

CRAWLING UNDER A BROKEN MOON



Issue No. 5

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CRAWLING UNDER A BROKEN MOON

Welcome to the fifth issue of *Crawling Under A Broken Moon*!

"I HAVE THE POWER!!!" was frequently heard blaring from the TV after I got home from school. I loved watching the gonzo mishmash of fantasy and technology clashing together with imperfect harmony. It was a great successor for *Thundarr* and I would be remiss if I did not honor it in the pages of this zine.

Join me as we explore a familiar setting taken to the DCC prerequisite of eleven!

Reid "Reidzilla" San Filippo

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Submission Guidelines

Original submissions are welcome. Anything published will belong to the author, artist, and creator. For art submissions, please send a link to some samples. Old school style black and white line art is preferred. Anything post apocalyptic is always welcome. All contributors will get a free print copy of the zine. Email: crawlingunderabrokenmoon@gmail.com

The Kingdom of Aetheria

by Sean Ellis

One hundred years ago a great hero (named Mach-O) united the tribes scattered across the forests and wetlands surrounding the Great Inland Sea, using the strength of his sword arm and mystic artifacts from the Forgotten Wars to compel servitude. Mach-O's model continues to this day; the general population remains subjugated by local rulers who employ great heroes that live at the people's expense but always keep them safe.

In the 21st century, the land now known as Aetheria was home to a great urban population whose ruins are still seen. An area of smooth rolling hills and dense deciduous forests, the land is responsive to farming. Head a few miles in another direction and you will find it too cold or rocky. The area is rich in minerals and Forgotten Technology of the Un Men is buried everywhere.

Men eke out a living scraping in the dirt, living in wood-framed long houses or tents made from skins. They plant crops of wheat, barley, oil seeds, and vegetables and hunt in the surrounding wilds. Level Zero Aetherian citizens tend to defend their homes with selfless strength, using simple spears and bows.

The City of Aetheria (the only permanent settlement in the nation) is protected by curtain walls of stone glittering with pink quartz. The castle proper is made atop the remains of a "gray castle". Here and there in Aetheria more gray castles may be found, so called for their smooth walls made of gray stone and metal bars. Inside these bunkers from the Forgotten War one may find powerful weapons, armor, and vehicles of which Aetherian Heroes are so fond. For that reason provincial rulers and warlords use these areas as headquarters and armories.

The king rules supreme, but his throne may be challenged at any time by test of combat. The Kingdom is a tribute state, creating a system of many small regional rulers who pay an annual tithe of goods in exchange for the king's protection. This protection consists of the king's heroes, who may be dispatched at any time to battle evils that may arise. Formal Aetherian armies are rare, and usually function as a backdrop with most battle being done between designated heroes from each side.





The Aetherian Hero Character Class

by Reid San Filippo and Sean Ellis

Heroes of the land of Aetheria follow a code taken from The Song of Mach-O, a favorite ballad sung in mead halls:

“Yea”, said Mach-O, “It is my will that ye battle forever with evil

to live for glory and never bend, to protect the weak and the orphaned

To see the end of each challenge begun, To eschew other work till the battle is won.

Aetheria’s heroes you will befriend, Yet be enemy to evil magicians...”

This may seem straightforward but it leaves room for interpretation. Nowhere does the code state any manner of obedience for authority, requiring any leaders to rule with strength or bribery. Some Chaotic heroes have interpreted the “battle forever with evil” and “eschew other work till the battle is won” to mean that since a hero must not do any other work until the battle is won and since the battle lasts forever, a hero is officially not allowed to work ever. Some Aetherian heroes may demand great reward for their actions since they are forbidden to work for their bread. Pity the poor village that cannot pay a hero’s reward!

Thus, officially, an Aetherian hero need never work again a day in his life, except occasionally to serve the king in war. Heroes who choose to leave the lands of Aetheria for greater adventure do not have such privileges but will tend to avoid dishonorable labor as much as possible.

Hit Points: An Aetherian Hero gains 2d5 hit points at each level.

Weapon Training: While an Aetherian Hero knows how to employ any weapon, armor, or shield, extensive use of any non-Aetherian or Forgotten Tech can result in dishonor, see Equipment Requirements.

Alignment: All alignments are found amongst the ranks of the Aetherian Heroes in equal measure but the populous shows much more favor to the Lawful than the Chaotic.

A Hero's Name

After accomplishing a great deed (or surviving a funnel) a hero receives a name from the local ruler. This name is created by taking the hero's most obvious battle trait and assigning a gendered prefix if the warrior is Lawful. The same gendered phrase is used by Neutral characters as a suffix, and there is a special suffix if a hero is either Chaotic or particularly high level. See the table below for some examples:

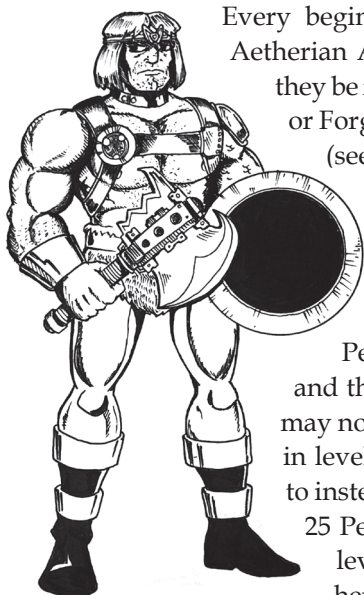
Lawful Prefix or Neutral Suffix	Battle Trait	Chaotic Suffix	Heroic Suffix
Lord/Lady	Slice	Ok	Ro/Ra
Man/Woman	Stab	Ak	To/Ta
He/She	Hit	Or	O/Ah
Dude/Girl	Blast	Od	
Sir/Princess	Smash	Os	
Battle or Battler	Spike	Oid	
Master/Mistress	Sneak	Us	
Ultimo/Ultima	(Weapon)	Ar	
	Power	An	
	Muscle	On	

Slashes separate gender specific pronouns.

So a male fighter known for using a hammer may be known as He-Hammer if lawful, Hammer-Man if neutral, Hammer-Or if chaotic, or Hammer-O if he is particularly heroic or high level.

Equipment Requirements

For their main weapons and armor they refuse to use anything other than Forgotten Tech artifacts or Aetherian Tech. Forgotten Tech needs to be requested after and cannot usually be bought - heroes therefore begin their careers using Aetherian Tech, which has the aesthetics of Forgotten Tech but not the function.



