

TOURNAMENTS, FAIRS, AND TAVERNS



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Player's Handbook, Third Edition,
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TOURNAMENTS, FAIRS, & TAVERNS



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and Russell Morrissey

(and a few fine folks from the EN World community)

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CONTENTS

PREFACE	4	CHAPTER SIX: FESTIVAL GAMES	42
CHAPTER ONE: RULES OF THE GAME	5	A Dragon's Gold	42
Degree of Success	5	Board Tumbling Game	44
Drinking	6	Squashgoblin	44
New Feat	8	Temperature Climbing	46
Professional Gambling	9	Tower of Castilo	47
New Skills & New Uses for Old Skills	9	Tripstep's Ladder	49
New Feats	11	CHAPTER SEVEN:	
Tournaments	11	RUNNING GAMES & FESTIVE ENCOUNTERS	50
Layout of Games in the Following Chapters	13	Taverns	50
CHAPTER TWO: CLASSIC GAMES	14	Fairs	51
Arm-Wrestling	14	Tournaments	51
Card or Dice Games	14	Create a Hook	52
Drinking	15	General Notes	52
Long Throw	15	Descriptive Notes	53
Races and Chases	16	Sites of Interest and the Guide NPC	54
Strategy	19	Encounters	54
CHAPTER THREE: MARTIAL TOURNAMENTS	20	A Few Words of Advice	55
Archery	20	The Black Eagle Pennant	56
Crazy Ernie's Bear Wrasslin' for Crazy Folk	21	Locations at the Black Eagle Pennant	58
Drinksplash	22	Guide NPC	59
Duelling	22	Encounters at the Tourney	59
Field List	23	The Market of Shadows	60
Jousting	24	Locations at the Market of Shadows	61
The Tree Game	26	Guide NPC	63
CHAPTER FOUR: TAVERN GAMES	27	Encounters at the Market of Shadows	63
Drunken Daggers	27	The House of the Badger	65
The Everyman's Fireball	28	Locations at the House of the Badger	67
Gin and Rabbits	29	Guide NPC	68
Stageless Play	30	Encounters at the House of the Badger	69
Stage Contests	31	APPENDIX:	
Trollbridge	32	TABLES & RANDOM STUFF	70
Young Wits	33	Random Stall Contents and Merchant's Wares	70
CHAPTER FIVE: MAGICAL COMPETITIONS	34	Quick Entertainers	70
Baal'meral'ruun	34	Twenty Potential Menu Meals	71
Conjuration Combat	38	House Specials or Imported Alcohols	71
The Game of Forms	40		
New Spells	41		

PREFACE

“All the World’s a Game, and We are its Players”

Entertainment is one of the main social needs of any person or group, part of the continuing effort to stave off the boredom and monotony people loath in everyday life. Forms of entertainment have developed through millennia of civilization, ranging from myriad forms of storytelling, to artistic creations and performances, and most importantly, games and competitions. Games are one of the most compelling and complicated forms of entertainment, because members of society can participate in them, whereas many other forms of entertainment simply leave the common person as a spectator. Though some games (particularly sports) can primarily only be enjoyed from the sidelines, most common games can involve anyone as a participant.

Through years of adjustments and adaptations, many games grow to be more than simply ways to provide entertainment, but rather an artistic aspect of their culture, as identifying as language or government. Indeed, in many ways, games and competitions could be considered an artform, a masterpiece work of activity often overlooked beside painting or sculpture. Regardless of how they are received, however, games are an important and integral part of society.

In a roleplaying adventure, competitions and games hold a unique place, a game within a game, and as such they are versatile tools. Game masters can use them to add flavour to a setting, to counterpoint more serious events elsewhere in the adventure, or even as adventures themselves, while players can use their character’s participate in games to develop personality quirks or prove their might in ways that don’t require leaving a wake of blood. Some villains might toy with heroes by forcing them to entertain him in a game, or a stubborn informant might only be willing to provide his knowledge if he can be beaten in his favorite sport, or the characters might simply want to interact with everyday folk to prove they’re real people.

Tournaments, Fairs, & Taverns presents twenty-nine games that can fit easily into a fantasy setting (most, in fact, don’t even require magic and can fit any setting), and also gives advice and guidelines for running adventures that incorporate these games. Hopefully, the games and rules in this book will add flavour and charm to your adventures, because after all, flavour and charm is entertaining, and why else do we play these games?

LAYOUT

The key to utilizing this book to its full potential is to remember you can easily give a new description to material that doesn’t fit your view of your campaign so it works in your world. To assist in finding the material you’ll want, the following section summarizes the chapters of *Tournaments, Fairs, and Taverns*.

Chapter 1: Rules of the Game presents a few overarching rules that apply to several other sections of the book, including rules for drunkenness, an explanation of the Knowledge (gaming and gambling) skill, and guidelines for roleplaying large tournaments.

Chapter 2: Classic Games details a handful of games that are relatively simple in premise, and thus are common to many different societies. Most of these games are competitions of skill or physical ability that do not require large groups, which might explain their wide-reaching appeal.

Chapter 3: Martial Tournaments includes seven games based around one of civilization’s primary concerns – combat. They range from such rural and wild entertainments as wrestling bears, to the legendary and noble tournaments of archery contests and the joust.

Chapter 4: Tavern Games introduces seven games that fit with the raucous and bawdy feel of many taverns. From card and dice games to dagger tossing and more dangerous kin, tavern games might convince you to actually want to start a game with “So you’re all sitting in a tavern...”

Chapter 5: Magical Competitions showcases three games that rely on magical power, one a wizard’s field sport, another the magical equivalent of a cockfight, the third a game of inventiveness and quick wit.

Chapter 6: Festival Games opens up six games for public entertainment. These games may be common sights at fairgrounds in a fantasy realm, and the fun that others are having might encourage PCs to join in the fun.

Chapter 7: Running Games & Festive Encounters gives brief advice on how to make games within the game have impact. It also describes three sample settings in which to use the rest of the material in the book. Any of these settings can easily be dropped into a game as a location for an adventure, even if you don’t want to use the presented games. We suggest that players not read this section, since it might spoil some of the surprises of those locations.

CHAPTER ONE: RULES OF THE GAME

This chapter presents rules that will be used elsewhere in the book. None of these are mandatory additions to a game, and the game master might choose simply not to use them if he thinks that it will be more fun for alcohol to have no effect on the heroes, or if he'd rather roleplay out a 200-person grand melee fighter by fighter. These rules are provided to help assist you in using this book, but in no way feel constrained by them.

DEGREE OF SUCCESS

Standard skill rolls merely indicate a result of success or failure. Degrees of Success are a new d20 mechanic for resolving *how well* you do something when compared to someone else. Additionally, these rules skew the results in favor of skill or ability over those of random chance.

When should you use Degrees of Success?

The Degree of Success (DS) rules should only be used in competitions between people or groups, or against a preset clock or previous record. They are used when it is important to know how well, or how fast, or how accurately you accomplish a task. Do not use these rules in combat in place of normal attack rolls, or when a character is simply trying to accomplish something. They are used when you are trying to do *better* than someone else.

For example, you should use these rules for arm wrestling, but not for bending a cage of iron bars. Likewise, though you wouldn't use them for a simple climb check to see whether a character can scale a cliff, you should use these rules if two competitors are trying to see who will reach the top first. Since it is quite possible that both climbers could succeed all their climb checks, some other method is helpful in seeing who edges out as the winner.

Never use the Degree of Success rules in combat situations involving attack and damage rolls. The Degree of Success rules do for skills much the same thing that hit points do for combat, so do not confuse

the two systems. Attack and damage rolls determine who succeeds and how fast in combat, not a DS rating.

Using Degrees of Success

Each competitor begins the competition with a DS of 0. There are two types of DS.

In cases where competitors are each trying to achieve the same goal independently (a foot race, for example): Each competitor makes a series of skill checks. The skill check result is added to the character's DS. Thus, though you might make a single bad roll, you could still be ahead because of good rolls earlier. This is called Direct DS.

In cases where competitors are directly opposed and equal opponents could be at a stale-mate for some time (an arm-wrestle, for example): Each competitor makes a series of opposed skill checks. If the leading character wins, the difference between the winner's skill check result

and the loser's is added to the winner's DS. If the trailing character wins, the difference is *subtracted* from the leading character's DS (this can result in a DS below 0). In this type of competition, a lot of "to-ing and fro-ing" may take place. This is called Opposed DS.

Target Number

The Target Number is used to determine when one of the competitors has won the contest. The first competitor whose DS reaches the Target Number has won the competition. Alternatively, it may be more important who has the highest DS in a given period of time or rounds. The way in which DS is used is described in each game. Contests with low Target Numbers are over quickly, sometimes after only one or two checks; those with higher Target Numbers (such as a game of chess) will last much longer, although a contestant with a large advantage over his opponent may be able to achieve victory fairly quickly. The Degrees of Success are a good indication of how close the contest was. A competition with only narrow leads in DS represents a very close game, the likes of which make spectators lean forward in their seats, caught up in the drama of the competition.

Simple Degree of Success

If you don't want to use the listed rules, use these three steps to break ties (i.e. situations where both competitors succeed in their skill checks) easily.

The winner is the character with the highest modifier to his d20 roll (as determined by skill ranks, ability modifiers and other bonuses).

If their modifiers are tied, check only the modifiers from their skill ranks and synergy bonuses, if applicable. Thus, an experienced chess player will have a very slight edge over another chess player with fewer skill ranks but a higher Intelligence score.

If both competitors are still tied, roll again.

The Target Number and DS type of each game or contest in this book is indicated in the game's description.

For example, Lydia is arm wrestling with an ogre. Arm wrestling has a Target Number of 20 and has Opposed DS (see the description of arm wrestling later in this book). In the first round, Lydia's Strength check beats the ogre's by 5, so Lydia's DS is 5. In the second round, the ogre beats Lydia by 8, pushing her DS down to -3. In the third round, the ogre beats her by 6, giving him a DS of 6. Lydia manages to push back slightly in the fourth round, beating the ogre by 1 and reducing his DS to 5, but in the fifth round, the ogre beats her by 9 again, giving him a DS of 13. If he beats her by 7 or more in the next round, he will have won the arm-wrestle.

DRINKING

"the Reason Civilization Exists"

Some scholars believe that civilization would not exist if alcohol had not given early peoples a reason to settle in one place where they could make alcoholic beverages. Certainly, drinking is an important part of many cultures. To many, socializing over a couple of drinks is a cherished and enjoyable tradition, while others decry alcoholism as an unavoidable source of clumsiness and stupidity. Alcoholic drinks are commonplace at nearly any festival or tavern, and sometimes drinking is the focus of a game or competition. Like in real life, too much drinking in-game can make people sick and ruin their fun, but a little drunkenness can add to the merriment of all.

Drink Sizes

Servings of alcohol are measured in 'shots.' A 'shot' does not denote any real-world significance; rather, it is simply a convenient word to measure small volumes of liquid in game terms. The number of shots contained in various drinking vessels is as follows.

Shot glass/mouthful	1
Small glass (cup)	2
Mug/glass (pint)	4
Wineskin (pint)	4
Large Flagon (quart)	8
Jug (two quarts)	16
Large Pitcher (gallon)	32
Keg (3 gallons)	96
Small Barrel (10 gallons)	320
Large Barrel (40 gallons)	1280

Drink Strengths

The strength of the drink is measured on a scale, with 0 being no alcohol content, and 10 or higher being powerful beverages. The following table should not be regarded as a definitive list of drinks, but rather a rough guide to how to use Alcohol Strengths. You should make up your own drinks for your own campaign.

Water	0
Weak Beer	1
Regular Beer	2
Wine	4
Strong Wine	6
Spirit	10
Strong Spirit	12
Dwarf Spirits	14

A drink's total effect is measured in Alcohol Units (AU). The alcohol units of a given drink is the product of its number of shots times its strength. For example, a mug (4 shots) of wine (Strength 4) is a total of 16 AU.

Game masters and players are encouraged to devise specific drinks for your campaign world. A sample list of drinks is provided in the appendix.

Effect of Alcohol

Alcohol is, basically, a poison. The more you drink, the greater effect it has. There are several levels of intoxication, each accompanied by penalties to certain abilities, and a slight bonus to resist pain. If you are using the wild spellcasting rules from *Wild Spellcraft*, then a spellcaster who fails a spell because of drunkenness causes a mishap.

- ◆ **Tipsy:** Judgment slightly impaired, but no noticeable effects. -1 penalty to attack rolls, skill checks, ability checks, and Reflex saves. No effect on movement or hit points. Must make a Concentration check (DC 10 +spell level)* to cast spells or take similar actions.
- ◆ **Merry:** Inhibitions lower, voices raise, and balance wavers slightly. -2 penalty to attack rolls, skill checks, ability checks, and Reflex saves. +1 temporary hit point per hit die. No effect on movement. Must make a Concentration check (DC 10 +spell level)* to cast spells or take similar actions.
- ◆ **Drunk:** Dizzy and disoriented, words slurred. -4 penalty to attack rolls, skill checks, ability checks, and Reflex saves. +2 temporary hit points per hit die. Can safely take one partial action each round, but must make a Balance check (DC 10)* to both move and take an action. Falls down on a failure. Must make

a Concentration check (DC 10 + spell level)* to cast spells or take similar actions.

- ◆ **Hammered:** Can't walk in a straight line, generally incoherent. -8 penalty to attack rolls, skill checks, ability checks, and Reflex saves. +3 temporary hit points per hit die. Can safely take one partial action per round, but must make a Balance check (DC 10)* to both move and take an action. Falls down on a failure. Must make a Concentration check (DC 10 + spell level)* to cast spells or take similar actions.
- ◆ **Plastered:** Communication is nearly impossible, as is standing up. -16 penalty to attack rolls, skill checks, ability checks, and Reflex saves (though the character can take no actions, so it usually doesn't matter). +4 temporary hit points per hit die (but usually unable to take advantage of this). He must make a Concentration check (DC 10)* to cast spells or take similar actions. Character is nauseated, and the only action he can normally take is a single move or move-equivalent action per round. A character who is plastered can, however, choose to take one partial action other than a movement, but is then stunned for the next 1d6 rounds.
- ◆ **Unconscious:** Character is unconscious, usually from sickness or extreme dizziness and confusion.

*Skill check penalty applies for this level of drunkenness as normal.

Getting Drunk

An average person's Alcohol Threshold is equal to his Constitution score, but this number can be modified by several other factors. Any racial, magical, or class-based bonuses to resist poison add to this number, the Endurance feat adds +4 to this number, and the Hard Drinking feat doubles a character's Alcohol Threshold (Constitution score and all other modifiers are doubled).

For each size category smaller than Medium-size that you are, your Alcohol Threshold is reduced by half. For each size category larger, double your Alcohol Threshold. For example, the Alcohol Threshold of the average Halfling is only 5, whereas a Great Wyrms Red Dragon would have an Alcohol Threshold of 496.

Once you reach your Alcohol Threshold, you become Tipsy. As you drink more, you progress through the various levels of intoxication, with a number of AU equal to your threshold increasing your drunkenness to the next category.

For example, Seth has a Constitution of 14. He drinks two shots of whiskey (12 AU each, total 24 AU). This exceeds his Alcohol Threshold, so he becomes Tipsy. Another 4 AU will take him to 28, putting him in the Merry category.

The game master may give a temporary bonus to a character's alcohol threshold of up to +2 from various factors, such as a full stomach or magical enhancements.

Drinking Too Fast

A medium size character can drink 2 shots as a move-equivalent action. Double this number for each size category above Medium and halve it for each category below Medium as indicated in the table below. A character can drink double the amount indicated in a full round.

Size	Drink as move-equivalent action	Alcohol Threshold
Tiny	½	¼ Con score
Small	1	½ Con score
Medium	2	Con score
Large	4	2 × Con score
Huge	8	4 × Con score
Gargantuan	16	8 × Con score
Colossal	32	16 × Con score

Attempting to drink more than this in one go requires a Fortitude save (DC 10 +4 per extra multiple or part thereof). A failure means that the character cannot swallow fast enough, and a failure by 5 or more causes the character to also lose his action the next round from gagging. In most drinking contests, this automatically means that the character has lost.

Additionally, sometimes an overdose of strong drink can shock a person's system. If a character drinks too much too quickly, there is a danger of him passing out or getting sick right away. If a character drinks more AU than twice his Alcohol Threshold in one round, he must make a Fortitude save (DC 20). If he fails the save, he either vomits out what he just drank, or falls unconscious (the GM gets to choose).

For example, in a drinking contest, Seth downs a mug of Dwarf Spirits, for a total of 56 AU. Since his Alcohol Threshold is 14, he becomes Hammered after one drink. He must make a Fortitude save (DC 20), or he'll most likely lose the contest.

Recovery & Hangovers

A character recovers at a rate of 8 Alcohol Units per hour. Additionally, eight hours of uninterrupted sleep enables him to recover completely.

A character who has become Drunk or higher suffers a hangover once he sobers up. A hangover consists of headaches, nausea and other unpleasant side effects. After recovering from drunkenness, a hangover begins. While hung over, a character suffers the same penalty to his attack rolls, skill checks, ability checks, and Reflex saves of the drunkenness category he reached the night before. Every two hours, the severity reduces by one category until the penalties go away.

For example, Seth continues drinking until he is Hammered. This category gives him a -8 penalty to most of his rolls and checks. He gets 8 hours of sleep and wakes the next morning with a hangover. He suffers a -8 penalty to various rolls and checks for 2 hours, then -4 for the next two hours, then only -2, and finally -1. After 8 hours, the ringing and buzzing finally goes away.

Folk Remedies

An Alchemy check (DC 20) will allow a character to brew a hangover or drunkenness remedy. Characters with 5 or more ranks of Heal get a +2 synergy bonus to this check. Most such folk remedies sell for 2 gold pieces per dose, and many inns and taverns make as much money sobering up their patrons as getting them drunk. A character can only benefit from one dose of a folk drunkenness remedy per day.

Remedies have an effect either on current drunkenness, or on hangovers. Particular effects may vary, but we present here a sample remedy, Hair of the Dog.

Hair of the Dog: This foul-tasting concoction doesn't even try to hide its ingredients; a clump of dog hairs float atop a green-brown broth filled with mashed leaves. The necessary ingredients for 5 doses can be found in a typical forest with an hour of searching and a successful Wilderness Lore check (DC 12). Two hours of work and an Alchemy check (DC 20) can turn the ingredients into 5 doses, each the size of a small cup.

Hangover Recovery – a dose of Hair of Dog reduces the character's penalties from a hangover as if 2 hours had passed. Only one such drink can have an effect per day.
Sobering Up – alternately, Hair of Dog sobers up a drunk character by 5d6 Alcohol Units.

NEW FEAT

HARD DRINKING

You are well-accustomed to drinking, and do not get drunk easily.

Requirements: Con 13+

Benefits: Your Alcohol Threshold is doubled after calculating all other modifiers.

For example, Bengar is a Dwarf with a 20 Constitution, the Endurance feat, and the Hard Drinking feat. His base Alcohol Threshold is 26 (20 Con +2 from Dwarven poison resistance +4 from Endurance), so with Hard Drinking his Alcohol Threshold is a weighty 52. A force to be reckoned with!

Optional Rule: Dutch Courage

You may choose to let drunkenness provide bonuses to certain social skills. The jokes about friendly and unpleasant drunks have a grounding in fact, since ale helps reduce people's inhibitions.

A player can choose for his character to be a *friendly* or *unpleasant* drunk. Once this choice has been made, it cannot be changed. A *friendly* drunk gets a bonus to his Diplomacy and Gather Information checks, while an *unpleasant* drunk gets a bonus to his Intimidate checks.

This bonus is +1 for being Tipsy, +2 for being Merry, and +4 for being Drunk. These bonuses *replace* the normal penalties to skill checks for those levels of intoxication. Beyond drunk, the character is not coherent enough to take advantage of his lack of inhibition, and the usual penalties apply.

