or equivalent); resuscitated creatures have 0 hit points and are mindless vegetables.
32+	The mutant completely shuts down the mind of up to 8 target creatures, causing instant death.

DEFECTS

Two defect mutations are included in this preview. Roll a d6 to determine a random mutation: (1-3) Asymmetrical Body, (4-6) Death Pretense.

Asymmetrical Body

Range: N/A Duration: Permanent Saving Throw: None



General (Passive)	The mutant's body plan is not symmetrical.
1	Roll this mutation check again, plus roll one additional defect.
2-4	The mutant has only 1/2 of a normal body – roll 1d4: (1) Mutant is missing lower half; no legs, movement 0'; (2) Mutant is missing upper half; head springs directly from hips, no arms or torso, no normal attacks; (3) Mutant is missing vertical half of body no arm or leg on one side, melee and missile attack every other round, 1/2 movement; (4) Mutant is missing one arm and one leg on opposite sides of the body; melee and missile attack every other round, 1/2 movement.
5-7	The mutant's body is greatly atrophied on one side, with a stump-like and useless arm and leg on the affected side; melee and missile attacks at -3, -10' movement.
8-11	The mutant has one arm much larger than the other; +1 STR, -2 AGIL.
12-15	The mutant has one leg much longer than the other; +5' movement, -2 AGIL.
16-17	The mutant's posture is distorted – roll 1d4: (1) Mutant's spine is permanently curved to the left; (2) Mutant's spine is permanently curved to the right; (3) Mutant's neck holds his or her head at a permanently odd angle; (4) Mutant's spine and hips are so distorted on one side that mutant cannot walk or run, but can only lurch at varying speeds; -5' movement.
18-19	The mutant's facial features are lopsided and distorted – roll 1d4: ; (1) One eye is located 3 inches higher/lower than normal; (2) Mouth is located off-center on one side of face; (3) One ear is located 3 inches further back on head than the other; (4) Nose or nostrils are located 3 inches to one side of face; -3 PERS, -2 AI recognition.
20	The mutant's facial features are ever so slightly off-center, just enough so to indicate possible mutant heritage; -1 AI recognition.

Death Pretense

Range: N/A Duration: Instantaneous Saving Throw: Will vs. mutation effect

General (Active)	The mutant reflexively feigns death when shocked or surprised (judge's discretion).
1	Roll this mutation check again, roll one additional random defect.
2-4	The mutant must make DC 17 Will save or fall into a coma for 1d10 rounds.
5-7	The mutant must make DC 15 Will save or fall into a coma for 1d6 rounds.
8-11	The mutant must make DC 12 Will save or fall into a coma for 1d3 rounds.
12-15	The mutant must make DC 10 Will save or pass out for 1d6 rounds; mutant may be revived by slapping or being splashed with water.
16-17	The mutant must make DC 8 Will save or fall asleep for 1d6 rounds; mutant may be wakened by any loud noise.
18-19	The mutant must make DC 5 Will save or fall asleep for 1d3 rounds; mutant may be wakened by any loud noise.
20	The mutant involuntarily falls down and curls into a fetal position while still awake and aware for 1 round.

FROM CHAPTER 7: ARTIFACTS OF THE ANCIENTS

It is known that the Ancient Ones were able to effectively wield the powerful and arcane forces of technology to such a degree as to achieve miracles beyond comprehension. Such was the craft of the ancients that many of their imperishable devices and instruments are untouched by the passage of centuries, if only one knows where to look for them in their lost but eternal holy places.

Only the very foolish or very brave ever attempt such a quest. The old places are not only well hidden by the jungle, the deserts, and the wounded earth, but are also guarded over by many ancient dangers. Wild, mutated beasts and "The Glow" are the least of the concerns facing those who would darken these long forgotten tombs of the ancients. Some whisper that the artifacts of the ancients are living things, and quite able to well guard themselves.

PLACEMENT OF ARTIFACTS

Placement of any of the Artifacts of the Ancients listed herein should be done with both intention and care by the discriminating judge. As each artifact is the equivalent of a magic item in a medieval fantasy campaign, and therefor has the potential to greatly impact game play, care should be taken. Let the axiom of "less is more" be your guide.

MAINTAINING GAME BALANCE WITH ARTIFACTS IN PLAY

It may seem that on the surface of things, PCs in an MCC RPG game are more powerful than their DCC RPG counterparts. By the very nature of this game, artifacts of the ancients are encountered and collected by the player characters much more frequently than equivalent DCC RPG characters will encounter potent magic items.

To maintain game balance, remember that most artifacts use power cells that constantly consume charges. Judges should scrupulously track the charges used by the PCs' artifacts, and use infrequent access to additional power cells or charging devices to mediate the power levels of said devices. This, plus the deadly nature of figuring out how to use new artifacts in the first place, should aid the discerning judge in balancing gameplay.

DESCRIBING ARTIFACTS FOR THE PLAYERS

Because your players are members of a 21st century society, describing the Artifacts of the Ancients to their primitive characters can become problematic. If you and your group enjoy a play style unconcerned with issues of metagaming, then no caution in this matter need be exercised.

If, however, you and your group enjoy game sessions filled with elevated levels of mystery and suspense, as well as a decided "Appendix N" flavor, then it is up to the judge to describe artifacts to the players in the most abstract terms possible. This will simulate the very real sense of the unknown that primitive tribesmen would experience when discovering lost artifacts from before the Great Disaster. When the PCs stumble upon a new item, it's best to describe it simply and in extremely general terms of size and shape, always comparing it to something within the characters' realm of experience. Use the following examples as a suggestive guide.

TECH LEVELS AND COMPLEXITY LEVELS

Tech Levels (TL) are only used to generally categorize artifacts, sometimes placing an upward limit on the ability of player characters to understand and master technologies too far removed from their understanding. Even the most brilliant of tribesmen cannot learn how to pilot a star shuttle or program a heuristic quantum computer, at least not without years of experience in dealing in such arcane super devices.

The maximum Tech Level that a PC can understand is based either on Intelligence score (see Table 1-1: Ability Score Modifiers) or class level, whichever is higher.

Complexity Levels (CL) on the other hand, represent a more specific and concrete measurement of an artifacts' inherit accessibility to the untutored user. For example, a stun grenade may only have a CL of 1 (you push a button and throw it away), whereas a dazer pistol with its multiple settings and optional power sources has a CL of 4.

ARTIFACT CHECKS

The knowledge and forces used to create the artifacts of the ancients may be forever lost, but that doesn't mean that a savage mutant tribesman can't pick up a dazer pistol and figure out how to fire it. In order to attempt to understand and use an artifact, characters make an artifact check roll of 1d20 +INT modifier +artifact bonus -the artifact complexity level, then take total rolled and consult the table below for the result. Each standard artifact check requires 3 turns (30 minutes) to complete.

For example, Mangarr the Mighty, a 1st-level Rover with a 16 INT, finds and attempts to understand a dazer pistol. Mangarr rolls a d20, adds his INT ability mod of +2, his artifact bonus at 1st-level of +2, and subtracts the complexity level of the dazer pistol (CL 3). Mangarr rolls a 12 +2 INT, +2 artifact bonus, -3 CL = 13. Mangarr successfully activates the dazer pistol and fires a shot, but does not yet understand how to use the artifact. He may elect to spend an additional 3 turns attempting to better understand how to use the dazer pistol and make another artifact check.

Artifact	Literal Description	Abstracted Description
Dazer Pistol	A small metal tube with a grip and buttons. You saw it fire a beam of pink energy.	A small, hard stick that you could hold in one hand. You saw the rays of a setting sun flow from it.
Household Robot	An animated metal being shaped in the form of a man.	A chunk of moving rock roughly shaped like you and your friends.
Force Field Belt	A belt with a set of controls in the buckle.	A flattened vine made of something like deer hide attached to a smooth, shiny rock.
Computer Control Panel	A desk-sized panel with buttons, dials, and large screens.	A large, strange boulder with a series of tiny rocks and gem stones buried in it. It has oddly-shaped windows made of hard air attached to it.

Should players attempt to collaborate and have multiple characters examine the same artifact, the artifact check will be that of the highest INT character +1 for each additional character with an INT above 12 to a maximum total artifact bonus of +4.

Teaching Others

Once a character understands the basic functioning of an artifact, he can share this knowledge with any other character. In order to learn how to use an artifact when being taught by someone who already understands the device, the second character must make a successful INT check (roll under his INT). A failure means that the character cannot learn to use that artifact for the next 24 hours. On a natural 20, the artifact breaks irreparably and inflicts damage as though the mutant had rolled a fumble on the artifact check table below.

For example, after having finally mastered the dazer pistol, Mangarr decides to instruct his comrade Canus, a manimal dog with an INT of 12, in its use. Canus rolls a d20 and gets a 10 — success! Canus now also knows how to use the dazer pistol, which could be handy knowledge to have later on.

Combat Artifact Checks

There will arise occasions when a player character will wish to grab an unknown artifact in the middle of combat

Table 7-1: Artifact Checks

d20	Result
1	Artifact breaks irreparably and inflicts maximum damage possible (or 1d6, whichever is greater) to all characters within a minimum range of 10′ (or greater range, if applicable).
2-8	Artifact breaks irreparably, inflicts 1d3 damage to user.
9-11	Artifact breaks — part falls off; make DC 12 Intelligence check to replace part.
12-13	Artifact activates for one use; but its operation is still not understood.
14-16	Artifact activates and its operation is minimally understood; DC 10 Intelligence check to first 1d3 uses; artifact operation is basically understood afterwards.
17-19	Artifact activates and its operation is basically understood; additional ammunition or power sources may used if available.
20-22	Artifact activates and its operation is well understood; minor repairs may be attempted with successful DC 12 Intelligence check and correct tools and materials.
23-26	Artifact activates and its operation is well understood; minor repairs may be attempted with successful DC 10 Intelligence check and correct tools and materials.
27-31	Artifact activates and its operation is precisely understood; major repairs may be attempted with successful DC 8 Intelligence check and correct tools and materials.
32-33	Artifact activates and its operation is precisely understood; major repairs may be attempted with correct tools and materials.
34-35	Artifact activates and its operation is precisely understood; major repairs may be attempted with correct tools and materials. With a successful DC 10 Intelligence check, proper materials, parts, and tools, a duplicate artifact may be constructed.
36+	Artifact activates and its operation is precisely understood; major repairs may be attempted with correct tools and materials. With proper materials, parts, and tools, a duplicate artifact may be constructed.

and attempt to quickly guess its function and use it. These are called combat artifact checks. In order to make a combat artifact check, the player character must immediately burn 1 point of Luck. This earns the character a one-time combat artifact check that takes only 1 round to execute (as opposed to the 3 turns a standard artifact check normally requires), and to which no normal bonuses apply except further Luck expenditures, i.e. a combat artifact check is a straight roll that does not include any artifact check bonuses from genotype, level or ability modifiers.

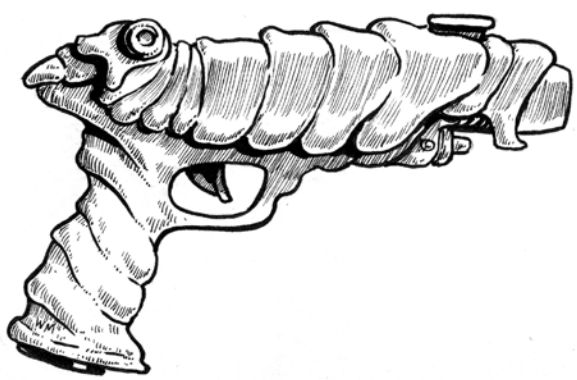
For example, the mutant Ro-Jeck is being attacked by a hard-light hologram armed with a mazer pistol. Ro-Jeck's holographic opponent rolls a 1 on his ranged attack and fumbles, dropping the mazer pistol to the floor. Ro-Jeck has never seen a mazer pistol before, but decides to scoop it up and attempt to fire it back at his opponent. Ro-Jeck grabs the mazer pistol, burns 1 point of Luck, and spends his round attempting a combat artifact check on the pistol. Ro-Jeck is a 1st-level Mutant, so his action die is 1d20, which he rolls for his artifact check with no additional bonuses. The mazer pistol is complexity 5, and Ro-Jeck rolls very well with an 18, so 18-5 = an artifact check of 13, meaning that Ro-Jeck manages to activate and fire the mazer pistol for one use, but still does not understand how it works. Fortunately for Ro-Jeck, the mazer pistol was already set on high and he subsequently rolls a successful ranged missile attack against his opponent, resulting in 3d6 of heat damage to the hard-light hologram's projection device, and it dies. Because Ro-Jeck did not roll high enough on his combat artifact check to fully understand the mazer pistol's operation, he would need to spend another point of Luck and make an additional combat artifact check if he wished to attempt to continue to use the mazer pistol during the same combat.

SAMPLE ARTIFACTS

Dazer Pistol

Tech Level: 4 **Complexity Level:** 4
Range: 50′
Damage: Stun DC 14/16/20; 1d6 rounds
Power: C-Cell (10), F-Cell (20), Q-Cell (U)

Dazer pistols fire thin pink beams of compact electro-magnetic energy that stun the neural systems of living beings as well as the CPUs of robots, androids, or AIs. The dazer pistol has three settings, which consume increasing amounts of power; light: 1 unit of power, medium: 2 units of power, and heavy: 3 units of power.



Mazer Rifle

Tech Level: 4 **Complexity Level:** 5
Range: 120′
Damage: Heat 2d6/3d6/6d6
Special: Disregards armor and force fields

Power: C-Cell (5), F-Cell (10), Q-Cell (U)

Mazer rifles fire focused beams of microwave radiation that pass through most force fields and armor, heating targets from the inside out. The mazer rifle holds up to two power cells, and has three settings, which consume increasing amounts of power; light: 2 units of power, medium: 4 units of power, and heavy: 6 units of power.

Force Baton

Tech Level: 4 **Complexity Level:** 3
Range: Melee
Damage: 2d8
Special: Attack +2
Power: C-Cell (20), F-Cell (40), Q-Cell (U)

When activated, this small pommel-sized device emits a 3′ long cylinder of blue light. This blue light is a quantum-shifted plasma field with kinetic acceleration properties. Anyone wielding a force baton will immediately notice that it seems to pick up speed on its own when any swinging force is enacted upon it. Thus, the weapon delivers extra blunt force damage when successfully hitting an object or person, making a loud, reverberating "throom" sound when striking. This device only consumes charges on successful strikes.

Medipac

Tech Level: 5 **Complexity Level:** 6
Range: Touch
Effect: Heal 3d8 hp; cure poison/radiation
Power: C-Cell (10), F-Cell (20), Q-Cell (U)

This most prized of all ancient artifacts is a small, handheld medical transmat device with an onboard diagnostic AI and database. To use the medipac, one need merely hold it against an injured living creature and activate it. This miraculous device instantly takes biomedical sensor readings and activates a specialized matter replicator to restore injured or diseased tissues to their original healthy state.

NOTE: Because the medical database is programed only for humans or pre-disaster living creatures, there is a chance (5% for each hit point healed above the creature's maximum) that the medipac will remove one random mutation or defect when used on a Mutant, Manimal, or Plantient.

Com-Badge

Tech Level: 4 **Complexity Level:** 3
Special: Audio and holographic communication (100 mile range), security clearance identification (varies by type and former owner), +2 to +4 (judge's discretion)
Power: Self

A com badge is a small metallic disk that automatically adheres to any surface on which it is placed. While its primary function is as an audio communication device, if the proper commands are given to the device AI, it can also transmit and project holographic communications, as well as biometric sensor data. Additionally, each com badge is programmed to identify its user for purposes of security access and clearance, as well as AI recognition. Depending upon the security settings of an individual com badge, this may allow the wearer access to otherwise secure facilities and to be recognized by AIs as the ancient former owner.

Gene Resequencer

Tech Level: 5 **Complexity Level:** 20
Range: Touch (platform)
Effect: Special, see below
Power: Q-Cell (U)

This potent experimental device of the ancients is comprised of a set of controls on a pedestal with a circular dais attached. Surrounding the dais are three inwardly curving banks of transmat emitters that light up in a banded rainbow pattern when the device is activated. Upon activation, any organic matter placed upon the dais will have its genetic code and very molecular structure altered. Since mastery of this most sophisticated instrument of the ancients is unlikely, use the table below to determine the outcome of activation by primitives (allowing normal artifact roll bonuses). NOTE: All genetic modifications have the side-effect of restoring the subject to full hit points.

Gene Resequencer Results

d20	Effect
1	Critical Failure: The device explodes inflicting 3d6 damage to all within a 10′ radius. One random surviving character is now a non-sentient gecko.
2-3	Character is genetically regressed to a pool of primordial soup.
4-5	Character is genetically regressed to a primitive chordate, which must be placed in water in 3 rounds or die of asphyxiation.
6-7	Character is genetically modified into an archaeopteryx.
8-9	Character is genetically modified into a chicken that smells of curry.
10-11	Character is genetically regressed to a prior evolutionary stage (man-ape, semi-sentient genotype); INT is now 3d3.
12-13	Character is genetically transformed into a different genotype; PSH to Mutant, Mutant to Manimal, Manimal to Plantient, and so on.
14-15	Character is genetically modified to gain one additional physical mutation (if PSH, character becomes a Mutant with one physical mutation).
16-17	Character is genetically modified and loses one random mutation or defect (if this reduces a Mutant to zero mutations, then character becomes PSH).
18	Character is genetically modified to gain one additional mental mutation (if PSH, character becomes mutant with one mental mutation).
19	Character is genetically modified into a short, simian looking version of their natural genotype, with wings and a prehensile tail (if PSH, character becomes a mutant with these mutations).
20	Character is genetically modified to his original form and genotype.
21+	Character is genetically modified into a superior being. Character gains +1d6 INT (to a maximum of 24), enough XP to progress to the next level, plus one additional random mental mutation (if PSH, character becomes a mutant with this mutation).

FROM CHAPTER 8: BESTIARY A.D.

AIR SQUID

Air Squid: Init +5; Atk spiked tentacles +5 melee (1d8 constriction), bite + 5 melee (1d20 swallow whole if damage total exceeds victim hp); AC 17; HD 20d6; MV 150′ flying; Act 2d24; SP holographic skin; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +2.

The air squid commonly inhabits clouded mountain tops, though their hunting range can extend for up to 100 miles. These sky-born leviathans will use their holographic skin to disguise themselves as clouds or to render themselves largely invisible. The helium-filled internal gas bladders of the air squid may be harvested, and these bladders will maintain their buoyancy for up to a week after the death of the creature.

CROACHLING

Croachling: Init +2; Atk bite +2 melee (1d4), crude spear +4 (1d5); AC 14; HD 2d6; MV 20′, 25′ flying; Act 1d20; SP walk on walls, ceiling; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +1; Mutations: *Carapace, Wings, Mental Blast.*

Croachlings are short, squat cucaracha scavengers that tend to live near the ruins of the Ancient Ones. Individual croachlings are semi-sentient at best, but in groups they utilize emergent swarm behaviors to function in a quite cunning and intelligent manner. Considered a pest species by many sentients, they are nonetheless quick-breeding and extremely difficult to eradicate, as befits their genetic heritage.

DEVILS

"Devil" is a collective term that refers generally to any of a species of gigantic arthropods that have resulted from the great "insect revolution" that transpired in the distant lands beyond the radiation barrier in the far north. Devils are mega-fauna, and as such have adapted many characteristics common to mammals, including endoskeletons, giving birth to their young live, and increased levels of animal intelligence.

Most devils are unable to cross the great radiation barrier and are thus quite rare. Notable exceptions to this rule who have established viable breeding populations in the jungles and savannas of Terra A.D. include:

DEVIL - WOOLER

(Devil) Wooler: Init +1; Atk +1 radiation blast (2d6 +1), cocoon spin (DC 15 entangle); AC 12; HD 2d10; MV 120′ flying; Act 1d20; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will -1.

Woolers are gigantic moths and vicious predators. Once its intended prey is spotted, a wooler will sweep down from the sky and attempt to sear the unsuspecting creature with its radioactive eye blasts. A wooler will then typically spin a quick cocoon around its victim and carry its meal away to be eaten later or fed to its larval brood.

Both the adult and larval form of woolers are quite furry, and their wool is sometimes harvested by the extra-daring for cloaks which will grant the wearer a +4 to Fortitude saves versus radiation.

HOLOGRAMS

Holograms are simulated humans constructed of projected light and force fields, and are most commonly projected from a tiny floating device known as a "light-bug" that hovers around inside the projected hologram. Having experienced runtimes several thousand years past their intended use, most holograms are a bit mad, if not clearly insane.

HOLOGRAM, SOFT LIGHT

Hologram, Soft Light: Init +4; Atk holo-flail (stun for 1d6 rounds) +4; AC 18; HD 1d6; MV 30′; Act 1d20; SP immaterial; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +4; AI recog 5.