Every beginning Aetherian hero is granted a set of Aetherian Armor and one Aetherian weapon. Should they be forced to wield any weapon not of Aetherian or Forgotten Tech, they may suffer a loss of Honor (see Honor Above All).

In addition, once per level they may go to the gray castle at which they were named and request a new piece of Aetherian arms or armor. This is a DC 15

Per check and the hero may add their level and their Honor Die to the roll. If it is failed they may not make the request again until they increase in level. At 5th level and above, they may choose to instead ask for a piece of Forgotten Tech at a DC 25 Per check. As above, the hero may add their level and their Honor Die to the roll. If the hero brings trophies of his deeds to display

they may be able to add a bonus to the roll as well, at the GM discretion. Failure results in the hero losing the use of their Honor Die for 1d5 days.

Aetherian Tech

Aetherians are odd craftsmen and what they deem a “master work” is merely serviceable to outsiders as it is heavily adorned with useless bits that make it look similar to Forgotten Tech. Any normal equipment costs (4d5+5)% more than usual and advanced items and armor such as silver weapons, half-plate, and full plate mail are unavailable.

Since Heroes are worshiped instead of gods, religious items such as holy water and symbols are likewise unavailable. Although some Aetherians do carry small, articulated statuettes resembling their ancestors or legendary heroes, these have no special power or ability.

The legendary battle harnesses of the Forgotten War, said to imbue the wearer with great strength, are so sought after that heroes choose to wear Aetherian Armor which is crafted out of random pieces of scrap so they appear to have one. Wires, ducts, wall panels... anything with a Forgotten Tech “look” is used, even if the artifact bestows no powers. This armor is often worn over a coat of chainmail when the AC bonus is too small.

Aetherian Armor: AC bonus: Varies (see table); Check penalty: -3 (-7 with Chainmail); Fumble die: d12 (d16 with Chainmail); Cost: 90 gp (230 gp with Chainmail)

When Aetherian Armor is purchased, consult Table AA-1.

Table AA-1: Aetherian Armor

Roll 1d6 four times, each roll applies to the next column. These rolls will tell you where the material comes from, what it’s made of, what it looks like, and what the AC bonus of the armor is.

Roll	Item of Origin	Material	Appearance	AC Bonus
1	Vehicle grill/hood	Plastic	Transparent	+1
2	Electrical panels	Shiny steel	Repainted	+1
3	Ducting	Carbon Fiber	Flashy	+1
4	Grate	Futureglass	Subdued	+2
5	Tubes and wires	Rusty steel	Etched	+2
6	Riveted plates	Laminate	Luminous	+3

Aetherian Melee and Ranged Weapons are also popular among heroes as they resemble the great Power Weapons of old. They are crafted in absurd dimensions and colors, are generally oversized, and otherwise look impressive.

Aetherian Melee Weapon: Damage Base +1; Awkward size and shape; Cost: +4d5+5%. Awkward size and shape: -1 to attack and +1 to Per rolls to intimidate or impress.

Aetherian Ranged Weapon: Damage Base +1; Range -25%, Awkward size and shape; Cost: +4d5+5%. Awkward size and shape: -1 to attack and +1 to Per rolls to intimidate or impress.

An armorer, weaponsmith, or Technologist can convert normal weapons to function as Aetherian tech with a DC 10 Int check plus a supply of bits and doodads to add to the item, costing 4d4 gp.

Honor above all

To the Aetherian Hero, nothing is more precious to him than his Honor. So important is this connection to his honor that he gains the use of an Honor Die as long as he upholds the code laid out in the Ballad of Mach-O. As each alignment interprets the code a bit differently this can often result in arguments and challenges amongst Hero bands of mixed alignments.

The Honor die may be added to any feat of Strength, attempts to intimidate or impress, and to all damage rolls with melee or Forgotten Tech weapon attacks.

In addition to the vague laws mentioned in the above ballad, the Aetherian Hero must also follow these three tenets in order to maintain their Honor:

- ✦ Eschew the use of use normal weapons and armor. Should they be forced to do so, they must roll under their Luck score + Per Mod + level each encounter they employ them in combat. Failure indicates they suffer dishonor and lose the use of their Honor Die for 2d24 hours.
- ✦ Refuse to take up menial tasks suitable for a peasant in order to gain food or shelter. Such thing are beneath a Hero and if taken up they must roll under their Luck score + Per Mod + level or the hero loses the use of their Honor Die for 1d5 days.
- ✦ To answer any challenge offered by an opponent of worthy stature. Those with less hit dice may be ignored. If a worthy challenge is refused for anything but the most deserving reasons, the hero loses the use of their Honor Die for 1d7 days.

Table AE-1: Aetherian Hero

Level	Attack	Crit Die/ Table	Threat Range	Action Dice	Ref	Fort	Will	Honor Die
1	+1	1d10/III	20	1d20	+1	+1	+1	1d3
2	+2	1d12/III	19-20	1d20	+1	+1	+1	1d4
3	+3	1d14/III	19-20	1d20	+1	+2	+1	1d5
4	+4	1d16/IV	19-20	1d20	+2	+2	+2	1d6
5	+5	1d20/IV	19-20	1d20	+2	+3	+2	1d7
6	+6	1d24/V	18-20	1d20+1d14	+2	+4	+2	1d8
7	+7	1d24/V	18-20	1d20+1d16	+3	+4	+3	1d10
8	+8	1d30/V	18-20	1d20+1d20	+3	+5	+3	1d12
9	+9	1d30/V	18-20	1d20+1d20	+3	+5	+3	1d14
10	+10	1d30/V	17-20	1d20+1d20	+4	+6	+4	1d16

FORGOTTEN TECH OF THE UN MEN

by Sean Ellis and Reid San Filippo

Long ago a rogue object flew between the Earth and the Moon, leaving chaos in its wake. Soon after, the Un Men appeared. A race of robotic warriors programmed with human consciousness, the Un Men seized what industrial resources remained in the northern Americas under a hail of blaster fire. As their war raged, the Un Men made truces with less advanced societies and enemies of the world's former superpowers.

The besieged nations found themselves alone and fighting an unwinnable war: the Un Men would not negotiate (they claimed to have created life on Earth and therefore what Earthlings had was theirs by right), and their efficient killing machines couldn't be stopped by the simple weapons that remained in the hands of man. But, there was a flaw in their design.