Optional Rule: Unwitting Bravery

You may also decide that intoxicated people do not frighten easily. Tipsy characters get a +1 bonus to Will saves against fear effects, and the bonus is +2 for Merry, +4 for Drunk, +8 for Hammered, and +16 for Plastered. At a certain point, some people care too much about stopping the room from lurching to worry about running away.

Optional Rule: Other Drugs

These drunkenness rules can be altered somewhat to reflect the effects of taking various other drugs, painkillers, anesthetics, hallucinogens and foodstuffs. For example, Halfling funerals are memorable for hosting huge pie-eating parties in honor of the deceased, and each slice of pie counts as 1 Pie Unit (PU). Beyond about 10 PU, the average Halfling begins to grow nauseous, but thankfully most stop before they get sick.

PROFESSIONAL GAMBLING

The following rules provide a very rough way to handle large-scale and long-term gambling. A given gambling location is like a community, in that it has a population size and GP limit. Additionally, a gambling location, hereafter called the House, has an overall skill level in Knowledge (gaming and gambling) (see below) that represents generally how difficult it is to win there. Note that some Houses are very discriminating, and though they might have a low population, they have the Skill Rating and GP limit of a larger House.

Stakes	Population	Skill	GP Limit
Meager	5-20	+0	10 gp
Low	21-80	+4	40 gp
Average	81-400	+8	200 gp
Challenging	401-900	+12	800 gp
High	901-2,000	+16	3,000 gp
Epic	2,001+	+20	15,000 gp

Limits of Gambling

The GP Limit of a House represents the typical maximum winnings a single game can garner. Bets of those stakes use the skill rank listed for the opposed Knowledge (gaming and gambling) check, while lower stakes typically use a skill rank whose GP Limit match the stakes of the bet. The skill ratings are deliberately high because the odds tend to be stacked in favor of the House.

To determine the maximum amount of money available for notable competitions or the highest value of any bet that might be accepted, like gambling tournaments, multiply half the GP Limit by one-tenth of the House's population. For example, a high stakes gambling casino with 1,000 customers on the average day would max out with a prize of 150,000 gp for a big tournament. However, your average low-stakes gambling in a rowdy bar with 50 people wouldn't even have enough money to match someone who ante's more than 100 gp.

Unfortunately, guidelines for running a gambling house are beyond the scope of this book, which primarily is concerned with using games for the sake of adventure. It is usually more dramatic to win a national card tournament than to just preside over it.

NEW SKILLS & NEW USES FOR OLD SKILLS

Many skills can be very useful in various games and competitions. Though obscure skill usages are presented in the individual game entries to which they apply, the most common ones are provided here. Many provide a synergy bonus to the Knowledge (gaming and gambling) skill, although their use can sometimes be considered cheating.

Bluff (Cha)

Bluffing is vitally important in many games of chance. For certain competitions where competitors can give up without having to necessarily finish the game (such as most card games), you may choose to substitute a Bluff check for a Knowledge (gaming and gambling) check. You cannot, however, substitute Bluff this way in order to run the odds of a competition.

If you instead use a normal Knowledge (gaming and gambling) check, instead of trying to Bluff, you can still get a +2 synergy bonus if you have 5 or more ranks of Bluff.

Gather Information (Cha)

You can use this skill to gain some insight on gambling odds, or on your competition in a game or tournament. A successful Gather Information check (DC 15) lets you learn about a single event or game, effectively learning his or their average skill bonus in the particular competition. The DC might be higher if the competitor is relatively unknown.

If you have 5 or more ranks of Gather Information, you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Knowledge (gaming and gambling) checks to run the odds of a particular competition if details would be helpful.

Knowledge (gaming and gambling) (Int)

This skill encompasses knowledge of many different types of competitions, plus the concepts of probability and game theory. It aids in playing games of chance, and in efforts to make a consistent profit at gambling. This knowledge ranges from gambits in chess, skill at card-counting, or even experience in rolling dice 'just so.' Also, it can provide information on what types of customs and traditions are tied with certain games, like how orc chieftans will respect outsiders more if they can beat a member of the tribe at a game of might.

In addition to common games you would know about from your background, you are considered well-learned

in at least one exotic or uncommon game or form of gambling per rank of this skill. If you are unfamiliar with a game, you incur a -2 penalty to your first few skill checks, until the Games Master deems that you have become familiar.

- ◆ *Check:* Whenever you participate in a simple game of chance, the participants each make a Knowledge (gaming and gambling) check, or an Intelligence check if untrained. Individual games may have different particular rules that add other bonuses (many card games, for example, grant a synergy bonus for high Bluff skills).
- ◆ *Running the Odds:* You can also use this skill to discern who is the most likely winner in an upcoming competition, such as a race or gladiatorial duel. This has a minimum DC of 10, but can go as high as DC 20 if there is a very large group of competitors. Having lots of clues or advice can grant a bonus of up to +2 to this check, at the game master's option. A DC 20 check can determine the odds of a particular competitor winning. This usage of the skill can take between a round and a few hours, so ask your Game Master for an estimate of how much time would be needed to make your judgment.
- ◆ *Professional Gambling:* If you wish to compete in a gambling House, choose a level of competition from those listed in the Professional Gambling section above, up to the highest level available at that House. You must wager an amount equal to at least half the GP Limit of the stakes you choose to play at. If you succeed, you win gp equal to the GP Limit of that competition. Regardless of how many games you play, you cannot win more than the total gp available in a given week.
- ◆ *Retry:* You can keep gambling as long as you have money to keep wagering (or can bluff that you do).
- ◆ *Special:* Most Houses of Challenging stakes or higher are slightly unfair and either have ringers in common games, or dealers who rig the game. Since large Houses are primarily money-making ventures, they take few risks, which can be represented by having the House Take 10. For particularly large and noteworthy games, the House might go to great lengths to stack the odds in their favor, sometimes even cheating if they fear great monetary loss.
See *Other Ways to Cheat* below.

Pick Pocket (Dex)

The PickPocket skill is essential for a character who likes to cheat. A successful Pick Pocket check (opposed with your opponent or opponents' Spot check) can grant a bonus to a Knowledge (gaming and gambling) check for certain games, such as card games where you can hide aces up your sleeve, or dice games where you can swap in loaded dice. Before making a Knowledge (gaming and gambling) check, you may make the opposed Pick Pocket check; the amount by which you beat your opponent is the bonus applied to your Knowledge (gaming and gambling) check. However, if your opponent spots you, you are in dire trouble!

Alternately, you can simply give characters with 5 or more ranks of Pick Pocket a +2 synergy bonus to Knowledge (gaming and gambling) checks for games in which the character states that he is attempting to cheat. You may also use this synergy bonus in dice games where a flick of the wrist may result in a better roll; this is not considered cheating for the purposes of these rules.

Other Ways to Cheat

Sometimes the only way to win is to play by a different set of rules, and sometimes, the only way to have a fair game is to cheat as much as everyone else. This section briefly details a handful of ways to cheat in various games. Most lawful characters would shy away from these tactics, even if everyone else is cheating.

- ◆ **Distraction:** A loud, noisy, or simply irritating distraction typically provides a -2 circumstance penalty to a competitor's skill checks or attack rolls. Depending on the nature of the distraction, it might affect one or several competitors at once. Common distractions include loud and directed jeering, flashing sunlight into the target's eyes with a mirror, jostling, close coughing, or even sending a familiar or animal companion to rub against the target or fly in her face. Normally, a distraction can be ignored with a Concentration check (DC 10) each round.
- ◆ **Intimidation:** A successful Intimidation check before or during a competition can enable you to "psyche your opponent out". This gives the opponent a -2 circumstance penalty.

Optional Rule: A Contest of Wills: In some cases, the competition is won or lost before it even begins. This can even occur before combats or duels. Two opponents may make opposed Intimidation checks

using the Degrees of Success rules. The Target number for this contest is 40. The loser suffers a -2 circumstance penalty for the duration of the contest or fight.

- ◆ **Magic:** The most common and insidious form of magical cheating is the simple *charm* spell, often used to convince a competitor that he'd rather let a 'friend' win instead. If the competitor who ends up winning is obviously an inferior competitor, this tactic may arouse suspicion, and most large competitions have at least one hired spellcaster to detect magic usage.

Other uses of magic tend to fall into the distraction or sabotage categories, such as *greasing* the ground in front of one racer, or using illusions to mislead a member of a team to confuse his allies and opponents. Curses are also relatively common, and typically harder to overcome than charm spells, while transmutation or abjuration magic can make someone stronger or tougher than he should be.

Most spell effects should be handled on a case-by-case basis, rather than simply providing a skill modifier. Of course, the best type of cheating is subtle, so spells with obvious sensory cues are generally worthless.

- ◆ **Sabotage:** From attacking and crippling a competitor before a sporting event, to rigging their equipment to fail (Disable Device), or simply delaying them so they miss a match, sabotage is one of the more valid ways to cheat. Sabotaged equipment usually either fails completely, or gives a -2 circumstance penalty to all related checks. An injury likewise grants a -2 or greater circumstance penalty.
- ◆ **Sleight of Hand:** Hiding cards, using loaded dice, or tipping dice just as they settle is covered in the Pick Pocket skill description, above.

NEW FEATS

GAME MASTERY

You are exceptionally proficient at a particular game or event.

Requirements:

Knowledge (gambling & gaming): 5 ranks

Benefit:

You gain +4 to all skill checks when competing in your chosen event. This does not apply to martial events.

GAME GRANDMASTERY

You are a true expert at a particular game or event.

Requirements:

Knowledge (gambling & gaming): 8 ranks,
Game Mastery

Benefit:

You gain +6 to all skill checks when competing in your chosen event. This does not apply to martial events.

TOURNAMENTS

Tournaments are competitions involving large numbers of competitors where a person must defeat multiple opponents to be the tournament's champion. This section details the main types of tournaments and provides rules for running tournaments in-game. Usually these rules will only be useful or necessary for tournaments with more than 20 competitors, and become practically vital for competitions with more than a hundred people.

TYPES OF TOURNAMENT

- ◆ **Elimination:** In an elimination tournament, many small competitions go on at once, and out of each competition, only one person advances to the next round. Most elimination tournaments have two people compete per game, so after every round half of the competitors lose, or are 'eliminated.' However, elimination contests sometimes just have one round with many competitors. Many martial contests are handled this way, particularly ones that are fought to the death. Other sample elimination contests might be beauty contests (where competitors must prove their beauty in various ways), or dance competitions.
- ◆ **Round Robin:** In a round robin tournament, competitors do not get eliminated if they lose once. Rather, there are several rounds of small games, and the winner from each game gets points. After a certain number of rounds (usually at least four), whoever has the most points is the winner. Alternately, in some round robins, the top four or eight competitors play off in an elimination final. A classic example would be a large sporting league competition, where after each team gets a chance to play against several other teams, the teams with the best records proceed to a single-elimination competition.
- ◆ **Endurance Events:** Though not necessarily a tournament in itself, this is a type of contest where the overall rules for elimination or round robin tournaments become

more complicated. In an endurance event, competitors gradually deplete their resources over time, so that less skilled or weaker competitors are eliminated first, and only the most skilled reach the end of the round. Two examples would be a poker tournament (where players could run out of money and have to fold) or grand melees (where competitors gradually weaken and lose hit points).

Skill and Combat Ratings

Most tournaments involve large numbers of competitors, and it can be quite tedious to roleplay every round of a large contest. The following rules are intended to help streamline and add drama to the process of running tournaments.

These rules gloss over non-dramatic parts of competitions, instead choosing to speed play toward a dramatic conclusion. Thus, contests are simplified to just give each competitor a rating, so only close competitions are actually role-played out. The game master should determine approximate Skill Ratings or Combat Ratings for each competitor a player character will have to face, and for the PC herself. Most games in this book that use the tournament rules will provide instructions for determining Ratings.

For contests that simply rely on a skill check, the Rating is equal to the character's total skill modifiers, including synergy bonuses, ability bonuses, and so on. An additional bonus or penalty of up to +2 or -2 can be added for favorable or unfavorable circumstances, but bonuses or penalties beyond these would be highly anomalous (e.g., a first-level character who has a magic item that gives +20 to a particular skill check).

For contests of martial prowess, assign each character a Combat Rating, approximately equivalent to his base attack bonus. Additional bonuses and penalties of up to +2/-2 should take into account unusually high or low hit points, strange abilities or weaknesses, and extreme physical abilities. Note that total attack bonus is *not* used, because a higher-level warrior with more feats and special abilities can typically beat a lower-level combatant, even if that character is much stronger physically.

Teaming Up

If two or more competitors try to aid each other, use the 'aid another' rules from the core rules as normal – you can give a another PC a +2 bonus by succeeding with a skill check (using your rating) at DC 10. Treat the team as a whole as one competitor, for the sake of determining overall ranking (see below).

Tier	Local (Village)	Area (Town)	Region (County)	Country	World	Planar/ Interplanetary
Top Rating (2 competitors)	+4	+9	+14	+20	+30	+40
Second (4 competitors)	+2	+7	+12	+18	+28	+38
Third (8 competitors)	+0	+5	+10	+16	+26	+36
Fourth (16 competitors)	-	+3	+8	+14	+24	+34
Fifth (32 competitors)	-	+1	+6	+12	+22	+32
Sixth (64 competitors)	-	+0	+4	+10	+20	+30
Seventh (128 competitors)	-	-	+2	+8	+18	+28
Eighth (256 competitors)	-	-	+0	+6	+16	+26
Ninth (512 competitors)	-	-	-	+4	+14	+24
Lowest of Note (The masses)	-	-	-	+2	+12	+22

The game master may rule that in some games, teaming up is not an option, or that the number of people who can assist each other is limited. For example, though a team of allied warriors in a grand melee would have a better chance of success, in a game of poker, it helps little for two players to try to help each other.

Sample Ratings

For games where these tournament rules are appropriate, sometimes sample ratings might be given for opponents. When they are not, however, use the following guidelines. *Unskilled* competitors have a rating of 0, *amateurs* have a rating of 2, *average* competitors have a rating of 5, *challenging* competitors have a rating of 9, and *elite* competitors have a rating of 14 or higher. Ratings higher than this should be reserved only for notable characters, or for epic games.

To determine the number of competitors of a given skill level in a typical tournament, use the following table. The GM should choose a level of competition and a total number of competitors. The table below shows the

average distribution of skills for each level of competition. Typically, there are two competitors with the highest rating, and then for every 2 points the rating is lower, the number of competitors doubles.

If a competition has a tier with a rating of +0, and there are still more competitors that have not been accounted for, assume that all the others have a rating of +0.

GMs can of course alter these stats to fit the needs of the game's story. If a large war has drawn away most of the skilled warrior, even a National competition might have a highest rating of only +10, or perhaps an avatar of a deity with a rating of +45 comes to compete at a local village arm-wrestling competition.

For example, at a regional joust, 800 competitors have come to play for the prize. There are 510 competitors who might have at least a chance of winning, with ratings of +14 (2 people), +12 (4 people), +10 (8), +8 (16), +6 (32), +4 (64), +2 (128), and 0 (256).

Running Tournaments

Since usually all that will matter is how well key characters fare in a tournament, and not how well NPC #754 does, these rules assume that unimportant characters simply do their average.

If you choose not to roleplay individual competitions, assume that NPCs effectively Take 10. PCs and important NPCs can compete by rolling $d20 + \text{their rating}$, or they can choose to play safely and Take 10 as well. This is an abstraction of how the game would actually play out, but it has two main effects on simplifying the results of tournaments.

The PC should roll against each tier of competitor, starting at "Lowest of Note" and progressing through to "Top Rating". You might wish to roleplay a few specific encounters or matches, but the overall check against the tier is the deciding roll. It is usually more interesting if at least the final round of a competition is fully roleplayed, even if a PC could win simply by having a higher rating (note that the table does not include the finalist's rating, and neither does it include PC ratings).

Note

This method, like many other things in the d20 System is an abstraction. The actual structure of the tournament is not important, and neither is the actual number of contests each competitor must be involved in. The ratings and checks themselves are also abstract – A PC might win a grand melee because he outfights his opponents, or because he hangs back and lets everyone else soften up his main rivals.

Example 1: Meece competes in a national card tournament. His total skill bonus to Knowledge (gaming and gambling) is +22. He easily defeats early competition, progressing to the final. The game master decides to only roleplay two rounds during the tournament, one because a competitor will try to cheat against Meece, and the final round because the opponent has a Skill Rating of 29.

Example 2: Bengar is a Dwarf rogue who wants to try his hand at jousting. His base attack bonus is +4, but since he barely knows how to ride a horse, and has never jousted, the game master assigns him a Combat Rating of 2. He might fair well at a village fair against other amateurs, but he probably would not progress past round one in a royal joust.

CHAPTER TWO: CLASSIC GAMES

Certain games are considered classics. These games test what they're meant to test in perhaps the most efficient and entertaining way possible, usually only focusing on a single skill, rather than a combination of factors. From board games that simplify the core tenets of warfare strategy, to simple tests of strength or endurance, these competitions transcend boundaries of culture because, though minor variations appear everywhere, the core component of these competitions remain the same. Despite their simplicity, or perhaps because of it, many cultures highly respect those who are skilled at these games.

LAYOUT OF GAMES IN THE FOLLOWING CHAPTERS

Chapters Two through Six present sample games and tournaments, all of which use the same general format:

GAME NAME

Target Number/DS:

If the game uses Degrees of Success, this entry gives the Target Number required to win and indicates whether the DS is Direct or Opposed. The game's name is followed by a brief description and history of the game.

Mechanics: How you play the game.

Variants and Optional Rules: Regional variations or other ways to play the game are presented here, provided to add flavour and variety to the game.

ARM-WRESTLING

Target Number/DS: 20/Opposed.

Arm-wrestling is a simple test of opposed arm strength. Two competitors sit across a table from each other, clasp matching hands (right and right, or left and left), and try to shove the other person's hand to the surface of the table.

Mechanics

Each round, competitors make Strength checks. If neither competitor reaches the Target Number quickly, they may begin to tire. A character can arm-wrestle for a number

of rounds equal to her Constitution, but after that, she must succeed a Constitution check (DC 10) to continue to arm-wrestle. She must check again each round, and the DC increases by 1 for each check she has made. Characters with the Endurance feat gain a +4 bonus to this Constitution check.

When she fails this check, she can no longer arm-wrestle, and automatically loses. If both competitors fail their Constitution checks in the same round, then the winner is whoever had the higher DS (Degree of Success).

A character who fails the above Constitution check incurs a -2 penalty to all Strength-based rolls involving that arm until she can rest for at least one minute.

Variants and Optional Rules

Characters who compete with their off-hands may have a -2 penalty to their Strength checks. Characters with the Ambidexterity feat do not have this penalty.

Sometimes an arm-wrestle is conducted over a pair of spikes or flames, positioned so that the loser's hand is injured. If this variant is being played, the loser takes 1d4 points of damage, plus the winner's strength bonus. In addition, her hand is considered injured, incurring a -2 penalty to skills that require the use of that hand, and to attack rolls with that hand. This lasts until the injury is healed.

Wizards and sorcerers occasionally play psychic arm-wrestling, using their own mage hand spells (or, in rare cases, Bigby's hand spells) to wrestle. Instead of Strength checks, use opposed caster-level checks. Wizards, sorcerers or psions can also sometimes engage in mental conflicts which work in the same way as arm-wrestles, but Intelligence is substituted for Strength and Wisdom is substituted for Constitution. The GM can optionally rule that the loser takes damage.

CARD OR DICE GAMES

Target Number/DS: 10-60/Direct

These are generic rules which can be used with any card or dice game, or any game that relies a great deal on luck or chance, but in which skill can play a deciding factor.

Mechanics

Unless you want to go to more detail, simply have all players make opposed Knowledge (gaming and gambling) checks each round, with the winner adding to her DS. To simplify the process of playing the card or dice game, have each player bet before rolling his Knowledge (gaming and gambling) check. Each player then makes his skill check and adds that to his DS. Each player may then choose to bet again or to fold, and then each player still in makes a skill check as above. The process is repeated until someone reaches the Target Number for that game. The Target Number will vary depending on whether the game is based mainly on skill (high Target Number) or on luck (low Target Number). The winner of the entire game gets all the money that was wagered on that game.