Soft light holograms are immaterial (except for the tiny light-bug floating within the projected body) and are thus very difficult to hit, since melee weapons or missile fire tend to pass harmlessly through their hologramatic bodies. Because of this, soft-light holograms are often considered harmless, but they are not always so. A soft-light hologram may be armed with a holo-flail, a holographic melee weapon capable of delivering a painful 1d6 of light-based stun damage to a biological being.

HOLOGRAM, HARD LIGHT

Hologram, Hard Light: Init +4; Atk 1d8 melee or by weapon type; AC 20; HD 4d6; MV 30′; Act 1d20; SP invulnerable except for heat-based attacks; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +4; AI recog 5.

Hard-light holograms, on the other hand, are virtually indestructible, and can use any weapon available to them. Comprised of projected quantum-field "hard" light, they cannot be harmed by physical blows and most other forms of attack. Heat-based attacks will eventually cause the hard drive of a hard-light hologram's light-bug to overheat and temporarily power down, at which time it becomes susceptible to normal attacks and damage.

SCREAMER

Screamer: Init -4; Atk +1 melee (1d4 + 1d3 DC 15 radiation burn); AC 9; HD 3d6; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP undead; SV Fort +4, Ref -4, Will +2.

Screamers are corpses that have been re-animated by a semi-intelligent and highly radioactive fungus. Screamers are easily spotted at a distance, particularly at night, as they glow brightly in a sickly blue-green phosphorescence. Gassy by-products of the fungal animation process cause the aptly-named creatures to continuously howl in a low, inhuman scream, as air is drawn through their hollow rib cages and forced out their throats. While relatively slow and clumsy, a single touch from these monstrosities can cause severe radiation burns and worse. Anyone killed by one of these hideous apparitions becomes infected by the symbiotic fungus and arises within 24 hours as a newly-born screamer.

Screamers are dormant during daylight hours and only animate at night, unless deep underground. Because the animating fungus possesses a hive mind (though of a low order of intelligence), screamers tend to operate in coordinated packs.

FROM CHAPTER 9: PATRON AIS

GAINING A PATRON AI

When a Pure Strain Human reaches 1st-level and selects the Shaman character class, that character must decide which Patron AI he wishes to serve, and then find another Shaman of that same patron. Though the exact rituals vary by individual Patron AI, in every case the prospective Shaman will receive, in exchange for some sacrifice or service rendered, a talisman of the appropriate patron and instruction in the complex rituals required to successfully bond with the desired patron.

The fledgling Shaman then learns and activates the wetware program *Patron AI Bond,* and runs the program as detailed below. The Shaman may burn Luck and use glowburn to increase his or her results.

PATRON AI BOND

Level: 1 Range: Self Duration: Lifetime Activation Time: 1 week + quests as ordered Saving Throw: None

General — The Shaman commits to the lifetime service of a patron AI, forming a pact to gain its support as the Shaman's patron so long as the Shaman continues to please it with his or her service. This patron may be a global computer network, satellite defense system, quantum consciousness, or other artificial intelligence who accepts the Shaman's service. The initial ritual takes one week to complete. Once the pact is made, the Shaman may invoke the patron AI's support with the wetware program *Invoke Patron AI*, and the patron may or may not answer as it sees fit. In return for the patron's assistance, the patron may ask the Shaman to do certain things. The Shaman must act faithfully in the patron's service at all times, lest it cast him off. The Shaman may perform more than one ceremony in order to serve multiple masters, but doing so may raise questions as to the Shaman's true loyalties.

This is dangerous technology; having one's neural pathways rewritten with wetware programs by a patron AI should not be undertaken lightly. The Shaman should be forewarned that to do so is to directly channel global (and in some cases extraterrestrial or extra-dimensional) forces.

Manifestation — Varies. See individual patron AI descriptions.

1	Lost and patron taint!
2-11	Failure. Neural feedback causes the wetware program to be lost from memory for 1 month, during this time it cannot be relearned.
12-13	The Shaman makes contact with the patron AI and successfully negotiates the terms of the compact. The Shaman learns the wetware program *Invoke Patron AI* as it relates to this patron, but may only activate it once per week. Each time the Shaman activates *Invoke Patron AI*, he is indebted to this patron, who will call in the debt at some point. The Shaman's patron marks the Shaman as its servant via an inconspicuous brand or symbol somewhere on the Shaman's body.
14-17	The Shaman makes contact with this patron AI and is considered a useful pawn. The Shaman receives a prominent mark of the patron on his hand or face. The Shaman learns the wetware program *Invoke Patron AI* as it relates to this patron and may activate it once per day. Each time the Shaman runs *Invoke Patron AI*, the Shaman is indebted to this patron AI, who will call in the debt at some point.
18-19	The Shaman makes contact with this patron AI and is granted a mark of favor in the form of a prominent mark of the patron on his face. The Shaman learns the wetware program *Invoke Patron AI* as it relates to this patron and may activate it once per day at a +1 bonus to the program check. Each time the Shaman runs *Invoke Patron AI*, the Shaman is indebted to this patron, who will call in the debt at some point.
20-23	The Shaman arrives at an agreeable arrangement with this patron AI. Shaman receives a prominent mark of the patron on his face. The Shaman learns the wetware program *Invoke Patron AI* as it relates to this patron and may activate it twice per day at a +1 bonus to the program check. Each time the Shaman runs *Invoke Patron AI*, the Shaman is indebted to this patron, who will call in the debt at some point.
24-27	The Shaman is considered an important person in this patron AI's plans. The Shaman forms an agreement with this patron and is marked as one in the patron's service. The Shaman learns the wetware program *Invoke Patron AI* as it relates to this patron and may cast it twice per day at a +1 bonus to the program check. The patron also gives the Shaman a gift (for which a counter-gift is to be expected). The gift is a single patron wetware program, selected from the patron's program list. The Shaman can activate this wetware program once per day in place of running *Invoke Patron AI*. Each time the Shaman activates this wetware program or *Invoke Patron AI*, the Shaman is indebted to this patron AI, who will call in the debt at some point.
28-29	The patron AI considers the Shaman indispensable to its long-term goals. The Shaman learns the wetware program *Invoke Patron AI* as it relates to this patron and may activate it up to three times per day at a +1 bonus to the program check. The patron also gives the Shaman a gift (for which a counter-gift is to be expected). The gift is a single patron wetware program, selected from the patron's program list. The Shaman can activate this program once per day in place of running *Invoke Patron AI*. Each time the Shaman activates this patron program or *Invoke Patron AI*, the Shaman is indebted to this patron AI, who will call in the debt at some point.
30-31	The Shaman's patron considers him or her indispensable to its long-term goals. The Shaman learns the wetware program *Invoke Patron AI* as it relates to this patron and may activate it up to three times per day at a +2 bonus to the program check. The patron also gives the Shaman a gift (for which a counter-gift is to be expected). The gift is a single patron wetware program, selected from the patron's program list. The Shaman can activate this program once per day in place of running *Invoke Patron AI*. Each time the Shaman activates this wetware program or *Invoke Patron AI*, the Shaman is indebted to the patron AI, who will call in the debt at some point.
32+	The patron AI considers the Shaman integral to its long-term goals. The Shaman learns the wetware program *Invoke Patron AI* as it relates to this patron and may activate it up to four times per day at a +2 bonus to the program check. The patron also gives the Shaman a gift (for which a counter-gift is to be expected, of course). The gift is *two* patron wetware programs, selected from the patron's program list. The Shaman can activate either of these programs once per day in place of running *Invoke Patron AI*. Each time the Shaman activates either of these patron programs or *Invoke Patron AI*, the Shaman is indebted to this patron AI, who will call in the debt at some point.

GAEA

(GLOBAL ARRAY EARTH AI)

The artificial intelligence known as GAEA was once responsible for monitoring and controlling the weather systems and climate of the pre-disaster world. Taken temporarily offline by the events of the Great Disaster, GAEA re-booted centuries later to a find a world suffering from a runaway Greenhouse Effect. While she has been able to use her remaining orbital weather control satellites to somewhat mediate the effects of climate change, the results have been limited and mixed, resulting in deserts and rain forests from pole to pole.

GAEA's goals are to regain full control of the planet's climate and return it to the temperate and finely-balanced mechanism it once was. Thus, she is not only a founding member of the alliance of greater AIs known as the Mainframe of Order, but one of its leading lights.

Often referred to colloquially simply as "Mother," GAEA expects her followers to aid her in her quest to find ancient launch installations and to orbit more weather control satellites for her use. She is also insistent that all of her followers work in a proficient and orderly manner towards the goals of restoring Terra A.D. to its former glory.

When summoned, GAEA appears as a 12' tall floating hologram of a gentle-faced woman wearing a billowing toga and cloak, with her long amber hair radiating and waving outwards from her head like the rays of a rising sun.

PATRON AI BOND (GAEA)

A Shaman may choose to bond with this patron AI by finding or gaining access to a GAEA node — a small green metallic sphere about the size of a marble. When properly activated by a successful *Patron AI Bond* attempt, the metal sphere will embed itself in the Shaman's forehead, forever marking the Shaman as a follower of GAEA. The sphere will immediately begin rewiring the neural pathways of the Shaman, implanting the wetware program *Invoke Patron AI (GAEA)*. Especially favored supplicants may be granted additional wetware programs as noted in the *Patron AI Bond* results table.

INVOKE PATRON AI (GAEA)

Invoke Patron AI (GAEA) check results:

Level 1 (GAEA)	Activation time: 1 round, and the program may be run only a limited number of times, according to results of *Patron AI Bond*.
1	Lost, failure, and patron taint.
2-11	Failure. Unlike other wetware programs, *Invoke Patron AI* may not be lost for the day. Depending on the results of *Patron AI Bond*, the Shaman may still be able to run this program.
12-13	GAEA does not respond, and your connection attempt times out. Shaman gains a temporary boost in Intelligence of 1d6 (to a maximum of 24) from the effort, and these added Intelligence points may be glowburned. The added Intelligence points last for only 1 hour.
14-17	GAEA grants the Shaman the ability to perceive small-scale shifts in the local morphic field of the planet, resulting in the Shaman being able to anticipate and avoid attacks from enemies. Attackers must now make two attack rolls for each attack against the Shaman, and take the lower of the two rolls. The effect lasts until the end of combat.
18-19	GAEA lowers the ambient temperature of the air, creating a quickly rising fog that obscures the Shaman and any other friendly beings within a 20′ radius of the Shaman. Shaman and friends can see through the fog, but enemies must make any attacks into the fog at a -6 penalty when attempting to target the Shaman, and at a -4 penalty when targeting any affected allies of the Shaman. The fog lasts until the end of combat.
20-23	GAEA allows the Shaman to summon and direct a lightning strike (even indoors and underground). The lightning bolt does 6d6+1d6 per GL damage to anyone it strikes, with leftover damage arcing over to the next nearest available target within 10′ of the original target. The absolute range of this lightning bolt strike is line-of-sight.
24-27	GAEA creates an arctic micro-climate around the Shaman's enemies targeted at one individual and radiating out 20′ from that point. All enemies within the arctic zone suffer 1d6 freezing damage per round, are blinded (suffering -4 to all attacks), and cannot move without making a DC 12 Agility check to prevent slipping and falling prone on the ice. Beings friendly to the Shaman may enter the arctic zone freely without suffering its effects. The arctic micro-climate lasts until the end of combat or until the Shaman is killed.
28-29	GAEA uses her ring of orbiting weather control satellites to create a monsoon of torrential rain, sleet, and high winds (even indoors or underground) that assault the Shaman's enemies, driving them back 15′ and inflicting 4d6+1d6 per GL damage. This storm also partially blinds opponents, causing them to attack at -4. The storm lasts until the end of combat or until the Shaman is killed.
30-31	GAEA's satellite network focuses its ultra-powerful tractor beam emitters on the planet's crust and causes a 10′ by 30′ bottomless chasm to open up directly beneath the Shaman's enemies, swallowing them whole and then sealing shut again on the next round. Even creatures with flight ability will fall long enough to be imprisoned and crushed unless they were actively in flight when the chasm forms.
32+	GAEA chooses to manifest personally as a nigh-invulnerable 12′ tall hard-light hologram in order to aid her follower for 10 rounds. She appears in a sparkling beam of bright sunlight and announces in a booming voice, "It's not nice to fool Mother Nature!" GAEA will then begin to strike down the Shaman's enemies with 12d6 lightning bolts (2 per round) until all are dead or until the end of combat. She will then vanish, pronouncing, "Now let nature take its course!" GAEA's holographic avatar (AC 18) can sustain up to 500 points of damage before being shattered into stray photons and causing all within sight to be blinded for 1d3 rounds. The Shaman takes automatic patron taint when this result is rolled.

PATRON TAINT: GAEA

Roll d6	Result
1	Shaman's hair turns green and gains a grass-like texture. Each additional time this result is rolled, the Shaman's hair becomes more plant-like, resulting in a more arboreal appearance with leaves and eventually even flowers forming on Shaman's head. After four instances of this result, the Shaman finds that he or she no longer needs to eat so long as they are exposed to abundant sunlight and water.
2	Shaman's eyes become milky white, as the iris and pupil slowly fade; Personality score drops by 1 with each additional result. Shaman gradually craves the company of pollinating insects, suffering a -1 to attacks if more than 100′ distant from such.
3	The Shaman's skin begins to gradually toughen into a tree bark-like texture. Each time this result is rolled, the Shaman's AC goes up by 1 and his or her Agility score is reduced by 1.
4	Every time the Shaman activates a wetware program, a small thundercloud forms over the Shaman's head, soaking all within 20′ with a gentle rain. On the same round that a wetware program is activated, the thundercloud randomly targets a single victim within 20′ (excluding the Shaman) and fires a 1d3+GL damage lightning bolt at that target. Each time this result is rolled again, the base die for the lightning damage moves up the dice chain.
5	A strong wind blows each time the Shaman activates a wetware program, lifting the Shaman a few inches off the ground and causing the Shaman to suffer -1 to all actions and program checks on the subsequent round. With each additional result the Shaman gains 5′ of airborne movement and suffers an additional -1 to actions on the subsequent round.
6	Each time the Shaman activates a wetware program, a minor earthquake occurs causing all within 60′ (excluding the Shaman) to make a DC 5 Reflex save or fall prone, losing an action for the round while standing back up. On each subsequent occurrence of this result, the DC of the required Reflex save increases by 1.

WETWARE PROGRAMS: GAEA

Those committed enough to become followers of GAEA may eventually learn three new wetware programs:

Level 1: *Elemental Shield*

Level 2: *Corrosion*

Level 3: *Chain Lightning*

GLOWBURN: GAEA

GAEA graciously grants increased wetware program results to those among her followers who demonstrate their commitment to her cause through personal sacrifice. When a Shaman utilizes glowburn while casting one of GAEA's programs, roll 1d4 and consult the table below.

Roll d4	Glowburn Result
1	GAEA rewards those who care for the planet at their own expense; Shaman slices his own flesh and lets their blood flow into the ground near a non-sentient plant (expressed as Stamina, Strength, or Agility loss).
2	GAEA favors those among her followers who replenish the atmosphere with needful gases; Shaman hyperventilates, expelling excessive amounts of carbon-dioxide, until carpopedal spasms occur, triggering a small seizure (expressed as Stamina, Strength, or Agility loss).
3	GAEA causes multiple sapling sprouts to erupt from the Shaman's bare skin, after which they spring forth from the Shaman towards the nearest soil and take root. Growing each sapling cost the Shaman 1 point of Strength, Stamina, or Agility.
4	GAEA uses one of her orbiting solar arrays to focus a surge of EM radiation upon the Shaman, adding great power to the Shaman's program check, but also causing severe radiation burns to the Shaman (expressed as Strength, Stamina, and Agility loss).

Elemental Shield

Level: 1 (GAEA) Range: Varies Duration: 1 round/GL Activation Time: 1 round Saving Throw: None

General — The elemental forces of nature rise to the Shaman's defense, shielding the Shaman from enemy attacks.

Manifestation — See below.

1 — Lost, failure, and patron taint.

2-11 — Lost. Failure.

12-13 — The air shimmers and gusts, granting the Shaman +1d3 AC and blocking the first melee or missile attack targeting the Shaman.

14-17 — The air shimmers and gusts, granting the Shaman +1d4 AC and blocking the next two melee or missile attacks targeting the Shaman, assuming that the program duration has not expired.

18-19 — The air shimmers and gusts, granting the Shaman +1d5 AC and blocking the next three melee or missile attacks targeting the Shaman, assuming that the program duration has not expired.

20-23 — A small boulder erupts from the ground and begins flying around the Shaman in circles; the boulder blocks any incoming melee or missile attacks until the program duration expires or the rock takes over 25 points of damage.

24-27 — Small magma vents open up in the ground at random intervals around the Shaman, periodically spewing flames and lava. The magma vents do not directly damage anyone taking care to avoid them, but the vents do target all incoming attacks on the Shaman and block them. Missile and ranged attacks are merely blocked, but as melee attacks are blocked any melee weapon used in such an attack is superheated. Mundane weapons melt or burst into flames; technological weapons become too hot to hold and are automatically dropped and cannot be picked up again for 1d6 rounds.

28-29 — A hurricane-force wind arises and snatches the weapons out of the hands of all attackers within 30', disarming them. The weapons are thrown 10' in random directions, but may be recovered on the following round.

30-31 — The sky darkens with massive thunderclouds and the Shaman and any friendly targets within 50' are protected by a torrential rain of lightning bolts. These lightning bolts unfailingly strike and intercept any incoming attacks made against the Shaman and any allies within range. Melee weapons used in these attacks become electrified and are immediately dropped, causing the wielder to take 1d8 electrical damage.

32+ — The Shaman and all friendly allies within 100' are protected by a massive meteor storm, as hundreds of small meteorites deorbit from space. These meteorites unerringly intercept, strike, and block all forms of incoming damage targeting the Shaman and his friends, from mundane melee strikes to incoming particle beam attacks, knocking any weapons originating these attacks out of their owners' hands, disarming all opponents within the 100' range. Weapons thus struck are either permanently broken (mundane weapons) or deactivated for 1d10 rounds (artifacts).

Corrosion

Level: 2 (GAEA) Range: Line of sight Duration: Instant Activation Time: 1 round Saving Throw: None

General	The Shaman summons the forces of nature to corrode, erode, fully discharge power cells, or otherwise cause technological objects to fail and cease functioning.
Manifestation	See below.
1	Lost, failure, and patron taint.
2-11	Lost. Failure.
12-13	Failure, but program is not lost.
14-17	Moisture invades a single technological object and causes it to short out and temporarily cease functioning for 1d3 rounds; weapons will not fire, devices will cease functioning, non-patron AIs will go offline.
18-19	A tangle of vines burst forth from inside any single technological item or device, rendering it inoperable; the item or device cannot be reactivated until the vines have been pulled and cleared from the device, which takes 1d6 rounds of dedicated effort.
20-23	A hyper-corrosive rust attacks any single technological item or device, reducing its effectiveness by 50% on the first round, and rendering it permanently frozen and inoperable on the second round. With proper knowledge and tools, the device can later be cleaned and restored to a semi-functional state that will be generally 50% of its former functionality.
24-27	A sudden cessation of all molecular motion in any single technological item or device causes the energy state of all power sources to be reduced to zero. This causes power cells to completely discharge, fusion processes to cease, and quantum states to collapse. Any non-patron AI targeted by the effect has its memory and programming wiped clean and restored to factory settings.
28-29	Up to 1d3 technological items or devices of the Shaman's choice are subjected to increased gravitational tidal forces generating by the planet's mantle, pinning them to the ground and causing their internal components to be crushed, rendering them permanently inoperable.
30-31	The circuits of up to 1d6 technological items or devices of the Shaman's choice are bathed in a gamma ray burst from a distant quasar and permanently fused, never to be functional again. Any components or power cells are rendered forever inert, and cannot be salvaged or even handled without taking 1d4 in radiation damage.
32+	In a squall of directed tachyon particles emanating from a super massive black hole located in the galactic core, any technological weapon, device, transport, or non-patron AI up to 100 metric tons in weight ages 1 billion years in the blink of an eye, crumbling into a pile of rust-colored dust and blowing away in the wind.

Chain Lightning

Level: 3 (GAEA) Range: Varies Duration: Instant Activation Time: 1 round Saving Throw: Reflex vs. program check

General — The Shaman calls down a lightning bolt possessing a limited artificial intelligence of its own, which guides the lightning bolt unerringly from target to target.

Manifestation — See below.

1 — Lost, failure, and patron taint.

2-11 — Lost. Failure.

12-13 — Failure, but the program is not lost.