The android bodies of the Un Men operated by unique wireless signals, for they feared that using cables was wasteful of resources and prone to damage. A group of humans and dwarves managed to project a signal that shut these servos down, littering battlefields with deactivated Un Men and leaving enormous amounts of weapons behind after the slaughter was complete. This technology exists today buried under the dust and rubble of this "Forgotten War," concentrated strongest in the bunkers made of gray stone and steel bars known as "gray castles" in an area north of the Inland Sea now called Aetheria.

All Forgotten Tech (such as blasters, jetpacks, armor, and personal vehicles) depend on power cells, rectangular fist-sized batteries that hold a maximum of 50 charges (roll 5d10 to determine starting load) and can be used to operate all Forgotten Tech... for a time. When all charges are used up, the equipment immediately ceases to function (a disturbing development in flying devices) until a new cell is loaded. Some have discovered the secret of reloading, but many others discard the item after it "stops working."

In addition, Forgotten Tech is aged and finicky. Each time it is used, the wielder must roll against an escalating DC that starts at 5 and increases

by one for each time the technology is used that day. For this check, most classes roll a $d16 + \text{Luck Mod}$. Aetherian Heroes are raised on tales of Forgotten Tech and get to roll $d20 + \text{Luck Mod}$. Failure means a meltdown, after which the power cell is drained. Roll 1d8 on the table below to determine the meltdown's effect, subtracting a Luck bonus and adding a penalty.

Roll for warning alert of the impending meltdown: 1) A calming musical tone; 2) smoke and heat; 3) a trilling electronic scream; 4) a flashing light of a random color.

Table FT-1: Meltdown Effects

Roll 1d8

- 1 Equipment simply refuses to function. PC must roll under their Luck on next operation to see if it reboots. If this roll is failed, re-roll on this chart.
- 2 Blinding flash. DC 15 Fort save for all within 10' or else suffer -2 to all actions that require sight for next round.
- 3 Stunning blast. DC 15 Will save or user is stunned for a turn.
- 4 Delay. The equipment ceases to function only to spark back to life in 1d3 rounds whereupon it immediately performs its function.
- 5 Emergency venting. Roll a standard +0 attack on the user as the weapon backfires. Damage is dependent on the amount of charges the user attempted to fire, $1d4 + 2$ damage per charge.
- 6 Meltdown. The piece overheats and melts, causing $1d4 + 2$ fire damage for 1d3 rounds, setting fire to any flammable materials in a 10' radius and destroying itself.
- 7 System purge. Equipment immediately uses all remaining charges in one round as if it were an advanced item: blasters fire one supercharged shot, jet-packs fly in the direction last directed a speed of $1d4 + 2 \times 5'$ x the number of remaining charges (if an object is struck, convert the remaining charges into $1d4 + 2$ damage per charge for the unfortunate character).
- 8 Detonation. All remaining charges discharge, causing $1d4 + 2$ damage for every remaining charge in a 20' radius and destroying the equipment.

The chief tenant of Forgotten Tech is similar to that of fast food; it is cheap for an advanced society to produce, the ingredients (power cells) are interchangeable, and it is available in three sizes.

Basic Tech is able to discharge one power cell per activation. This discharge triggers a benefit with a value of $1d4+2$ that is appropriate to the technology: a basic blaster will do $1d4+2$ damage, a basic jetpack can move the user $1d4+2 * 5$ feet, a basic force field absorbs $1d4+2$ points of damage, and strength-enhancing harnesses add $1d4+2$ Strength for one round.

Intermediate Tech discharges precisely two cells per round ($2d4+4$), and Advanced Tech is able to discharge anything from one charge to a full cell discharge in one round.

When Forgotten Tech is found, roll an unmodified Luck check. A DC 10 means the tech is basic, DC 15 Intermediate, DC 20 or better Advanced.

COMMON FORGOTTEN TECH

Blast Rays were developed by the Un Men to be used on living targets without damaging infrastructure. The energy is absorbed by most nonliving matter, and is easily reflected by Power Swords, discussed later.

Blast Ray: Damage $1d4+2$; Range: 70/140/210; SP Adjustable

Blasters are powered by cells holding 50 charges at $1d4+2$ damage per. Use is at -2d until the weapon is fired in battle multiple times and the user has trained with a weapons master. Aetherian heroes automatically gain proficiency without these stipulations.

Adjustable: Blasters may fire a single shot, a 30' cone (costing 3 charges per $1d4+2$ damage) or a 20' radius explosive blast (costing 5 charges per $1d4+2$ damage).

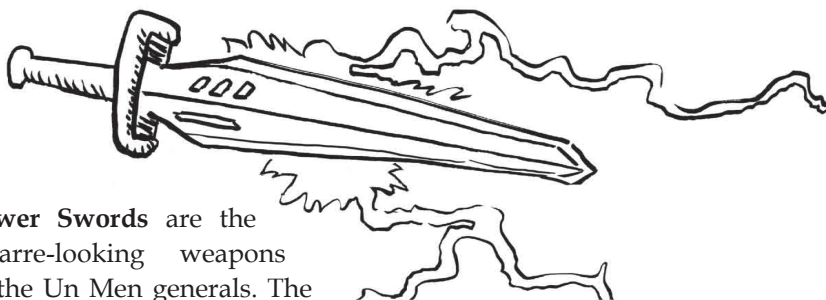
Power Harnesses are breastplates that provide benefits to their wearer. A power harness is 50% likely to have a built-in blaster, usually firing from a gauntlet, centerpiece, or shoulder pad. Basic harnesses have $1d3+Luck$ Modifier powers (max of 5 powers), intermediate $1d4+Luck$ Modifier powers (max of 5), advanced harnesses have all five.



Table FT-2: Power Harness powers

Roll 2d6

- 2-3 **Flight:** Each charge spent allows movement equal to $(1d4+2)*5'$.
- 4-5 **Force field:** Each charge spent soaks $1d4+2$ damage from the next attack to hit the wielder. If no damage is dealt, the charge is not spent.
- 6-8 **Strength boost:** Each charge delivers a stat boost of $1d4+2$ for one round.
- 9-10 **Stamina Boost:** Each charge delivers a stat boost of $1d4+2$ for one round.
- 11-12 **Life Support:** 1 charge per round basic, 1 charge per turn Intermediate and advanced.