Variants and Optional Rules

There are far too many variant types of card and dice games to detail here, but for most card games, players with 5 or more ranks of Bluff or Sense Motive get a +2 synergy bonus to their Knowledge (gaming & gambling) checks. For dice games, players with 5 or more ranks of Pick Pocket likewise get a +2 synergy bonus. For characters who wish to cheat, see the cheating rules in Chapter 1.

Different Games: The Target Number will vary depending on whether the game is based mainly on skill (high Target Number) or on luck (low Target Number). Craps (a dice game where players roll two dice and attempt to roll the same number twice without rolling certain taboo numbers first) has a Target Number of 20, while Spades has a Target Number of 40. Poker, despite appearing luck-based, is actually a very skilled game and has a Target Number of 50.

You may wish to make the game a little more detailed, but it is not recommended for streamlined play. However, some options are:

- ◆ *Raising:* allow players to raise in between rounds of skill checks. When the player comes to bet (before making his skill check) he may choose to “raise” the bet (within the betting limits of the House). All other players must meet that bet or fold.
- ◆ *Antes:* many games require a player to pay an “ante”. This is usually equal to the minimum bet. This ante is paid before the hand commences (i.e. when all DS are set at 0).

DRINKING

Target Number/DS: n/a.

Whoever lasts longest, wins!

Though some might call it a test of stupidity, the drinking contest is one of the most ancient forms of ‘civilized’ competitions. Competitors take turns ingesting drinks of alcohol, and the person who can drink the most without passing out or vomiting is the winner.

Mechanics

Use the drinking rules presented in Chapter 1, which each competitor drinking either in turn or simultaneously. After each drink, the drinker must at least be able to put down his glass without dropping it (Dex check DC 0). Most competitions require all participants to drink the same alcohol, but friendly competitions might give some people ‘handicaps’ by letting them either drink weaker alcohol or smaller portions.

Variants and Optional Rules

Some taverns hold competitions of speed drinking, where drinkers race. Usually they must see who can drink a bottle or large mug fastest, or perhaps several shots or cups. Whoever finishes all of her drinks first wins. If drinkers finish on the same round, whoever’s Fortitude roll is highest wins (see Chapter One), or they must have a run-off match.

Among Halflings, pie-eating contests are quite popular. The results of severe overeating are effectively the same as becoming drunk, especially considering some of the ingredients Halflings use. A typical slice of Halfling pie counts as 1 Pie Unit (PU), and Pie Threshold is calculated the same as Alcohol Threshold.

LONG THROW

Target Number/DS: -/Direct

Similar to arm-wrestling in that it tests strength, a competition to toss a heavy object also carries the additional restriction that only the strongest can even compete. Each competitor lifts the object to be thrown and hurls it as far as he can.

Mechanics

First, determine the weight of the object being thrown. Competitors whose maximum load is not sufficient to lift the object cannot compete. If the object is a medium load for a competitor, she has a -3 penalty to all rolls in this competition. If the object is a heavy load, the check penalty is -6.

Each competitor makes a Strength check to see how far she hurls the object. This result of her check becomes her DS (Degree of Success). If the thrown object is a weapon which the character has Weapon Focus in, she gets a +1 bonus to her check. Characters with the Far Shot feat double their rolls, because Far Shot doubles a thrown object's range increment. The competitor with the highest DS wins.

If the actual distance matters, rather than simply who wins, assume that any check result of 10 travels a distance equal to the object's range increment. For every 4 points beyond 10, the object travels another range increment. The normal limitation of 5 range increments for hurled objects does not matter here. For characters with the Far Shot feat, instead of doubling their result, simply calculate distance by doubling the object's range increment.

Specifics

The following objects are commonly used in long throw competitions.

- ◆ Javelin: Weight: 2 lb, Range increment: 30 ft
- ◆ Discus: Weight: 5 lb, Range increment: 20 ft
- ◆ Stone: Weight: 14 lb, Range increment: 10 ft
- ◆ Halfling: Weight: 30 lb, Range increment: 5 ft
- ◆ Small Boulder: Weight: 56 lb, Range increment: 5 ft
- ◆ Log (22' long): Weight: 150 lb, Range increment: 2 ft

Being thrown can be quite painful upon impact. If a person is thrown, she takes 1d6 points of falling damage upon landing. If she is thrown into a solid object like a wall, she takes 1d6 points of damage plus the thrower's Strength bonus. The object or creature struck takes the same damage. A Tumble check (DC 15) can negate the damage to the thrown creature.

Variants and Optional Rules

Some long throw competitions require the thrower to try to hit a target with precision. The target is typically a medium-size, immobile target (AC 5), at a distance of 4 standard range increments. For these competitions, contestants take turns throwing at targets. If a contestant misses and at least one other contestant hits, then the missing contestant loses. After every two series of throws, the target is moved back another range increment. Thus, usually only characters with Far Shot have a chance to hit accurately enough to win. The last competitor to stay in without missing wins.

Another variant, popularized with cabers (logs), is to have the hurled object make a precise rotation in mid-air. For most caber competitions, the goal is not to throw far, but to have the caber turn a precise 180-degree rotation and land on the end which the thrower initially held, without leaning significantly to either side. For throwing competitions like this, the thrower must still be strong enough to lift the object, but she makes a Dexterity check instead of a Strength check. She still suffers penalties if the object is a medium or heavy load.

Halfling toss is popular in many frontier towns, where humans and Halflings live together, and Halflings mock men for their large size. Large folk toss drunk Halflings into snow banks or hay bales from a distance of 15 ft or more, and throwers who miss not only lose but are pelted by Halfling-tossed stones. One man tried to play Dwarf toss, but he soon quit, saying, "It's not so easy anymore since I got me arm cut off."

RACES AND CHASES

Target Number: n/a./Direct

Races test speed and endurance, and are some of the most fast-paced competitions, making them great crowd-drawers. Races can be foot races, swimming races, horse races or even a mixture of various types.

Mechanics

You should determine the movement rates of various competitors. *Each competitor adds 2 points to any roll made per 10ft of movement rate.* The Run feat grants an additional +2 bonus in foot races. Note that the actual distance traveled is not important, only the relative Degrees of Success.

You should be aware of the use of Jump, Swim and Climb skills to make the most of this system. If you want to use races with mounts, make sure you are familiar with use of the Ride skill.

Races and chases are divided into "range increments". It's important to note that the actual distances covered by range increments (as with any DS-based mechanic) are abstract, as are the actual speeds of competitors, although individual GMs may wish to assign each race an actual distance per range increment; this will have no effect on the rules, however. These rules supersede the running mechanic in the Core Rules, presenting a more streamlined way of resolving competitive races and chases.

RACES

A race consists of a number of range increments.

- ◆ *Dash*: 2 range increments
- ◆ *Typical Race*: 10 range increments
- ◆ *Marathon*: 20 range increments

Each competitor makes one check for each range increment. The competitor with the highest total after all checks have been made is the winner.

- ◆ *Foot race*: Strength checks
- ◆ *Swimming race*: Swim checks
- ◆ *Climbing race*: Climb checks. Climbers must beat a DC at each range increment. Failed checks mean that the climber cannot proceed, although retries are allowed (in effect, this works out as an obstacle at every range increment – see below).
- ◆ *Mounted races*: Strength checks based on mount's Strength. For all of these checks, a rider or driver who succeeds a Ride check DC 10 grants her mount or vehicle a +2 bonus to the primary check. If the Ride check beats DC 20, the bonus is +4, and +6 for DC 30 or higher.
- ◆ *Mixed races*: some races may not simply require a single type of movement. For example, a race could consist of a mix of run, climb and swim checks.

A sample race: 6 competitors are racing in the Dak'Rothian Marathon, an event which involves running, swimming and climbing. It's a long event (20 range increments), and is set out as follows:

- ◆ *1-3: Initial Dash*: A straight run, designed to put some space between the competitors. In the third range increment, competitors must leap a small canyon (Obstacle, Jump DC 15 (failing causes 3d6 damage), Retry allowed).
- ◆ *4-6: Cliff-face*: Competitors must now climb a rocky cliff unaided. This has a base DC of 14 (this is essentially three range increments each of which contain an obstacle; retries are allowed).
- ◆ *7-8: Second Dash*: At the top of the cliff, runners race across a large meadow. At the end of the meadow (range increment 8) they must leap from the cliff into a lake below (Jump DC 12 to dive successfully, otherwise 3d6 damage).

- ◆ *9-12: Swim*: Competitors must now swim across the lake. It is a rough lake, requiring a swim check at DC 15 at each range increment (failing by 5 or more means that the swimmer starts to drown).
- ◆ *12-13: Underwater Tunnel*: Swimmers must then swim underwater through a tunnel (cumulative -1 to the swim checks).
- ◆ *14-18: Third Dash*: A little longer than previous footstages, and designed to weed out those who will have tired significantly by now. In the 16th range increment there is a slippery, marshy segment (Hazard, Balance DC 12).
- ◆ *19-20: Horserace*: Horses are waiting for the racers for the final leg of the race. At range increment 20 is a final canyon to be jumped (Obstacle, Jump DC 18, No retry, falling causes 4d6 damage).

CHASES

Chases are a little different to races. In a chase, you're not trying to establish which character reaches a target destination first; the "race" has no end until the chaser catches the escapee or gives up. Use the following process to run a chase:

Starting advantage: the escapee starts with an advantage, whether this be because the chaser takes a few moments before he begins the pursuit or because there is already distance between the two parties involved. This advantage must exist, otherwise the chase is over already. The advantage is expressed in terms of DS.

- ◆ *Time*: have the escapee make an initiative check. This represents his advantage and is used as his starting DS.
- ◆ *Distance-based*: use the base speed of the chaser, and determine how many "increments" of that base speed exist between the two parties. The escapee's starting DS is increased by 5 times that number.

Range increments work in the usual abstract fashion. For each range increment, both parties make the relevant checks (and obstacle checks if required). The GM should describe each increment before checks are made; often it is useful to give a number of alternatives for the next increment, so that the escapee may choose where to go. Different alternatives may require different check types (e.g. the current range increment is a busy street; the GM

describes this, and gives 3 options for the next increment: a run down a nearby side street, a climbing increment up the side of a building or a run through the city park, which includes an obstacle to proceed such as a wall which must be climbed over).

The race is over if the chaser's DS becomes equal to or greater than the escapee's or if the chaser's DS drops behind the escapee by 30 or more.

The escapee can utilize various tactics to help him escape. He may only use one tactic in any given range increment, and tactics are utilized before the regular race checks to increase DS (Strength/Climb/Swim etc.) are made.

- ♦ *Hiding*: if the escapee's DS is 20 points better than the chaser's and the current range increment is not a flat plain or field, then the escapee may make a Hide check vs. the chaser's Spot check. If he wins, then the chase is over. If he fails, he does not gain anything to his DS that round (whereas the chaser does).
- ♦ *Creating Hazards*: an escapee can attempt to put hazards (see Variants and Optional Rules, below) in the chaser's path. This requires a Dexterity check at DC 14. The DC that the pursuer must beat in order to avoid being slowed by the hazard is 10+ a voluntary check penalty decided on by the escapee. The escapee may describe the hazard how he wishes, based on the GM's description of his surroundings. Attempting to create a hazard costs the escapee 5 DS plus the voluntary check penalty used to create the hazard.

Example – Ralf is escaping from the city guard. He has a DS lead of 12, and decides to delay his pursuer. He takes a -4 penalty to his Dex check (and his DS, reducing his lead to 8) and succeeds in his check, knocking over a barrel of apples into his pursuer's path. The guard must now make a Balance check at

DC 14; he fails, and does not gain any DS for that range increment. Ralf rolls his Strength check (for a foot-race) normally, increasing his DS by 12 points, making his lead a full 20 points. With that lead, he may now attempt to hide, and so in the next range increment, he rolls a Hide Check vs. the guard's Spot check and succeeds. The chase is over.

Variants and Optional Rules

Long races: longer races presents the possibility of competitors failing due to tiredness or a lack of endurance. A character may safely race for a number of range increments equal to his (or his mount's) Constitution score. After that, he must make an additional Constitution check each round with a DC equal to twice the number of range increments so far raced. A failed check means that the competitor must rest, adding 0 to his DS for that range increment. A non-living mount (for example, an automated vehicle or an undead mount) does not need to make Constitution checks.

Pacing: a character may choose to pace himself, sacrificing overall speed in order to be able to race for longer. Alternatively, the character may choose to sprint, racing faster but tiring more easily. The character may choose to either add 2 to his ability checks but suffer a 2 point penalty to his Constitution for the duration of the race, or he may choose to sacrifice 2 points on his ability checks in order to add 2 points to his Constitution.

Obstacles: the above rules assume a race on a straight track or one relatively free of complications. For races with obstacles, sharp turns, or other hazards, contestants have to make a secondary check whenever a hazard occurs to determine how well they deal with it. These obstacles occur at specific places in the race, marked by specific range increments. There are two types of obstacle – an Obstacle and a Hazard:

Name	Type	Retry?	Skill Check	Taking Damage
Hurdles/Hedges	Hazard	n/a	Jump DC 15	1d3
Debris in path	Hazard	n/a	Balance DC 10	No
Canyon	Obstacle	Yes	Jump DC 18	No
Ledge (jump down)	Hazard	n/a	Jump DC 12	2d6
Cliff	Obstacle	Yes	Climb DC 10-20	No

- ♦ *Obstacle*: these obstacles must be successfully navigated in order to progress in the race. If a character cannot make the required check, she forfeits the race. *Retries*: Generally, failing a “mandatory” skill check at an obstacle (i.e. one required to even continue the race) means you forfeit the race (unless optional damage is allowed instead). However, many skill checks allow for retries. Once you have failed an initial skill roll, your DS increases by 0 for that range increment even if you succeed in a retry. Each retry decreases your current DS by 10 points. This only applies if retries are allowed for that obstacle.
- ♦ *Hazard*: these obstacles don’t stop a character dead, although if not successfully navigated they can slow her down. The character should make the required check when reaching the range increment at which the hazard occurs; a successful check allows her to continue as normal, while a failed check allows her to continue but prevents her DS from increasing that round.

Taking Damage: The GM may rule that a competitor may take damage and continue the race normally on a failed obstacle check rather than slow down or stop at that range increment. The damage will vary (perhaps a jump down from a rooftop will cause 2d6 damage, or running blindly through a thorn bush will cause 1d4 damage). This rule is also useful when using vehicles, as a competitor may deliberately take risks that damage the vehicle in order to keep up.

Some example obstacles are presented below. The GM should set specific obstacles for each race. Some Elves hold climbing races through tree branches, instead of up cliffs, while Halflings and Gnomes are fond of occasionally using larger races as their mounts.

STRATEGY

Target Number: Varies/Opposed.

The simpler and faster a game, the lower Target Number. Chess has a Target Number of 50, and the Margins of Success of other games are detailed below.

Of all the classic games presented in this chapter, Strategy board games vary the most from region to region. The classic example of this game is Chess, in which the various pieces iconographically represent the different abilities and distributions of real military forces. Other strategy games may be somewhat more or less complicated, and some might seem to have nothing to do with combat, but all strategy games promote thinking about both your

own moves and those of your opponent, encouraging long-term, tactical thinking.

Mechanics

Opponents make opposed Knowledge (gaming and gambling) checks, which represent progressive efforts to outmaneuver and defeat the opposing side. The first gamer who reaches the Target Number wins. For strategy games with more than two players, the highest rolling character out of the group adds to her DS, and a gamer must reach the Target Number against all competitors to win. In most board games, competitors hang around until the end, and always have a chance to make a come back. In others, particularly ones where players control ‘military forces,’ whenever the leading player reaches the Target Number against another player, that other player loses, his forces or money depleted. The continues until only one player is left.

Variants and Optional Rules

Gnomish Ambush uses a board with a screen across the middle. Two players set their pieces before the game starts, and then describe to each other where on a grid their pieces move, trying to avoid an ambush. It is mostly a game of chance, but Gnomes appreciate its unpredictability. *Target Number: 10*

Nyming’ur Kir’uctur is an Elvish game whose length matches the lifespan of its players. Hundreds of pieces are involved, representing different aspects of culture and society. There can be up to eight common players at a time, and a ninth player can join if he wishes, but he must play a divinity. Players add their DS score to their Knowledge (gaming and gambling) checks, and the DS vaguely represents the resources that player has available. A player who defeats another player subtracts the loser’s DS score from her own, representing the suffering of conflict. *Target Number: 200*

Keegan’s Wheel is played among Dwarves, with two players – one Goblin side and one Dwarf side. The loser of a coin toss has to play the Goblin side, and though he has four times as many pieces, he has to surround a single Dwarvish piece on two sides in order to capture it, while a Dwarvish piece simply has to move over a Goblin piece to capture it. The Dwarf player can use a turn to add or remove ‘walls’ to the board, while the Goblin player can spend a turn to create another Goblin piece in each of the four corners of the board. The Goblin player starts with a DS score of 10, but the Dwarf player has a +2 bonus to all his checks. *Target Number: 40*

CHAPTER THREE: MARTIAL TOURNAMENTS

Combat and defense is one of the foremost concerns of societies and civilization, so it is not surprising that many competitions focus on martial skills and exposition. Warrior societies put great stock in such tournaments, while more secure cultures, which tend to find martial competitions to be quaint throwbacks to more dangerous times, enjoy combat competitions as entertainment detached from actual needs for military might. This interest might hail from a chivalric sense of honor and nobility, or in the simple debauched bloodlust of a decadent nation. All of the contests in this chapter make use of standard combat rules, rather than the Degree of Success rules in Chapter One.

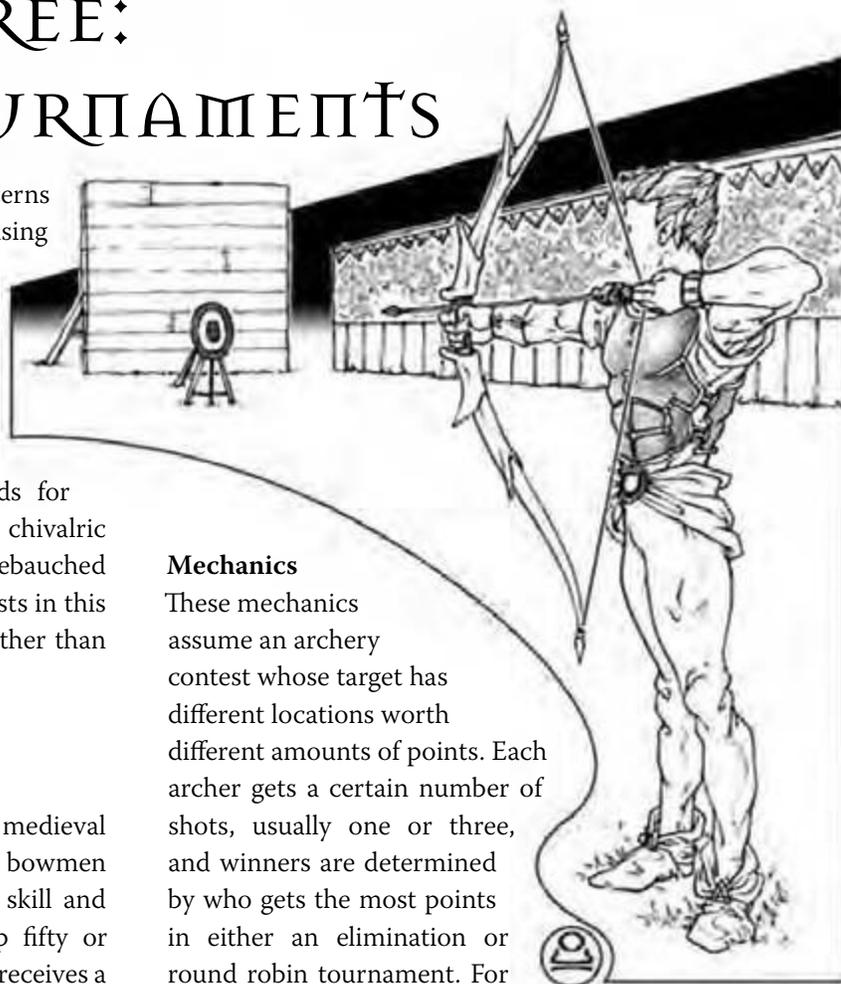
ARCHERY

Target Number/DS: n/a.