14-17 — The Shaman calls down a lightning bolt that does 3d6 damage to any target within 100'; if the first target is slain, the lightning bolt jumps to any additional target of the Shaman's choosing within 50' of the first target and deals the remaining damage.

18-19 — The Shaman calls down a lightning bolt that does 4d6 damage to any target within line of sight; if the first target is slain, the lightning bolt jumps to the next target of the Shaman's choosing, dealing its remaining damage, and continuing on to additional targets until the full damage is absorbed.

20-23 — The Shaman calls down a skipping orb of ball lightning that delivers 6d6 damage to any target within line of sight; the ball lightning then bounces from target to target, slaying all within its path and shutting down any technological item being held or worn by the targets, until all of its damage is spent. Technology shut down in this manner takes one full round to be reactivated or rebooted.

24-27 — The Shaman targets a single foe within line of sight, and that foe's personal electromagnetic field begins to rotate at hypersonic speeds, causing a sonic boom that deafens the foe and all within 10' for 1d3 days. This spinning EM field also turns the foe into an organic electric dynamo, dealing 10d6 electrical damage to the target and causing 1d10 electric bolts to fork out from his chest and target the Shaman's enemies for 1d6 of damage each.

28-29 — A titanic shift in the planet's magnetic poles causes multiple arcs of polychromatic lightning to erupt from the ground and strike the Shaman's foes. There are 1d7 of these lightning bolts that strike for 1d12 damage each; these ground bolts may be targeted at a single or multiple foes.

30-31 — Weather control satellites form an intelligent thunderhead cloud with an enormous and angry female face. This thunderhead is able to flip its electrical charge back-and-forth instantly, creating circulating lightning bolts that strikes up to 10 targets with 6d6 of cascading electrical damage. Each lightning bolt first strikes a target of the Shaman's choosing and then arcs back heavenwards completing the circuit. If a target is not killed outright by the first round of 6d6 damage, they receive an additional 4d6 on the second round, and should they survive that, they receive 2d6 on the third round. If a target somehow survives the total damage taken from this program, it is stunned for 1d6 rounds.

32+ — The skies overhead darken as rotating thunderheads gather from horizon to horizon and a giant black iris opens up in the center. From this eye in the sky, the mother of all lightning bolts roars down from the heavens deafening everyone within sight for 1d3 rounds. The massive thunderbolt strikes the ground anywhere within line of sight of the Shaman and a jagged spider's web of electricity arcs across the ground selectively striking the Shaman's foes. The Shaman directs a total of 24d6 of damage to an unlimited number of foes in any desired sequence until the total damage is exhausted.

JOURNEY TO THE HOLE IN THE SKY

FICTION BY
BRENDAN J. LASALLE

By the time we met the Lady in Blue, our company had swelled to twenty… No, I tell a lie, including myself, there were twenty-one.

There was Ergard, the first man I met on the road, and Seelia, the wild-eyed woman who painted her face with ash.

There were Droman, Jordana, Jenson, the fool Amoreza, and beautiful Eleeka.

There were the two dwarves, Morgan and Gelzer, the eagle-eyed elf Salvota, and the halfling Nona, who had left our company before our journey ever began.

There was the former nobleman, William Swyfield, and the quiet beggar he arrived with, the one who claimed he abandoned his given name once he entered the Lady's service.

I recall Avel the gong farmer, the bravest man I have ever known, and fierce Quincy as a pair, because they died together and are thus seared into my mind forever as one.

And then there are the faces in my mind that I can put no name to, perhaps because they died too soon, perhaps because to recall our short acquaintance and brief companionship is too painful to bring to mind – the man in the leather vest, the woman with the sack of apples (she shared and shared – and I never saw her eat one, I remember that much), the bald man who kept clearing his throat and saying "someone needs to come up with a plan," to no one in particular. The last two I am certain I once knew their names – the youth in the iron helm and his friend, the red-haired man with the enormous laugh – but now I use all of my considerable Will to bring those names to mind, and I fail.

I now call myself Azaforth the Unyielding, and I commit these memories to this page and onto the immortal record as such. But on the day we met the Lady I was but a peasant farmer called Tim Bottle.

I grew up in Rakefield, a child of one of the many families that toiled in the fields for King Rolette. He was no true king, just one of the many fierce warlords in our land that fought constantly among themselves for territory. Rolette managed to hold several gangs of undisciplined warriors together long enough to stake claim to a few farming villages and a port town in the years before I was born. Everything went easier if you called Rolette "king," of course, for his spies and informants were everywhere. I remember my mother and father raising a glass of the strong mead they made every summer and toasting his health, even when they were alone with only myself and there was no chance of their words coming to dangerous ears. It was just easier to accept the falsehood than deal with the consequences of telling the truth.

These easy, casual lies of my childhood had nothing to do with my deep loathing of my family and circumstances. I can only call it an *otherness*. From the first moments I remember I had thoughts in my head I knew that did not belong in the head of a peasant named Tim Bottle. I saw it in the faces of my parents and our neighbors, in the strange stars overhead, in the weather. I lived a life of wrongness. With every step I took I felt I wore borrowed skin, like my true self was a prisoner. I was *other*, something apart from everything and everyone I knew.

I did what I could to fit in and live a good and true life, but my every word and deed rang false, and that much falseness is a great burden for a man to carry every moment of every day. I had no friends, and once I was old enough to make excuses my mother and father didn't even bother to beat me any more. They simply did their best to never look me in the eyes.

I considered running, leaving Rakefield and never returning. I could use whatever name I chose then, and be whoever I wanted to be. But I rejected this thinking – I would still be a prisoner of false flesh, and a man cannot run from his own skin.

And then one night, long after I had decided that I was simply a madman or a fool, or that perhaps everyone in the

world felt as strange and alone as I did and I was simply a worse liar, the dreams began.

In my dreams I visited a temple, once grand and magnificent, now fallen to ruin. There was one brilliant light, and that light was the Lady. I could only see her magnificent blue gown and the perfection of the skin of at the nape of her neck. The light radiated from her face, like her head was a blazing star, and if I raised my eyes to it I knew it would strike me blind or dead.

She spoke then in my dream.

How to describe the first words of truth one hears after an existence of nothing but lies? What to compare it to? Everything I can think of – the first time one hears a finely tuned violin in the hands of a master musician, a warm sunrise after a night out in a storm, spotting a wolf and deer lying together in peace in the forest, seeing a star fall to earth, or to see a thing of earthly beauty take to the sky and become a star – all of these notions fall short. It was magnificence beyond all I had ever allowed myself to hope.

Your life has been stolen from you. Our enemies have taken away that which was yours by right and nature, and replaced it with ashes and dross. Come, find me at the cliff. Together we shall recover your true existence.

Her voice seemed to come from a million miles away, from the tops of unreachable mountains that man had never seen. Those words resonated in my heart and brought me a warmth so alien that before I experienced it I never knew I had been cold. What the Lady in Blue said was Right.

The cliff. Find me at the cliff.

I woke up laughing, and I could not stop myself, not even when my father banged on the wall and threatened to put me out into the night could I cease my laughter. What cared I for night or cold or the terrors of aloneness? I knew something *Right* for the first time and the rest of the world be damned. I shoved my face into my pillow and laughed and laughed.

The dream came again a fortnight later, then again. Soon, I was visited by The Lady every night, and my heart sang to know her. The visions started to take over my life. I saw the Lady everywhere. The visions consumed me, and I could no more focus on what was in front of me than I could count the winds. I went to pick sauceberries and came home, somehow, with a basket of brambles. I could only smile at my mother's fury, dream while she lambasted me for an idiot. *I would find the cliff, I would find the Lady, I would find the truth, and my mother could choke on brambles and lies.*

I see my anger on the page, and while those were my true feelings at the time that anger feels old and misplaced to me now. Looking back, I realize now that my parents were also victims of the forces that imprisoned me into my strange and alien life. I was not their real son, the son they wished for and possibly even deserved, and their pain and confusion was as real as my own.

It matters not now. Never again shall I bend to the whims of the universe.

Came an evening I could no longer ignore the summons. *Go now,* the Lady sang into my ear, *Today. Find me at the Cliff.*

The Cliff.

THE CLIFF.

I awoke in the dark. I remember murmuring to myself while I found my boots and tunic and dressed without lighting a candle. The Lady, the cliff, the Lady . . . it was my only thought. I was as in a fever.

I grabbed a few items I could find in the dark – a pitchfork, a length of rope – and I went off down the darkened road. It seemed to me I could read the stars as plainly as you can read the words on this parchment, and those stars said to go south and west, south and west.

I followed.

As dawn broke over me the next day I found myself walking – nay, striding down a cart track through lands I had never seen before. I had left my village without the permission of the King, a violation that meant my death should I be captured. I was hungry and exhausted and cold, and following portents in the clouds and in the configurations of leaves in the trees that only I could see. I was nineteen summers old, a desperate and friendless outlaw.

It was the finest day of my life.

Before noon of the first day I met a lone traveler on the road. He was wild eyed and haggard, dark hair askew, cloak filthy with mud. After going through my entire life friendless and estranged from humanity, I found a stranger, a madman perhaps, and our kinship was instant and more binding than blood.

"The Lady?" he said, voice hopeful.

"The Lady," I croaked. It had been a long time since I had spoken, or had so much as a sip of water.

"Ergard Northman," he said.

"Tim Bottle," I said. He offered me a sip from a jug of rainwater and a bite of old dark bread. It refreshed me better than a night's rest in front of a fire, and together we walked on.

I remember that time like a fever dream. It seemed the most normal thing on earth to meet others on the road who had shared a dream with me, a dream so powerful that we all dropped our lives and lands and went searching for some impossible truth.

As the days passed we met others, and still others, all seeking the cliff. We walked together as one, never discussing the timing of a rest or a meal, or what change of direction we should make, but perfectly synchronized nonetheless. We spoke very little.

At one point we were trekking our way down an old logger's road when four men stepped out from behind the trees. They held cudgels and their eyes were cruel.

"Travelers in our woods," said their leader, a man of ugly and vicious countenance. "I'm afraid that there is a toll to pass this way…"

Seelia, faced streaked with black ash making her look like

a creature of hell, broke ranks and shrieked at them "You curs shall have nothing of us! We serve the Lady! Go back to your bolt holes or face such death as man can not conceive!" It was the first words I had ever heard her speak. Her fury was like the white-hot heart of a furnace fire.

The bandits looked shocked, then angry…then they saw the look in Seelia's eyes, in all of our eyes. They faded back into the forest and we went on, unmolested.

In communal dream we wandered, laughing at danger and cold and thirst.

Three days after I left Rakefield we found the cliff. First we could smell the sea, and knowing how close the Lady must be spurred us on quicker and quicker until we almost ran. We were all together then, all twenty-one of us as of that last morning before we met the lady. We were madmen.

As we broke into the clearing we saw a banquet table set near the edge of the cliff, set with enough rich fare for a company of kingly sycophants. But our eyes had barely time to take in this wonder, a banquet here in the wilds far from any civilization, when we saw she who had summoned us:

The Lady in Blue.

How to describe my first encounter with true power? Now, years later, I can see through some of the deceptions that completely shaped my perception of the world at the time. But on the day I met the Lady I broke into the clearing before the cliff and was sure that I was face to face with a goddess. A goddess, at least.

She was fully seven feet tall and robed in blue, but unlike my dreams her gown was a tattered wreck of a garment, barely clinging to her form. Her head was that of a statue of a woman, but a statue left to the elements until the features were worn nearly smooth by wind and rain.

She held severed human heads: five of them, all held by the hair. In her right hand she held three, two men and a woman. In her left she held two. I could see bloody threads hanging from them, and I felt my stomach revolt to see them sway in the breeze.

"It's all true," said Gelzer. It was the first words I had ever heard him speak.

We all crowded into the clearing. There was the Lady, and before her was a huge banquet table, covered in plates and dishes of food. My mouth watered at the sight of so much food together at once.

The Lady raised all of the heads she held a bit higher, like one might with a lantern if one wanted to see a bit further with it.

Then at once the heads animated. Each opened its eyes, and they spoke in unison with five voices.

"You have come. You have all arrived. Join me, friends. Join me."

To hear five voices speak as such was unnerving, to say the least. But it was also a wonder that the woman of our dreams actually addressed us. I wished for her to ask something of me, anything. I would have performed any task, no matter how dangerous or demeaning, and done so gladly.

We all approached – some cowering, some bold, but all with eyes wide with wonder.

"Come, my friends. You have traveled a long way, you are weary." She gestured and the eyes of the severed heads looked over the amazing feast before us. "Come, rest and eat your fill. When all are satiated we shall speak." Then she turned her back and held all her heads aloft so they could look out over the endless sea.

Eat we did. We were ravenous at that point, and the pack of us tore in to the rich food with a will. Strangely, many of the dishes were putrid and despoiled. A bowl of berries, covered in green mold, between a dish of perfect pears and a tureen of fragrant rice. A plate of meat, crawling with maggots, next to a roast chicken fit for a king's table.

Most hardly noticed the disgusting dishes, or didn't comment, so hungry were all. I remember watching Amoreza eat one rancid date after another, and when our eyes met he shrugged and kept eating.

I ate until I could no longer. Then we all sat upon the grass, weary from walking and dazed from food and wine of such unaccustomed richness, gazing at our benefactor. When we were all sated and silent, the Lady in Blue turned to us. Five sets of eyes, somehow still quick with life, looked us over.

"Friends, I am here to tell you a horrible truth. Your true lives, the lives that you were all meant to live, have been taken from you. Our enemies – who are, in fact, the enemies of all the right-thinking people of this world – stole your true existences away from you while you were still each one an untethered soul, floating through the ether. These villains used dark magic and foul alliances to commit this atrocity."

Funny now to look back and wonder why none of us thought to ask why. Why would such cosmic forces be interested in the likes of us? We who were but gnats to them to be swatted at their leisure – why would they even bother? Why not destroy us outright, such was their might? Now I think in these terms, but that day on the cliff I nodded my head, along with my twenty compatriots, and knew that yes, this was truth, that there were others out there who had taken away what was rightly ours, and now we had an ally against them and their machinations. I looked to my companions and I saw the same thing in their eyes; we all wished a Reckoning.

The Lady continued, her five heads speaking five voices as one. "Our enemies also imprisoned me, forcing me to a hell-realm of fire and torment. But I found a way to escape. I cannot show my true face nor say my true name – if I were to, they would instantly know that I had thwarted them, and they would strike out and confound our plans. If you must refer to me, call me only the Lady in Blue. Once our enemies are cast down and destroyed, then shall I share my true face with you."

"Now the war against our enemies begins. Now shall we rise up and cast down those unworthy powers that would enslave the world and tyrannically reform the lives of innocent souls. And if you would be my ally in this war, if you

would have me return the lives that were stolen from you, I would ask you to perform a task for me, a task that will bind us together forever."

"Our enemies – who are indeed the enemies of all the right-thinking people of this world – have captured another of our allies and imprisoned her. If you would be *our* ally, if you would have my help to gain back that which has been taken from you, you must rescue her."

"Return here tonight when the full moon is high in the sky. There," she gestured behind her with her two-head hand – "there, at the edge of the cliff, shall be an invisible bridge. Follow the bridge until its end and there wait until you see a hole in the sky appear at its terminus. This hole in the sky is a doorway to another world, a prison dimension, home to a host of fell creatures, and they will try to bar your way. Worse, our ally herself is guarded by a terrible sentinel, a titan who can be slain by no mortal means. I have used my powers against this sentinel, keeping him weak, but make no mistake: for all my efforts the titan is dangerous beyond reckoning.

"You must be courageous and clever. Find our ally – she is held in a cage of alder wood. Free her and return to me and each of you shall have your heart's desire. I shall return that which was taken from you. I shall give you back the lives that were meant to be yours. Extraordinary lives, away from the false friends and mindless toil our enemies forced upon you. And the means to do so…"

And she turned and swung her pale arms outstretched as if she were announcing her victory over all of creation, severed heads held now to look out over the ocean.

"Here," the heads said in unison, and then came a sound, like some god caught a thunderbolt and tore it in two.

First I thought that she had torn the sky itself, but now when I seek out the memory with my knowledge of magic and its workings I see that she tore reality itself asunder. A rent in our Universe appeared before her now, and a howling alien wind issued forth, forcing us back, blowing sod and dust into the sky. The banquet table and all its plates and bottles and leftover food flew past us as we struggled to stand our ground against the wind.

I turned my eyes to look and in the world revealed by the rent I saw stars, as if she had opened a jagged portal in daytime that opened up into night. And there I saw it, a cyclopean monolith beyond.

It was a great wheel, set on an axis higher than the tallest castle of a tower. I saw it was inscribed with configurations of stars. The wheel was impossible, an artifact of a race of giants so huge as we would be less than insects to it.

I heard the five voices of the Lady in Blue, even through the howling winds, as if she held those severed heads inches from my ears. "This is the Wheel of Destiny, one of the Seven Pillars of Existence. All those who return from the prison behind the hole in the sky shall be allowed to spin the Wheel, and doing so they shall change the stars that rule them. The Wheel is all wisdom and power, the Wheel shall return the lives that our enemies stole from all of us."

The Lady turned once more to face us, and as she did, the rent in reality stitched itself to, like a torn ruin of a painting healing itself to become a peaceful landscape once more. The winds were gone like she had shut the door to Winter itself.

The Lady walked to where the wind had blown some of the stuff of our banquet. We followed, all of us in awe, unable to turn away from the power and mystery before us.

The Lady put her foot on a bottle of wine, improbably whole after it had been blasted into a clump of weeds.

"If you would share the power of the Wheel then do as I ask this evening, and find our ally. You cannot speak her name – if you were to say it aloud our enemies would instantly know of our plans, and would work to thwart them. It is much too soon to battle them openly. This is the name of our ally."

The Lady then put slow but inexorable pressure down upon the bottle. The bottle soon smashed, wine and glass erupting from it.

The wine and glass formed a pattern in the grass. I read a name there on the ground: DRAZETTA. It was only there for a moment, a miracle plain there at our feet, and then the edges of the symbols blurred and became a simple puddle in the dirt without form or meaning.

"Now I must leave you. But do not forget tonight . . . "

"I'll have none of it!" cried a voice, high and angry.

I looked and saw that one of our companions, a stout halfling in a tattered leather apron, was walking away, keeping her eyes on the Lady as he went.

"Nona, wait!" said Jenson.

"I'll have none of it! We have been beguiled! This is some trick. Well, thank you very much for this . . . this display, whatever it was. I'll have none of it, thank you very much. I'm leaving this instant. And if you lot are anything but fools you will return to your homes and forget this madness. An invisible bridge to a hole in the sky? Did you all not hear her mention a guard who cannot be slain by mortal means? Pfui! Rubbish!"

The halfling looked about. I think she was shocked that none were willing to leave with him.

Finally Nona said, "So be it. All of you are fools! Off to your deaths then, the lot of you! I'll have none of it!" She spat into the dirt, then she backed away. When he reached the tree line she turned and fled and was gone.

Later on, in an entirely new life, I heard a story from a scribe I hired to recopy an ancient text I had found. He was from Mherken, a town near the cliff where I met the Lady. The scribe told me a local legend about a halfling stranger who came in to a tavern there one afternoon, drinking and ranting about having escaped from some magical creature who wore the body of a headless woman. One moment she was telling his story, and in the next she fell from her stool. Somehow she hit her chin just right on the oak table, and her head came off cleanly there at the bar. They say the head blinked and tried to speak for a full minute.

We stood that night under the full moon, all looking over at the water. None of us saw anything.

"Someone has to go first," said Jenson, nervously twisting the neck of his sack.

"I will," I said, stepping to the edge of the cliff.

After The Lady in Blue disappeared – she simply sunk down into the earth leaving no trace, another casual miracle – we mostly sat silent until nightfall. Some spoke of how we should proceed – I remember that bald man who kept clearing his throat and complaining that someone needed to make a plan, until someone else told him to shut up or else. Some others made their way to Mherkin and returned with food and bulging waterskins. I myself had collected what I could from the remnants of our feast from where the wind had scattered it, and while the others talked I ate a bit of bread and some pomegranate seeds, and thought my unsettling thoughts.

I stayed apart from the others and their discussions, simply thinking. We had certainly seen miracles that day, so many miracles one could faint under their weight.

I thought of what it might mean that a being of such power as the Lady in Blue needed us, a motley assortment of powerless peasants, to assist her. We were neither warriors nor doer of great deeds, but only simple folk united in the strange unreality that the Lady claimed our Enemies (our unnamed, never-seen Enemies) had mired us in. I thought about the secrets we had seen and heard that day.

A terrible thought returned to me again and again – *you may safely tell your secrets to a man about to die*. The thought chilled me.

In the end, as the warm night began to settle over the ocean, I knew that come my death or ruin, I would follow that bridge. I would find the hole in the sky, would rescue our ally. I would return and spin the Wheel of Fate, would reclaim my true existence.