Power Swords are the bizarre-looking weapons of the Un Men generals. The blades come in impossible shapes and are made of metals that can be any color on the spectrum - some even glow. Power swords do not suffer meltdowns or need power cells to function.

Power Sword: Damage $2d4+3$; SP Reflect power attack, awkward shape, other powers

Reflect power attack: whenever an energy or light-based attack is targeted at a wielder of a Power Sword, the wielder can make a Reflex save vs. the attacker's unmodified attack or casting roll. If the roll is successful, the attack instead is reflected. The wielder then rolls an missile attack to determine if this attack hits the new target. Note: the wielder is able to reflect an attack that is targeted at him/her. The initial attack may not even hit for the wielder to attempt to reflect it!

Awkward shape: a Power Sword is at -1 to hit in melee.

Other Powers: Power Swords also carry 1d3+Luck Mod unique powers. Roll 2d6 to determine the power(s). Each time 6-8 is rolled, the type of blaster imitated by the sword is improved: when rolled once treat as a basic blaster, twice intermediate, thrice advanced.

Table FT-3: Power Sword unique powers

Roll 2d6

- | | |
|------|---|
| 2 | Is able to tap into a Power Star to allow an increase of Strength, Stamina, and Agility to 18 for 24 hours every 72 hours. Wielder must locate and assemble Power Star to achieve this effect. |
| 3 | Opens doors/disables security for a gray castle somewhere. Wielder must quest to discover where the castle dwells and what it holds! |
| 4-5 | Weapon only deals subdual damage. An extra d4+2 is added to damage, which is always non-fatal. Dragons, Demons, and Undead are unaffected by this ability. |
| 6-8 | Is able to fire a beam of energy identical to a basic blaster every other round. |
| 9-10 | Improves Str, Sta, or Agi stat by 2 as long as this sword is wielded. Roll randomly for the stat affected; may be gained multiple times as long as it applies to a different statistic. |
| 11 | Is able to add charges to power cells at a rate of 1d4+2 charges per round if no other action is taken |
| 12 | Absorbs magical effects targeted at the wielder when a Will save is made equal to the caster's roll. This spell must be released before a new one is absorbed. Releasing the spell allows the wielder to cast it at the spell's lowest listed effect. |

The strange shape of Power Swords is due to the fact that they are actually part of a larger mystic item which fits together as a puzzle. Each Power Sword has between one and five mates and when all are combined they lock together to form a larger item called a Power Star which functions as wireless reserves of infinite power, able to power Forgotten Tech and recharge power cells. Most Forgotten Tech (specifically vehicles such as the Thopter or the Ramm) are meant to draw from a nearby Power Star for their basic operation, allowing power cells to be used to increase effects. As there are no known functional Power Stars in existence, power cells are now the exclusive method to power Forgotten Tech.

INTO THE DARK LANDS

by Sean Ellis and Reid San Filippo

Leagues north of Aetheria is an area known as the Dark Land. In the 22nd century, several objects struck this area from space, inciting volcanic activity and forming crater valleys and high ridges. The Dark Land is hazy with sulfuric clouds that obscure treacherous craters and bottomless pits.

Mystic herbs abound here at the expense of more mundane vegetation. The area is almost a haven for spell components, if it weren't for the terrible danger of its denizens. The area is now home to enemies of Aetheria, who strike and fall back to the area, confident they will not be followed.

Many subterranean tunnels have been found that lead to horrific sites of ancient evil and power: dragons and fire loving creatures dwell in the volcanic depths, and evil men and creatures barricade themselves in the levels above.

These diseased plains are home two great enemies of Aetheria, each using the Dark Lands as a base for their forces, albeit for entirely different motives.

THE GREAT LIBERATOR BLACKSUN

Blacksun crash landed in Aetheria a over a decade ago in a small spacecraft. Lacking memories of his former life, he joined Aetherian society and was appalled at the conditions of the common man. Using a Power Sword and Harness, he leads a small contingent of Aetherian freemen and Tree-Hobbits as a revolutionary, seeking to overthrow the Aetherian dictatorship once and for all.

Blacksun (level 4 Warrior): Init:+1; Atk: melee Power Sword +7 (2d4+6) or ranged + 6 (1d4+2); AC:17; Hp: 34; MV: 30'; Act 1d20+1d14; SP: Power Sword (+2 Strength for an 18), may fire as basic blaster every two rounds, opens a gray castle, Power Harness (basic technology: Strength enhancement, force field); SV: Fort: 2 Ref: 1 Will: 1; AL: L; Treasure: Chain mail, Power Sword (appears as a glowing, jagged sliver of metal), Power Harness (appears as a glowing gold, gaudy necklace).

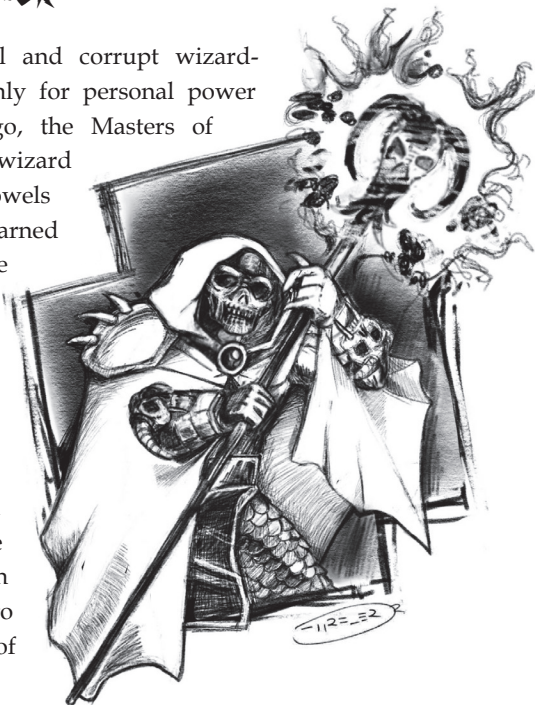
Blacksun is handsome and strong, with olive skin and dark black hair, dressed in barbarian furs. He dwells below ground in the remains of a gray castle so worn and picked over that it was abandoned by Heroes who found it a decade before.

The rumor is that Blacksun has found something wondrous in the bunker's depths but is unwilling to risk the lives of his soldiers to retrieve it. He is always looking

for allies to assist in his war against Aetheria's status quo, and Aetheria's king is willing to pay any ransom for his head.