The archer with most points wins. A staple of medieval tournament events, the archery contest draws bowmen from far and wide to compete in this test of skill and accuracy. Contests can sometimes attract up fifty or more skilled competitors, and the winner often receives a valuable prize – cash, jewelry or, more commonly, a fine bow or quiver of arrows.

In traditional archery contests, contestants fire arrows at a stationary target, though some tournaments use moving targets or have the archers fire from horseback. Usually the target has different locations that are worth different points in a contest, though some contests simply require a contestant to hit the target at all to progress.

Total Atk Roll	Location	Points
Less than 5	Miss	0
5	Outer Ring	1
6	Middle Ring	3
7	Inner Ring	5
9+	Bull's Eye	10
13+	Split Another Arrow	Same as original arrow's, but also crowd approval



Mechanics

These mechanics assume an archery contest whose target has different locations worth different amounts of points. Each archer gets a certain number of shots, usually one or three, and winners are determined by who gets the most points in either an elimination or round robin tournament. For each shot, the archer makes an attack roll, and the total AC he hits determines how many points he gets. The first round of shots is typically at 100ft, which targets being moved back 100ft per round thereafter that there is no winner. Make sure to take into account range penalties.

Variants and Optional Rules

Common variants involve using other weapons than bows. Halflings favor slings or javelins, Gnomes enjoy watching blindfolded archery, and Dwarves are renowned for throwing hand axes through kegs of ale.

Orcs practice *Punctureshot Archery* contests, where the goal is to shoot *through* several archery targets. Each target is a sheet of painted paper attached to a thin sheet of wood. After the arrow hits, roll for damage. For every 5 points of damage, the arrow punctures one target and hits the next. Magical arrows are usually forbidden, but most Orcs won't know the difference unless the arrows are obviously enchanted. For every target punctured, double the points earned. A bullseye that deals 20 damage and punctures 4 targets would gain a base of 10

points, times 16 (2x2x2x2), for 160 points. Sometimes, instead of archery targets, Orcs line up prisoners of war, which take 10 points of damage to puncture through a torso. For another archery competition, see the *Tree Game*, page 26.

CRAZY ERNIE'S BEAR WRASSLIN' FOR CRAZY FOLK

Target Number/DS: n/a.

Existing combat rules handle the contest.

"Bear wrasslin'! Come and wrassle the bear!

Step right up, only one silver!"

Crazy Ernie is a middle-aged human man, who seems to have a few physical problems. His head is perpetually canted over at a slight angle, and he stalks the grounds near his fair booth with a seemingly exaggerated limp. Apparently a victim of too many head wounds, Crazy Ernie has problems staying on task, or remembering what happened a few minutes ago. Despite his injuries received while training his bears to 'wrassle,' Ernie loves the big furry creatures, and wants to share his love with fairgoers wherever he travels. In his case, sharing love involves giving every man, woman, child, and Elf a chance to grapple with a fierce black bear.

Ernie keeps three black bears and one brown with him at any given time, in special wagons equipped to hold them. The bears have been declawed ("which they weren't too keen on," Ernie states), but the wizards Ernie hires to make sure people don't cheat at his games are quick to warn the overeager that they haven't been *de-teethed*.

For the cost of 1 silver piece (children can get in for 1 copper piece), a person is let into one of the cages to try to fight the bear. All fighting must be bare-handed, with no aid of magic, and even those who don't win get a prize depending on how long they last. Each person gets a choice of which bear they want to face, but Ernie will always encourage strong folk to test their limits.

A hired wizard is present at every game to *detect magic* as an assurance against cheating. Cheaters who are caught are reported to fairground authorities, and "don't get a chance to wrassle unless they ask real nice like." The wizards are also useful for casting *sleep*, either on the bear, or the person, since Ernie claims that bears stop mauling sleeping people.

Mechanics: The contest is run like combat, though the trained bears do not try to deal damage other than subdual. If a bear pins a person, Ernie will let the bear hold him for a few rounds while he congratulates them

for trying their best, then gives the command for the bear to let go. If a person pins a bear, Ernie will applaud, then ask for the person to let his bear free and come out to get a prize.

The bears will try to grapple smaller foes straight off, but against larger foes will take a few swipes first. They have been trained to be relatively docile, and will not make any bite attacks unless non-subdual damage is dealt to them. Nor will they keep attacking unconscious foes, usually. Note that bears do not have the improved grapple ability, so they use standard grappling rules.

The statistics for the bears are as follows.

"Sonny," a young brown bear, reserved for children. Small Animal. HD 1d8+2; hp 6; AC 13, 12 (touch); Attacks: 2 swipes +3 melee (1d3+2 subdual), bite -2 melee (1d4+1); Grapple check modifier: -2; Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +0; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 14.

"Boozer," average brown bear, for teenagers and Elves. Medium-size Animal. HD 3d8+6; hp 19; AC 13, 11 (touch); Attacks: 2 swipes +6 melee (1d4+4 subdual), bite +1 melee (1d6+2); Grapple check modifier: +6; Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +2; Str 19, Dex 13, Con 15.

"Grinder," big brown bear, for adults. Medium-size Animal. HD 5d8+15; hp 37; AC 14, 11 (touch); Attacks: 2 swipes +9 melee (1d4+6 subdual), bite +4 melee (1d6+3); Grapple check modifier: +9; Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 23, Dex 13, Con 17.

"Butch," massive female black bear, for the brave and foolish. Large Animal. HD 10d8+50; hp 95; AC 15, 9 (touch); Attacks: 2 swipes +16 melee (1d8+6 subdual), bite +4 melee (2d8+3); Grapple check modifier: +21; Fort +12, Ref +7, Will +4; Str 31, Dex 11, Con 21.

Ernie, 12th-level human Expert (wrestler). HD 12d6+48; hp 90; AC 7, 7 (touch); Attacks: unarmed +14/+9 melee (1d3+4 subdual); Grapple check modifier: +13; Fort +12, Ref +1, Will +5; Str 18, Dex 4, Con 18; Feats: Endurance, Great Fortitude, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Unarmed Strike, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (Unarmed).

The prizes vary on how well Ernie thinks you do. As a general guideline, he'll offer some token worth 5 silver pieces to anyone who pins Boozer or Grinder, typically some form of bear paraphernalia. Children who successfully pin Sonny get 1 silver piece and a lollipop (but only after they wash their hands of fur). Anyone who can pin Butch (a feat Ernie himself could only pull off when Butch was a baby) gets invited by Ernie to a local tavern for drinks, or barring that, a small gold pin

in the shape of a bear. Prizes are, of course, lower if Ernie thinks you weren't taking a risk, like if a big Orc wants to 'wrassle' Sonny.

If a person doesn't manage to pin a bear, but can last at least 30 seconds (5 rounds) without getting himself pinned, Ernie will let him try again for free after he rests for an hour.

Variants and Optional Rules

If a druid or other shape-shifter offers to assume bear form, Ernie will gladly 'wrassle' her, and actually pay 1 gold piece for the opportunity, though he gets riled up if the person deals real damage to him.

DRINKSMASH

Target Number/DS: n/a.

An ancient game among Orcs, Drinksmash involves the two things Orcs love, drinking and smashing. The players take turns punching each other, but before each punch, they must drink a large mug of Orcish Ale Stout.

The game is initiated when one player challenges the other. The challenged player then decides who punches first. That player then downs a full mug of the ale and then punches the other player as hard as he can. The player cannot move to dodge, or else he loses, but if the punch misses or connects but deals no damage, it still counts as a turn. The last Orc standing wins, though usually the ale does them in before the damage.

Most drinksmash games either aren't wagered on, or have only minor wagers, like beads or necklaces. They are normally just used as a show of might to gain respect.

Mechanics

See the drinking rules in Chapter One. Before each Orc's turn, he must quaff a large mug of Orcish Ale Stout (12 AU). Then he punches the other character in the face, usually taking full advantage of Power Attack if he has that feat. Since the other character must accept the hit, he acts as if his Dexterity were 0, so hitting should be easy, until the combatants get too drunk. Because the target is effectively flat-footed, rogues can make sneak attacks by hitting vital spots (like jamming the target's nose cartilage into his brain, for instance).

Variants and Optional Rules: Stonehead is a variant common among Orcish rogues, derived from the legend of an Orcish thief who stole three handfuls of gemstones

from an Elvish prince by balancing one handful on his head. It is a somewhat less bloody variant of Drinksmash, and has all the same rules, plus each Orc has to balance a flat stone on his head, about three inches across. After being hit, the Orc must succeed a Balance check (DC 5 + damage taken) to keep the stone balanced on his head. The game becomes progressively harder as each player becomes increasingly drunk and unbalanced.

DUELLING

Target Number/DS: n/a.

Duels are melee combat competitions usually involving only two competitors. Often used to settle disputes of honor or to settle arguments, a duel is basically just a normal fight with some rules structuring how it is run.

The main differentiation of duels is whether they are to be fought to the death, or simply until one side forfeits or is wounded. Some forms of duelling limit the movements or attacks duellists can use, and occasionally duels limit each competitor to only a single strike.

Mechanics

The normal combat rules handle all the details of basic duels. Many duels are free-form, but most have at least some restrictions or code of conduct.

Duels to first blood last either until one duellist passes out from loss of hit points, or until a character scores a critical hit that deals damage. Previous 'hits' might simply bruise or wind the opponent, and not actually draw blood. If the first blow to draw blood kills the target, this is not a violation of the rules, though it is likely to cause arguments and debates.

Circle duels take place wholly within a 5-foot radius circle, usually painted onto or carved into the floor. This allows combatants to freely make 5-foot adjustments (stepping around the edge of the circle), but any intentional movement outside the ring is considered a loss. Knocking an opponent out of the circle is considered bad form, and usually results in a loss for the offender.

Some duels require both fighters to clasp hands or have their left or right arms lashed together. This has some of the same effects of grappling, but not all. Combatants are limited to light weapons, are both in the same square, and have no threatened area, but they do not lose their Dexterity bonus to AC. A character must win an opposed Strength check to be able to move them, and even then is limited only to a 5-foot adjustment. In place of a normal attack, a combatant may attempt an opposed Strength check with a -5 penalty. If successful, he pulls

his opponent off balance, making him flat-footed until his next turn.

Line fencing duels are fought along a straight line, 5 feet wide and 30 feet long. No sideways movement is permitted. Fighters can try to push their opponent back as an attack action, which is resolved similar to a Bull Rush, but usually without any physical contact. Instead of opposed Strength checks, the fighters make opposed attack rolls, but the results are otherwise the same (*i.e.*, if the defender loses, he is moved back 5 feet, plus as much as another foot for each point the attacker won by, if he so wishes, to the maximum of his normal movement).

Quickdraw duels allow each combatant only one attack, and combatants must begin with swords sheathed. When the fight begins, the fighters roll initiative, and each gets to take one partial action in the first round. If a character has Quickdraw, he can draw and attack in the first round, but otherwise he cannot actually attack until the second round. Typically, whoever strikes first is the winner, though if a single strike is enough to kill or render unconscious one of the competitors, the survivor is automatically the winner even if he struck late. If character's have tied initiative, they act at the same time, so it is possible that both characters might fall unconscious or die, in which case neither side wins. Note that sometimes these matches devolve into a standard fight, but such combat is usually against the rules.

Variants and Optional Rules

If you have pistols in your game, quickdraw duels can represent standard quickdraw gun duels, in addition to sword duels.

Orcish Ritual Brawling is a duel in which both competitors must grapple each other for the whole duration. Any fighter breaking the grapple is considered a loser, but submitting once pinned is not considered dishonorable. These duels are not always limited to only two Orcs, but moderators try (often in vain) to keep the numbers even on both sides.

Elvish Utaken (Bladesong) Duels require duellists to sing while fighting. This singing can be done as a free action that lasts each character's entire turn, but at the beginning of his turn, a duellist must succeed a Concentration check (DC 10 +half the damage taken during the last round) or must stop singing because of distraction or injury. A duellist that stops singing loses. Sometimes duels are staged with padded weapons for sport, and instead of having to make a Concentration check each round, the duellists must make opposed Perform checks

once every two rounds (*i.e.*, after both duellists take their actions, make one opposed check). They have a penalty to this check equal to half the amount of damage they took during the previous round, subdual or otherwise. Keep track of each duellist's Degree of Success, and after a minute of duelling, the audience usually chooses the duellist with the highest DS on his Perform checks as the winner.

Red Herring duels are beloved by Gnomish illusionists, who use opposing *major image* spells to battle against each other. Actual moves and attacks in the illusory combat are unimportant, but each round the spellcasters make opposed Spellcraft checks, with a +2 synergy bonus if they have 5 or more ranks of Perform. After a minute or two of combat, or whenever one illusionist comes out as the obvious winner, the duel ends, and the spellcaster with the highest Degree of Success wins. Sometimes, a truly skilled Gnome can trick a real opponent into duelling with an illusory foe, though the opponent gets a normal chance to disbelieve any illusion with which they interact.

Than Uthami (Mountain Under a Gale) is a type of Dwarven duel in which the duellists cannot move their feet. Fighters act as if their Dexterity scores were 10 points lower for the purposes of AC, to a minimum of 1. Thus, a Dwarf with a 16 Dexterity normally would act as if his Dexterity were still 6, while an average Dwarf would have the AC modification as if he had a Dexterity score of 1. Grappling is forbidden, and all strikes must be downward or straight-on, never upward (this has no game implication; it is merely flavour).

FIELD LIST

Target Number/DS: n/a.

A relatively simple competition, a field list (often called a *grand melee*) is simply a large fight that is put on either for training or for the entertainment of spectators. Usually weapons are padded to prevent serious injuries, but more primitive or bloodthirsty societies have no qualms sending men to die for entertainment.

Mechanics

Use the rules in chapter 1 for running events with large numbers of participants to run a grand melee. Leaving the combat field or attacking a spectator is an instant disqualification, and may, in the latter case, result in serious injury from festival guards. When there are only two remaining combatants, revert to normal combat rules. Weapons that are padded deal subdual damage, unless the fighter takes a -4 penalty to his attack roll to deal real damage.

In most field lists, the last man standing is the winner. In some, two or more teams face off, sometimes with a mix of foot soldiers and mounted warriors. Each list usually has strict rules concerning the use of magic.

Variants and Optional Rules: Among Dark Elves, melees are used in warrior-training, typically taking place in small labyrinths with many opportunities for ambush and evasion. Instructors usually oversee these matches either via magic, or from positions above the battle, and assign class rankings based on how long each character lasts. It matters not how many foes one defeats personally – all that matters is your own survival.

Some lands may put on huge showcases of grand melees, often bringing in exotic types of fighters to entertain crowds that number in the tens of thousands. Some examples include chariot-combat, flooded arenas for sea battles, dire elephants, swarms of tigers, soldiers against young Dragons, or last-man-standing challenges against tyrannosaurs or iron golems. Particularly vile competitions may have necromancers ready to raise fallen warriors as undead to keep fighting.

Jousting

Target Number/DS: n/a.

A joust is a competition between two mounted warriors who charge at each other with lances, attempting to knock each other from the saddle. Usually a low, long barrier is placed along the line of the joust, with one competitor on each side, so the mounts ride past each other as the mounted warriors strike. A rider's charge is sometimes called a "tilt," and often huge crowds gather to cheer their favorites jousters as they tilt at each other.

The joust is a highly respected competition among knights and nobles, and in a society where mounted knights are the core of military strength, the joust may be the most honored and eagerly anticipated competition in an entire year's worth of festivals. Frequently the first full day of any grand tournament is devoted to the joust, with much ritual and pageantry both before and after the event.

The goal of a joust is to knock the opposing rider from his saddle without being knocked off oneself. Occasionally riders must take several passes at each before one of them is de horsed. Since the light lances used in entertainment jousts are made to shatter on impact (to reduce the likelihood of killing a knight), a squire who assists the knight is usually present by the side of the field to toss fresh lances to his master after each charge.

If a knight de horses his opponent, he wins. If both riders are de horsed simultaneously, typically the knights recover themselves and continue the fight on foot. Since riders usually do not carry weapons other than a lance (sometimes jousts involve swords or spears, but lances are the most common), squires have to hand a melee weapon to his master if the joust progresses to close combat.

Because jousts are primarily for entertainment and not actually intended to injure, knights typically ride in full plate, with large shields to absorb most of the shock of a lance strike. Some jousts limit knights so they can only strike at each other's shields as a safety precaution, but not all do. As mentioned above, many jousts also use weak wooden lances that shatter upon impact, making critical hits impossible. Regardless of precautions, however, jousts always carry an element of risk.

Though occasionally bloody, or even deadly, jousts are beloved by festival-goers for the thunder of hooves, flashing glint of steel armor, and crack of lance against shield.

Mechanics

The core rules present most of the necessary information for running jousts, with one exception, namely that according to the rules for the Ride skill, the DC for staying in a saddle when injured is a mere 5, simple for even novice horsemen. Since practical experience tells us that it is indeed quite possible to de horse someone in a joust, you are advised to implement the following rule.

Whenever two horsemen charge each other simultaneously, traveling parallel to each other but within striking distance, any impact tends to stop the rider's momentum without slowing his mount, effectively knocking him off the back of side of his seat. When such conditions are met (typically only in a joust, or when two mounted opponents decide to charge each other head-on), a rider struck must succeed a Ride check (DC 5 +damage dealt) or fall off his mount.

In a joust, both riders strike simultaneously, each making one single attack against his opponent. If a rider is struck, he must succeed a Ride check (DC 5 +damage dealt) or fall from his saddle. If one rider falls, the one still on his mount wins. If both riders are de horsed, the joust turns into melee combat, with each warrior usually having one round to get up and get a weapon before combat renews. Melee combat usually lasts only until one side submits, or

to unconsciousness, but rarely to death. If neither rider falls, both knights reach the end of the jousting field, turn, and make another charge at each other, repeating until someone wins.

A knight who is de horsed can attempt a Ride check (DC 15) to make a soft fall. Otherwise, he takes 1d6 points of damage. Most knights use warhorses, which obey commands readily, but if for some reason a warrior jousts with a non-warhorse, he must succeed a Ride check (DC 20) to convince it to charge into combat.

Each combatant may also select from a few options:

- ◆ *Aim at helm:* this has a penalty of -8 to the attack roll, but the Ride DC to stay mounted of the knight struck is DC 15 + damage dealt.
- ◆ *Crouch defensively:* a knight who chooses to joust defensively has a -4 penalty to his attack roll but a +4 bonus to his Ride check.

Jousting lances break easily. A lance that does more than 15 points of damage automatically breaks. This is desirable, as breaking a lance on an opponent wins the crowd's favor (the lance is immediately replaced).

Variants and Optional Rules

Most jousting tournaments do not simply have lists, but also test knights in other ways. Usually, over the course of a tournament, the various tests are worth points, and preliminary tilts are worth more points, with the four highest-scoring knights proceeding to an elimination final competition. Each knight competes in each of the small tests, a sample few of which are presented here.

Ring and Wreath: in this competition, a rider must charge at full speed down the length of a field, using his lance to pick up three small rings held out by squires. At the end of the charge, a fourth squire holds a wreath of leaves, which, if the knight succeeds in catching it, he usually gives to a maiden in the audience that catches his eye. The rings and wreath (tiny objects) each require an attack roll against AC7 to pick up. The knight can try for each ring and wreath regardless of the number of attacks he gets, because this is not actually combat. Each ring is worth one point, and the wreath is worth five points.