I would do all of this or I would die in its pursuit.

I would be first to step out onto the bridge, a bridge we could not see. I stood at the edge of the cliff, looking at the dark ocean some seventy feet below, and wondering if this would be the death I had foreseen. I lifted my leg to step, and as one all my companions took a deep breath.

"Wait!" cried Eleeka. She had collected a hand full of pebbles, and threw them out on to the bridge.

They landed with a sound like stone falling on stone, and they hung in the air.

All of us breathed a sigh of relief.

Emboldened, I stepped out onto the bridge. I winced, the entire time unsure if I would stand on air like the pebbles or fall to the rocks and serf below, brains dashed and blood washing out to sea.

I did not. The unseen bridge beneath my feet felt like an ancient road of cobbles, utterly unyielding. I stooped, astonished, and ran my finger along the surface, finding unseen grooves between unseen stones. I laughed then, and looked back at my companions. I remember the red headed man bellowing laughter then, and then all of us as we realized that it was *all true*, that this hadn't been some terrible trick played upon us.

Never would I be that innocent again.

The entire troop stepped out onto the bridge then. Amoreza nearly fell off testing its edge, tilting far past the point of no return before six hands grabbed him in the dark. The silent beggar paced off the edges, and found the bridge to be ten short paces wide. We could have safely walked five abreast, but instead we walked in a straight line, ever cautious least we loose the path and fall to the sea. I was second in line – Salvolta went first, carefully tapping ahead with the edge of his bow to ensure its continuance.

We walked.

The moon passed overhead, the stars wheeled, the night cooled, and on we walked. At first there was conversation and laughter. The troop made a game of asking questions – where could this one be from, what had been your life before the summons of The Lady - and guessing the answers, and in this way did those who wished to share their past become known to the rest of the group. Then someone began a song, and we all sang together, walking songs and tavern songs and harvest songs until we ran out and began to repeat ourselves, voices growing weaker as we went on. Finally we walked in silence, as our excitement faded and we began to grow weary.

When dawn began to creep over the edge of the world we began to truly take stock of our predicament. The bridge must have gradually risen from its original elevation, for now we found ourselves hundreds of feet over the surface of the sea. Clouds seemed nearer to us than water, and that was unsettling. Also, the very invisibility of the bridge grew more frightening as daylight rose. In the fresh light we could see feet about to touch nothing again and again, and it was hard not to flinch, or sit down frozen with fear. Some did have such issues – I recall Avel helping Jordana to her feet once she had sat still in fear and refused to move. He spoke to her softly, assuring her that all would be well, and he walked with her for a long while, standing to the side so that she could remain in the safe center of the bridge.

Before the sun had been in the sky an hour Jensen raised his hand to stop the troop. "I am exhausted," he said. "We have to stop." As if his words had dispelled some charm that had kept us walking, we at once were all exhausted and sat in our places. There was talk of preparing a meal out of what we had brought, but people began to curl up and sleep, and soon we all slept on our invisible bridge in the sky.

When we woke it was to stiffness and pain, and a new chill in the air. I felt just as anyone would feel having slept in the open air on cobbles. I had a terrible stiffness in my neck and it was hours of rolling and kneading before holding my head upright ceased paining me.

We put together a meal. When I had collected my two sacks of food back at the banquet site I thought it a wealth that

would never run out. Now, one meal for twenty hungry travelers did for more than half of it.

We walked. There was barely any conversation, much less songs. We walked and walked, all the romance seemingly sucked out of our adventure. We trudged on.

By that afternoon I was daydreaming, thinking of warm beds and a hot mug of mulled wine, when I heard Saltova call out "Look! A ship!"

We all strained to see. To us it seemed like a tiny spec off in the far ocean, but in our path.

It was a break from the monotony of nothing but ocean, and some of our troop chattered on about what it might mean for our journey. Would we be able to communicate with them? Should we bother?

The bald man cleared his throat. "Are we sure that whoever is on that boat is friendly? Uh-umm, someone needs to come up with a plan."

We soon realized that wondering about the ship's masters was moot. The great two-masted craft was overturned. Ergard, a one-time midshipman, thought that it might have run aground on a sand bar. The craft's two masts were nearly horizontal, and from a distance they seemed to be covered with birds.

"Are those . . . what, black seagulls?" asked Amoreza.

"There are no black seagulls, you lackwit," said Quincy, and his bearded face grew somber.

It was soon apparent that our path would take us directly over the ship. The last thing I recall before the attack was Ergard and William Swifield arguing over whether it would be possible for us to create some kind of rope out of our clothes, so that one of us could shimmy the 300' down to the ship to see if the now surly dead inhabitants had been considerate enough to leave us some badly needed food or water or other supplies.

As we grew closer we could see those birds better. They were black, angled, prickly things, and everything in their forms held menace. Saltova was already drawing an arrow from his quiver when they rose into the air as one and came for us. The elf fired twice before they reached us, slaying one before they were close enough to strike.

I can barely visit the battle in my mind. I saw these creatures – sea shrikes I now know them for, unnatural creatures with fangs like wolves and the eyes of evil men – flay Droman the hunter alive, ripping him with their beaks and cawing like children waiting for gifts. I lunged and struck with the pitchfork, shouting for them to go away. I saw Eleeka save Avel's life, breaking a creature's back with her stave an instant before the foul thing could tear out the gong farmer's throat. There was much more, cries of anguish and fury, and so much blood. Above all else I remember the blood, spattering the invisible bridge and giving it terrible definition there so high above the sea.

When it was done we had lost three of our companions – Droman, Gelzer, and the man in the leather vest whose name no one knew. A half dozen more had taken wounds, some grievous. The rest of us had survived, and four sea shrikes lied dead, broken and bleeding on the invisible bridge. Two of the birds had escaped, dragging the corpse of Droman and the man in the vest over the side. Looking below I could see the evil things flocking around the bodies of our companions in a perfect ecstasy of blood lust. It was sickening.

Swifield and Saltova worked together to strip the creatures for meat, and that night we all tried their flesh but its taste was horrible and everyone who partook grew at least a little ill.

We walked on. We marched until dark clouds rushed across the sky, blocking the moon and starlight and making us nervous to fall. Some time after we stopped, those black clouds began to pour rain on us, soaking us to our core. The winds grew strong and more than once we had to reach out and grab one another least we fall to our deaths.

Daylight found us miserable, soaked, and dispirited. We went on as best we could, many coughing and sputtering, and all walking silent with their thoughts.

One more died of our company died on the bridge before we reached its terminus – the youth in the iron helm. He had been quiet and sullen for much of the journey, occasionally speaking with Amerorza in morose tones, but otherwise keeping to himself. We had not yet walked an hour by my reckoning when the quiet talk between the youth and that idiot grew louder and louder, until it became full blown yelling.

"This is a trick!" he shouted, the helmet distorting his voice, making him seem larger somehow. "You think you can fool me?"

Ameoriza reached out to him, "No one is trying to fool you, the Lady in Blue is . . . "

"Gods damn the Lady in Blue!" he said, and I shuddered to hear such a blasphemy in this high and vulnerable place. "And Gods damn all of you. I'm going back to land."

As he turned to leave, the woman with the apples tried to hand him one for the journey, but he pushed her hand aside. He strode away from us while we all called for him for a few seconds. Then he took one further step, found nothing but air, and fell to his death. We all saw him go but we were so high up that we could not hear the splash.

There was moment of stunned silence, and then pandemonium. People laid themselves down on the bridge, hugging it as if they were about to fly off into the void. Some shouted, some screamed for the boy in the helmet. I remember Amoreza first giggling, then guffawing, then bellowing with laughter, occasionally choking out a single phrase: "*We are all going to die!*"

Eventually the troop came to their senses, mostly shouted into sensibility by Eleeka, who tested the bridge ahead and found that it seemed to go on ahead.

"It's disappearing behind us," said Avel. "There is no way back."

I suggested an experiment. We all walked ahead, leaving

an apple in the center of the path behind us. When the hindmost had walked ten paces away, the apple first tilted, and then fell into the ocean.

"Ten human paces," said Ergard. "Twenty feet?"

We all agreed that that seemed to be the distance.

A bit of food was passed out, and we went on, now carefully, each afraid that the next step might send us over the edge. Avel volunteered to go first, and he tapped ahead with a walking stick, searching for the edge.

That evening he found it.

top! Stop!" Avel said.

The second in line – Jenson, I think – did not stop in time, colliding with the gong farmer and clutching him to keep him from falling. The third did the same, and soon there was a mass of bodies there at the edge of the dark abyss, all clinging to one another. I was far enough back in line that I saw the mass of panicked companions, flailing and scrabbling and finally stopping just short of falling to the ocean en mass. A thrill of terror ran through me as I winced in anticipation of watching seven or eight of my companions fall over the edge in a stupid, senseless tragedy. But after mere seconds of shrieks and flailing of arms they managed to find their balance and they stepped back, breathing hard.

"End of the line. We made it." Said Avel, panting,

We sat there at the end of the bridge, breathing hard in the dark. The dark clouds were gone and there was nothing but stars overhead. We all looked about at the featureless black sea, small waves rippling below us in the cold breeze. There was nothing as far as we can see.

"Where is the hole in the sky?" The bald man finally said. "Somebody needs to come up with a plan."

ur wait wound up being two days.

Looking back, it was one of the very last "quiet times" of my life. I wasn't obsessing over gaining more magical power or guessing at the possible next machinations of my many enemies, wasn't anxious about thieves, or the displeasure of my patron, or anything. It may have been the last time in my life that I actually experienced true ennui.

We sat and spoke in groups, listening to the survivors tell the stories of their lives. I learned that Seelia had been a shaman in a tribe of outlanders who lived in the deep forest, but she hadn't actually believed in the divine until confronted with the Lady in Blue. Quincy had killed a man when a disagreement over the property line of their adjacent farms became violent. Amoreza had been a courtier and one time jester, and claimed to have wooed dozens of women with his mastery of etiquette and coy love talk. Jordana and Eleeka discovered that they had once both worked at the same farm and livestock market, and they amused us for the better part of an hour with their stories of all the characters they met there.

And then no one felt like telling stories any more. We were low on water and all our throats were dry. We sat quietly, and waited on the Hole in the Sky.

here it is!"

I had been asleep, wrapping myself tightly in my patched traveling cloak against the chill sea air, when Savolta cried out. I sat up, oddly now accustomed to waking suspended in the air over the sea, and looked where he pointed.

There at the edge of the sky some miles away was a shimmer. Something about it spoke to me. I did some calculations in my mind.

"That must be it," I said. "It's on a perfect trajectory to line up with the edge of the platform. This is it."

"Tra-what-ory?" said Amoreza, but the others were already gathering their things and getting ready.

Three hours later it drew nearly flush with the end of the platform. The closer it drew the more the angle allowed us to see through it, for it was indeed a porthole. It was fascinating, almost hypnotic to watch as it drifted across the sky. Beyond it I could see plants, and a hint of strange sky.

"I'll go first," I said. I pitched my voice to make it sound as if I were being brave, but the truth was I meant to be the first. The way I felt that evening on the invisible platform hanging in the sky I would have gone alone, been the sole explorer of this alien world so rich with possibility. I wanted to own it, and I was already jealous of having to share its bounty.

When the hole came flush with the platform, I stepped through. I recall one instant where I thought *There shall be a price, and that price may be my death.*

And then I found myself in another world.

I recall my ears popping so violently that I cried out. I found myself in a warm landscape under a sky of true magenta, cloudless and sunless and as strange as anything I had ever seen. I stood among tall reed like plants that towered over myself. I looked back behind – I could not see the passage between worlds, only more grass. Then one of my companions stepped out from nothingness, as he passed through the invisible curtain between worlds – it was William Swyfield, looking as shocked as I had been. Next, came Avel, then the rest of my companions. Soon we all stood, marveling at this strange world, at the blue shadows we cast and the smell of jungle.

And I looked over my companions and for a second, I wished them all dead. I wished for this place and all of its secrets to be mine alone.

The entire group was energized. Seelia and Savolta went off to scout, while us remainders took inventory of what rations we had left. I remember the woman with the bag of apples slicing them in quarters with her knife, and sharing them out amongst those who would have them. She still hadn't eaten one herself.

"There is a structure," said Seelia when they returned. "Off in that direction. It's the only thing you can see from the top of a hill we found. That is our destination."

"It is strange," said Savolta. "It looks like a giant beehive."

We walked and walked. Hours passed.

Until now I had mainly stayed quiet. I spoke when spoken to, and offered my advice and thoughts when I thought it was warranted. Now I stayed at the front, just behind Avel and Quincy. I felt a kind of fever then. It's a fever I know well now. I felt it when I first perused *Tarsjate's Living Grimoire*, or when I my companions and I finally slew the Keepers of the Grey Manse and took their artifact hoard for our own. It was a simple and pure lust for power, an irresistible force which drives me to this very day, to my pride and my shame in equal measure.

I nearly died for that lust there beneath that strange magenta sky, when the chaos pigs tore from the ground and set upon me.

We had been marching in the thicket of tall green stalks for unknown hours when we found a sort of clearing. The earth before us was disturbed, as if a shallow grave had once been dug there, and Morgan went ahead to investigate.

The beasts tore out from the earth and with a terrible shriek they all rushed us at once.

They all came for me.

Before I could react they knocked me to the ground and stood upon me. They seemed to be enormous pigs, but green and black, striped like the tigers I have since seen. Their faces were more man-like then one ever sees in swine, and their tusks were savage and sharp. They glowered down upon me, assured of an easy kill.

I have never been an especially robust man, and when I fell the wind rushed out of me at once and I was near helpless. I had dropped my pitchfork, and as the three viciously swiped at me with their tusks it was all I could do to fend them off. I raked at their eyes and tried to hold their faces back, but one of them tore my chest savagely. I saw my blood spurt up before my eyes and waited for the end to come.

My companions came, at once surrounding the pigs and hacking at them with any weapons they could. Two of the creatures turned to face the oncoming attackers but the one who bit me just held on and ripped. I screamed and scrabbled for something to bash it with – a rock, a stick. My hand finally fell on my pitchfork and with a scream I brought it up as sharply as I could. I stabbed it in its neck, barely understanding what I had done. I saw its hideous eyes roll back into its head, and it released me and stumbled back a bit. I used my pitchfork to drag myself up to my feet, gasping for breath, and I looked down at my attacker. It had stumbled over and I saw its green belly and its loathsome webbed feet. It was trying to wriggle away from me but I brought the fork up and with a scream I plunged it into the beast's belly, again and again, in a perfect red fury of pain and rage until, finally, two of my companions grabbed me and dragged me away from the mutilated thing.

The carnage was terrible. All three of the chaos pigs were dead, but so two were William Swyfield and the woman who had shared out all of her apples, ripped terribly and beyond hope of saving. Three others – Avel, Morgan, and the red haired man had wounds, which some of the others were tending to. Seelia cut my shirt away and put a compress of mud and herbs over the savage bite in my chest. My mind still reeled, and I could barely control my breathing. I had taken my first serious injury, slain my first monster. These would be the first of many.

"You were lucky," said Sellia, when she finally helped me to my feet. "You lost some flesh but nothing you can't live without. The Lady in Blue watches over you."

I wondered about that.

We finally made it to the structure after hours and hours of marching. The air stayed warm and there was no sign of sundown – just the steady, diffused light that seemed to come from behind the purple sky.

The structure was unlike anything any of us had ever experienced. It was over 300 feet tall, and it looked not so much built as *grown*, as if it were some strange seed put there by the gods to form something neither a true plant nor a edifice of man, but something in between.

"A seed," said Ergard, and we all had to agree. It was like a 300-foot tall seed, with a pair of closed doors large enough for a titan to walk through.

The bald man cleared his throat. "Well, here we are. Somebody needs to come up with a plan."

There was debate, scouting, searching. Finally someone pointed out that the gap under the door was easily large enough for a man to scuttle under.

Ergard volunteered to take a look under the door and report what he saw. We gathered around him as he first squatted, then belly-crawled under the door to look around.

"Gods," he said.

"What do you see?" hissed Jenson.

"It's . . . one huge chamber. I see a creature – gods, the size of it – asleep against the far wall. There is the cage, high over its head. It's one massive room, but I see a passageway just to the right. It might lead to –"

Those were Ergard's last words. Suddenly he was gone, dragged under the door so quickly we didn't have a chance to grab him. We saw a shadow under the door, a terrible flickering shadow that reminded me of a group of men holding torches.

Then there was a voice, a deep rumbling baritone, speaking words in the common tongue without sounding at all human.

"Pardon me. I am going to have to ask you all to exit this

dimension, immediately, I'm afraid. There is grave danger here. Please, take your group and leave to your home dimension or the nearest convenient alternate dimension. I'm afraid I am going to have to ask you go, now, this very instant."

Then we heard the tear. Ergard had only the tiniest moment to make a sound – "Uk!" - and then came that awful tearing, like two wolves pulling apart a chicken.

We looked at one another in abject horror. Ergard, the first sympathetic soul I met on my journey for truth, was dead – we had not seen him die, but he was certainly dead. We all backed away, quiet as mice – even those of us who were silently weeping, like myself.

alf an hour later, after we had retreated to the edge of the clearing and began our terrified discussion of what we should do next, Amoreza made his move.

The group was split on two opinions. The majority wanted to go back to the gate and find the way out.

The other half, rightly, realized that this was foolish. We had come this far, and if we returned without accomplishing what we set out to do we would risk the displeasure of the Lady in Blue. I was quite sure that would be a terrible, and most likely final, mistake.

I had a plan – before he died Ergard said he he had seen a passageway off to the right. I thought if we could just make our way to it, we might save ourselves from whatever beast was within, and find some way to rescue the prisoner.

I was just making my point when someone cried out – Amoreza had left our group, and was about to slide back under the cyclopean doors. He threw a long blue shadow across the dooryard.

"Stop! Amoreza, stop— what are you doing?"

"What I should have done since the beginning – taking charge. I've listened to you dung brained wag-tails for just about long enough. Did you hear that thing speak? It was *polite*. It was *reasonable*. Of course it killed what's-his-name, he walked in unannounced like a tramp. I know how to speak that creature's language – I'll just ask it politely – *politely*, a concept beyond any of you rabble I'm sure – to tell us the way out, and we shall be on our way home. Well," and here he gave me such a grin as cleared my conscious that I didn't try harder to stop him," at least *I* shall be leaving."

He slid under the door. We all looked at one another, panicked. Then I ran for it – I had to see what would happen, and if he were actually successful I though it prudent to be near by, to next make my own apologies and request for parole.

In the distance I heard Amoreza clear his throat and speak "Excuse me, great and kind sir. Pardon me for crawling under your door."

Several of us crawled up and looked into the chamber under he heavy door – Eleeka, Morgan, Avel, Quincy, and myself. I remember being shoulder to shoulder with Avel and smelling the reek of his profession exuding from his present slops.

Inside it was as Ergard had described – one huge room, like the inside of a hollowed-out hill, and across from the door a titan the likes of which I hope never to see again, asleep against the hive-like wall, under the cage that hung from so, so high above. The titan,was vaguely human in shape, blue and scaly, with fangs larger than the tallest man, and radiated menace, even in repose. It seemed he could swallow one of us in a single gruesome bite.

The titan was the lesser of the horrors in that chamber. Just before the door was a creature from beyond nightmare. It seemed a giant jack-o'-lantern, larger than a nobleman's carriage, face perhaps carved by the devils of all hells. Green fire glowed from within its seemingly hollow bulk, and it moved about on thick ropy tendrils, like a kraken made of vines. The air wavered in front of its face as the heat of its flames, hotter than the forges of a hundred blacksmiths, shimmered and withered.

And before it, hands upturned, stood Amoreza, hands splayed in a conciliatory fashion. "Truly you are a magnificent creature, but . . ." he began.

The creature smiled, and its smile was more terrifying than any warrior's battle cry. It spoke, and its voice filled the world.

"Thank you – so nice to find a civil being in this place. Refreshing, actually. None the less I am going to have to insist that you and your band leave this dimension immediately, either to your point of origin or to another convenient dimension."

"Ah, but you see therein lies our problem. You see, my companions and I – " and here he gestured at the line of us crouched under the door, and when the creature looked at us sidelong, eyes lingering on myself for a single heart-stopping moment, I could have killed that fool myself – "we were sent here under circumstances utterly beyond our control. You see, we encountered this being . . ."

"Charitable Gods! Shut up, Amorea!" hissed Eleeka. It was too late, of course. We could all see that the creature had started to slowly bring its two foremost tendrils to bear, slowly coiling them closer to the chattering fool. To his credit, our companion was smiling, the very picture of social confidence. He had less than one minute to live.