THE WARRIOR LICH SKULL-OR

Skull-Or was once a powerful and corrupt wizard-hero of Aetheria who cared only for personal power and advancement. Decades ago, the Masters of Aetheria took captive the evil wizard and imprisoned him in the bowels of Castle Oldskull where he learned the castle's secret: it fed off the energies of spellcasters and lied to its heroes. The wizard escaped but had little strength left in his bones. Dying on the fields of the Dark Lands, the wizard called out to Sezrekan who extended the wizard's life in exchange for the secrets of Castle Oldskull. The wizard rose again as the lich Skull-Or, pledging to deliver the castle into the hands of his patron... and then destroy it.



Skull-Or (Lich and level 5 Wizard): Init:+3; Atk melee Power Sword +5 (2d4+7), or Level drain, or Paralyzing touch, or Fear, or ranged Power Sword + 2 (2d4+4); AC:18; HD: 5d12; Hp: 30; MV: 30'; Act 2d20; SP: Undead immunities, 1/2 damage from piercing and slashing damage, Level draining touch, Power Sword, Power Harness, Fear touch, Paralyzing touch, 8 known spells max level 3, Patron Bound to Sezrekan; SV: Fort: +7 Ref: +6 Will: +8; AL: C

Power Sword: the other half of this power sword is currently in the hands of Mighty Man, his sworn enemy. This sword adds a +2 to Skull-Or's Strength, Agility and Stamina, fires as an Intermediate blaster, and may reflect blasts or absorb magical effects targeted at the wielder when a Will save is made equal to the caster's roll. Before it can store another spell, the one currently held must be released at the spell's lowest effect.

Power Harness: An Advanced harness, it features a built in blaster, a Strength, Agility, and Stamina bonus, and a force field.

Undead: Immune to sleep, charm, hold, mental effects, and cold. Doesn't eat or drink. Can be turned by Lawful clerics.

Level drain: May drain a level with a successful unarmed attack. Target must make a DC 12 Will save to avoid the effect.

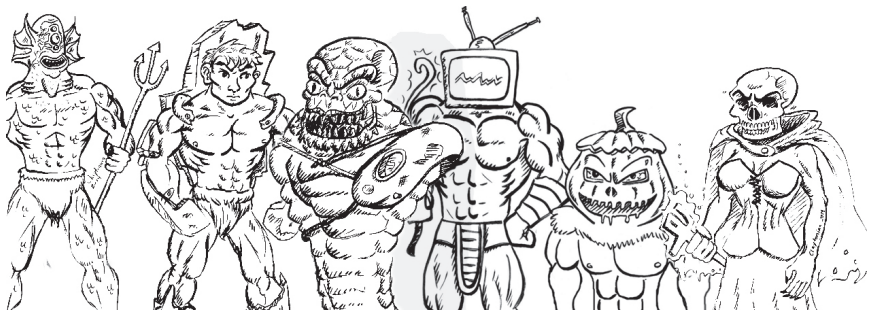
Fear: Rather than attack, may force opponents in melee range to make a Will save vs. 12 or else run away for 1d4 rounds.

Paralysis: With an unarmed attack, may force opponent to make a Fortitude save vs. a DC of 16 or else be paralyzed for 3d4 turns.

Wizard Staff: Functions as a +1, +1 weapon doing 1d4 damage, emits darkness in a 20' radius at the caster's discretion and grants a +2 bonus to saving throws and a +2 bonus to Consult Spirit and Planar Step spells. If the staff is ever destroyed, Skull-Or takes 5d4 damage.

Skull-Or appears as a powerfully muscled human with a skeletal face and claws instead of hands and feet. He paints his skull-like visage with glowing yellows and greens, and his eye smolder red.

Skull-Or's extended life has warped his sense of urgency in most matters. He is content to send his Serpentoid and Sharkana (See CUaBM, Issue #1) henchmen into the field whilst he stays behind in his impressive Fortress of Darkmaw, consulting auguries and spirits to determine his action's eventual outcome. These henchmen are ill-led and rarely successful, but Skull-Or seems to enjoy yelling at them for their incompetence and punishing his generals too much to intervene personally.



CASTLE OLDSKULL AND THE MASTERS OF AETHERIA

By Reid San Filippo

Castle OldSkull is a sapient extra dimensional fortress dedicated to the eradication of "evil magic". It teleported itself to this dimension, coming to rest on the eastern border of Aetheria, when it became aware of the vast amount of magic flowing here after the Cataclysm.



While the power it can wield outside its walls is limited, within itself it has ultimate power and can bend space to be any shape and size. It can also grant power to those who choose to live within its walls and pledge themselves to its cause. Thus it psychically called to the strongest and most virtuous warriors it could sense and offer them power in exchange for completing "noble" quests it would assign to them. Most of these quests involved defeating powerful evil wizards and bringing them back alive to be imprisoned in the castle dungeon. These warriors named themselves the Masters of Umerica and quickly built up a good reputation.

In truth, Oldskull believes that all wizards are evil as it is only a matter of time before they go bad. It feeds deeply off of the wizards imprisoned in its dungeon to increase its own powers and grant strength to its loyal minions. The power it gives to the Master of Umerica are very real and all but the newest recruits are very well muscled and more handsome than when they first joined. In addition, it grants them Forgotten Tech arms, armor and vehicles that have no chance of malfunctioning to better capture wizards for imprisonment.

While all of the Masters are fully devoted to Castle Oldskull, they are completely unaware that is a fully sapient entity and that it feeds off of the wizards that they capture for it. Even more, Oldskull never speaks directly to anyone, instead planting psychic suggestions that the person believes are their own ideas. Even the missions that it sends the Masters on are implanted in such a way that feel confident of what they must do but never question where the information came from.

Any "good" wizards that aid the Masters find their power diminishing as the castle slowly feeds on them. This results in a permanent -1 to all spellcasting checks for every six weeks spent living in or near Oldskull. Those the stay long enough to lose most of their power are psychically convinced to retire and settle in the village

community that now surrounds the castle known as Skullsvale. Anyone inquiring of these retired wizards will find they are quite happy as they are highly honored by the villagers for their service to the Masters. In fact, everyone in Skullsvale is quite happy due to Oldskull's psychic influence and it is actually a great place to live.