Javelin Toss: in the javelin toss, the knight rides at full speed down the field and tosses a javelin at an archery target at the end of the field, from a range of at least twenty feet. Use the rules presented in the archery section above

to determine what area of the target the knight strikes, and how many points he earns. Each knight is allowed to make two tosses, taking the best score of the two.

Windmill Tilt: at mid-length down the field, a rotating sign is placed, with one side painted red, the other white. The knight rides at the sign and strikes its edge as hard as possible. For every 4 points of damage dealt with the attack, the sign rotates once, earning the knight one point per rotation.

Race: a race between two or more mounted warriors, this contest uses the rules presented in Chapter Two for races. Each knight participates in only one race, usually involving four laps around the jousting field, and the winner takes 10 points.

Obstacle Course: this competition requires the knight to guide his horse down the field, which is obstructed with bails of hay that must be jumped, high wooden walls that must be ridden around, low bars which must be ducked, or sometimes even ramps that lead up to a long pool which must be leaped. The obstacles are made to be more hazardous to the rider than to the horse, so obstacles that could result in a broken leg are usually avoided. The game master should devise a combination of Jump and Ride checks, with points earned equalling 1 for every 5 points of DC beyond 10. For jumps, use the lower bonus of either the rider's Ride skill or the mount's Jump skill to determine how far the mount can jump. During a leap, the rider must succeed a Ride check (DC 15) or fall off the horse.

As an example, an obstacle course might require hurdling three bales of hay (Jump or Ride DC 10, 1 point each), ride through a series of silk curtains that shroud vision and conceal wooden poles at head-height (Reflex DC 8 to avoid, 2 points), and finally jump a 15 foot lake (Jump or Ride DC 14 for a light horse or DC 16 for a heavy horse, 10 points).

Some obstacle courses include a javelin toss, ring and wreath, or windmill tilt in addition to avoiding the obstacles. The distractions of the obstacles incurs a -2 circumstance penalty to the knight's attack rolls for these test.

Preliminary Tilts: In qualifying tilts, a knight earns eight points for de horsing an opponent while staying in his own saddle. If he defeats his opponent in melee on foot, he gains only three points. Each knight usually participates in three to six preliminary tilts. Instead of

using tournament fields, Halflings sometimes host jousts on long narrow bridges over water, which sometimes have their railings removed to add to tension. The knights and their mounts (riding dogs) charge and make one strike each, then wheel around and continue to fight in the center of the bridge. A mount by the edge must make a Balance check (DC 5) each round it is in combat, or fall off the edge. A knight can win either by dedogging his opponent, outfighting him in melee, or knocking him off the bridge. The fall into water can be a jolt, but is rarely dangerous.

Lances may either be “outrance,” with a standard sharpened point, or may be tipped with a blunting wooden plate, referred to as “arms of courtesy.” Alternately, weaker lances may be used, which always shatter after one strike. In jousts that are intended to be safe, knights are limited to striking each other in the shield with lances that are either blunted or made to break. If a blow is intentionally aimed only for the shield, or if the lance is blunted, the damage is automatically subdual. If a lance is intended to break, it cannot inflict critical hits.

THE TREE GAME

Target Number/DS: n/a.

A unique archery game that encourages even commoners to practice their shooting skills, the Tree Game was invented by Halfling nomads who needed archery practice but could not be bothered to carry large targets. Originally the game consisted of first shooting arrows into a tree, then firing more arrows to try to dislodge them, but current versions of the game are far more festive, because bags filled with candy or copper coins are hung high in trees, and well-aimed shots can free them for the crowd. If only short trees are available, javelins or stones are usually thrown instead of using bows, which would make the contest too easy. The weapons being fired or thrown are almost always padded, to prevent possible injuries.

Before the game starts, a large number of objects are put into the branches of the tree. Traditionally, archers fire blunted arrows up to get caught in boughs or branches (these arrows are marked with ribbon or coloured fletching to differentiate them from the arrows being shot to dislodge them), but sometimes people climb up and hang candy bags from the branches. Sometimes, arrows are still shot up, but people who knock arrows out are rewarded with candy and coins. The maximum number of contestants allowed is equal to the number of items left in the branches, so everyone has a chance at

winning something, but typically games don't go above a dozen players, or else they get cluttered. Usually all contestants begin with the same amount of ammo, to be fair (typically 3 or 5 shots).

At a signal, everyone begins shooting (or throwing), trying to dislodge the objects in the tree. Contestants are free to move around beneath the tree to try to find better positions, but climbing the tree is forbidden for obvious reasons. After everyone uses all their ammo, or after a preset amount of time, the game ends. If playing for prizes, contestants get to keep whatever they knock out of the tree (or can exchange a knocked-down target for 1 silver piece worth of candy or toys. More serious games with skilled competitors are usually observed by several judges, and whoever knocks the most objects out of the tree wins a small prize.

Mechanics

The game is set up around a tree, which must be at least 30 ft high. A standard tree for this game has a five-foot diameter trunk, with branches that begin at 20 ft up and end at 70 ft up. Objects hanging in the tree are typically Diminutive, with an AC of 9. However, because the objects must be dislodged and not just struck, they gain an effective AC of 11 for attempts to knock them out of the tree. Distance is not usually a big factor for bows, since most trees are not tall enough to go beyond one or two range increments, but range is definitely important for thrown weapons.

Intervening Branches	Effective AC	Miss Chance
0-14 ft	11	0%
15-24 ft	13	10%
25-39 ft	15	20%
40-44 ft	18	30%
45-49 ft	21	40%
50 ft+	21	50%

Additionally, intervening branches provide cover and concealment bonuses to the target's ACs. Consult the following table to determine how hard targets would be to hit. Targets concealed by more than 50 ft of intervening branches are effectively invisible, and cannot be seen or even targeted normally, though few trees get as large as that.

CHAPTER FOUR: TAVERN GAMES

All targets have base AC 11, so shots that beat AC 11 but not the effective AC listed above are stopped by cover granted by interposing branches. Shots that miss because of cover fall back down to the ground (arrows have a 50% chance of breaking; arrows that don't break can be fired again). Shots that miss for any reason other than cover fly out of the tree and are effectively lost.

As a full-round action, a player can make a Spot check (DC 10) to try to find a clearer path to one of the targets. He spends that round moving around under the tree looking for openings, and if he is successful, he can shoot as if there were 20 ft fewer intervening branches. Doing this repeatedly does not provide greater benefits than 20 ft. Note that Spot checks get a penalty of -1 for every 10 ft of distance.

Before the game begins, the game master should make a quick list of what numbers and types of prizes are at each height in the tree.

Variants and Optional Rules: Earlier versions of the game focus on trying to hang arrows in the branches of a tree. A contestant gets one point for each arrow he shoots that is still hanging at the end of the game, and one point for each arrow shot by another contestant that he knocks out of the tree. Games usually last between one and five minutes. Each contestant begins with 20 arrows. By firing an arrow, a contestant can hang an arrow in the branches with a successful attack roll against AC 10. For every 2 points the attack roll beats AC 10, the archer can choose to hang his arrow 5 ft higher in the branches. Firing into the trunk is forbidden (since it is too easy to stick an arrow there, and too hard to dislodge one), but a critical hit from a shot to hang an arrow in the trees causes the arrow to imbed firmly into a branch, giving a -10 circumstance penalty to any shot to knock them out.

Alternately, an archer may fire a shot to try to dislodge another archer's arrow, using the basic rules presented above. The archer may choose to take a -10 penalty to his attack roll, but if he successfully dislodges the target arrow, his own arrow will still stay in the branches. Shots that miss because of cover fall back down to the ground (arrows have a 50% chance of breaking; arrows that don't break can be fired again). Shots that miss for any reason other than cover fly out of the tree and are effectively lost.

[Note that this is inspired by a real-world game played by some Native American cultures.]

Easy to prepare and easy to play, tavern games are one of the most common games player characters might take part in, if for no other reason than that taverns are far more common than huge festivals or tournaments. Tavern games come in far too many forms to present them all here, but they tend to two different directions. Some are quiet games that are best enjoyed over a glass or two of ale and require a fair degree of skill, while others are loud, boisterous, and open to whoever's interested. Often, how a game is played depends not just on the rules, but on the mood of the inn. Under the right circumstances, even a game of chess can get a tavern full of townspeople cheering and drinking toasts to their favorite player's skills.

DRUNKEN DAGGERS

Target Number/DS: n/a. When thieves' guild leaders want to see a game, they sit at a table and start piling gold coins one by one on the table, waiting for someone's greed to overcome his sense of safety. Once two people agree to play, the guildmaster stops stacking coins and calls the entire tavern to attention to watch the match. The winner, assuming he survives, gets the entire pile of coins, often as much as 20 gp or more. For the chance to see a man throw away his life, few cruel men would lament the loss of pocket change.

In *Drunken Daggers*, the two opponents stand in front of walls on opposite sides of a room, between twenty and forty feet apart. Someone quickly draws with chalk an area three feet by seven feet behind each man, which will be the target area. A Each man is given a bottle of whiskey (or some other strong liquor), a shot glass, and a stack of daggers. A coin is flipped to see who goes first. Then, turn by turn, the men take a shot of whiskey (12 AU) and throw a dagger, trying to hit the target area behind his opponent.

Whoever misses the target area first, loses. A miss can be either throwing outside the target area, or hitting the man in front of the target. If the winner dies by being hit, the winnings usually go to his next of kin or debtors, if he has any. Sometimes, of course, a player might not want to win, so a man should take a quick catalogue of everyone who wants him dead before he agrees to play.

Mechanics

First, use the Drinking rules in Chapter One to handle the effects of the whiskey. Few matches go beyond three or four throws per competitor, and a man who knows he is about to pass out will sometimes try to garner favor with the guildmaster by intentionally aiming for his opponent's leg or arm, which typically sates the master's thirst for blood without offending the other player too much.

The target area has a base AC of 4 (large-size, immobile), but with a +7 cover bonus to AC because of the person in the way. Exceptionally skinny or fat people might offer a +6 or +8 cover bonus. Finally, take into account the range, which will usually give a -2 to -6 penalty to the roll, since daggers have a range increment of 10 ft.

If the attack hits, the game moves onto the next player. If the attack misses, but it would have hit if not for the cover, it instead strikes the person in the way. Players are expected to stand still in front of their targets, so they get no Dexterity bonus to their AC. If the attack roll hits the AC of the person in the way, he takes damage, but even if it is stopped by armor, the person who threw loses. If the attack would have missed even if the cover hadn't been there, the dagger clatters somewhere else, and the thrower still loses. Play continues until someone misses.

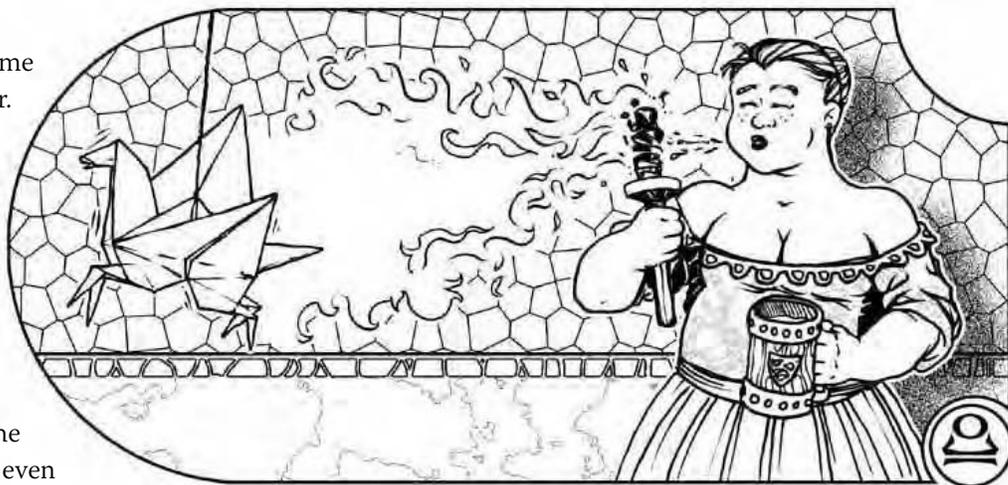
Because players are not supposed to move when being thrown at, they can be sneak attacked if they are within 30 ft, but only if the thrower is intentionally trying to hit (you can't accidentally sneak attack). The potential victim can make a Sense Motive check against the thrower's Bluff check to try to guess if his opponent plans to actually harm him. He has a -1 penalty to his Sense Motive check for every 10 ft of distance.

If a player does intentionally attack another player, use normal combat rules to see if he hits his opponent. If he misses because of armor, the attack hits his opponent and he loses without dealing any damage, but if he only misses by less than 4, his attack still hits the actual target, so he'll have another chance to throw.

Halflings, Gnomes, and other short folk stand in front of smaller targets, with a base AC of 5, but with the same cover bonuses, since the short ones will provide the same proportional amount of cover.

Variants and Optional Rules

If the guildmaster is feeling particularly bloodthirsty, he will have both competitors blindfolded, and will be a little more generous on whether the game ends. If a dagger misses only a little, he'll let play continue, saying it was a good throw. If an attack misses the target's base AC by less than 4, play will still continue, since hopefully one or the other will manage to hit somebody. A blindfolded character has a 50% miss chance in combat, but the other effects of blindness do not affect this game.



THE EVERYMAN'S FIREBALL

Target Number/DS: n/a.

Legend has it that this game was first played by monks at a distant monastery which burned down centuries ago, who defeated a horde of raiders, but had little use for the loot, which consisted mainly of alcohol. Since the monks were forbidden from drinking the ale, they used it in a game. Regardless of whether this legend is true, the Everyman's Fireball has been clearly linked to the burnt wreckage of a number of homes, taverns, and even towns. Without surprise, it has been prohibited by many governments, which has only increased its popularity. Some tavern owners have even gone to the trouble of having spellcasters permanently ward the traditional area of the Everyman's Fireball to resist burning.

The game has numerous names depending upon where it is played. While it is known as "the Everyman's Fireball" in many human regions, the Elves called it "Alighted Spirits," the Dwarves call it "Husband's Breath," and

Gnomes call it “Dragon Flagon.” Other races and regions have their own names for the game, but the basic rules stay the same. A paper, cloth, or tinder mock-up of a person, creature, or other recognizable object is erected in the center of a wide room, and a 10-foot radius ring is drawn on the floor around it.

Everyone who wants to play gets a turn, typically starting with the ladies in the establishment. Each person walks up with some sort of alcoholic beverage, and holds a communal torch or candle near her lips. She then spits out her drink, through the fire, igniting the ale and hopefully setting the target on fire. If a person can at least singe the target, she’s a marginal winner, and someone will usually buy her a drink, but only the person who actually manages to burn the target down gets a prize.

Mechanics

A typical target is Tiny, with 4 hit points, and an effective AC of 9 (10, -5 immobile, +2 size, +2 for being in the second range increment of spit). Also, since almost no one has Exotic Weapon Proficiency (spittle), most contestants have a -4 penalty to their attack roll.

Each player takes a mouthful of alcohol, then spits through the flame at the target. She must first succeed a Reflex save (DC 0, which *can* be failed by someone drunk enough) or else catch on fire herself. She then makes her attack roll, regardless of whether she herself is on fire. The spit itself does no damage, but the flaming ale does 1d6 points of fire damage, but no more than the alcohol’s strength, so average wine will do 1d6 damage, but no more than 4, while a mouthful of whiskey does a full 1d6. If the person can deal at least 1 point of damage, she singses the target, burning it slightly. If she deals enough damage to destroy the target, she wins.

Variants and Optional Rules:

Even though players are not consuming any of the alcohol that they spit out, ale with a strength of 10 or higher could still count as 1 AU worth of drinking simply by being in the mouth.

In the Elvish version, *Alighted Spirits*, players don’t even put the ale in their mouths, but instead hold a flame at arm’s length and try to pitch a cup’s worth of ale through the flame and at the target. This incurs a -2 penalty to the attack roll, to make sure the alcohol, torch, and target are all lined up.

Gin and Rabbits

Target Number/DS: n/a.

Gin and Rabbits is a card game for two to four players, ages 14 and over. The age requirement is due to the games limited pornographic content. The goal of the game is to use the cards to acquire two whole shots of gin, and three rabbits.

The deck has 50 cards, with 5 cards of each of 10 different types. The card types are:

- ◆ *The Dagger*, which has a picture of a dagger diagonally across the card, which is used to make another player discard a card. Discard this card.
- ◆ *Half-shot of Gin*, which shows a smiling rabbit sitting next to a half-empty shotglass. This card counts toward the necessary number of gin shots.
- ◆ *Shot of Gin*, with a picture of an unconscious rabbit lying beside a tipped-over shotglass. This card also counts toward the gin shots needed.
- ◆ *Happy Rabbits*, with a picture of two rabbits stacked on top of each other. If there are at least two other rabbit cards in play, you can play this card as a rabbit card for yourself.



- ♦ *Nasty Rabbits*, showing three rabbits holding miniature weapons. It lets the player look at the top three cards of the deck and take one of them. Discard this card.
- ♦ *Single Rabbit*, with an image of a contented rabbit holding a carrot between its paws. It counts toward the mandatory number of rabbits.
- ♦ *Skull and Crossbones*, which has a three-legged rabbit with an eyepatch. This card lets a player put any card in play into the discard pile. Discard this card.
- ♦ *The Table Cards*, 5 each of The Sun, Rye Stalks, and Juniper Berries, which are the necessary ingredients for gin. If you have one of each card in your hand, you can play them as a Shot of Gin.

Each player starts with a hand of five cards, and draws up to full at the beginning of each turn. A player must play at least two cards per round. When the draw pile empties, the discard pile is reshuffled as a new deck, and play continues until a player gets two shots of gin and three rabbits.

Mechanics

On each player's turn, have him make a Knowledge (gaming and gambling) check (DC 10). If he succeeds, he can either gain a rabbit or a glass of gin, or make another player lose a rabbit or shot of gin, or he can give another player a -5 penalty on his next turn. For every 10 points that he beats the DC by, he can take another action, so if his total roll is 30, he could choose to gain two glasses of gin and give another player a penalty next round.

Whenever a player gets a shot of gin, he must drink an actual shot of gin (4 AU), and whenever he gets a rabbit, he must announce that fact. If any person of the opposite sex asks within the next minute to kiss him, he cannot refuse, or else he has to discard the rabbit. Play continues until someone gets the necessary combination of gin and rabbits.

To handling gambling, use the guidelines presented for standard card games in Chapter Two. Players are usually expected to wager after each round. Additionally, players are allowed to sell or trade their gin or rabbits to each other, for whatever fee the player is willing to pay, including cards in the game. A player cannot have more than three rabbits or two shots of gin at a time, and must discard extras, so sometimes it is beneficial to trade. Characters can only offer to trade on their own turn.

Variants and Optional Rules

If you want to play a simple version of this game, simply have all players make opposed Knowledge (gaming and gambling) checks each round, with the winner adding to his DS. The Target Number is 17, and players cannot be defeated before the end of the game.

STAGELESS PLAY

Target Number/DS: n/a.

The goal is not to win, but to make the game enjoyable.

An elderly colonel created this game when, after retiring from the military, he became a bard. Designed to share the glory and excitement of his adventures and campaigns, the Stageless Play is a game that involves the imaginations of several players, each of whom creates and portrays a character in stories and adventures that another player, called the Playwright, composes. The Playwright controls all the people and creatures in the story aside from those the players play. The goal is not to win, but to create an entertaining story for all the players to enjoy.

Sometimes a skilled storyteller is pressed into being Playwright for a quick game of Stageless Play by patrons at a tavern. It is considered a great feat for a bard to be able to run a game of Stageless Play with little or no preparation, and tavern-goers will often watch a game in progress with more interest than they would a simple performance by the storyteller. Sometimes crowds heckle or shout advice in the game, and many cheer when, at the climax of a gaming session, the players defeat the foe or challenge the Playwright has created for them. Some of the most skilled Playwrights are actually payed to prepare very detailed Stageless Plays in advance, and they run them for nobles and dignitaries to perform in.