"And that being sent us here to retrieve someone. But the journey has been perfectly awful. Many of our companions died on the way. Others were slain . . ."

"By the chaos pigs, yes, I know," the creature said. **"And one brave soul I slew myself."**

For the first time I saw Amoreza hesitate, just for a moment. I held my breath.

"Yes, you did. But none of us blame you, certainly. You were absolutely within your rights to do so."

The creature seemed amused. **"Thank you for saying so. Very gracious of you, mortal."**

"You certainly are welcome," said Amoreza. I sighed a heavy sigh of relief – I thought the fool would have stuck his foot in it for sure. Had I underestimated my companion?

"That being said, I still have to insist that you leave," said the creature. **"Immediately."**

"Well, we would like nothing more than to comply with your request – your perfectly reasonable request, let me assert. Unfortunately the porthole seemed to disappear behind us."

"Did it?" asked the Creature.

"Yes. We believe that we won't be able to leave unless we rescue the one we've come for – I think - called Drazetta, and . . . Oops!"

We all gasped – we had been so careful about following the Lady in Blue's rules, and now the fool Amoreza had spoken the name and sealed our fate.

The creature actually rolled its flaming eyes – quite a thing to see on the visage of an animated jack-o'-lantern lit with the green flames of hell itself. In a trice it had snatched up Amoreza, grabbing his ankle and upending him so that his head hit the floor before the creature casually popped the screaming idiot into its flaming mouth. It turned on us then, and I could see my former companion in the interior of the creature – hair and clothes disintegrating in an instant, skin catching fire and blacking in another second – as the monster shouted **"Invaders! Invaders at our very gates! Come to our aid, oh servants of the wise Masters!"**

Behind me I heard the bald man shout "What do we do? Someone needs to come up with a -" And then, just a strangled cry.

I looked behind me at the rest of the troop, all further back in the clearing between our structure and the grass line. Somehow while we were focused on the creature inside the door another had appeared, this one like a woman made of thorns with the coldest blue eyes I have ever seen. She had come from behind the bald man, reached her thorny arms around his face and neck, and ripped. He fell to his knees, bleeding from dozens of tiny slashes.

It was a chaos. Most of my companions fled away from the prison hive, but the tall grass was suddenly filled with these woven women, and they reached out their arms and slew and slew. Savolta drew his bow, started firing arrows, but I didn't see any creatures fall. I saw the silent beggar ripped across the face and chest, and he fell to his knees without a sound. Jordana rushed over, tried to stab one of the things with her spear, but they shredded her in an instant.

All was panic. We who had been watching the fool Amoreza at the door looked at one another, each hoping against hope that there could be some salvation.

Then a massive tendril shot out, grabbed Quincy by the leg, and dragged him under the door.

I don't know what possessed us to follow Avel inside to attack the creature. It might be the way he went in – no hesitation, no waiting for us. The creature had grabbed his friend and, with the simplicity of Truth, Avel the gong farmer slid under the door and charged the fiery monster. He had something in his hand – in memory's eye I see a trowel, but that simply can't be true – and he stabbed it. Only Eleeka, Morgan, and myself were left there at the door, but we charged as one, right behind Avel, and rushed at the creature. I could feel its heat reddening my face as I stabbed it again and again with my pitchfork. I was screaming with everything that I had, and my screams mixed with those of our companions outside the door. It sounded like a slaughter out there in the clearing.

The creature swung its great tendril, striking Morgan on his shoulder with a crack so loud that I am sure the blow crushed the big dwarf's spine. Then, Avel struck it an improbably effective blow with his tiny weapon and the murderous thing hissed fire, giving the gong farmer his full attention. It still held Quincy in one long tendril, and now it grabbed brave Avel in its other. They both shrieked, Quincy in pain and Avel in such defiance that I have never seen in another man. He actually threw his tiny shovel then and struck the fiery beast another sold blow. It grinned at this, and began to slowly crush the life out of both of them.

I looked around me, there in the massive hive-like dome of the prison chamber. I saw only one ally – beautiful Eleeka, who was running off on her own for the side passage Ergard had pointed out. I never saw her again.

I was alone with the creature. I was in mortal terror, backing away from it while I watched it inexorably squeeze those two brave men to death. I walked backwards, unable to take my eyes off the scene such awful mortality. Avel and Quincy had been the best of us, and now they were two more casualties of the Lady in Blue's machinations.

I kept backing away, watching as the creature finally snapped the spines of both of those men and threw them to separate sides of the chamber before focusing on me. I started to back away quicker and quicker and suddenly I struck the far wall.

But it was not the wall. I had struck the titan.

Its eyes fluttered, opened, then focused on me with cosmic rage. In an instant he had grabbed me and held me tightly in its mighty blue claw.

A coldness crept over my mind at that point. I was about to die, I was looking into the unfeeling eyes of the beast that would snuff out my life, without feeling or effort. I looked into the blackness.

It held me in its one palm, then balled its hand into a ter-

rible fist, holding it up like a blacksmith over an anvil.

"Please help me," I whispered, with no idea where the words came from. "Powers of the cosmos please help me."

I knelt there, naked and alone, at the gates to the great palace, an unearthly structure of jade and glass, with walls of white marble, thirteen tall towers topped with thirteen beautiful minarets shaped like stars and moons and magical symbols under an impossibly beautiful sky, blue in eternal twilight. Humbly waiting, I could only look over at this impossible place, a home of great gods. I waited there for days, weeks, with no idea where I was, or how long I must wait. I did not hunger or thirst, merely knelt in supplication to whatever powers held my fate in their hands.

I waited. Power lay within, and I would wait a thousand years for it.

At some point the massive doors opened and out he came. One day, I would know him as terrible Sezrekan, the wickedest sorcerer ever to walk the earth.

"Enter, slave, and get to your work.

I toiled endlessly for the great man, fetching books I was forbade to open, fetching his meals and his wine, feeding the bizarre menagerie of specimens he kept from every corner of the cosmos. I did what I was told at all times, and my reward was almost always scorn and contempt. But still I served the great man – it was the way to survive, and possibly the way to power.

One day in perhaps my sixth or seventh year of servitude, Sezrekan called me into his chamber. It was the first time I was allowed to sit in his presence. He asked me questions, first about my life and my youth, and then concentrating on the Lady in Blue and the misbegotten quest she had sent me, and my long-gone companions, on. I spoke without guile, surprised to remember every detail of my ordeal with impossible clarity – a trick of that demi-plane and its unique place in time/space, I now know. I have since lost nearly all of those expanded memories (what was the name of the boy in the helmet?), but when Sezrekan questioned me that day I answered with unerring honesty and precision.

When he was done he made me an offer. I would serve him for a total of 101 years, after which he would accept me as a supplicant and return me to the world versed in the way of magic. I would be a wizard; I would have the life that in my youth I believed I deserved.

I answered yes, and cried with gratitude at his cold regard.

I served great Sezrekan in his strange and wonderful palace for our agreed upon period, never aging, never tiring or growing hungry. Eventually he began my training, giving me 13 tomes of magic symbols and astronomy to memorize fully before he would allow me to proceed. That took nearly thirty years by my reckoning, and the effort first nearly destroyed my mind, and then honed it to the probing instrument it is today.

At last the wizard declared me worthy of his patronage. That morning in his laboratory he told me that it was nearly time to return me to the World I had known, where I would roam and adventure until he bade me to act in his behalf in some great and subtle plan that I was to play a minor role in. "But first," he said, pouring two glasses of wine from a ruby decanter I had brought him just moments before, "I have to send you back to your original body."

"I don't understand, master," I said.

He handed me the glass of wine, the first time he had ever deigned hand me anything. "I can't physically remove your body from that demi-plane. I'm going to have to send you back, and once your physical form is destroyed I shall remove your consciousness and place you into a new vessel, one I already have laid out for you like a new garment."

"Wait, what?," said I, fear rising in my throat.

"Go now," said the mighty Sezrekan. "Do not fail me."

He made a tiny gesture and I was gone.

The titan held me in his hand. The heat of his body was amazing. I was back in my old form, back in the prison-hive of a creature called Drezetta that I would never even lay eyes on, for one instant, before the beast brought his fist down where it struck me like a living thunderbolt. The death of that body was not momentary, or even quick; there was pain beyond all reckoning, pain that could drown the entire universe. The pain stayed with me, the last thread that held my body and spirit together, even as the titan tossed me into its mouth and ripped me with those terrible, terrible fangs.

And I woke on earth, on a bright and warm day, lying in a field of poppies and dressed in fine robes and sturdy boots. I sat up and marveled at myself, the memory of the pain of the death of my former body fading in my mind, but never fully forgotten. I woke up in the body of a young man. This form was perfect, handsome and stronger than I had ever been in my old life.

By my right hand was a walking stick, heavy enough on one end to be an effective weapon. By my left hand was an ancient leather-bound book – the *Black Grimoire*. My new life had begun.

Sometimes I think to myself of the Lady in Blue. She had deceived and lied to us all the way, but had she also showed me truth? I had accepted her quest and woke up in a new life, a life I felt that I had earned. A life beyond any that I ever could have imagined in those squalid days as a farmer's hated child in Rakefield.

I know this one thing for a certainty. Somewhere out there in my destiny I shall once again find her, and ask these questions to her stony, expressionless face. I shall find the Lady in Blue, and on that day I mean to have the truth.

Judges Guild

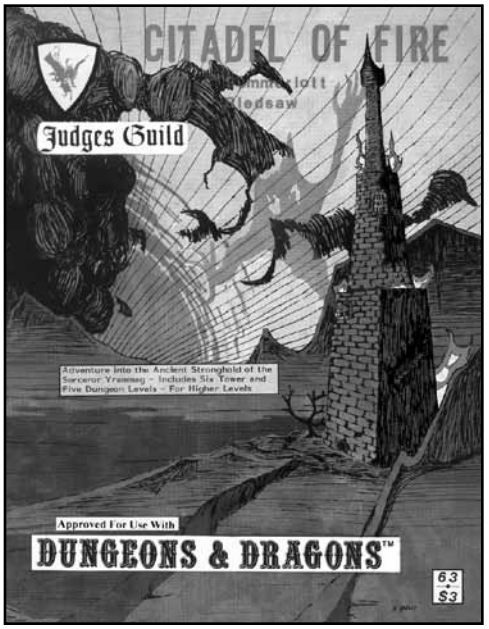
1977 Fantasy Catalog

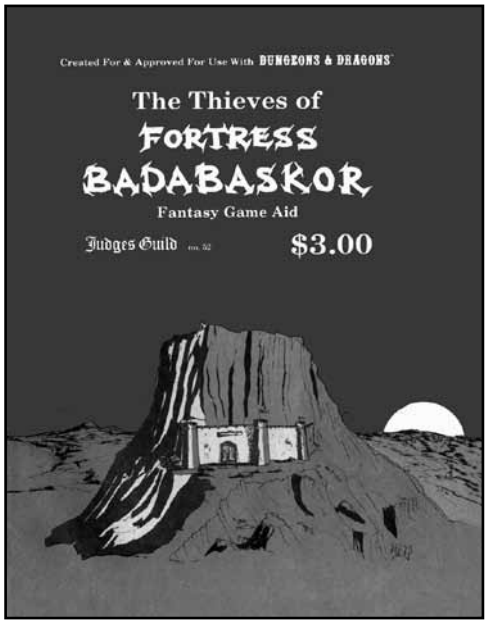
Goodman Games is working with Bob Bledsaw, Jr. and Judges Guild to produce a hardcover collection of the greatest works of the Judges Guild. As you surely know, Judges Guild was the pre-eminent publisher of licensed D&D accessories in the 1970's. The company produced many adventures that remain famous to this day: *Citadel of Fire, Thieves of Fortress Badabaskor, Tegel Manor, Dark Tower, Citadel of the Invincible Overlord*, and many others. Many Judges Guild adventures were "the first of their kind" and helped set the stage for D&D modules still to come.

As part of our ongoing project to scan in many classic Judges Guild works, we came across a mail order catalog from 1977. Judges Guild was not just a publisher, but also a mail-order retailer. The company sold RPG-related products from a variety of other companies. In this era before the Internet, Judges Guild was the largest supplier of mail-order RPG products, and a one-stop-shop for D&D fans. Read this catalog and you are essentially seeing a cross-section of what the fantasy RPG sector had to offer in 1977, just a few years after the creation of D&D. We invite you to read through the items listed in the catalog and take a trip down memory lane. Make sure to note the listing for polyhedron dice, as well as the explanations of what D&D is and how to play it!

The catalog was originally printed on 11"x17" newsprint, folded and mailed to customers. It is reproduced on the following pages at actual size, printed across each two-page spread.

Shown below: cover art for some of the original Judges Guild adventures slated for inclusion in the Goodman Games hardcover project.





Judges Guild Fantasy Catalog

DECEMBER 1977 &
Current Updates

Welcome to the December '77 Judges Guild catalog. We've listed our own fantasy game aids along with a plethora of games, role-playing & other wise, plus many different lines of miniature figures. We want to give you the best service possible and hope to hear from you soon. If you have any questions please don't hestate to write us.

For those new to the fascinating hobby of role-playing gaming, we have written an article on What It Is, How to Set up a Game and Which Games are Available. We hope this will introduce you to what we've found to be a source of great enjoyment and challenge.

If you know of friend who might be interested in Fantasy/Sci Fi gaming, please let us know or request an extra catalog with your order (they're free). Have fun! *-Bob Bledsaw & Bill Owen*

FANTASY ROLE PLAYING
A SWORDS & SORCERY PICNIC

What is a Fantasy Campaign?

A fantasy campaign is a unique game concept which permits a group of players to experience the thrills of Star Wars, Star Trek, Flash Gordon, John Carter of Mars, Tolkien's Middle Earth, Conan, Tom Mix, The Lone Ranger, Superman, Hopalong Cassidy, Fritz Leiber's Lankhmar, Andre' Norton's High Sorcery, Norman Marauder's Gor, Tarzan, or countless other mythos in an open ended format which permits the game to progress from session to session. Some campaigns have been running weekly sessions for years. The facination which captures the imagination and inspires this new gaming concept is the assumption by the players of roles during the game sessions. One player is selected to fill the role of judge. The judge selects the mythos upon which the cam-

Wilderlands of High Fantasy

OFFICIAL GAME AID CREATED FOR **DUNGEONS & DRAGONS**

by Judges Guild

$8.50

With Five 17 x 22 Judge's Campaign Maps & Five Player's Campaign Maps and two 16 Page Guide Booklets.

paign is based. A set of rules are purchased to resolve conflicts and provide a game system whereby the game can progress from session to session without ambiguity. Usually the mythos selected will dictate which rule set should be purchased. Most campaigns are based on the Dungeons & Dragons TM rule set and this is the first fantasy role playing system to have been published.

The players begin play by selecting the type of creature they wish to assume as a role in the game sessions to follow. The mythos and rule set will determine the types of creatures which can be selected. Elves and dwarves are common in most campaigns, but if the mythos is the Wild West creatures are limited to men. Next the players dice for characteristics. Characteristics common to most rule sets include strength, intelligence, dexterity, and other qualities which give the creature life in the context of the game. The characteristics will indicate what class of profession the character should assume in the game. A high strength is the characteristic most desired by fighters, while magic users benefit most from a high intelligence. The options are limited by the mythos and rule set again...unless the judge wishes to develope his own professions for the game. The players are now ready to outfit their characters with equipment, and this usually entails the purchase of swords, shields, Colt 45's, and so forth with the money which the character begins play with. The money used is determined by a die roll according to the rule set used. What can be purchased is one of the first decisions the judge must make. Although most judges allow the players to purchase equipment listed in the rule books, his campaign mythos may not provide a general store whereby the players are automatically outfitted.

While all this may seem rather arbitrary with all the die rolling going on, it is important to remember that any good fantasy game system will allow for an orderly progression of the characteristics as the player-character gains experience which will tend to offset any very low die rolls by an unlucky player. One of the most important characteristics is how many points of damage the character can take (especially if he is going to venture forth seeking dragons to slay). These points (often called hits to kill or subdue) become greater and greater as the player-character goes up in levels of experience. Special dice called polyhedral dice have been developed to permit special probability rolls to be made and most rule sets for role playing make use of these 4-sided, 8-sided, 12-sided, and 20-sided dice. With the increased popularity of fantasy role playing, the price of these special dice has plummeted until they are now available for only $1.49 per set.

Now the judge is ready to proceed with his major function. This includes creating situations in which the player-characters will have the opportunity to meet and defeat (usually) the enemy, perform heroic deeds and quests, grow in strength and wealth, and accomplish the impossible. The enemy is most often a fantastic creature of evil disposition which has accumulated a hoard of ill-gotten treasure and the player-characters (having heard the rumor as to the location) set off in search of the lair. The judge has drawn up a dungeon and populated it with orcs, goblins, and other denizens of the deep wherein the player-characters must venture to locate the evil dragon's hoard and rescue the maiden. The rules give guidance in this area of setting up situations but it is often advisable to select a judge at the beginning who is widely read in the mythos of your campaign. Many situations are derived from the rule sets because most offer a free form of extemporanious play when the player-characters enter the wilderness surrounding the town in which they start. Random encounters of werewolves, trolls, griffons, centaurs, and other creatures are standard fare in most campaigns, especially in D&D based campaigns.

The player-characters can also encounter wandering monsters in the dungeons as they search for treasure and fame. An encounter will result in an immediate check to determine if the monster or player-characters are surprised and if so, which has the advantage of the first round of melee. This ifrst round can be used to flee, speak, or close with the monster to strike the first blow. The rules for combat are not complicated once the players have been through a few melees. The monster is struck by rolling a 20-sided dice and crossindexing the result on a table which specifies the score required to hit the monster with the monster's armor class and the player-character's experience level and professional class. Fighters and Clerics can hit any given armor class easier than a magic user although all gain in hit probability as they increase in experience levels.

As a campaign progresses, the player-characters accumulate wealth which will permit them to hire guards, build castles, and engage in trade and other activities which will add new dimensions to your campaign. The player-characters often engage in friendly competition and seldom does relations between player-characters develop into total war. A campaign and the flow of strategic activities which experienced players tend to introduce in it as they begin influencing world events is an excellent excuse for a miniatures involving Middle Earth, Conanesque, and other armies which provide hours of fun and action. Miniatures also add color to encounters within the dungeons. While not necessary because most the play taking place in the dungeons is done on paper, a plethora of monster miniatures have been recently designed to meet the growing needs of fantasy role playing. Dragons, halflings, ghouls, mummies, and hundreds of others have been released in just the last year.

How do you get started in setting up a campaign?

Select a mythos that you feel will suit the tenor of your group. By this I mean you should decide roughly whether your campaign should have the depth to hold the interest of the group for a long period or merely several sessions. This should give an idea as to how much effort you should expend in creating a unique and structured universe for the players. Are your players purists when it comes to the Tolkien approach? Should you populate the area with many adventure possibilities or simply have one dungeon for your group? These are questions only the judge can answer and if time is precious he may opt to purchase several playing aids to lighten the workload. It is important to get an area map around the dungeon prepared before beginning play because it will give the players a feel of reality if the features can be mentioned as they move into the wilderness. For a really short-shriff campaign, this problem can be circumvented by locating the dungeon in the same one-horse town as the player-characters begin in...but it isn't near as much fun.

As has been implied up to this point, dungeon adventuring comprises a significant portion of the play. While this holds true at the beginning of a campaign, the players will gravitate towards more esoteric pursuits as they gain power and influence in your pseudo-universe. Much time is spent in designing castles to be constructed, developing magic spells and devices, manufacturing potions, engaging in trade, and dealing with the situations which only result when establishing the player-character as a baron or notable earth-shaker. Many times the players find these activities more enjoyable than the actual adventuring. They often spend weeks developing organizational structures, defensive and offensive strategic plans, and political machin-

Article continued on Page 7, Catalog begins on next page

Judges Guild Booty List

WHAT IS A BOOTY LIST?

It is a listing of fantasy & science fiction games and accessories that you can order from Judges Guild. The next pages (12-16) have a detailed listing of various types of games and companies' products. We ship your order the same day it is received and by 1st Class Mail or by United Parcel. To holders of PO Boxes- please give us your street address also, in case the weight necessitates UP. We have attempted to give a short synopsis of each product so you'll know what you're buying. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to write.

MINIMUM ORDER:

Minimum order for games, rules & aids is $1.00. Minimum order for any order that includes miniatures is $10.00, however other items may ordered in addition to the miniatures to make the $10 minimum.

POSTAGE CHARGES:

Following is for orders other than subscriptions (see section on subs for their postage charges). There is no postal charge for U.S.. Canada, APO & FPO. Exception: Frazetta prints require a $1 per order (up thru 6 posters) postage charge.