MASTERS OF UMERICA CURRENT MEMBERSHIP



Mighty Man - Grandson of Twackarr the Barbarian, descendant of Mach-O, a legendary warrior reputed to have defeated the Sorcerer Kings with his mighty Grav Hammer.



Master-of-Arms - A cyborg with amazing scientific skills as well as many techno-weapons. Has many mechanical arms.



Bugoff - A stately humanoid insect warrior that is the pinnacle of virtue.



Marsh Man - An intelligent plant humanoid with great druidic powers.



Slam Man - A massive warrior with a magic helm that allows him to survive any impact taken to the head.

Geek-O - A good bumbling magician from another dimension. One of the Masters most devoted, if inept, members. (Actually is a patron level ancient super sorcerer that was defeated by Oldskull via trickery. Now is a psychically lobotomized battery of enormous power for Oldskull.)



BONDING WITH OLDSKULL

Any non-magic wielding character of level 1 or greater may come Castle Oldskull and petition to join the Masters. If they seem earnest, Oldskull will have one of the Masters give them a dangerous quest and then psychically keep tabs on them. Should they succeed, prove themselves valorous, and avoid using any sorcery they will be welcomed as a Squire to the Masters.

Should a Squire successfully assist a group of Masters on 3 separate mission, they will be offered the title of Master and become a permanent member of the team. This appointment is finalized by the person entering into the heart of Castle Oldskull and bathing in its radiance.

At this point, Oldskull will seal the psychic bond to the new devotee and begin empowering them with a fraction of the power it siphons off from all of the mages imprisoned within its structure.

Servants of Castle Oldskull will receive the following benefits:

- ✦ Free room and board within the Castle itself.
- ✦ Free repairs to all mundane equipment.
- ✦ Free healing and ability damage restoration. They heal 1 HD and 1d3 points of ability damage every 24 hours spent inside Oldskull.
- ✦ An allotment of 3d12 units of one type of ammunition for the ranged weapon of their choice that they own, including firearms and Xeno weaponry, at the start of each mission.
- ✦ (Masters Only) Request the use of a number of Forgotten Tech equal to level/3, round up.

In addition, upon becoming a Master and every time they level up, do the following:

- ✦ Either Str, Sta, or Per will increase by 1d3 points, roll randomly.
- ✦ 50% chance that Int will decrease by 1 point , to a minimum score of 7.
- ✦ Gains 1 Luck point

Servants of Castle Oldskull will be required to obey the following rules:

- ✦ NEVER use sorcery! Magical items that do not cause user corruption are fine.
- ✦ NEVER kill any evil sorcerer encountered if at all possible. They are to be returned to Oldskull for "imprisonment".
- ✦ NEVER sell or trade away equipment bestowed upon you by Oldskull.
- ✦ Protect the Castle and surrounding village with your life.
- ✦ (Squires Only) Obey all orders given by the Master in charge of the mission.

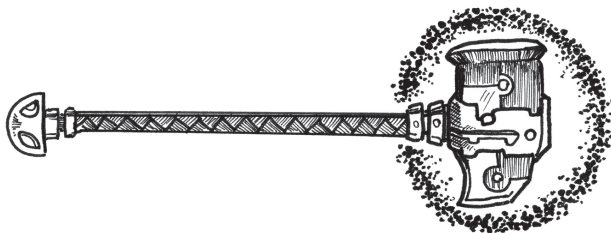
For a Squire, failure to obey any of these rules will result in a stern lecture delivered by a senior Master. After three such infractions, the offender will be kicked out of Oldskull's service.

Should a Master ever fail to live up to any of these, they will suffer Oldskull's psychic wrath and must roll on the table below. If they are an Aetherian Hero, they also lose the use of their Honor Die for 1d3 days.

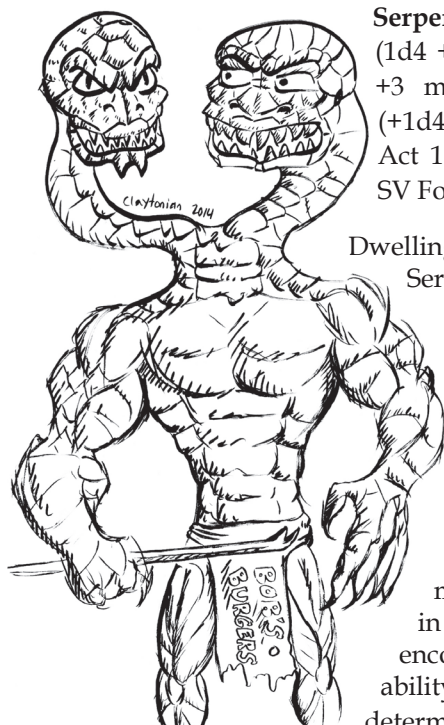
Table OW-1: OldSkull's Wrath!

Roll d30 - Luck mod, Luck points may be spent to adjust up or down.

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 0-3 | Oldskull was momentarily distracted and did not notice your infraction. |
| 4-6 | Your mind is filled with unhappy thoughts. You suffer -1 to all actions for 1d7 turns. |
| 7-9 | Uncertainty and doubt plague you! You suffer a -1 die type penalty for the next 1d5 hours |
| 10-13 | A illness overtakes you! You lose 1d3 points from a random ability score for 1d7 days. |
| 14-17 | Pain fills you brain! You pass out for 1d4 turns take 1d6 points of Int damage. This ability damage may be healed as normal. |
| 18-20 | Your skin permanently changes color to remind you to obey. Roll 1d8: 1 - blue, 2 - green, 3 - orange, 4 - magenta, 5 - red, 6 - purple, 7 - silver, 8 - gold. If this punishment is gained again, your body becomes a mix of all colors rolled. |
| 21-23 | Your main hand and arm enlarge and becomes bestial looking. When attacking or performing other actions with that arm, treat it as though it has +1 Str mod and -1 Agi mod. If this punishment is gained again, increase the bonus and penalty by +1/-1. |
| 24-26 | A massive pain fills your brain! You pass out for 3d4 turns take 2d4 points of Int damage. This ability damage may be healed as normal. |
| 27-28 | One piece of equipment bonds permanently to you as a cybernetic implant. It should be randomly chosen from the equipment most used by you. If it required a power cell to function, it now causes temporary Sta damage at a 1d3+1 charges - to - 1 Sta ratio instead (roll once when this punishment is acquired). This ability damage may be healed as normal. |
| 29+ | A wave of metaphysical energy distorts you! Roll on Table 5-4: Major Corruption, DCC rule book page 118. |



TWISTED MENAGERIE



Serpentoid: Init +3; Atk bite +3 melee (1d4 + poison DC 14 Fort) or as weapon +3 melee; AC 14 + piecemeal armor (+1d4-1 AC); HD 1d10+2; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP special ability (see below); SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will -1; AL C.