The Playwright controls the action in a Stageless Play, but the game is in no way just taking turns at storytelling. Instead, dice are used, with the Playwright telling players when they have to roll. Whenever a player's character attempts a dangerous or dramatic action, the Playwright assigns a number that the player must roll equal to or higher than in order for the character to succeed. Choice of characters is usually limited too in some way, so there can be a variety of characters, but nothing that would be too strange or would spoil the fun for other players.

Mechanics

A game of Stageless Play progresses in acts, like a play. The total number of acts is up to the Playwright, but a standard two-hour session of Stageless Play is usually

limited to five acts. The first act is the Opening, the next three acts are the Challenges, and the final act is the Climax. There must be at least an Opening and a Climax, but Challenges are not totally necessary (though they tend to be the most fun).

Since the game is a collaborative effort, all of the players should attempt to make the game as enjoyable as possible. During each act, the Playwright makes a Perform check and notes the result. A result of 10 or higher is a routine performance, which is entertaining, but not likely to draw a crowd. A result of 15 or higher is highly enjoyable, 20 or higher is great fun, 25 is memorable, and a result of 30 or higher is extraordinary, which will delight even onlookers.

The players can assist if they want, though players do not have to play nicely. To assist, each player can choose to either play nicely or claim the spotlight. Those who play nicely may make a Perform check (DC 10), and each player who succeeds adds +2 to the Playwright's Perform result. Those who try to claim the spotlight may make a Knowledge (gaming and gambling) check (DC 10). On a success, that player adds an effective +4 to the Playwright's roll when determining how fun the game was for him, but does not increase the fun of anyone else. If the spotlight-hogging player fails his check, however, he instead causes the entire check to get a -2 penalty.

For example, Kevin the bard has been forced by six eager players to run a game of Stageless Play. In the Opening act, Kevin's Perform check result is 22, and five of the six players try to add to the fun. Three succeed in their effort to assist, so the total result for that act is 28, enough to get crowds watching eagerly and applauding at the end of the act. The sixth player tries to hog the spotlight, and manages to succeed his check, so for him the game is as fun as if Kevin had rolled a 32. At the end of the act, that player is quite pleased with his accomplishments, but the rest of the players and audience don't benefit.

Add together the results of each act, and after the story is completed divide by the number of acts in the story to get the average performance of the story. Though individual parts may have been more or less entertaining, this is the overall factor of how much people enjoyed the total game.

During each act, describe briefly what the plot is, which can be practically any type of story. A Playwright who makes a poor Perform check effectively tries to force

the players to follow a specific storyline that they aren't interested in, while an exceptional roll represents a story that is so cunningly crafted that the players not only enjoy the story, but the Playwright manages to create the story that he wanted to tell.

Note that a Stageless Play takes too long to perform for it to be useful for most Bardic Music abilities. At the game master's option, however, a bard acting as Playwright can use a session of Stageless Play as if it were a usage of Bardic Music (Inspire Courage, Inspire Confidence, Suggestion, etc.). This unorthodox usage incurs a -10 penalty to the Bard's Perform check.

Variants and Optional Rules

Since the game is mostly freeform, there are a near-infinite number of variants, but certain abilities can be useful in the course of a game of Stageless Play. A spellcaster may use a spell to enhance the realism of the game (typically an illusion). For each spell level that he is willing to spend in a given act, he adds a bonus equal to that many levels to his Perform check, to a maximum bonus of +10. This assumes that the spellcaster has appropriate spells; *flesh to stone* and *finger of death* spells aren't usually useful in adding to the fun. A character who provides food or drink for the group adds a +1 bonus to everyone's Perform checks for as long as the food lasts.

Friendly drunks (see the drinking rules in Chapter One) add their skill check penalty from drunkenness as a bonus to their Perform check instead, as long as they are not Hammered or worse.

STAGE CONTESTS

Target Number/DS: n/a/Direct

Stage contests require competitors to perform publicly (either by singing, dancing, playing a musical instrument, stand up comedy etc.) Usually a group of judges will determine the winner, and often award a small prize. In some cases, such a contest may take place in a royal court with much larger prizes.

Mechanics: Each player simply makes a Perform check. The performer with the highest score wins.

Variants and Optional Rules: Friendly drunks (see the drinking rules in Chapter One) add their skill check penalty from drunkenness as a bonus to their Perform check instead, as long as they are not Hammered or worse.

Debating: sometimes a contest may require two competitors to use their oratory skills to battle each other in a game of wits. This works in the same way as Young Wits, although a prize is offered to the winner.

TROLLBRIDGE

Target Number/DS: n/a.

The peculiar trollish habit of setting ambushes on bridges may be based more on stereotype and folklore than fact, but it is nonetheless ingrained in the myths of many cultures. Following the time-honored tradition of making light of deadly hazards, trollbridge developed as a brutal game based on these ambushes. The game is popular in taverns that have strong tables, or as a children's game or at festivals. Dwarves sometimes play the game as well, but they usually refer to the 'Dwarves' in the game as 'Kobolds.'

Three strong tables or crates are set up in parallel, about three feet apart. Four players take up positions on the outer tables, two on each. These are the Dwarves. Meanwhile, one player, the Troll, stands on the center table with a sack of potatoes, turnips, or other tubers, which is the Club.

When the game begins, the Dwarves attempt to cross the center table to reach the opposite side. The Troll uses his Club to try to knock them off of the tables as they pass. Each time a Dwarf successfully reaches the opposite side, he scores a point for the Dwarf team. If a Dwarf is knocked off or falls off of the tables, he is out for the remainder of that round, but if the troll is knocked off the table, he can climb back on. Play proceeds until all the Dwarves are knocked to the floor (in which case the Troll wins), or until the Dwarves earn 24 points (in which case the Dwarves win).

Mechanics: Each table is ten feet by ten feet. The Troll is not allowed to move from the central table, and if he is knocked off, he can climb back up as a double-move action (one move to stand up, another to climb onto the table). Roll for initiative like in normal combat, and let each character act in turn. Remember that the Dwarves can move through each other's spaces because they are allies.

To cross the bridge, the Dwarves must make a Jump check (DC 10) to cross each gap. Since the gaps are only three feet, and the minimum jumping distance is three feet, any roll automatically clears the gap, but if the roll does not at least beat DC 10, the Dwarf loses his balance and falls in

the square he landed on. It is a move-equivalent action to stand back up. If the Dwarf succeeds the Jump check, he can keep on moving, and can try to jump the second gap, assuming that his movement rate is sufficient.

Unless a Dwarf ends his round on the central table, the Troll usually readies an action to either block or attack the first Dwarf that comes across, and he also can make his normal number of attacks of opportunity per round. The sack of clubs is an unwieldy weapon (Medium-size, weight 8 pounds, 1d4 bludgeoning subdual), and unless he has Exotic Weapon Proficiency (sack of potatoes), the Troll has a -4 penalty to his attack rolls. A Dwarf who takes damage while crossing the bridge must make a Balance check (DC 10 + damage dealt). If he fails, he falls down in his current square. Failure by 5 or more means he falls off the table. Any Dwarf rendered unconscious likewise falls down and is out of the game.

If the Troll readies an action to block, he can use his movement to move into the square the Dwarf is jumping to. The Dwarf must make an opposed Strength check with the Troll. If the Dwarf succeeds, the Troll is pushed back to his original square, and the Dwarf lands safely, but must end his current move action (he can move again if he has anymore actions for the round). If the Troll succeeds, the Dwarf must succeed a Balance check (DC 10) to keep from falling backward off the table. If the Dwarf succeeds the Balance check, he can either attempt to jump back to where he started (Jump DC 26) or fall down onto the table in a square next to the Troll.

A Dwarf or Troll may attempt to try to shove another player off the bridge, as a bull rush attack. If a Dwarf attempts this, he incurs an attack of opportunity for attack while unarmed, but if the Troll tries to bull rush, the unarmed Dwarves cannot make attacks of opportunity back. If two or three Dwarves delay to assist each other, each extra Dwarf that can make a Strength check (DC 10) grants a +2 bonus to the main bull rusher.

Either Troll or Dwarf can attempt to trip the other, using the standard rules for tripping.

If the Troll readies an action to block a jumping Dwarf, a Dwarf may spend a standard action to attempt a Bluff check opposed to the Troll's Sense Motive. If the Dwarf succeeds, and the Troll tries to block him when he jumps, the Troll moves into a square that the Dwarf is not jumping into, allowing the Dwarf to land safely.

A Troll with Combat Reflexes has a distinct advantage in this game, since he could potentially get attacks of opportunity against all four Dwarves. Though Exotic Weapon Proficiency (sack of potatoes) is useful, only diehard fans would go to the trouble.

A Dwarf can make a Tumble check (DC 15) each round to move past the Troll without incurring an attack of opportunity. If the Troll blocks a Dwarf as he is jumping, the Dwarf can attempt a Tumble check (DC 25) to roll past the Troll without being blocked or incurring an attack of opportunity.

If a Dwarf falls down, the Troll can try to stand on him to keep him from getting up, but this is considered unfair play. However, if the Troll does this, the Dwarf can attempt to free himself as a move-equivalent action with a successful Strength check (DC 10). If the Dwarf does free himself, the Troll must make a Balance check (DC 10) to keep from falling down. If he fails by 5 or more, he falls off the table.

As an example of one round, the Troll wins initiative and readies an action to block a jumping Dwarf. Dwarf 1 tries to Bluff but fails, and when he jumps the Troll moves into the space he is aiming for. The Troll could make an attack of opportunity, but he chooses not to, and instead Dwarf 1 must roll to avoid falling. He manages to do so, but falls onto his face on the table next to the Troll. Dwarf 2 then jumps and lands easily, but as he tries to run past the Troll, it uses its attack of opportunity to strike at Dwarf 2. Dwarf 2 takes 4 points of subdual damage, and though he doesn't fall, he has to pause to regain his balance. Dwarf 3 and Dwarf 4 can jump across freely, since the Troll has spent all his actions for that round. Next round, the Troll is going to try to bull rush Dwarf 2 off the table.

A standing long jump can clear the entire middle table and both gaps, a total distance of sixteen feet, with a Jump check (DC 36). Usually, though, standing long jumps are limited to twice the jumper's height, so only those with special abilities could accomplish this. Obviously, anyone who can pull this off should not bother playing Trollbridge.

Variants and Optional Rules

In Dwarf and Gnome versions, the tables are only 2ft apart (Halflings still use 3 foot gaps, because their natural +2 bonus to Jump checks balance out the difference). Some Duergar clans play this game with actual captive

Trolls, and send a quartet of armed and armored warriors to attack and harrass the beast as they jump past it.

If children play against an adult Troll, the children are usually given short sticks that they can use to attack the troll. A stick is a Small weapon (1 subdual bludgeoning damage, simple weapon).

At the game master's option, Dwarfs with the Expertise feat could be allowed to take a penalty of up to -5 on their Jump check, and gain a +5 dodge bonus to their AC, lasting one round.

Young Wits

Target Number/DS: 30/Opposed

When two courtiers begin to exchange sharp words and veiled insults, the result becomes a contest of wits that can continue for some time.

Mechanics

This battle is a combination of Perform and Diplomacy skills. Each contestant may use either skill for his opposed skill check, with a +2 synergy bonus if he has 5 or more ranks in the other skill. Both continue to make skill checks using the basic Opposed Degree of Success rules (in the same way as an arm-wrestle). The result of this exchange is usually humiliation of the opponent, but this can often win favor with onlookers (a fair maiden, a king and so on).

Variants and Optional Rules

Many duellists and combatants engage in such a contest before any blows are struck. The loser of a contest engaged in in this manner suffers a -2 penalty to all attack rolls during the ensuing fight.



CHAPTER FIVE: MAGICAL COMPETITIONS

No competitions in the real world involve magical powers, but as is often the case in a fantasy world, magic can be applied to many otherwise mundane activities to add spice and flavour. Some non-magical game or sport might be picked up by spellcasting enthusiasts who wish to make their skills more important in play, while other games might be created originally for spellcasters, with no attachments to standard competitions. Spellcasters tend to be a prideful lot, and so as much as some magic-users may claim these games would not interest them, most would believe that their magical skills would prove superior.

BAAL'MERAL'RUUN

Target Number/DS: n/a.

Affectionately known as “Bahly” by fans, this game was first developed among the top wizard academies and universities, who adapted a testing exercise into a sport that would allow their students to compete with limited risk of injury, bloodshed, or demonic invasions. As such, it has a rich and respected history, though few non-spellcasters know much about it other than that it exists. Originally, it served as a means of training students in the arcane arts, encouraging them to think of inventive uses of spells and to trust their fellow spellcasters, but several hundred years ago it began being used for more athletic purposes than academic.

Baal'meral'ruun (a Draconic phrase meaning “ball-magic-run”) is played on an outdoor field that is 110ft long by 35ft wide. On either end of the field, 10ft from the edge, three metal posts are set, five feet apart (thus one in the middle, and one in both the square to the left and to the right of the center). The central post is 15ft high with a one-foot wide hoop goal (AC7), and the adjacent posts are 10ft high with half-foot wide hoop goals (AC9). The goal of the game is for the two opposing teams to throw the ball through the other team's goal hoops. Each ball thrown through the lower hoops earns 2 points, while a goal in the middle, higher hoop is worth 3 points. The ball is a four-inch diameter steel ball marked with two purple stripes.

Each team has five players, each of whom normally performs only one role, but teammates can choose to switch roles by running next to each other and tapping each other as a symbol they are switching positions. The

first position is the Sent'magrex (attack-caster), who is the only position allowed to cast spells on the opposing team or the other team's goals. The second position is Ires'magrex (heal-caster), who is the only position allowed to cast spells on members of their own team or on their own goal. Then there are two Pothac'osiv (mute-runners), who are allowed to make physical contact with other players, up to and including physically attacking with weapons. The last position is the Wath'draces (ball-giver), who guards the goal. He is allowed to cast spells on his own goal, but must stay within twenty feet of the goal until someone switches position with him.

Regardless of position, any player can carry, shoot, or pass the ball, and can cast spells on themselves or on any part of the field aside from the goals. However, only the Sent'magrex can cast spells where members of the opposing team are currently standing. For example, the Sent-magrex can cast *sleep* or *dispel magic* at opposing players, but any other position could only cast spells where the field was clear. *Grease* or *entangle* would be a fair option, but not if a player is in the area of effect. Damaging spells are allowed, but players must practice caution. Whenever a player falls unconscious, the game is halted and another team member must be switched in. If a spell or attack kills another player, the team that made the attack automatically loses, and the player responsible is usually banned from future games. Players are encouraged to use spells to disrupt the other team, but direct damage is mostly used only when the caster knows his target can survive. The crowds love attack spells.

A player who violates these position restrictions is given a warning, and after three warnings for a single player, the opposing team gets 5 points.

Play lasts for ten minutes, in two halves of five minutes each. After each half, team mates can switch out (often necessary, since most spellcasters don't have enough spells to last two halves), and have a 2 minute break to cast buffing or healing spells. Each team also gets one time-out per half (time-outs last 1 minute), usually reserved for when several team members are overcome by magical afflictions. During time-outs, players from both sides are allowed to cast spells on teammates.

If an entire team is rendered unconscious or unable to act before the end of a half, the team still standing gets 4 points for every member of their team still able to function. The game pauses and each team can switch out players up to their full number of five, and play resumes. If an entire team is rendered unable to play, the other team gains 40 points, and the game ends.

Play is open to any magic-user, arcane or divine, but usually only members of a team's home academy can play for that team. A team can bring no more than twenty players to a game.

Mechanics

At the beginning of each half, players must announce their positions before play starts. The Wath'draces must move to within twenty feet of his own goal, but all other team mates can begin anywhere on their half of the field. One member of each team usually stands near the middle of the field, ready to grab the ball when it is released, but no more than one player from each team can be within 10ft of the middle of the field. One of the judges gives a signal, and then teleports the ball into the very middle of the field. The two players nearest the middle of the field make initiative checks, and whoever wins gets the ball. Then everyone else rolls for initiative, and play progresses using normal movement and combat rules.

The ball weighs four pounds, has a range increment of 20ft, and is considered a simple weapon. Though it is not normally used to inflict damage, if it is hurled as an attack, it deals 1d6 points of bludgeoning damage, with a $\times 2$ critical. To pass a ball, a player must make a grenade-like attack at the square he wants to pass to. A player in the square the ball hits can make a Reflex save (DC 10) to catch the ball, even if he was not the intended target. For the sake of simplicity, assume that balls that are not grabbed simply land in the square with no effect. A character in an adjacent square can ready an action to try to intercept the ball; he and the player the ball is heading for both make Reflex saves, and whoever rolls highest gets the ball, assuming he beats at least DC 10.

If a ball is on the ground, play continues, and whoever can get to it first can pick it up as a move-equivalent action from any adjacent square. A player may attempt to grab it on the run by succeeding a Reflex save (DC 15) when he passes through the ball's square, or (DC 20) from an adjacent square.

Characters can try to disarm whoever is holding the ball using the normal disarm rules. A character who is struck for more than 10 points of damage in one round must succeed a Dexterity check (DC 5) or drop the ball.

A player who is in the same square as a goal, and at a height where he can reach it, can attempt a Reflex save (DC 10) to catch the ball. For many other tactics, such as levitating a large object to block the goal hoops, use common sense. Though many tactics do seem cheap or unfair, part of the appeal of the game is watching players find ways to overcome these obstacles.

Specifics

Certain spells are wholly prohibited in Bahly games, mostly spells that cause instant death like *disintegrate* or *finger of death*. It is forbidden to remove the goals, such as by *polymorphing* them so balls cannot score, and it is illegal to wholly block goals with *force* effects, but illusions to make goals appear elsewhere, or appear to vanish, are fair. Particularly cruel spells, like *insanity*, *domination*, and all spells that inflict negative levels are likewise forbidden for the sake of polite play. Finally, players are not allowed to create extra balls or destroy or alter the original ball. Judges usually have *true seeing* and various other spells cast to make sure proper spells are used.

Crowds are usually civil, but sometimes fouls can offend crowd members. Since many Bahly spectators are magic-users themselves, this can be quite dangerous if an audience member begins casting spells onto the field. Offending audience members are quickly targeted with *hold* or *sleep* spells, and are removed, with all efforts going toward getting rid of the threat without disrupting the flow of the game.

To run tournaments of Bahly, each team's rating is equal to half its average base attack bonus plus its average caster level, plus the average Intelligence bonus of the players. See Chapter One for rules on Tournaments.

Variants and Optional Rules

Not wanting to get sued, we did not present the rules for the version which involves four balls that fly around, and has contestants flying around on broomsticks.

Typical Baal'meral'ruun Player, Human Wiz 3

CR 3; Medium Humanoid; HD 3d4; hp 7; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30ft; AC 12 (flat-footed 11, touch 11); Atk +1 melee (1d3 subdual; unarmed strike); or +2 ranged; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +5; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 14,

Wis 12, Cha 10. *Skills and Feats*: Concentration +6, Jump +3, Knowledge (Arcana) +8, Spellcraft +8; Combat Casting, Great Fortitude, Scribe Scroll, Silent Spell

Wizard Spells Prepared (4/3/2): 0- Daze, Flare, Mage Hand, Resistance 1-Grease, Silent Image, Sleep 2-Flaming Sphere, Invisibility

Possessions: Bracers of armor +1, cloak of protection +1, 2 potions of cure light wounds.

Notes and Tactics: The above stats can be used to approximate a typical mage prepared for a Bahly match, ready to swap back and forth between any position. The spells are a mix of direct combat spells (sleep, flare), illusionary powers that can be used to divert and confuse opponents (invisibility, silent image), and spells that can alternate as attack spells or way of denying opponent's part of the field (grease and flaming sphere).