Foreign:

Foreign orders will be sent surface mail unless following Foreign Air Mail surcharge is added- you must include $3 of postage for $5 of merchandise ordered- we will refund any excess postage (for example: an order totalling $14.99 would require $6 postage additional).

TAX:

Orders from Illinois must include 5% sales tax on all items except subscriptions & magazines.

SUBSCRIPTION ITEMS VS. NON SUBSCRIPTION ITEMS

Subscription items are items originally sent out as a part of the Guildmember subscription. Non-Subscription items are optional and must be ordered separately; also subs may not be back-dated- issues become back issues as they are published.

Subscribers to the Journal receive only the Journal. Guildmembers receive the Journal and fantasy material (including guideline booklets and/or maps).

BACK ORDERS:

Rulebooks, games and aids will be back

JUDGES GUILDMEMBER SUBSCRIPTION ISSUES PUBLISHED THUS FAR:

1 THUNDERHOLD ISSUE a castle of a dwarven King and extensive Cavern with guidelines on poison, metal/coin values, beggars, buffoons, special encounters (originally 'J') 3.00

2 CITY STATE CAMPAIGN ISSUE a wilderlands map (1 each for Judge & Players) for the area around the City State with villages, castles etc.; guidelines on Baronies, technological level, trade guide, wishes, morale, NPCs & negotiations ('K') 4.50

3 TEGEL MANOR ISSUE a huge haunted house with room & monster descriptions and guidelines on magic statues and resurrection results ('L') 4.50

4 MODRON ISSUE a town map and an underwater map with descriptions of town inhabitants and guidelines on swimming, sharks and monster compendium of D&D monster statistics ('M') 3.50

5 BARBARIAN ALTANIS/GLOW WORM STEPPES CAMPAIGN ISSUE a wilderlands map of both areas above (with 1 each for Judge & Players), with villages, castles etc.; guidelines on ruins, caves, searching, rivers ('N') 5.50

6 VALON/TARANTIS CAMPAIGN ISSUE a wilderlands map of both areas above (with 1 each for Judge & Players), with villages, castles etc.; with guidelines reprinted from the 2nd issue on Baronies, technological level etc. (current issue 'O') 5.50

JUDGES GUILD RETAIL STORE LINE (WITH ORIGINAL ISSUE(S) SHOWN):

#2 DUNGEON TAC CARDS- 140 weapon & action cards showing Greyhawk & Chainmail 'to hit' scores and stats (originally as a part of Basic Sub) 3.95

10 GUIDE TO THE CITY STATE- 56 page street by street, shop by shop listing of City State's NPC's and guidelines on women, background, calender (available separately, comes as a part of following CITY STATE GAME AID) 3.50

12 CITY STATE OF THE INVINCIBLE OVERLORD GAME AID- huge ref's aid to a large, fantastic medieval city with large city map, guidelines on NPCs and back ground plus Thunderhold/Sunstone Caverns (originally from Basic Sub and 1st issue) 9.00

14 READY REF PACKAGE- combines many quick reference sheets for D&D from many of

counters and regular features .80

47 CAMPAIGN HEXAGON SYSTEM- 55 small, numbered hex grids plus terrain generation guidelines for mapping wilderlands hexes and many other uses 2.50

48 WILDERLANDS OF HIGH FANTASY- combines five different 17x22" maps (with 1 each for judge and players) plus two sixteen page guidelines booklets on villages and campaign guidelines (originally issues 2, 5 & 6) 8.50

MASTER LIST

All Judges Guild items are listed below including parts of issues in case you have lost a certain map or booklet.

SPECIAL BACK ISSUE OFFER (replaces original offer in previous issues):

When buying three or more back issues deduct $1 per issue ordered. For example: Ordering issue 1, 2 & 3 would be $3 + 4.50 + 4.50= $12 - 3 = $9.00. Applies to orders of three or more only.

#1. 34x44" City Map (4 sections) $4.50
2. 135 Dungeon Tac Cards 3.95
4. 17x22" City State Players Map .50

NON SUBSCRIPTION ITEMS:

9. 17x22" Small City State Judges Map 1 section .50
10. Guide to the City State 56 pages of more NPCs and guidelines 3.50
11. Special Starter Package- D&D plus Associate Guildmember Subscription (add required postage) 20.00
12. City State of the Invincible Overlord Play Aid- 9.00
13. Deluxe Fantasy Package- Item #12 PLUS D & D PLUS Multi Sided Dice Set 19.95
14. Ready Ref Sheets Package- 20 pages of seven different RR charts published through Installment L 2.99

SUBSCRIPTION ITEMS:

15. Thunderhold/Sunstone Caverns 11x17" map and Players map of Thunderhold 1.00

Thunderhold Installment 3.00

18. 17 x22" City State Campaign Map One with all names shown 1.50
19. 17x22" City State Campaign Map One without names shown 1.50

Campaign Installment 4.50

21. Newsletters I, J & K, all 3 for .25
22. Newsletter L (4 pages) .30
23. 17x22" Judges Map of Tegel Manor and area 2.00
38. Judge's First Fantasy Campaign Map 17x22" 1.50
39. Players' First Fantasy Campaign Map 17x22" 1.50
40. Judges Guild T-Shirt, adult sizes 3.75
41. Judges Guild T-Shirt, children sizes 3.25
42. Judges Guildmember Button .25

SUBSCRIPTION ITEMS:

43. Barbarian Altanis/Glow Worm Steppes Issue (N) 5.50
44. Wilderlands Campaign map from issue N 17x22", specify which you want- Judge's or Players' (printed both sides) each 1.80
45. Judges Guild Journal N .80

NON SUBSCRIPTION ITEMS:

46. Blank Wilderlands Hex Grid 17x22" printed both sides on same paper as other maps .80
47. Campaign Hexagon System, a booklet of 55 light grey hex fields (hexes are numbered & .3" in size- making them .2 mile for the standard D&D 5 mile Wilderness hex) 8½x11" 2.50
48. Wilderlands of High Fantasy includes two sets of five different campaign maps and campaign guidelines 8.50

SUBSCRIPTION ITEMS:

49. Valon/Tarantis Issue (O) 5.50
50. Wilderlands Campaign Map from issue O 17x22", specify which you want- Judge's or Players' (printed both sides) each 1.80
51. Judges Guild Journal O .80

JOURNAL SUBSCRIPTIONS:

Six bimonthly issues $4.50 (Canada & Foreign add $1, for 3rd class/ sea mail- no 1st/air service).

GUILDMEMBER SUBSCRIPTIONS:

See postal surcharges at end of list.

ASSOCIATE SUB, $12, includes Judges Shield as 1st sent item plus the next 6 issues.

SEVEN ISSUE SUB, $12, includes the next 7 issues.

CATCH UP SUB, $22, includes the last 4 issues, just published, plus the next 6 issues.

CITY STATE CATCH UP SUB, $30, includes the last 4 issues, just published and a City State Play Aid plus the next 6 issues.

ADVANCED GUILDMEMBER SUB, $19,

ordered if out of stock and we are expecting more in soon. Miniatures will be back ordered only if the total out of stock miniatures add up to a $10 or more. If we are unable to back order, a credit memo will be issued usuable for a future order or cash refund if requested.

DISCONTINUED ITEMS:

Certain items have been discontinued and their numbers will not appear below when no longer available.

JUDGES GUILD FANTASY GAME AIDS:

We produce game aids for added depth of play for DUNGEONS & DRAGONS TM Reg App For, and usable for other fantasy game systems. Most of our retail game aids found in stores are made up of previous Guildmember subscription issues. Since many have asked for a description of what has been published, we have provided that below- with the numbers of the issues that made them up.

PAYMENT:

Please send a check or money order, don't send cash!

Send to:
Judges Guild
P O Box 773
Decatur, Il.
62525

the guildmember issues (from Basic Sub and Issues 1, 2 and 3) 2.99

27 TEGEL MANOR- a huge haunted house with large map of manor and area plus room descriptions and guidelines- a good, basic dungeon-type scenario (issue 3) 4.50

28 JUDGES SHIELD- a reference screen for D&D monster stats, Hit matrixes, experience points and much more; three cardboard pieces fit together, also serves as a screen to hide ref's secret material (originally part of Associate Sub) 1.98

36 CHARACTER CHRONICLE CARDS- a compact character reference for players or NPC listings. Room for stats, armor and background, 100 cards. 1.98

37 FIRST FANTASY CAMPAIGN by DAVE ARNESON 92 page book & large wilderness campaign map (1 each for Judge & Players) trace history & development of the original fantasy role-playing campaign by the originator of the dungeon adventure concept. Many new rule guidelines on lair generation, character interests, army make-ups etc. 7.98

46 BLANK CAMPAIGN MAP- 17x22" numbered hex grid (printed both sides) for mapping new wilderlands areas or other purposes .80

45 JUDGES GUILD JOURNAL N- 16 large pages on wilderness encounters, dungeon en-

24. 11x17" Players Map of Tegel Manor and area 1.00
25. GL Booklet L- 24 pages & Character Checklist RR chart 2.50
27. Tegel Manor Installment- items 22-25 4.50

NON SUBSCRIPTION ITEMS:

28. Judges Shield- cardboard screen with reference material like to hit charts & monster compendium of statistics 1.98
29. Six Character Checklists (RR from Installment L) .50
30. 11x17" Reduced Judge's Map of Tegel Manor and Area .75

SUBSCRIPTION ITEMS:

31. City of Modron/Underwater Adventure 11x17" Judges' Map & 8½x11" Players Map 1.00
32. GL Booklet M- 16 pages & RR chart listing all monster statistics 2.50
33. Newsletter M (8 pages) .60
34. Modron Installment- items 31-33 3.50

NON SUBSCRIPTION ITEMS:

35. Three Monster Statistics Compendium Sheets (printed both sides .50
36. Character Chronicle Cards- new NPC and player character cards for recording characteristics, weapons, magic items etc. 100 cards for 1.98
37. First Fantasy Campaign by Dave Arneson- 92 page booklet and two campaign maps describe the development and background of the original dungeon game 7.98

as the first sent item, plus the next 6 issues.

POSTAL SURCHARGES:
Effective Jan. 1, 1978

US/APO/FPO*
1st Class +3.50
3rd Class + 00
CANADA*
1st Class +4.50
3rd Class +3.80
FOREIGN*
Air Mail +14.00
Sea Mail + 5.20

*this surcharge is levied for the extra cost of sending the issues- any items to be sent out as '1st sent' items will go the best way, regardless- UP, 1st Class or Air, respectively.

SUBSCRIBERS, IF YOUR ADDRESS LABEL has an '0' next to your name, resubscribe today so you won't miss an issue! If it has a 'P' next to your name, you may get $1 'early resub' discount if you resub by January 15, 1978. Don't Delay!

CHANGE OF ADDRESS:
Please enclose old address and effective date in addition to new address.

Stop Press!

Latest New Releases Available From Judges Guild

I learned of many new products while attending Metro Detroit Gamer's WinterCon VI in Pontiac, Michigan. Incidentally, it was very good con for game players with numerous and continuous tournaments and spontaneous events. MDG did a fine job of booming forth on the PA system whenever an event was imminent; over 700 gamers took advantage of the good weather (in between our chain of midwestern blizzards) to attend. With MDG's well-organized association, I'm really looking forward to Origins (July 14-16, 1978) in Ann Arbor, Michigan for added summer-convention spice!
As advance notice, MDG asked me to let you know that many DMs are needed for their monster D&D tournament at Origins. They would like to have experienced DMs, so if you think you would be able to fill the bill please write them a letter explaining your qualifications and any pertinent data to the following address- Origins D&D Tourney, 2616 Kemwick, Troy, MI 48098.

Now, on to the new fantasy items! TSR was in the process of binding their long-awaited MONSTER MANUAL when I spoke to them at the con. This will be in the form of a hard-bound book, about 112 pages long. With over 350 monsters listed (and over 200 illustrations) there will be many new monsters listed along with the old ones from the rules, supplements, Strategic Reviews and Dragons. The book will list the monsters alphabetically and in a standard format. The price will be $9.95.

I saw MIDDLE EARTH by SPI at the con and it looks very impressive. It is a $20 game and is made up by actually four different games- two mini-games (Sauron & Gondor) and WAR OF THE RING (which is a character game and a campaign game). The WAR OF THE RING portion is available by itself for $15. The designers, Howard Barasch & Richard Berg, have made great efforts to retain as much of Tolkien's basic theme, but allow the numerous options that might have occured. More on this on page 15, upper 1st column.

Battleline is releasing MACHIAVELLI, a game of diplomacy for 2-8 players (best for 4-6). Bribery and assassinations play a part too. Full color box and map plus die cut counters, $12.95.

ARCHWORLD is Fantasy Game Unlimited's latest release. It is a rules booklet for fantasy miniatures battles with an emphasis on the ordinary soldiers as opposed to the more common 'powerful magic' syndrome. Magic is relegated to behind the scenes activities and protecting leaders in a tight spot. The booklet is $6.00.

RIVETS is Metagaming Concepts' latest mini-game, $2.95. The game hypothesizes a future war of robot vehicles 'with the intelligence of electric can openers', still fighting it out without human supervision. Metagaming's WIZARD has not yet been released- we do have them on order and have been advised to look for it in January '78. This will be the second part with MELEE of their Swords & Sorcery trilogy.

We have all of these items on order and should have them available for mail order by the time you read this -*Bill Owen*

TSR GAMES & SUPPLMENTS Available from Judges Guild.

Booty List Cont.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS*

* T.M. Reg. App. for.

Dungeons & Dragons, the original fantasy role playing game system. Includes three booklets, boxed (polyhedra dice required). More extensive than the D&D Basic Book which is an updated low level game system. Includes information on all phases of adventuring- dungeon, wilderness, sea and air $10.00

Dungeons & Dragons Basic Book, a good start into fantasy gaming including all of the basic information for lower level of play (1st three levels). As a note, an advanced version will be released, also rewritten and expanded, to add on to this basic system 5.00

Dungeons & Dragons Basic Set, includes the D&D Basic Book, a Monster & Treasure Assortment, a Dungeon Geomorph and a polyhedra dice set 9.95

Monster Manual now available, see Stop Press, page 12 9.95

Supplements to D&D:
The following Supplements are not strictly necessary to play D&D, but do add much depth of play once your campaign has been established.

Greyhawk, Supplement 1 5.00
Blackmoor, Supplement 2 5.00
Eldritch Wizardry, Supplement 3 5.00
Gods, Demi-Gods & Heroes, Supplement 4 5.00

Battle Rules for Miniatures:

Chainmail, the original medieval battle rules with man to man section recommended for use in D&D 5.00

Swords & Spells, battle rules designed for use with the D&D game system, very detailed 5.00

Legions of the Petal Throne, battle rules designed for use with the EPT game system (listed below) 6.00

Aids for D&D:

Monster & Treasure Assortment #1, gives tables for random treasures and monster encounters for levels one through three 2.49

Monster & Treasure Assortment #2, tables for levels four through six 2.49

Dungeon Geomorph 1- Basic Dungeon, geomorphic pieces of a dungeon floor plan designed to fit together many different ways 2.49

Dungeon Geomorph 2- Caves & Caverns, pieces of a cavern-type floor plans 2.49

Dungeon Geomorph 3- Lower Dungeon, 2.49

(For Listing of Dice, see back page)

Publications on D&D:

Strategic Review is a small newsletter with new monsters, character classes and other D&D material. Strategic Review later became The Dragon which is a colorful, glossy magazine with emphasis on D&D material (with some on EPT and others).

Strategic Review Vol. I, #1, 2, & 3 each .50
Vol. I, #4, 5, Vol. II, #1 each .75
Vol. II #2 1.00

The Dragon (Vol. I #1-6 is out of print) Vol II, #1, 2, 3, 4 each 1.50

Other Role Playing Titles:

Empire of the Petal Throne, a huge game system, world maps and capital city map, boxed. The theme is a complete fantasy mythos of the world of Tekumel developed by Prof. M.A.R. Barker. Exotic peoples, monsters, gods, background and language abound. 27.50

Metamorphosis Alpha, a role playing game system for a giant, lost space ship where the players can choose characteristics via strange mutations 5.00

War of the Wizards, a game magic in the arena designed as adjunct to EPT. Very detailed spells and interactions 7.50

Boot Hill, relives the wild west in a role playing game system allowing players such characteristics as gambling skill, throwing, marksmanship etc. 5.00

Star Probe, the first part in a Sci-fi trilogy game, includes star map 6.00

Star Empires, the second and very detailed part of the Sci fi trilogy, with star map 7.50

Don't Give Up the Ship, miniature rules for the age of sail 5.00

Classic Warfare, ancient miniature rules by Gary Gygax 10.00

Tractics, very detailed rules for armored miniatures from World War II to the present. Includes three volumes, charts & box 11.95

Wizards & Warriors, simple fantasy quest game of escorting a princess past monsters to the castle. Pieces, colorful map and box 6.95

Dungeon!, simple game of players entering different parts and levels of a dungeon to win treasure from the menaces therein. Includes colorful board, monster & treasure cards and pieces 9.95

GARRISON MINIATURES

Available from Judges Guild, order including miniatures must total at least $10.00 (other items may be ordered for minimum).

Garrison miniatures are very well done and may be purchased 1 figure at a time, if desired. However, since the figures are imported from England, we will be out of some numbers until another shipment arrives; each newsletter we will list the figures that we are out of at that time- these will be marked at a star.

Foot Figures are 35¢ each (almost all 'SS' and 'ME' numbers are foot except as noted)
Cavalry Figures are 75¢ each (and are listed as 'SSM' and 'MEC')
Special Figures and Sets are marked to side of the figures' name.

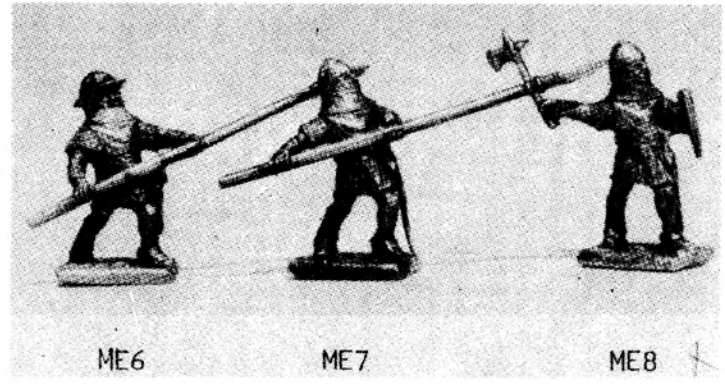
These figures are highly recommended.