Dwelling throughout the Dark lands are the Serpentoids, muscular man-shaped snakes of an evil disposition. They tend to wear piecemeal armor and wield melee weapons crafted from scrap. While they can speak in common tongue, they are not known for their intelligence or social skills.

Due to their love of imbibing the mutagenic herbs that grow richly in the Dark Lands, each Serpentoid encountered will have a different special ability. Roll 1d8 on the chart below to determine it.

- 1 **Tongue Lash:** Lacking weapons, this creature is able to use a prehensile tongue like a whip, damaging or entangling enemies. Range 10', damage 1d6 and opponent must pass a DC 14 Reflex save or else be entangled. Entangled creatures can attempt escape once per round. Rolling a DC 14 Reflex save or inflicting six points of edged damage will release those entangled.
- 2 **Venomous Spittle:** This monster hawks gobs of spittle to disable and damage enemies. A Reflex save of DC 1d16+6 needed by the target or they suffer 1d4 Agility damage and their speed reduced by 5 feet. Range 10'.
- 3 **Constriction:** This Serpentoid either resembles a large constrictor snake, or else possesses several long, spindly limbs. He is able to make several grapple attacks in a round using 2d24 action dice. Held opponents are entangled, DC 12 Str check to break free, and suffer 1d4 damage per round.
- 4 **Poisonous bite:** This creature must move in close to bite, and so is at -1d to initiative. On a successful bite the victim must make a DC 14 Fort save or suffer Blindness (permanent); if blinded a second save must be passed or suffer automatic death.

- 5 Devour prey: Why fight when you can digest? This Serpenthoid is able to unhinge his jaw and swallow a man sized opponent within melee range on a successful attack, ignoring all non-magical armor bonuses to AC. If he hits, the opponent is swallowed whole and takes an automatic 1d3+1 damage per round until the opponent is able to struggle free or the Serpenthoid is killed. Also, while engulfed the victim takes ½ of all damage inflicted on the Serpenthoid. To escape, the victim must make a contested Strength roll vs Str 16.
- 6 Hideous Rattle: As a movement action this Serpenthoid can make a noise that terrifies or transfixes its enemies. A Will save of DC 1d16+6 needed by the target or they must roll a d2. On a 1 the opponent moves away from the Serpenthoid for 1d4 rounds. On a 2 the opponent stands transfixed for one round and may take no action.
- 7 Steel Scales: Thorny scales protect the Serpenthoid and wound his enemies. It gains +5 AC and anyone making grapple or unarmed attacks automatically suffer 1d3 damage each round.
- 8 Roll 1d7. This number is how many powers this Serpenthoid has. If the roll is a seven, the creature gains all powers and doubles its HD.

Random Encounter Table DLM-1: Dark Land Mutagenic Herbs. Roll 1d5

1	Cosa - Imbibing this colorful moss will randomly change the drinker's skin color to a brilliant hue: Roll 1d6: 1 - yellow, 2 - magenta, 3 - blue, 4 - red, 5 - green, 6 - purple. Effects last 4d4 days. Cumulative 2% chance of the effects being permanent with each dose.
2	Buph - Chewing these leaves will cause the person's muscles to expand massively in a short amount of time (2d6 minutes). This raises their Str by 1d3+1 but lowers their Sta by an equal amount, due to the pain. The effects last for 4d12 hours. Cumulative 1% chance of the effects being permanent with each dose.
3	Hyb - This rare flower is a magically potent fertility enhancement and enables crossbreeding with other species. Works for both sexes. The effects last for 1d14 hours. Cumulative 1% chance of the effects being permanent with each dose.
4	Chaosleaf- (Addictive) Chewer must make a DC 15 Fort save or Roll on Table 5-4: Major Corruption, DCC rule book page 118. Effects are permanent.
5	Orac - (Addictive) The imbibor will immediately gain the effects of a Second Sight spell, DCC rule book page 267. Casting roll 1d24+5 and will be the immediate target of a Curse spell, DCC rule book page 273. Casting roll 1d20+5.

Un Men (Robotic Tyrant): Init 0; Atk claw +6 melee (1d8+2) or laser +6 missile fire (range 100', 1d8); AC 18; HD 3d12+12; MV 30'; Act 2d20; SP infravision 60', immune to mind-altering spells, heal 1d5 hp per round, additional equipment; SV Fort +9, Ref +0, Will +6; AL N.

Thankfully these beings are very rarely seen since the end of the Forgotten War. When encountered, there is a 60% that they will be in hibernation mode. If hibernating, there is only a 1-6 chance per round that they will wake up if care is taken to be quiet. Any attack will cause them to wake up immediately and act at the end of the surprise round.

Un Men are nearly identical humanoid robots roughly 9ft tall. The only features that differ among them is the equipment attached to their bodies. To determine what equipment they are carrying, roll 1d3 times on the UnE-1 table below.