While it is possible to simply use five or ten of these wizards, many teams will use a combination of low-key players such as this as well as talented individuals who are prepared or specialized in a particular position. As an example, look at the Laughing Stones Team below.

The Laughing Stones

The Laughing Stones is a long-established and relatively well-known Baal'Mearal'Ruun team, formed around the dreams and desires of a Dwarven wizard and cleric. The team has twelve members, although seven of these are largely novice wizards whose stats conform to the typical players outlined above. The remaining seven team members are the Laughing Stone's star players, whose skills and powers have developed around the four core positions of the game.

Star Sent'magrex

Ariosto, Male Human Wiz 6: CR 6; Medium Humanoid; HD 6d4+12; hp 31; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft; AC 13 (flatfooted 10, touch 13); Atk +4 melee (1d3+1 subdual; unarmed strike); or +6 ranged; AL LN; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +5; Str 13, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 19, Wis 11, Cha 13;

Skills and Feats: Alchemy +13, Concentration +11, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (Arcana) +13, Spellcraft +13; Empower Spell, Enlarge Spell, Maximize Spell, Scribe Scroll.

Spells Prepared (4/4/4/3): 0- Daze, Flare, Mage Hand, Ray of Frost; 1-Cause Fear, Charm Person, Ray of Enfeeblement, Reduce; 2-Blindness, Glitterdust, Invisibility, Shatter; 3-Dispel Magic, Hold Person, Slow

Possessions: *Ring of counterspells*, *wand of colour spray (29 ch)*, *brooch of shielding*, *potion of Blur*, 2 *potions of cure light wounds*, *arcane scroll (mage armor)*.

Notes and Tactics: A tall, good looking human with a waxed mustache, Ariosto is the most confident and outgoing of the Laughing Stones. Usually cast in the role of Sent'Magrex, Ariosto's choice of spells focus on disabling and neutralizing the opposing team. Spells such as *glitterdust*, *slow*, and *flare* are a particular favorite due to their prominent visual effects, as is using his *wand of colour spray* against weaker opponents. One sneaky tactic that makes him the bane of teams using clerical spell-casters is his habit of casting *shatter* on opponents' divine foci to disable their spell casting ability.

Ariosto doesn't focus much on defensive magic, relying on his natural agility to avoid attacks. The sole defenses he maintains against magical attacks are his *brooch of shielding* and his *ring of counterspells*, which is set to counter any attempts to cast Hold Person on the young wizard.

Star Ires'magrex

Thodan the Hammer, Female Dwarf Wiz 4/Cleric 3: CR 7; Medium Humanoid; HD 4d4+12 (Wizard) +3d8+9 (Cleric); hp 41; Init +4 (Improved Initiative); Spd 20 ft; AC 12 (flatfooted 11, touch 11); Atk +6 melee (1d3+2 subdual; unarmed strike); or +4 ranged; SA Turn Undead; SQ Dwarf abilities, Spontaneous Casting; AL NG; SV Fort +8, Ref +3, Will +10; Str 14, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Alchemy +12, Concentration +13, Knowledge (Arcana) +12, Spellcraft +12; Combat Casting, Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (Transmutation)

Wizard Spells Prepared (4/4/3): 0-Arcane Mark, Dancing Lights, Daze, Detect Magic, Detect Poison, Disrupt Undead, Flare, Ghost Sound, Light, Mage Hand, Mending, Open/Close, Prestidigitation, Ray of Frost, Read Magic, Resistance 1-Enlarge, Grease, Silent Image, Spider Climb 2-Cat's Grace, Invisibility, Levitate, Minor Image

Cleric Spells Prepared (4/3+1/2+1): 0- Guidance, Cure Minor Wounds, Resistance, Virtue 1- Change Self*, Divine Favor, Entropic Shield, Remove Fear; 2- Bull's Strength, Endurance, Invisibility.

**Domain Spell*: Thodan's domains are Magic and Trickery.

Possessions: Wand of silence (22 ch), bracers of armor +1, cloak of resistance +1, ring of protection +1, quaal's feather token (tree).

Notes and Tactics: Thodan serves a goddess of magic and joy (if such is appropriate in your world) that has little recognition outside a few remote Dwarven clans. Driven by a need to promote her goddess and silence those who

claim Dwarves have little skill with magic, Thodan is the founder and captain of the Laughing Stones team.

In game situations she rarely bothers to chase the ball, preferring to use her spells to enhance the skills of her teammates and protect them from harm. Thodan has a keen intellect, and often studies the prior tactics and skills of any opposing teams she knows she will encounter. She is particularly proud of the laughing stones, and makes good use of many of her star players skills outside the area of magic. While they are occasionally outgunned by teams with more powerful spellcasters, Thodan is not above casting silence on her more physically capable team-mates and sending them in to mute the opposition's casting attempts and even up the odds. Any of her fellow team-mates who uses up their spells for the match but can't be replaced often receives the same treatment, becoming what Thodan refers to as a "thinking tactical landmine of deafness" when she boasts of her teams success and strategies.

Star Pothac'osiv

Kellan, Male Half-Elf Mnk2/Sor3; CR5; Medium Humanoid (Elf); HD 2d8 (Monk) +3d4 (Sorcerer); hp 19; Init +4 (Dex); Spd 30ft; AC 17 (flatfooted 12, touch 16); Atk +2 melee (1d6; improved unarmed strike); or +6 ranged; SA Stunning attack 2/day, flurry of blows; SQ Half-Elf qualities, evasion; AL LN; SV Fort +4, Ref +8, Will +8; Str 11, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Climb +5, Concentration +8, Jump +35, Listen +3, Search +2, Spellcraft +8, Spot +5, Tumble +10; Dodge, Deflect Arrows, Improved Unarmed Strike, Mobility, Stunning Fist .

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/6): 0-Flare, Light, Mage Hand, Prestidigitation, Resistance 1-Expeditious Retreat, Shield, True Strike

Possessions: *Bracers of armor +1, ring of jumping potion of wisdom, potion of cat's grace.*

Notes and Tactics: Kellan's career as a Bahly player has spanned more than thirty years, and he is one of the most popular and well known players on the Laughing Stones team. Slowly approaching middle age for a half-Elf, there is talk of Kellan slowing down and soon retiring, despite the fact that he shows no sign of fatigue or any loss of skill. Defenders claim that although the aging sorcerer may slow down, his years of training and increasing natural cunning will make him even more dangerous. Even more effective, Thodan tries to keep a steady supply of potions to enhance Kellan's awareness and agility on hand, making any natural erosion in his strength and speed irrelevant.

Kellan's role on a team is almost always that of a runner. Once the ball is in hand, he sprints across the field using a combination of natural agility, tumbling skills and spells to avoid attacks and outrun defenders. Few manage to hit Kellan with weapon or ray attacks when he's in mid-sprint, and after years of watching the half-Elf sidestep lightening bolts and duck below fireballs, few try to catch him with direct attack spells either. Defensively Kellan is nearly as strong, using his skills as an unarmed combatant and his stunning attack ability to immobilize opposition ball carriers and more powerful spell casters. Although Kellan is a fair shot and often uses *true strike* to enhance his attempts at goal, his favored form of scoring involves leaping up to the lip of the goal and throwing the ball in at close range, often hanging from the hoop-like goals for a few seconds while the crowd roars appreciation for his goal.

Ferag, Male Half-Orc Rgr2/Div3; CR5; Medium Humanoid (Orc); HD 2d10+4 (Ranger) +3d4+6 (Diviner); hp 28; Spd 30ft; AC 14 (flatfooted 11, touch 14); Atk +7 melee (1d4+3; spiked gauntlet); or +6 ranged; SA Favored Enemy (+2 Gnomes, +1 elementals); SQ Half-Orc Traits; AL N; SV Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +6; Str 16, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 16, Ws 15, Cha 7.

Skills and Feats: Animal Empathy +3, Climb +7, Concentration +10, Jump +8, Listen +7, Scry +7, Spellcraft +7, Spot +7, Wilderness Lore +6; Ambidexterity, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Scribe Scroll, Track, Two-Weapon Fighting

Wizard Spells Prepared (4+1/3+1/2+1): 0- Detect Poison, Mage Hand (x2), Prestidigitation, Resistance 1-Change Self, Enlarge, Magic Weapon, True Strike 2-Bull's Strength, Cat's Grace, See Invisibility.

Possessions: 2 masterwork spiked gauntlets, ring of protection +1, cloak of resistance +1.

Notes and Tactics: Ferag is one of the most physically gifted half-Orcs anyone could hope to meet, combining the typical half-Orc strength and power with a high agility, endurance and keen intellect. Since a young age he has shown a great aptitude for divination magic, and he has proven himself to be at home both in the wild and the city. Because of his natural advantages, Ferag has more than his fair share of Orcish pride. Few beyond his teammates ever choose to spend time with him, and his opponents are subjected to a litany of boasts and heckles for the duration of any match.

While watching Kellan run as a Pothac'osiv is an exercise in grace and agility, watching Ferag make his way across the field is like watching a magically assisted

battering ram. His goal, in every game, is to create holes in the opposition's defense and keep the physically weaker wizards on his team from coming to physical harm. He uses his gauntlets to pummel those who get in his way, often boosting his strength and dexterity as soon as a match begins and enlarging himself when it becomes prudent. He reserves his *true strike* spell for shots at goal.

One tactic that Ferag uses is enchanting the ball itself and using it against the Wath'draces at the other end of the field. More often than not the half-Orc is capable of stunning or knocking unconscious the goal defender, and the more agile Kellan is often in place to scoop up the loose ball and scoring.

Star Wath'draces

Kertak, Male Kobold Sorcerer 6; CR 6; Small humanoid (reptilian); HD 6d4+12; hp 28; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft; AC 14 (flatfooted 11, touch 13); Atk +4 melee (1d2 subdual; unarmed strike); or +6 ranged; SQ Darkvision 60ft, light sensitivity; AL LN; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +8; Str 11, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +11, Hide +6, Search +2, Spellcraft +9, Spot +7; Combat Casting, Spell Penetration, Still Spell

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/7/6/4): 0-Dancing Lights, Daze, Detect Magic, Flare, Ghost Sound, Mage Hand, Prestidigitation 1-Enlarge, Expeditious Retreat, Obscuring Mist, Silent Image 2-Invisibility, Levitate 3-Wind Wall

Possessions: *Wand of levitate (13 ch)*, *cloak of resistance +1*, *eyes of the eagle*.

Notes and Tactics: Kertak was a foundling discovered by Thodan when he was barely hatched. Thodan took pity on the small creature, and raised the kobold to serve her as an apprentice and servant. At adolescence Kertak manifested evidence that he had inherited more than his share of sorcerous blood from his natural parents, so Thodan encouraged her ward to explore his abilities and recruited him as part of her fledgling Baal'meral'ruun team. Almost all of Kertak's spells have developed as a result of the game, and he rarely uses them off the field.

Kertak's favored tactic is to coat the goal area with a wind-wall, making distance shots impossible and requiring opponents to drive through the wall and put the ball through the goals by hand. While many teams see this as a relatively easy task, it can quickly become complicated once the hulking form of Ferag or the skilled attacks of Kellan fall back to assist their kobold teammate. Kertak's other tactics revolve around misdirection,

creating illusionary goal posts or levitating obstacles into the path of shooters. His *obscuring mist* spell is often used when more than one attacking opponent is heading toward goal, complicating attempts to pass or move the ball quickly between the attackers. *Levitate* is often used to move the ball high above the reach of many players, keeping it just low enough that Kellan can reach it with his magically enhance leaps.

CONJURATION COMBAT

Target Number/DS: n/a.

From wizards academies to royal courts, from the depths of eldritch dungeons to the alleys behind disreputable taverns, magic-users often seek a way to test their skills against one another without risk to themselves or the environment around them. Rather than engaging in a full spell duel that could leave both mages unnecessarily injured, it has become standard practice among many spellcasters to compete with summoned creatures instead of their full powers. Kings can determine which magus to recruit as their court wizard, and thugs with mild magical talents can entertain themselves and their fellow criminals with a quick battle between otherworldly and powerful creatures. Regardless of the trappings laid about it, however, Conjunction Combat rarely amounts to more than a magical and fantastic cockfight.

At its simplest, Conjunction Combat involves two spellcasters summoning creatures and making the creatures fight. In more civilized settings, wards are often set up to keep the summoned creatures from inadvertently damaging their surroundings, and some competitions allow the spellcasters to cast beneficial spells on their own creatures. Competitors in Conjunction Combat are never, however, allowed to cast offensive spells against the other player or his summoned creature. The winner of the fight is simply whoever's creature survives the battle, though some competitions allow both spellcasters to summon up to three creatures, one at a time.

Some consider Conjunction Combat cruel to the summoned creatures, and though it is sometimes a poor idea to incur the wrath of outsiders that could potentially track down those who force them to fight, it is so rarely a problem that Conjunction Combat continues to be a popular and respected magical competition.

Mechanics

Before a game of Conjunction Combat begins, sometimes a third party or one of the competitors creates an



inward focused *greater magic circle* (see the end of this chapter), though a standard *magic circle* can suffice if the summoned creatures will fit. The ward is not required, but is generally provided as a safety precaution for onlookers, even though the summoned creatures will usually attack the first hostile creature they see, which will typically be the opponent's summoned creature.

On the same initiative, both spellcasters summon one creature, and the creatures take turns fighting, based on which spellcaster had the higher Dexterity score. Combat continues until one side is defeated, at which point the winning spellcaster is expected to dismiss his summoned creature, especially if the combat was conducted without a *magic circle*.

Specifics

If a summoned creature disappears before combat is finished, such as if the summoning's duration runs out, the spellcaster who summoned that creature loses, unless his opponent's creature vanished at the same time. For obvious reasons, it is rarely entertaining to watch casters below third level play this game, since otherwise the creatures vanish far too quickly.

Specific rules vary among venues, but often spellcasters are allowed to cast spells to assist their summoned creatures. Magic-users are not allowed to enter the circle, so in order to apply a touch spell, they must command their creature to move within their range of touch. It is also usually legal for spellcasters to give their creatures magic items to aid in combat.

Some versions of this game allow spellcasters to summon up to three creatures over the course of the competition, but to have no more than one in play at a time. Usually, though, most spellcasters don't like to waste a large number of spells at once unless they know that other people are available to protect them. Few mages have enough magical power to waste much on games.

Variants and Optional Rules

Dark Elves are fond of a variant of this game that tests the offensive ability of one caster against the defensive of another. Only one spellcaster summons creatures, and he can cast whatever spells upon those creatures that he wants, but the creature is not allowed to attack. The other spellcaster can use whatever spells he wants to attack and try to kill the summoned creatures, but neither spellcaster can attack the other. Whenever one summoned creature dies, the defensive caster can summon another. If the offensive caster can kill three summoned creatures in less than a minute, he wins. Otherwise, the defensive caster is usually allowed to have whichever summoned creature is still present to make one attack against the losing offensive caster.

THE GAME OF FORMS

Target Number/DS: n/a.

"For I am bear," says the human wizard as he transforms into a large grizzly, "who mauls the human."

"I am eagle, flying above bear," says the sorceress, shapeshifting into an avian form that takes wing.

The man returns to human form long enough to say, "I am vulture, waiting patiently for eagle's fall," before he assumes the form of a crook-necked vulture.

The woman lands and returns to her natural form. She smiles, and says, "I am become lion, driving away cowardly vulture to claim the kill."

The game of forms is a contest of ingenuity, using shapeshifting magic as the venue for the competition. Two spellcasters use spells like *alter self*, *shapeshift*, and *polymorphic aura* (see the end of this chapter) to assume ever-changing forms, attempting to avoid the danger posed by the opponent's form. Any form of avoidance is usually acceptable, as long as the new form is somehow superior to the opponent's current form. Lower-level magic-users are usually limited to simple changes, or sometimes have to rely on illusions to conceal their form rather than changing it, while spells that allow only a single transformation are nearly useless, since the game is played in stages. If a spellcaster delays for more than a few moments to change to a new form, or if her new form is insufficient (usually judged by a third party), she loses. Actual attacks are usually not allowed, so the game of forms is generally a bloodless one.

A spellcaster cannot assume a form that has already been used in the game (except to briefly return to her own form to announce how her next form will defeat her opponent's current form), nor can she use forms of humans with particular skills or tools (you cannot, for example, assume the form of a hunter with a spear to fend off your opponent's lion form). The winner is usually the most inventive or magically-skilled competitor.

Mechanics

There are few rules needed to run this game, simply a character who is able to assume different shapes, either naturally or magically. Obviously, spellcasters with higher-level transmutation spells usually fare best because they have the most range of options, though certain choices of form are forbidden by the limits of magic, and competitors are not allowed to take forms that represent concepts. A spellcaster might become a powerful celestial to defeat an evil imp, but she could not adopt the form of a holy symbol to represent righteousness. Nor can the form of a clock be adopted to represent time, or a tombstone to represent hopelessness. Only tangible forms are valid, unless both sides agree otherwise at the outset.

At the game master's option, characters might be allowed to make a Knowledge (gaming and gambling) check (DC 20) each round to see if they know a form that traditionally wins against whatever form the opponent is using, though there may be penalties for very rare forms

(what beats a fluffy towel?). Only those who have specific knowledge of this game can make this check.

Specifics: Magic-users are allowed to cast spells on themselves, though usually only actual form-altering spells are allowed.

Variants and Optional Rules

Some old archmages with far too much lust and not nearly enough decency play *Satyr's Pursuit*, meant to represent a legend of a satyr who tried to chase after a nymph who kept changing forms in an effort to make

the satyr leave her alone. In this game, the goal is for one competitor to try to create as repugnant or unappealing a form as possible, and the other competitor must explain what about this new form makes him love his 'nymph' even more. If the pursuer does not know what to say, he can make a Perform (poetry) check (DC 15, typically increasing by +1 per form beyond the first) to come up with something romantic but not pithy.

Orcs, never great spellcasters, like to play this game with props instead of spells, using a grab-bag of items to make themselves look like different creatures or forms.

New Spells: Greater Magic Circle and Polymorphic Aura

These spells are used in the above games, and can be useful in other circumstances as well.

GREATER MAGIC CIRCLE

Abjuration [varies]

Level: Brd 4, Clr 4, Pal 4 (circle against evil only),

Sor/Wiz 4

Range: Close (25 ft +5 ft/2 levels)

Area: Emanates up to 30ft from either touched creature, or from a chosen spot.

As *magic circle against evil*, except that it encompasses a more flexible area, and can be put into place before summoning a creature. There are four versions of this spell, one against each alignment (good, evil, law, chaos), each of which is a separate spell.

Like the various *magic circle* spells, this spell can be focused inward to trap any summoned creatures in an immobile prison. Any creature already in the circle when it is cast, or any creatures later summoned into the circle, cannot cross its boundaries. The border of the *greater magic circle* can be in any shape, up to a 30-ft emanation, but the area is set upon casting, and cannot later be changed.

If the spell is cast as a trap, the caster may choose whether it is inwardly permeable, meaning whether summoned creatures that begin outside the circle can enter. If he allows other summoned creatures to enter the circle, they can be trapped as well.

At the caster's choice, any of the four *greater magic circle* spells can be cast with no alignment restriction, so that they do not inhibit summoned creatures, such as for the purposes of a fight between two creatures in a game of Conjuraction Combat.

POLYMORPHIC AURA*

Transmutation [Wild]

Level: Drd 3, Sor/Wiz 4

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Medium (100 ft +10 ft/level)

Target: One creature

Duration: 1 hour/level

Saving Throw: Fortitude negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: Yes

For the duration of *polymorphic aura*, the targeted creature can assume the form of another creature as by the *polymorph self* spell. Once each round, as a full-round action, he can choose to polymorph into a new form. Unlike the normal *polymorph self* spell, the target does not heal damage because he changes shape.

The Druid version of this spell only allows the target to assume the forms of animals and beasts, and is commonly just called *wildshape*. For the life of me, I don't know why they didn't put a version of this spell in the litmus. *Material Component:* A filled cocoon.