Royal Armies of The Hyborean Age

SWORDS & SORCERY Designed especially for the Hyborean age of the 'Conan' series
(See Fantasy Games Unlimited rulebook on Hyborean battles)

AQUILAND
SS19 Bosnian Archer
* SS20 Pikeman
SS21 Infantryman
SS22 Standard Bearer
SS23 Dark Legion
SSM24 Mounted Knight
* SSM25 Black Guard @75¢
SSM26 Mounted Standard Bearer @75¢

NIMIDIA
SS27 Archer
SS28 Infantryman



ME6 ME7 ME8

VANHA
SS49 Infantryman
SS50 Archer
SS51 Guard
SS52 Standard Bearer
SSS2 Mamoth and Crew @$4.00

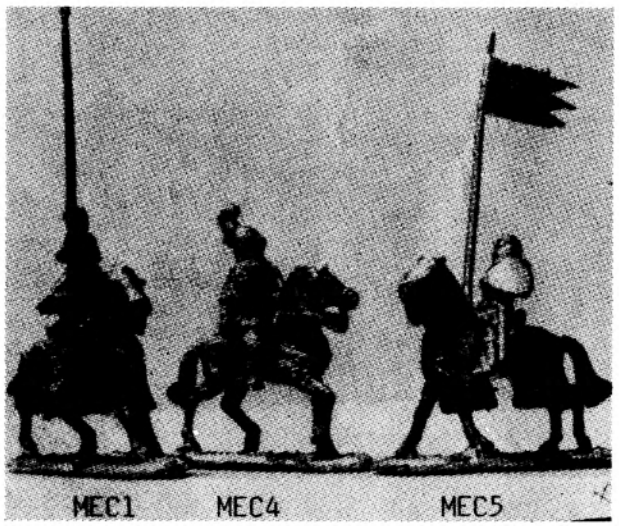
MEDIEVAL

Knights on Foot @35¢ each

____ME1 Short spear closed plumed basinet
____ME2 Sword Basinet open
____ME3 Battle axe chapeau de fer
____ME4 Two Handed sword crested helmet
____ME5 Knight with mace and chain

Men At Arms on Foot @35¢ each

____ME6 Short spear and shield
____ME7 Glave no shield
____ME8 Battle axe and shield
____ME9 Footman w/military flail
____ME10 Longbowman firing bow
____ME11 Longbowman taking arrow from belt
____ME12 Genoese Crossbowman
____ME13 Genoese Crossbowman readying crossbow
____ME14 Foot Soldier w/spear & shield
____ME15 Foot Soldier w/Pavise & Spear
____ME12A Pavis for use with Crossbowman
____ME16 Scot with claymore
____ME17 Scot w/lochaber axe
____ME18 Footman w/halberd
____ME19 Scots Spearman
____ME20 Foot Knight w/poleaxe
____ME21 Scots Pikeman, advancing c.1320



Knights Mounted @75¢ each

*____MEC1 Lance crested helmet barded horse
____MEC2 Mounted Knight w/sword
____MEC3 Battle axe closed plumed basinet unbarded
____MEC4 Mace crested helmet unbarded horse
____MEC5 Squire open basinet carrying forked banner
____MEC6 Mounted Knight w/small banner
____MEC7 Mounted Knight w/standard

____MEC9 Man at Arms, Mtd. w/spear
____MEC10 Mounted Crossbowman

*unavailable at this time

SS29 Royal Guard
SS30 Standard Bearer
SSM31 Mounted Knight @75¢
SSM32 Mounted Guard @75¢
*SSM33 Mounted Standard Bearer @75¢

NORTHMEN

SS4 Infantryman w/mace
SS7 Archer
SS8 Infantryman w/spear
SS9 Infantryman w/axe
SS10 Standard Bearer

CORINTHIAN

SS34 Infantryman

HYKAN

SSM35 Horse Archer @75¢
SSM67 Cavalry w/glaive @75¢

PICT

SS36 Infantryman

SHIM

SS3 Guard
SS38 Archer

AMAZON

SS37 Archer

STYGIA

SS39 Infantryman
SS40 Archer
SS41 Standard Bearer
SSS1 Chariot & Crew @$3.50

TARUN

SS42 Infantryman
SS43 Immortal
SS44 Archer
SS45 Standard Bearer
SSM46 Heavy Cavalryman @75¢
SSM47 Horse Archer @75¢
SSM48 Mounted Standard Bearer @75¢

HERO'S

SS1 Barbarian on Foot
SSM58 Barbarian Mounted @75¢

WIZARDS

SS53 Order of The Pale Hand
SS54 Wizard of The Dark Ring
SS55 Druid
SS56 Priest of Matri
SS57 Follower of SET
SS2 White Magician
SS61 Enchantress

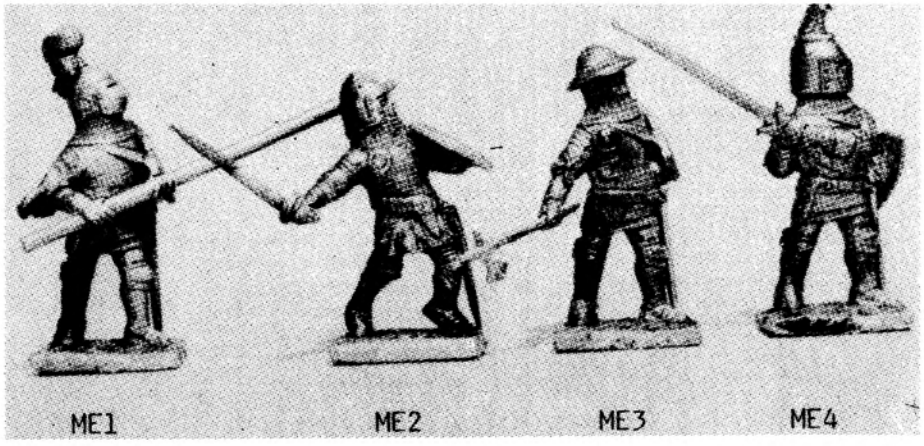
MISCELLANEOUS

SS59 Queen with Tiger @88¢ (per set)
SS62 Attendant
SS63 Attendant
SS64 Temple Dancer
SSM60 Mounted King @75¢
SSM68 Mounted Sultan @75¢
SSM69 Enchantress Riding Tiger @75¢

DEMONS & MONSTERS

SS5 Troll
SS6 Frost Giant @88¢
SS11 Snow Ape @88¢
SS12 Demon
SS13 Winged Demon @88¢
*SS14 Winged Dragon
SS15 Hawkman @88¢
SS16 Two Headed Troll Giant @88¢
SS17 Easten Giant @88¢
SS18 Winged Serpent @$1.17
SS65 Griffon @88¢
SS66 Centaur @88¢
SS71 Goblin (Orc) Chief w/std.
SS72 " " w/glaive
SS73 " " w/mace
SS74 Armored Frost Giant @88¢
SS70 Tree Demon @88¢

*items marked with a star are out of stock at time (check cover date)



GRENADIER MINIATURES Available from Judges Guild.

GLADIATOR SET:
6 Gladiators in different positions
Lights, Mediums, Heavy and Tridentman
Price...$1.98

MEDIEVAL WARRIORS

25mm

1066

M 1 Viking Swordsman
M 2 Viking Axeman
M 3 Viking w/spear
M 4 Viking Archers
M 5 Viking Berserkers
M 6 AngloSaxon Housecarl w/axe
M 7 AngloSaxon Housecarl w/sword
M 8 AngloSaxon Archers
M 9 AngloSaxon Fyrd Spearman
M 10 AngloSaxon Fyrd Clubman
M 11 Norman Swordsmen
M 12 Norman Spearman
M 13 Norman Maceman
M 14 Norman Archers
M 15 Norman Crossbowmen
M 16 Mounted, Norman w/Lance
M 17 Mounted, Norman w/Sword
M 18 Mounted, Norman w/Mace

1400 - 1550

M 19 Man-at-Arms, Sword*
M 20 Man-at-Arms, Axe*
M 21 Man-at-Arms, Battle Axe
M 22 Man-at-Arms, Poleaxe
M 23 Man-at-Arms, Bills & Halbards
M 24 Man-at-Arms, Crossbow firing
M 25 Man-at-Arms, Crossbow loading
M 26 Man-at-Arms, Longbow firing*
M 27 Man-at-Arms, Handcannon
M 28 Peasant levies, Spears & Gleaves
M 29 Knights w/Swords*
M 30 Knights w/Maces or Axes
M 31 Knights w/Morning Star & Warhammers
M 32 Mounted, Man-at-Arms w/Bills
M 33 Mounted, Man-at-Arms w/Axe
M 34 Mounted, Man-at-Arms w/Crossbow
M 35 Mounted, Knights Charging Lance
M 36 Mounted, Knights w/Sword
M 37 Mounted, Knights w/Axe
M 38 Mounted, Knights w/Mace
M 39 Mounted, Knights w/Lance
M 40 Mounted, Knights w/Morning Star
M 41 Bow Shields (6) $2.98
M 42 Medium Gun w/crew $2.98
M 43 Heavy Siege Gun w/crew $3.98
M 44 Hussite Warwagon $4.98

PRICES:

All Footmen Packs $1.98 (6 figs)
All Mounted Packs $2.40 (3 figs)
All Others As Marked

Unless Marked Otherwise
$1.98 Packs- W1-26 W28-31 W33-36
$2.40 Packs- W27 & W32

WIZZARDS AND WARRIORS

25mm

W 1 Hobbits w/bow, spear & Swordsmen (8)
W 2 Mountain Dwarves w/Swordsmen and Warhammermen (6)
W 3 Mountain Dwarves Axemen & Bowmen (6)
W 4 Elves of the Forrest Swordsmen & Bowmen (6)
W 5 Elves of the Forrest Spearmen
W 6 Gnomes of the Rune Shield Swordsmen, Axemen & Spearmen (8)
W 7 Ents of the Great Wood Two different Ents
W 8 Good men of the West Bowmen
W 9 Good men of the West Swordsmen, 3 types (6)
W 10 Good men of the West Spearmen & Axemen (6)
W 11 Female Characters Fighting Woman, sword, spear, bow, 2 sorceress & thief (6)
W 12 Northern Barbarians Swordsmen & Axemen (6)
W 13 Sorcerors 6 different types of Magic users
W 14 Specialists Thief, Assassin, Bard, Cleric Ranger (6)
W 15 Orcs of the Red Eye Swordsmen & Axemen (6)
W 16 Orcs of the Red Eye Bowmen & Spearmen (6)
W 17 Orcs of the White Hand
W 21 Goblins of the Misty Mount Warg Wolf Riders (3)
W 22 Kobolds Swordsmen & Spearmen (6)
W 23 Trolls Wood trolls & Cave trolls (6)
W 24 Mordor Command pack Goblin, Orc, Great Orc, Standard Bearers, Nazgul & Dungeon Duke
W 25 Chaotic Warriors of the East Swordsmen (6)
W 26 Berserkers Axemen & Swordsmen (6)
W 27 Mounted Black Riders (3)
W 28 Monsters #1 Balrahg (1) & Wraiths (3)
W 29 Monsters #2 Slimes, molds, oozes, jellies, etc. (6)
W 30 Monsters #3 Werewolves (3) & Wererats (3)
W 31 Monsters #4 Ghouls (3) & Mummies (3)
W 32 Monsters #5 Elementals, Air, Earth, Water, Fire (4)
W 33 Monsters #6 Ogres (3) & Giant (1)
W 34 Monsters #7 Minataur (2) & Medusa (2)
W 35 Monsters #8 Zombies (2) Skeletons (2) Gargoyles (2)
W 36 Monsters #9 Purple worms (2) Giant Snakes (2)
W 37 Large Monster #1 - Hydra $4.00

WIZZARDS AND WARRIORS

25mm

SPECIAL FANTASY SETS

SET 1 TREASURE
Large treasure chest, small jewel chest, pot of gems, 2 mounds of coins, mound of coins and gems and a pile of massed gems, jewelry, coins and treasure, 2 sacks of coins.....$2.00

SET 2 MAGICAL ITEMS
4 potion bottles, 4 scrolls, 2 skulls, wand, staff, barrel, crystal ball, scarab, brazier, boots, 2 effret bottles and 2 books of spells.....$2.00

SET 3 WEAPONS
Round shield, goblin shield, elf shield, man shield, orc shield, 2 helms, chain mail, 2 swords, 2 crossbows, hammer, axe, battle axe, spear and mace.....$2.00

SET 4 DUNGEON ITEMS
Talking door, Rune Throne, crypt, dead warriors, stone chair and table, idol, 2 stone urns, small altar, trap door, 2 wall torches.....$4.00

SET 5 TORTURE CHAMBER
Hooded executioner, torturer w/hot iron, The Rack, The Iron Maiden, table with Torture devices, Brazier with hot irons, The stocks, and the Victim $4.00

SET 6 THE SORCERORS ROOM
Table w/open book, scroll, candle on skull, lizard and amulet, shelves with books, bottles, skull and snake, conjuring sorceror seated on stool, stone urn, barrel, jug, effret bottle, sack and chest and boiling couldron...$4.00

SET 7 THE TEMPLE
LARGE! Altar with sacrificial victim and stone statue. High Priest holding up heart and knife. 2 Priests, 2 statues, 2 temple braziers.....$4.98

SET 8 THE TREASURE VAULT
Stack of large chests, 3 piles of gold bars, 2 pots of gems, 2 urns of coins

Swordsmen & Battleaxemen (6)
W 18 Orcs of the White Hand
Polearms & Bowmen (6)
W 19 Goblins of the Misty Mount
Swordsmen (6)
W 20 Goblins of the Misty Mount
Axemen & Spearmen (6)

W 38 Large Monster #2 - Red Dragon $4.00
W 39 Large Monster #3 - Blue Dragon $3.00
W 40 Large Monster #4 - Wyverin $3.00
W 41 Large Monster #5 - Manticora $3.00
W 42 Large Monster #6 - War Mommoth $4.75
W 43 Catapult w/orc & man crew $4.00
W 44 Dart thrower w/orc & man crew $3.00

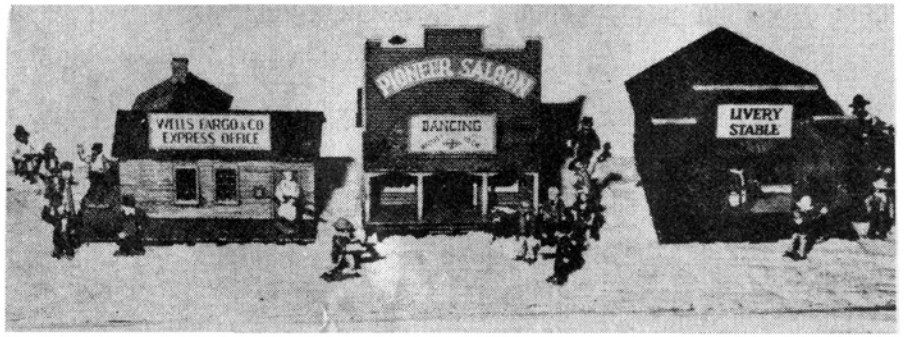
GAMERS' NOTES:

Wizzards and Warriors broad range and highly imaginative designs has rapidly made it the most popular line in America. The lire contains everything you need to stock a dungeon, organize legions of warriors or create your own fantasy world. Unlike our competitors we do not force you to buy more figures of one type than you can use. We package both our creatures and warriors in careful multi-packed proportions for your convenience and enjoyment. Our special sets have proven to be popular with dungeoneers and diorama builders alike. If you need a temple scene, wizzards quarters or dungeon room, we have it. Mix and match them to serve your special needs. Grenadier Medieval and Ancient lines are ideal for supplimenting your Fantasy ranks. Many of these figures have recently been used by Professor M.A.R. Barker for his fantasy temple based on the Empire of the Petal Throne.

and gems, open chest of coins, stack of bags of coins, pile of various treasure items, counting table w/treasure, stool w/scribe.....$4.98

SET 9 THE GUARD ROOM
Two bunk beds with hanging weapons, stack of weapons, table w/mugs, food, lantern, knife, and bottle, two stools, chest, barrel and couldron....$4.00

SET 10 THE SORCERORS CHARIOT
Sorceror with familiar riding in wildest fantasy chariot drawn by two Unicorns.....$4.00



WESTERN GUNFIGHTER 25mm

C 1 LAWMEN & COWBOYS PACK
Sheriff
Deputy Sheriff
2 cowboys with rifle
2 cowboys with pistol

C 2 BANDITS & BADMEN PACK
2 Mexican Banditos
3 Holdup men
1 Gunslinger
All poses different

C 3 SALOON FIGHT PACK
Saloonkeeper w/scattergun
Gambler
Saloon Girl
3 fighting cowboys

C 4 TOWNSPEOPLE SET 1
Bankguard w/carbine
Cowboy w/sack
Townslady
Old veteran
Gold miner
Townsman & child

C 5 TOWNSPEOPLE SET 2
Store owner w/rifle
Lady shopkeeper
Depot agent
Prisoner in irons
Town Judge
Townsman

C 6 TOWN CHARACTERS PACK
Undertaker w/tombstone
Mountainman
Barber
Dude
Doctor
Town drunk

C 7 CAVALRYMEN PACK
Officer
2 Troopers firing
2 Troopers charging
Trooper loading carbine

C 8 INDIANS PACK
Chief
2 Indians firing bows
2 Indians firing rifles
Indian w/war club

C 9 PERSONALITIES PACK
Wyatt Earp
Doc Holliday
Bat Masterson
John Slaughter
Shootist, Wes Harding
Squirrel Tooth Alice

C 10 MOUNTED COWBOYS
3 different mounted cowboys w/pistols and rifles

ALL PACKS: $1.98 each

Starguard, Sci-fi miniature rules $3.50

STAR SOLDIER 25mm

POWERED ARMOR TROOPS
S- 1 Troopers*
S- 2 Troopers with Bomb Racks
S- 3 4 Recon troopers, 1 Commander

INFANTRY, NONHOSTILE ENVIRONMENT
S- 4 Troopers with Laser rifles*
S- 5 Grenadiers and Rocketeers

INSURGENT INFANTRY
S- 6 Insurgent with needle rifle
S- 7 Insurgent with Coneguns and Rocketgun
S- 8 Command Pack, Infantry and Insurgent

*(* = Pkg. contains 2 different positions)*

ANDROMEDA ALIENS
S- 9 Photon Rifleman
S-10 Bombadier and Rocketeers
S-11 Statsis Fieldmen and Officer

GALAXY ALIENS
S-12 Rayrifleman
S-13 Rocketeer and Grenadiers
S-14 Statsis Fieldmen and Officer

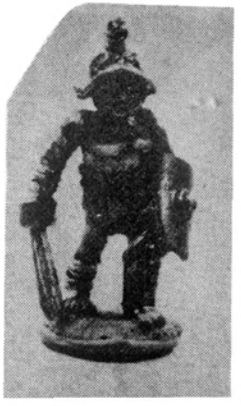
HEAVY WEAPONS
S-15 Laser Cannon w/crewman for Humans and Aliens
S-16 Statsis Generators and Mortars (4)
S-17 Rocket Pods (2) and Mines (5)
S-18 Antigrav Sled w/Detachable Rocket Pod

MILGAMEX RULEBOOKS Available from Judges Guild.

Sword & Spear, a very interesting matrix system for blow by blow melee combat with basic and advanced versions. Dozens of weapon classes (7 sword types alone) along with a fantasy supplement are included $3.95

Ancient Warfare, a very detailed rule set for large ancient battles (utilizing the WRG stand sizes). Many interesting concepts on generalship, scouting, melee and a middle earth supplement in addition 3.95

Tactical Ancient Armies, a large and comprehensive source for organizing ancient armies appropiate for WRG type rules plus middle earth supplement 5.00



WAR OF THE RING & MIDDLE EARTH Available from Judges Guild.

NEW!

The following games, by the publishers of Strategy & Tactics Magazine, have been long in the making- and are now available! Each makes use of S&T's colorful maps and die cut counters and is enclosed in a large plastic box (with compartmented counter storage).

Middle Earth, the Wars of Middle Earth S.R. 1419, is the complete game with the double-map campaign game (WotR below) and two smaller battle games (Assault on Gondor & Battle for the Ring) $20.00

War of the Ring, a campaign game with double map of Middle Earth covering the quest of the Ringbearer's party and the war itself. The major part of the Middle Earth game, above, available separately 15.00

CHAOSIUM FANTASY GAMES Available from Judges Guild.

Booty List Cont.

Elric, of Michael Moorcock's series is the subject of this medium - complexity campaign type game. Accent is on the characters and magic of this Melnibonean epic, for which colorful cards and die cut counters are provided. The playing map is 22x28" and quite beautiful in four colors $12.50

All the World's Monsters, 120 8½x11" loose leaf (three-hole punched) pages of at least 265 new monsters usable for D&D adventures. Characteristics, attacks, descriptions and occasional illustrations are included. Also included is a Monster Creation table to allow you to roll up a unique monster 8.00

White Bear and Red Moon, is a complete fantasy boardgame with die cut counters and map-board. Colorful 70 page booklet includes background, heroes, tribes and rules 9.95

Nomad Gods, second in a series with WB&RM, is similar with colorful map, counters and background/rules booklet, 72 pages 9.95

Troy, is a complete boardgame with die-cut counters, colorful mapboard and 44 page booklet of rules & background of the siege of Troy. Also included is cards allowing intervention by the residents of Mount Olympus in this recreation of Homer's Iliad 9.95

FANTASY MINIATURES AVAILABLE FROM JUDGES GUILD

FANTASY MINIATURES
Packs that are starred (*) have not been released at this time.

Der Kriegspielers

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1058 The Hobb 3.98
1056 The Friends 3.98
1059 The Supporting Cast 3.98
1054 The Characters 3.98
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1087 Ring Wraith on winged beast 3.98
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1089 Stone Troll (Giant) w/cudgel 2.49
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1092 Eagle of Misty Mtns. 2.25
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1001 Lesser Orcs w/bows & axes (6) 1.98
1002 Lesser Orcs w/hammers & bills (6) 1.98
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1008 Great Orcs w/short swords & bills (4) 1.98
1009 Great Orcs Comd.-Ldr. & Standard (4) 2.49
*1021 Great Orcs w/bows & siths (4) 1.98

ORCS OF THE WHITE HAND
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1006 Orcs w/bows & poleaxes (4) 1.98
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1063 Bowmen of Morth (6) 1.98
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1065 Axemen of Lossar (6) 1.98
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Heritage Models

NEW

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1153 Bat-like Thing (4) $2.98
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1155 Skeleton Men (6) $2.98
1156 Pixies (8) $1.98
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Ordering Instructions:
These figures are available direct from Judges Guild. There is a $10 minimum on orders including miniatures (other items from the Booty List on the back page may be ordered to make this minimum). There is no postal charge, orders are sent via United Parcel, the same day that they are received.