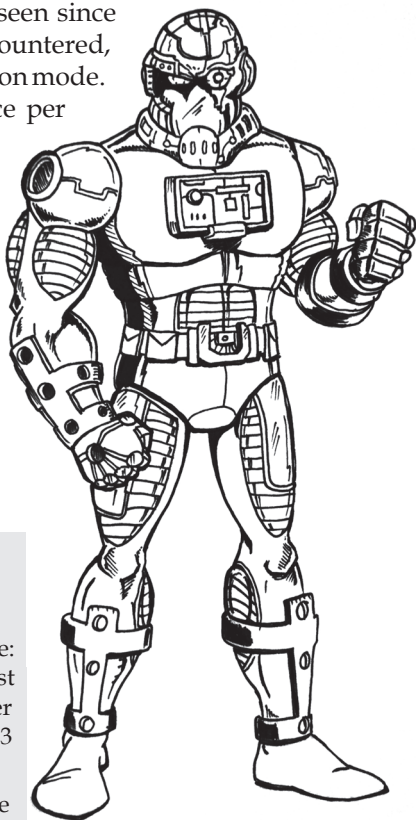


Table UnE-1: Un Men Equipment

Roll d10

- 1 Flamethrower - Atk +6 missile fire (range: 50' cone, 1d10 damage. Also, victim must roll under their Luck score or else suffer 1d4 fire damage, DCC RPG pg 96, for 1d3 rounds)
- 2 Plasma Cannon - Atk +6 missile fire (range: 200', 1d14 damage)
- 3 Sensor Suite - +4 to all perception checks and may cast Detect Magic or Detect Invisible at will, Casting roll 1d20+CL5
- 4 Vibro Axe - Atk +6 melee (1d12 damage, Crit on 17+)
- 5 DNA Extractor - Atk +6 melee (1d3 Sta damage)
- 6 Mana Extractor - Atk +4 melee, On a successful melee hit 50% chance of disenchanting one magic item or consumes one spell known, GM's choice.
- 7 Distortion Gun - Atk +6 missile fire (Target teleported 2d100 ft in a random direction and Fort save DC 12 or suffer 3d4 damage)
- 8 Chronoaccelerator - This Un Man has 3d20 action dice
- 9 Extension Arms - All melee attacks now have a range of 15'
- 10 HypnoVox - May cast Charm Person, Casting roll 1d20+CL5

There are legends of an electronic signal developed in the Forgotten War that will completely shut down the Un Men. Perhaps it can be rediscovered...

In addition to all other equipment, Un Men are host to 1d5 drones (see below) that can detach from their bodies and engage targets so that the Un Men are free to focus on their tasks.

Drone, Un Men (Robot Servitor): Init:+2; Atk: blaster +2 (1d4+2 as hp or Agility damage, range 60'); AC: 15; HD: 1d8+2; MV: 30'; Act 2d16; SP: Immune to mind-altering effects, infravision 60'; SV: Fort: +0, Ref: +6, Will: +2; AL: N

Drones are essentially flying blasters that depend on power cells for both flight and a blast attack. A drone that engages in multiple attacks must return to its host in one turn or less. If no shots are fired, the drone can continue to fly for up to five turns.



Coming Next Issue!

Car Warriors of the Wastelands!

- ▶ New class: Petrol Head
- ▶ New rules: Vehicle combat!
- ▶ New gear: Vehicle creation rules
- ▶ New foes: Road gang generator
- ▶ New hazards: d100 Stuff Found on Apocalyptic Roadways

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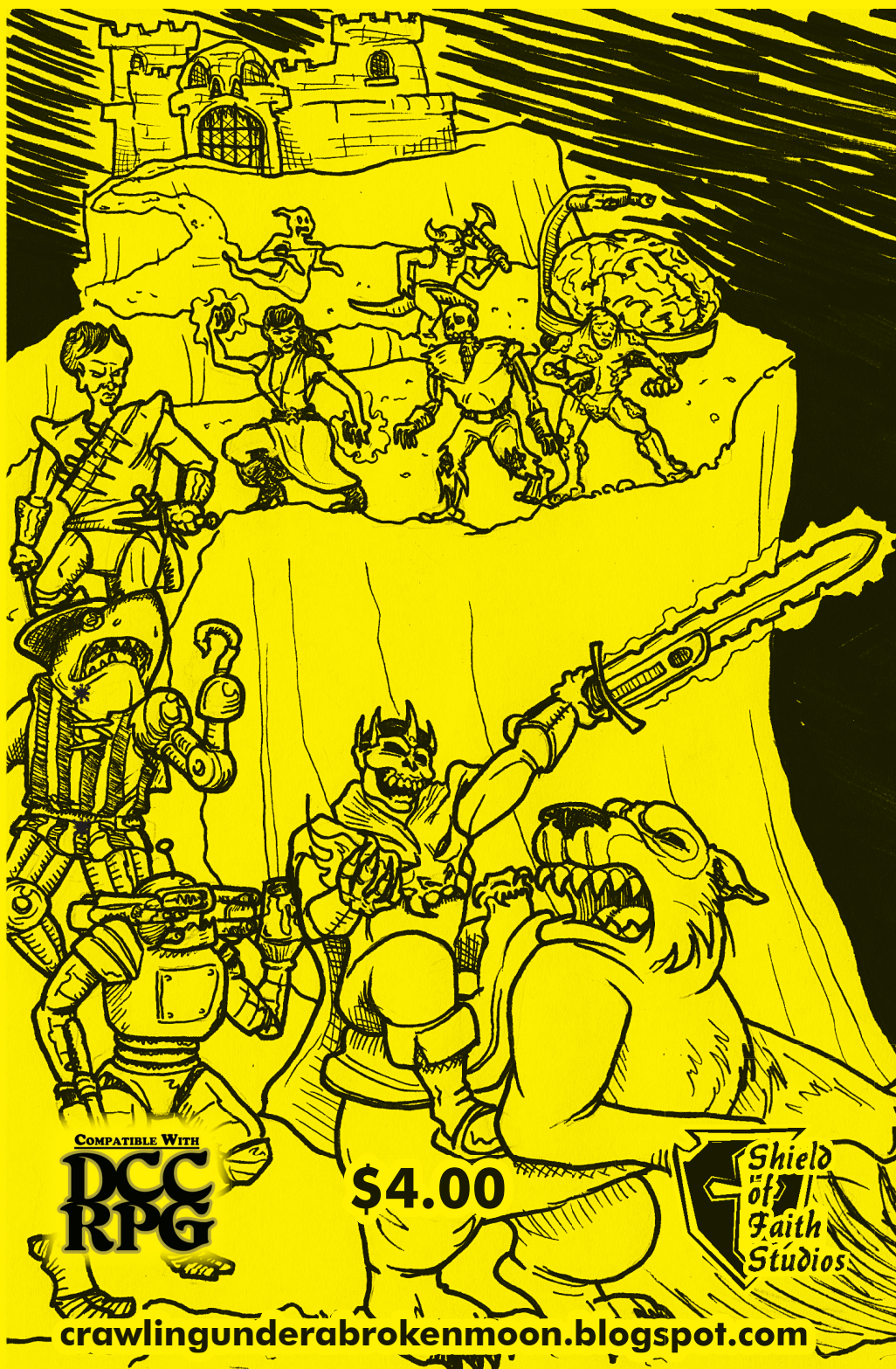
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