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1425 English billman w/felt hat advancing (FF-25) 2.95
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1016 Wood Trolls (3) 1.98
1017 Cave Trolls (4) 1.98
1018 River Trolls (3) 1.98
1019 Mountain Trolls (3) 1.98
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MEN OF GOODLY NATURE
1060 Citadel Grds. w/spears & swords (6) 1.98
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25mm FANTASY FIGURINES

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1318 Dwarves w/axe and shield 2.95
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1333 Legion of the Dead w/sword 2.95
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*1411 Man-at-arms w/two handed axe 2.95
*1412 Crossbowman in plate armor firing 2.95
*1413 Early Period command pack w/mounted herald, standard bearer, foot standard bearer, and commander w/pole axe 2.95
1414 Mounted knight w/lance and shield on comparisoned horse (FFC-2) 2.95
1415 Mounted man-at-arms w/lance charging 2.95

TEKA FINE LINE BRUSHES

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5/8 oz. bottle- 65¢

#6 Metal Primer
10 Night Black
11 White
12 Equip. Light Gray
20 Fire Red
23 Flesh
24 Int'l Orange
25 Royal Purple
26 Federal Blue
30 Blue
32 Sky Blue
40 Yellow
41 Earth Yellow
50 Jungle Green
52 Olive Drab
53 Dark Wpn. Olive
60 Khaki
62 Sahara Sand
64 Dk. Earth Brown
73 Midstone (tan/olive)
83 RLM Gray (light green/gray
702 Panzer Gray
703 Panzer Dk. Yellow
704 Panzer Dk. Green
705 Panzer Red-Brown
810 Desert Pink (a deeper fleshtone)

Note: Orders including paint must total at least $10 (may include other items to make the $10 minimum). Orders will be sent postfree via United Parcel.

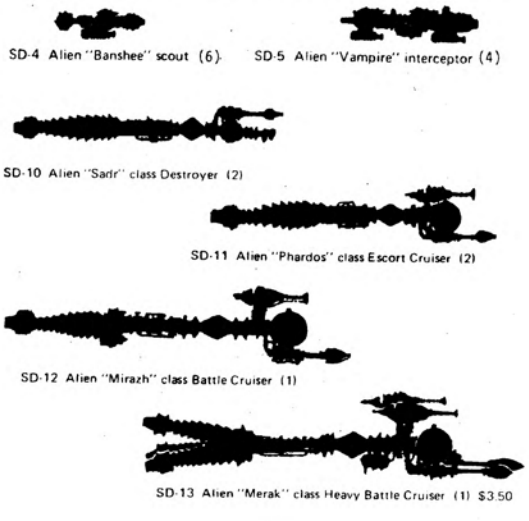
VALIANT MINIATURES

Available from Judges Guild, see requirements for ordering miniatures on the Booty List.

$3.50 per pack (quanity each shown)
SD-1 'Intruder' IID Scout (9)
SD-2 'Vigilante' IIIC Interceptor (6)
SD-3 'Phantom' VB Assault Ship (4)
SD-4 Alien 'Banshee' Scout (6)
SD-5 Alien 'Vampire' Interceptor (4)
SD-6 'Draco' Class Destroyer (2)
SD-7 'Aries' Class Escort Cruiser (1)
SD-8 'Perseus' Class Cruiser (1)
SD-9 'Orion' Class Heavy Cruiser (1)*
SD-10 Alien 'Sadr' Class Destroyr (2)
SD-11 Alien 'Phardos' Escort CA (2)
SD-12 Alien 'Murazh' Battle CA (1)
SD-13 Alien 'Merak' Hvy Battle CA (1)
SD-14 Small Movement Stands (9)
SD-15 Large Movement Stands (6)
*'Orion' Class is $4.50 each

Alpha Omega, sci-fi boardgame by Battleline, designed to be usable with the Stardate 3000 ships $13.00

See Sci-fi section below for other tactical space games.



Wooden Ships & Iron Men, boardgame usable with Fighting Sail series ships below 9.00
Don't Give up the Ship, miniature rules for sailing ships 5.00

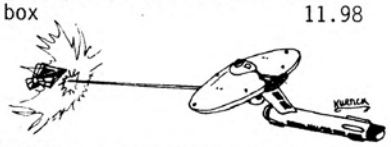
VALIANT FIGHTING SAIL MINIATURES
$3.50 per pack (quanity each shown)
FS-1 100 Gun Ship of the Line (2)
FS-2 74 Gun Ship of the Line (2)
FS-3 44 Gun Frigate (2)
FS-4 36 Gun Frigate (2)
FS-5 20 Gun Sloop of War (3)
FS-6 18 Gun Brig of War (3)
FS-7 16 Gun Schooner (3)
FS-8 12 Gun Cutter (3)
FS-9 Bomb Ketch (3)
FS-10 Mediteranean Galley (3)
FS-11 Algerian Xebec (3)
FS-12 Ships' Boats (15)
FS-13 Masts Under Full Sail (12)

FS-14 Floating Batteries (6)
FS-15 Land Fortifications (3)

SCIENCE FICTION GAMES & MINIATURES RULES

Available from Judges Guild, other Sci-fi titles listed in TSR's section. See order requirements for miniatures.

Game Designers Workshop:
Traveller, three volume sci-fi role playing, boxed. Detailed character generation, space-ship building and movement, & worlds and adventures $12.00
Imperium, NEW strategic inter-stellar war with hard-backed map of the near region of the galaxy, die cut counters and box 11.98



*Zocchi & Associates:
Star Fleet Battle Manual, ship to ship combat for Star Trek-based battles utilizing energy allocation to shields, phasers, warp drive etc. Cut-out ship silhouettes are included; designed for use with miniatures listed $6.00
Alien Space, sister game to Star Fleet Battle Manual with many new ship types 5.00
Star Command, tactical level rules 5.00
Superhero 2000, role playing of the future with players constructing their characters into an optimum crime fighter to battle terrorists and other criminals 6.00
Space Patrol, extensive sci-fi role playing booklet with accent on adventures on alien planets. Includes roll-your-own alien charts 5.00

STAR TREK SHIP MINIATURES-
Dreadnought 2.50
Cruiser 1.98
Destroyer 1.98
Scout 1.98
Romulan 2.50
(Orders including miniatures must total $10, minimum; rules/games may be included to make the min imum.)

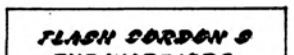
*Avalon Hill:
Starship Troopers, man to man sci-fi board game with hard backed map and die cut counters based on Robert Heinlein's book 10.00

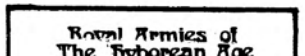
*Metagaming Concepts:
Monsters Monsters, fantasy role playing with the players being the monsters 5.95
Ythri, sci-fi game of Poul Anderson's Avalon 8.00
Ogre, mini-game on future supertanks 2.95
Chitin, mini-game on war between races of intelligent insects 2.95
Melee, mini-game on man to man combat 2.95
WarpWar, mini-game on tactical spaceship design and combat NEW 2.95
Rivets, a mini-game of war between unintelligent robot vehicles (see Stop Press, page 12, for more details) 2.95
Wizard, the second mini-game in Metagaming's Swords & Sorcery trilogy- not available until January '78 2.95

FANTASY GAMES UNLIMITED

Available from Judges Guild

Chivalry & Sorcery, NEW role playing medieval fantasy rules, 129 pages $10.00
Gladiators, man to man contest in the arena suitable for use with Grenadier's gladiator miniatures 5.00
Royal Armies of the Hyborean Age, battle rules and miniatures organization for the Conan era 6.00
Down Styphon, musket & pike era battle rules and figure organizations, uniform guide





and Figure Organizations, uniform guide. Based on Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen, fantasy action on an alternate earth 4.00

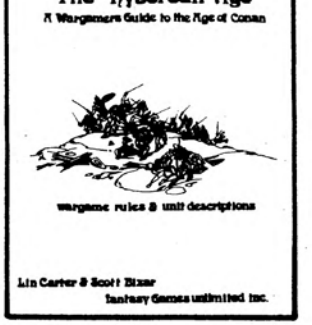
Flash Gordon & the Warriors of Mongo, role playing adventure rule system 6.00

Bunnies & Burrows, role playing system inspired by Watership Down ~~usuable~~ with Grenadier miniatures of the same name 6.00

Lords & Wizards, fantasy boardgame with die-cut counters, 22x28" three-color map 12.00

Citadel, mini-game of the quest recover the long-gone wizard's talisman; includes rules cut-apart counters and 12 floor plans 4.00

NEW- Archworld is a fantasy world with lesser emphasis on magic (see Stop Press, page 12 for furthur description), booklet $6.00.



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81)

FRAZETTA PRINTS have raised their poster price to $4 each effective December 1, 1977.

Frank Frazetta's Fantastic Art

Available from Judges Guild.

FRAZETTA PRINTS $4.00 each, full color, each approx. 18x24", add $1 postal charge for each order of poster(s). Numbers (from Book I & II) available are shown below:

5) Wolfmoon
6) Sorceror
10) Spiderman
12) Green Death
17) Snow Giants
20) Tyrannosaurus Rex
21) Egyptian Queen
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23) Atlantis
24) Silver Warrior
31) Death Dealer
35) Core
38) Savage Pellucidar
39) Chained
42) Sea Witch
43) Flying Reptiles
44) Jongar Fights Back
45) Pony Tail
46) Stranded
48) The Moonmaid
49) The Destroyer
52) The Norseman
53) Escape on Venus
54) A Princess of Mars
55) John Carter and the Savage Apes
56) Thuvia, Maid of Mars
63) Gulliver of Mars
66) Against the Gods
69) Beasts of Venus
70) Ghoul Queen
80) The Huntress
81) Dark Kingdom

NO POSTAGE CHARGE FOR ORDERS OF SEVEN OR MORE POSTERS! Include $1 for postage for orders of six or less.

No postage charge for the following books:
'The Fantastic Art of Frank Frazetta' (Book I), 42 plates, most in color $7.95
'Frank Frazetta' (Book 2), 39 plates, most in color 7.95

24)

Games And Accessories

Available from Judges Guild.

DICE:
High Impact Polyhedra Dice Set, including 4, 8, 12 & 20 sided $2.25
High Impact Twenty Sided Die, orange plastic each .75
Polyhedra Dice, including 4, 6, 8, 12 & 20 sided 1.49
Twenty Sided Dice, one red and one white plastic pair .89
Average Dice, six-sided dice numbered 2, 3, 3, 4, 4, 5 pair 2.00

Note: High Impact dice numbers are not filled in; a permanent Sharpie marker is recommended- with two colors for the 20-sided, one for the teens and another color for ones.

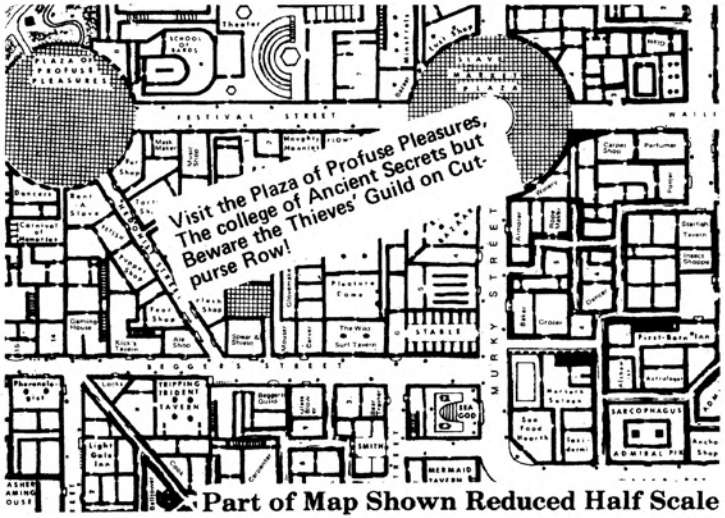
GDW:
En Garde, swashbuckling role playing in the era of the Three Musketeers with emphasis on maintaining social level, dueling and military campaigning. Forty-six page booklet 4.00

Avalon Hill:
Diplomacy, one of the best games on diplomacy which is simple to learn but hard to master. Best with 5-7 players with scenarios for Napoleonic through World War I eras 11.00
Kingmaker, another good game for wheeling and dealing with each player/baron attempting to crown his own royal piece king. Expandable complexity for 2 players and up 10.00
Outdoor Survival, game of survival in the wilderness. Many scenarios featuring lost parties, hunting and more. Allows gradual expiration of life levels 10.00

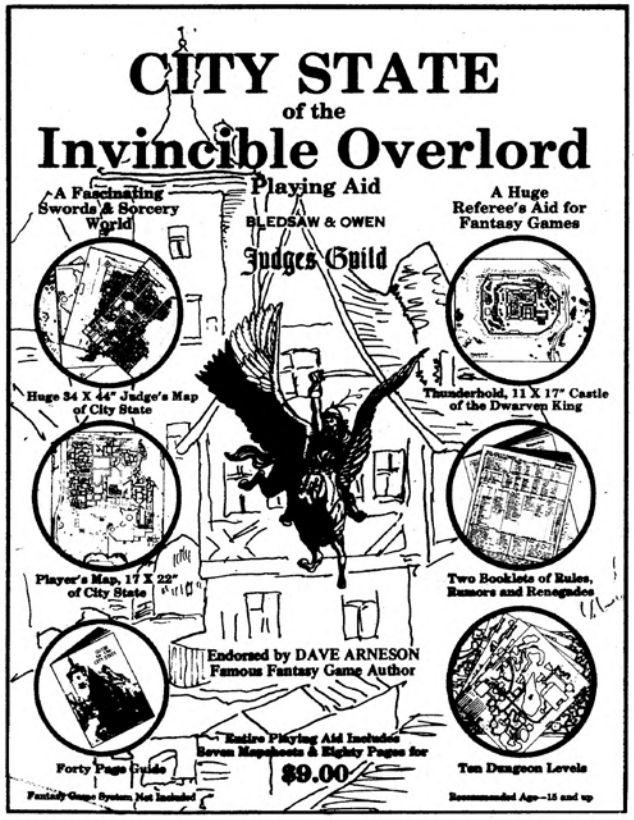
Heritage Models:
D&D Index by Dave Arneson, indexes the original volumes of D&D 5.00

Ancient 3000 BC to 1250 AD, rules by Wargames Research Group in England. The most widely played rules here and in England 5.00
Wargamers Guide to Ancients, painting tips and organization 4.00
Renaissance 1490-1660 AD, rules by WRG for full plate & arquebusier. An adaption of the their popular Ancients rule system 5.00

Creative Wargames Workshop:
Emerald Tablet, very detailed rules for fantasy miniature battles with an emphasis on medieval type magic (which is risky!) 6.95



Part of Map Shown Reduced Half Scale



En Garde! is a chivalrous representation of the age of the Three Musketeers. Here a player is not only concerned with his swordsmanship and fair play, but also his social status in a very genteel society. Monsters, Monsters! takes the more common fantasy theme and gives it a different twist. In it the players become the monsters who come out of the dungeon to raise havoc among the adventurers above ground. Bunnies & Burrows portrays the world of intelligent rabbits as depicted in the popular novel Watership Down. As more and more people get hooked on this habit-forming hobby, the list grows larger- allowing more choice to would-be adventurers.

What Game Aids are Available to Enhance a Starting Campaign?

For Swords & Sorcery type role-playing games, like Dungeons & Dragons, Judges Guild offers a wide range of referee aids. Its City State of the Invincible Overlord details an entire fantastic, medieval city, room by room. Like Tegel Manor, a haunted house, many non-played characters, legends and helpful campaign guidelines are included. For a larger 'feel', its Wilderness of High Fantasy provides many large maps of part of the City State 'world'.

To promote smoother play Judges Guild has produced many 'nuts & bolts' aids. Judges Shield, in addition to providing a screen for the referee's secret maps, also contains game charts and references to Dungeons & Dragons. Campaign Hexagon System provides mapping paper for detailing campaign areas and is usable for virtually any game system.

TSR, the company that produced Dungeons & Dragons, has made Dungeon Geomorphs, dungeon areas that may be rearranged for variety. Monster & Treasure Assortments provide useful listings of random items usuable in D&D.

Frazetta Prints- #6, The Sorceror

#31 Death Dealer

NOTES:

LEGIONS OF THE PETAL THRONE is actually $5, not $6 as is stated previously. As we have no control over the companies that supply us, prices are subject to change without notice. This catalog (& later updates) supercede all pre-

vious listings. Because of policy of shipping the same day some have wanted to phone in their orders- our phone is (217) 422-1930 and there is an 85¢ charge additional to the cost of items ordered (because of UP restrictions, addresses must not be to a P O Box or RR#). We're open from 9am - 5pm, Monday thru Saturday (& often after 5pm, especially Saturday). Thanks!

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GUILDMEMBER SUBSCRIPTIONS- bimonthly issues of Judges Guild Journal and fantasy game material (including maps, background and guidelines).

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☐ City State Catch Up Sub $30.00
☐ Advanced Guildmember Sub $19.00

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THE GAMER'S YEARBOOK

Submissions from the gaming public • Send your submission for the 2016 Yearbook to info@goodman-games.com!

JENN: THANK YOU for joining me in all my adventures, both on and off the table. You are worth more than any treasure this old adventurer could ever find. I look forward to slaying monsters and looting dungeons together for the rest of our lives. -Brent, your 0 level husband

---

WHEN THE PATH I'd found led me somewhere I didn't want to be anymore, you led me off the beaten trail to a whole new world. For almost 2 years I've had more inspiration and fun than I thought possible. Thank you, A. Lott! Sincerely, A. Pickle.

BORIS THE BRAVE, heed my words! The betrayal and isolation of your companions was not a secret the cosmos would keep. By the will of Sezrekan, Maal Sotar shall rise again. Barriers of time and space are nothing to a wizard!

LANKHMAR! So glad it's back in games.

CAN ANYONE HELP the women from Upper Coldcutters? Their men were last seen on their way to give their yearly tribute, some exquisite and sought-after cold meats, to the bandits that promised to otherwise obliterate their village. Refer to The wandering vaudeville of earthly pleasures later this year.

THERE'S A NEW KID IN TOWN! Phlogiston Books is a tiny publishing house based in Spain, a country that, believe or not, is head over heels with DCC RPG! We'll offer, day-jobs permitting, a range of adventures and game aids both in English and Spanish. Visit phlogistonbooks.net for more details!

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE ROYCROFT BLACKMOOR adventuring party for finally hitting Epic level and special congratulations to Cindy Moore on the release of her first AL adventure, debuting here at GenCon, DDEX3-3!

TO THOSE WHO SEEK THE GEOMETRIST'S LEGACY: beware the equation of eternal life, it's a trap. I suspect that it could be an algebraic phylactery scribbled by the "mathemagician" on the Vertical Halls so that, once solved, it would nest in the mind of the unwary until it asserts contr$\sqrt{(3x(5y+7z))}+\sqrt{(5y(7z+3x))}+\sqrt{(7z(3x+5y))}=(\sqrt{2})*(3x+ 5y+7z)$...

NOVA GREYHAWK GROUP of Northern Virginia celebrates FOUR YEARS fighting the Temple of Elemental Evil old school style. 1st edition with a healthy dose of DCC and Xcrawl mechanics thrown in! No longer welcome at the Inn of the Welcome Wench and currently chasing Zuggtmoy in the Abyss...

FOR SALE/TRADE: Lightly used ANTIQUE 1964 MM-G3C Municipal Defense Death Ray Sponson. Includes reticulating dark matter armored shielding. DEATH RAY NOT INCLUDED. Disclosure: Actual death ray exists in another plane of reality after time ends. Retrofit applications endless. Those with a penchant for volcanoes, income tax reviews, & ethylene glycol need not inquire.

THE NOBILITY OF LOCH NWAR and the owners of the Three Lions would like to congratulate Memnoch the Tribboleth on his ascent to Hyperbaron of Zemetris, while the Followers of the Elder would like to congratulate him and his companions upon the routing of certain amphibious elements that have dwelt in the Fanes of the nearby swamps. The gracious nobles in Primary Chamber of Loch Nwar hope he will support their policies for many years. Long live the Hyperbaron!

LOST: KEVAN THE HALFLING. Last seen gaining infelicitous entry into extra-dimensional prison. Rumored association with admonishing jack-o-lantern. Munificent reward of 43 coppers, two chickens and a bag of night soil offered for safe return. Please contact Marious the Wanderer at the Tumbling Ogre Inn for more information.

THE DCC DUNGEON DUCKS celebrate the formal adoption of Hasthar into House Derpington, and offer their sincerest condolences to Hasthar on the sudden demise of his adoptive father.

R.C. OF DENVER extends warm regards and well wishes to our departing Judge, Todd Bradley. May Fortune always find you Crawling my Fiend. DCC Fright Night! 1st Tuesdays, 6pm-10pm. Starting Sept. 2015! Special guest this month...Grimtooth! Call Judge Doug-(303) 332-7239.

I WANT YOU FOR THE ROAD CREW!

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