**Polymorphic Aura* is reprinted from *Wild Spellcraft*.

CHAPTER SIX: FESTIVAL GAMES

Rarely are so many different games crowded into so small a space as in a festival. To clear away the frustrations that come from the troubles of life, people like to celebrate, and so regardless of what a festival is meant to celebrate, it will almost always have several different games available to entertain the crowds. Many games that people play in private or in the streets are brought to festivals and given new life, with larger crowds to watch, and more intense competition. For entertainment of all varieties, festivals are one of the best places to go.

A DRAGON'S GOLD

Target Number/DS: n/a.

Variations of this popular event can be found throughout most kingdoms, especially those far from the wilderness, or where dragons are only known in children's tales and minstrel's songs sung by a winter fire. It is as old as fairs themselves in the reckoning of most, and if there were a unique origin to it, it has been long forgotten. It is the highlight event of many a fair, and often played during holidays celebrating historic victories within a kingdom. Played mostly by common folk, nobility at times take part in a more refined version for their amusements. Often the burden of providing gold and treasure for this game falls upon the local 'Dragon,' namely whoever is in power in the government.

The centerpiece is a huge dragon, a costume worn by half dozen or more participants, which is paraded through the festivities, harassing fair maidens, chasing children and being chased by dogs. Made of canvas, cloth, papier-mâché, or other materials both common and lavish, depending on who has crafted it, all are bright and colourful. A huge head with a moveable jaw leads a sinewy body, with four (or more) legs and a lashing tail. Someone inside the dragon controls each appendage, in addition to those moving the body, and coordinated teams can make the costume move with surprising realism. During especially large, well-known fairs, or those that are well funded, minor magics are also added, causing smoke to pour from sneering nostrils, emerald flames to glow in avaricious eyes, and roars to thunder across a delighted countryside.

The dragon is led throughout the fair, ending up at a central location wherein lies its treasure, a mountain of

gold, jewelry, and priceless treasures waiting for the brave to try and take it. The 'treasure' is mostly a few bales of hay, covered in pieces of costume jewelry, mock weapons and arms, lacquered urns, and occasionally, the fallen remains of a hero not up to the task of ending the beasts life (usually crafted out of painted wood for armor, stuffed with straw and tinged with red paint 'blood'). Despite the overall mundane quality of the hoard, strewn throughout it are items of value. A gold or silver coin here, a bolt of fine cloth there, a pouch of candies, a well-made knife, or any other conceivable prize made or donated for the event.

The dragon circles its horde protectively, while the challengers line up. The first to enter are the winners of the day's earlier contest, or winners of a raffle. They rush onto the hoard and attempt to dodge past the dragon to get at its treasure, sometimes one by one, but more often in groups who hope that at least some out of their number will be able to heroically defeat the drake's greed. Anyone who is struck by one of the Dragon's attacks must stop and leave the hoard, though they have the choice to just fall where they're struck, making the sight even more intimidating.

As the event winds down, the dragon is eventually slain by 'knights,' or by another dragon that also dies in the combat, or by a rush of onlookers. The tradition varies from county to county. This being the end of the event, the treasure that has been stolen is picked over and prizes are bragged about, with any treasure not yet claimed usually being tossed out at a parade that ends the day.

Mechanics

The treasure hoard is a mound of hay about two or three feet deep, and fifty or more feet in diameter. The Dragon winds its way slowly across this hoard, attacking anyone it can. Usually no more than eight people are allowed to run onto the field at once, which is usually enough that the Dragon can't hit them all. The Dragon attacks as many people as it can, and by the rules, anyone who is struck must stop searching, usually leaving to stand aside and watch, though it is permissible to fall where you are struck and lie as a casualty. It is considered very bad cheating to try to rummage through the hoard while you're dead.

Each round, a person on or near the hoard can make a free Spot check to notice some form of worthwhile valuable. The base DC, not counting range, is 20, though treasure is scattered a little more liberally toward the very middle (since the Dragon can almost always hit someone before they get to the middle), so the base DC there is only 15. Roll on the table below to see what the treasure is. If a person has already spotted some treasure, he can get it out of the hay as a move-equivalent action once he reaches the area. Alternately, a person can spend a full round to make a Search check (DC 10) in any one square. This searching provokes an attack of opportunity, but if successful, the person can roll on the table below to see what he gets.

Once a person either spots or picks up an item, he can make a hasty appraise check (typically DC 17 for even the most common items) to determine the value, though usually common sense can determine an item's value. A person is free to keep searching and picking up as many items as he wants, if he's willing to risk being attacked by the Dragon.

Festival Dragon: Huge object; HD n/a; hp 80; Init -2; Spd 20ft; AC 6 (-2 Dex, -2 size); Atk two or more claws -2 melee (1 subdual), bite -2 melee (1d3 subdual), tail lash -6 melee (1d2 subdual); Face/Reach 10ft by 30ft/5ft; SA can make one attack of opportunity per round with each limb that can normally attack; SQ Hardness 4; AL usually Neutral Good; SV Fort +0, Ref -2, Will -4; Str 10, Dex 6, Con -, Int -, Wis -, Cha -.

Some festival Dragons are built with a breath weapon attack, a cone of brilliant red and gold ribbons that can be spat out like flames in a 20ft line, 5ft wide. It can use this breath weapon once every 10 rounds, which is the time it takes to recoil the ribbons into the mouth and reset the mechanism. Anyone struck by the flames is 'killed.'

The Dragon is usually not allowed to hit someone who is more than five feet from the edge of the hoard, though once someone sets foot on the hoard, they must get at least twenty feet away, or they're still considered a fair target. Also, the Dragon is usually generous to children, and prefers to just chase children off, unless they get greedy.

The above stats are for a Dragon operated by relatively untrained commoners. A Dragon operated by properly-trained performing team would have an AC of 8 (no Dex penalty), and a +2 bonus to all attack rolls.

Specifics: Use the treasure table below to determine what type of item is found in an average search.

Variants and Optional Rules

People aren't normally allowed to attack the Dragon, but in some morally-upstanding communities, if a person shouts a passage of scripture or asks for a god to protect him, the people inside the Dragon will usually not attack that person for at least one round. In other communities, a person who finds a weapon in the hoard, either as a toy or a real one, can try to use that weapon to make an attack on the Dragon. If they're successful, they usually get cheers from the crowd and a small reward later.

d%	Outer Hoard (value)	Inner Hoard (value)
01-10	A small mound of 3d6 cp	A mound of 5d6 sp
11-20	A shell bracelet (2 sp)	Costume jewelry (1 gp)
21-30	A bag filled with coloured stones and marbles (5 sp)	A finely-made article of clothing, tied with ribbon (5 gp)
31-40	A wreath of flowers and ribbons (2 sp)	A large box that holds many rich candies (2 gp)
41-50	An embroidered cloth with a picture (1 gp)	Bronze jewelry item set with semi-precious stones (5 gp)
51-60	A wooden token good for a free meal at a local restaurant (5 sp)	A dagger or shortsword in sheath (10 gp)
61-70	A toy sword painted silver (2 sp)	A metal flask filled with spirits (2 gp)
71-80	A gold coin (1 gp)	A pretty doll or other toy (5 gp)
81-90	Some type of art supply, like inks, pens, fancy wood, or paint. (3 gp)	An common item made of silver or gold, like a needle (10 gp)
91-100	Roll on the Inner Hoard table at +10	Fancy jewelry or clothing (50 gp)

BOARD TUMBLING GAME

Target Number/DS: n/a.

A fun game that is easily played by anyone, the board tumbling game begins when someone, usually an innkeeper, is willing to please others by offering a bit of money. A rectangular piece of wood – 4 inches tall, 2 inches wide, and an inch thick – is lain on flat ground, with one or two coins on the top, usually just copper. People take turns tossing stones from anywhere between 20 and 100ft from the board, trying to knock it over. If they succeed in tumbling the board, they win the money on top. Usually the person who begins the game has at least a few coins available, so everyone will have a chance to play. Alternately, the person putting up the money to be won charges a fraction of the possible winnings for each chance to throw, so for a silver piece, an innkeeper might charge 2 or 3 coppers per throw.

Sometimes when a noble wants to make his servants happy, he'll even put a gold piece on the board, with no charge to play for it. In this case, it is tradition for the servants to vow, "Be my life long enough to be your grandson's servant."

Aside from being a fun game used to try to earn a few coins, the board tumbling game has a more charming aspect, in that it was often used by shy people to draw the attention of someone they were enamoured with. Usually when this game is played, the line to play forms in a ring around the board, as much as a hundred feet in diameter, and a cleverly tossed stone could potentially make a charming woman or man's eyes turn your way. The expression, "throwing the stone to someone" is often used when a man flirts with a woman.

Mechanics

The board itself has a base AC of 9, and a rock is a simple weapon that deals 1d2 points of damage with a range increment of 20ft. Additionally, simply hitting the board is not enough, so players get a -2 circumstance penalty to their attack rolls because of the difficulty of tumbling the board. Often people have favored stones that they think are lucky, which could, at the game master's option, provide a +1 luck bonus to the attack roll. The effective AC of the board, after taking in range, is usually 17, up to as much as 21 at maximum range. A successful hit tumbles the board.

If, alternately, a player wants to get the attention of someone they have a crush on, the player can try to toss the stone in that person's direction. The base AC to land

a stone close to a chosen person is 5, modified by range. The person the stone lands by then makes a reaction check toward the player, to see if she reacts favorably. An attack roll that succeeds by 5 or more grants a +2 bonus on this reaction check. If the attack roll succeeds by only one point, though, the stone might end up bouncing into the target's legs, which incurs a -1 penalty on the check.

Specifics

Often innkeeper's cheat when they run this game by making sure to put the board where there is some sort of sticky fluid (like spilled liquer, or vomit) on the ground. This adds a further -1 circumstance penalty to attack rolls to tumble the board. On the other hand, very generous innkeepers will stack the board with all the coins payed for the chance to play the game, letting the winner take all.

Many first-time players try to toss the stone in the air and let it land on the board. This is far less effective than simply trying to throw the stone directly. Tosses are resolved as grenade-like attacks, and have a far greater chance of missing.

Variants and Optional Rules

Halfling children like to play this game with cakes or plates of food instead of with a board and a coin. If a child successfully flip the food onto the ground, he'll be able to tell any one other friend to do almost anything simple. Often, Halfling children with a secret won't share it unless someone can beat them at Food Tumbling.

[Please note that this is actually a traditional game from Spain (among other places), played by peasants or servants of land-owners.]

SQUASHGOBLIN

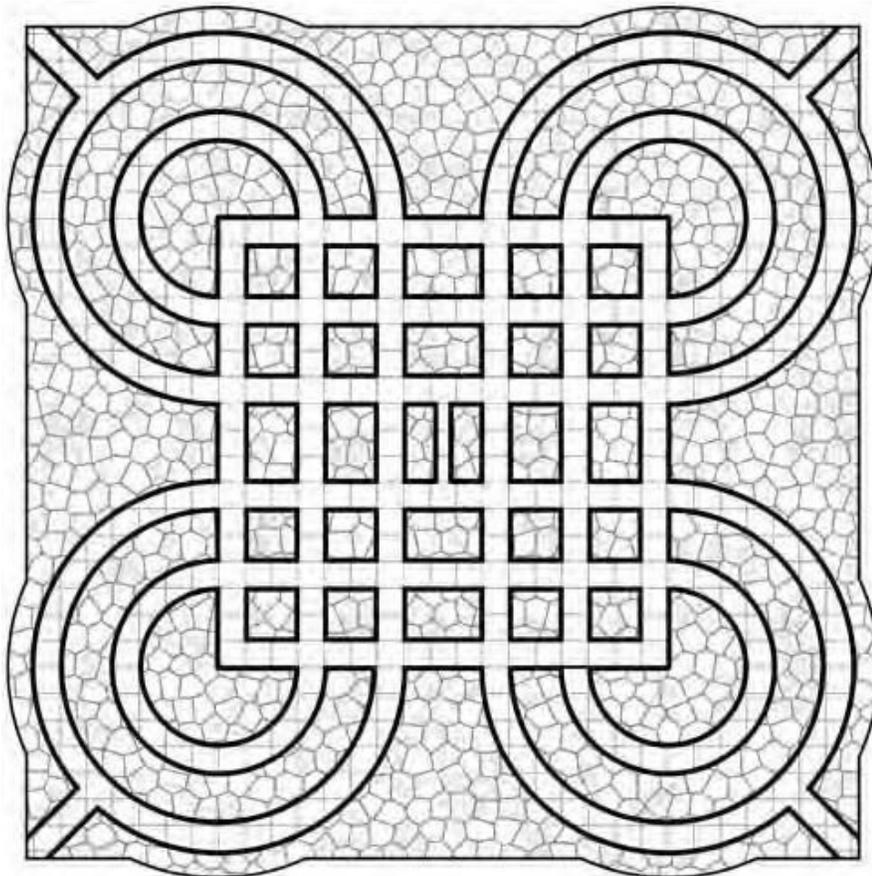
Target Number/DS: n/a.

This game is played exclusively by Dwarves; few other races can work stone well enough to make it possible, except perhaps dark Elves with their magic. It is likely that no other culture would care to play it in any case. Developed from Dwarven "boulder runs" – worked sections of tunnel used for boulder traps – Squashgoblin involves two teams of Dwarves rolling large boulders through narrow tunnels, trying to use the boulder to crush effigies that represent Goblins.

In traditional boulder runs, once Dwarven enemies entered the run, teams of Dwarves would push boulders about to flatten them. A series of gently curving loops

was a common feature of the boulder runs, allowing the boulder pushers to build momentum. Different crews of boulder pushers would often compete to see who could squash more goblins. Eventually, Dwarven leaders began holding peacetime competitions in boulder pushing as a useful and amusing bit of defense practice. Eventually it turned from wargame to sport, and the tunnels were widened to allow two teams to run boulders at the same time. The design for the run has now been pretty well standardized, although some regional variations may occur in the placement and number of loops.

Squashgoblin is played by two teams of five Dwarves each, in a maze of tunnels filled with twenty-five straw or wooden effigies of Goblins, which are strewn and hidden about the run. Each team rolls a five-ton stone boulder, ten feet in diameter. The tunnels themselves are twenty feet wide, big enough for two boulder teams to just barely pass each other by, if needed. Usually four Dwarves push the boulder while the fifth runs ahead, scouting for Goblins and warning of oncoming traffic. Most players memorize the layout of the run and can easily keep track of where they are, so hitting unexpected walls is rarely a problem, even though the Dwarves pushing the boulders cannot even see what is ahead of them. Most teams have detailed codes they can shout to each other so they can know when and where to turn, and how fast.



Teams may not intentionally have their stones contact members of the other team, nor can they themselves take any offensive action toward the other team, and are penalized by losing points if the judges think they were not trying hard enough to warn the other team. Similarly, it is against the rules to use one's own body to impede the progress of the other team. If anyone is crushed under a stone, the game is immediately stopped, with first concerns going toward the injured. Stones *are* allowed to contact, however, and crowds love when two huge stones crash into each other, resounding through the caverns. It is wholly against the rules to move Goblins before they are crushed, but team scouts are encouraged to shove crushed effigies into corners to make the path clearer.

Once all the effigies have been crushed, the team that crushed the most is the winner. Judges and spectators watch either through trapdoors, or from high overhead, to confirm the scores. Because of the effort necessary to make a Squashgoblin run, most are equipped with open ceilings so they can be easily observed by crowds, without making the game any easier for the players.

Mechanics

Unless otherwise noted, all the tunnels in Squashgoblin are twenty feet wide, approximately twelve feet high, with flat floors of smooth stone that have no slope. Though the stones are too heavy to push or drag normally, the smoothness of the tunnels and the stones makes their movement possible.

A stone's base speed is 0. As a move-equivalent action, a stone may be accelerated by 5 ft with a Strength check (DC 20), and it will start moving in whatever direction the Dwarves push it. Each round, a stone will decelerate by 5 ft unless the Dwarves either increase its speed again (DC 20) or keep up the current momentum (DC 10). All these Strength checks are move-equivalent actions, but the Dwarves automatically move with the stone. Up to four people can work together, using the assisting rules (one pusher is the main pusher, and for each other pusher who succeeds a Strength check DC 10, the main pusher gets a +2 bonus to his check). Regardless of how hard it is pushed, the stone will never move faster than it's pushers.

Obviously the stone will never go into reverse on its own, but a Strength check (DC 25) can slow it by 5 more feet, in addition to the 5 ft it naturally slows down by. Alternately, if the stone is already at a complete stop against a wall, the Dwarves can attempt this Strength check (DC 25) to make it start moving backward at a speed of 5 ft. This also works if they want to change directions, which usually requires either a full stop (the hard way), or slamming the stone into a wall at an angle (the easy way).

Since the tunnels are wider than the stones, they can be shifted slightly from side to side, referred to as ‘changing lanes.’ Whenever the Dwarves attempt one of the above Strength checks, they may choose to also adjust it sideways 5 ft in either direction, as a free action (Strength check DC 10). For example, in one round, the team could use their two move actions to try to accelerate the stone twice to a speed of 10 ft, and shift it over 10 ft as two free actions. A team may try to shift the boulder 10 ft as one action (DC 25), but a boulder can shift no more to the side than it moves forward in a given round.

When a stone strikes a wall (and it will), the results depend on its speed and angle. If the stone has not ‘changed lanes’ this round, it will usually strike straight on, dealing 1d6 points of damage to the wall and to itself, or 2d6 if it is moving faster than 50 ft per round. The same will happen if two boulders strike head on. Since stone has a hardness of 8, this is usually negligible, especially since each team’s boulder has 1,800 hit points. Particularly old stones might be a bit more fragile, but Dwarves are picky about these things, so they won’t use substandard boulders.

If the stone has changed lanes in the past round, it is considered to be moving at a slight angle, and so any damage dealt or received is halved, since the stone will roll slightly against whatever it strikes. Either way, the stone will instantly stop if it hits a wall or another boulder, even if it only hits half-on, which is often much faster than trying to slow down and possibly back up to go down a perpendicular corridor.

The one exception to this is when the boulder is rolling down one of the curving tunnels on the corner of the run. A boulder that hits the wall in one of these tunnels will slow down 5 ft, but will follow the curve of the tunnel freely at its remaining speed, without the Dwarves having to manually change its angle. For example, if a boulder is traveling at 40 ft per round when it enters one of the roundabout tunnels, it will slow to 35 ft per round, but continue moving. It will not slow down beyond the first

round it is in the tunnel (aside from normal slowing down if the Dwarves stop pushing), because the walls let it smoothly arc, so the Dwarves must still push it, but it sometimes requires less effort than trying to slow the boulder to a stop and get it moving again.

Specifics

If a stone rolls into a person’s square, the victim takes 20d6 points of damage (Reflex DC 5 to avoid, with a +1 increase to the DC for every 10 ft the stone is moving). Since the Goblin effigies have 5 hit points and are immobile, they are instantly crushed.

Pushing heavy boulders is about as taxing as running, so count each round of accelerating the boulder as one round of running for determining how long a team can keep pushing it. If they are both accelerating it *and* running (such as if the boulder is traveling faster than 40 ft per round), count each round as two rounds of running. Just keeping the boulder at the same speed is not a substantial exertion.

Whenever a boulder rolls over a Goblin effigy, the team must make a Strength check (DC 5) or else the boulder changes lanes 5 ft either to the left or right at random.

To run a *Squashgoblin* tournament using the rules in Chapter One, determine each team’s rating by adding its average Strength bonus, average Constitution bonus, and one point for every 5 ranks of Spot the best Spotter on the team has.

Variants and Optional Rules

Dwarvish generals keep asking for permission to round up real Goblins and employ them in Squashgoblin tournaments, but most thanes forbid such cruelty, because rumours say that Duergar actually do do such a thing.

TEMPERATURE CLIMBING

Target Number/DS: n/a.

Also known as “Hot Rung,” “The Druid’s Climb,” or simply “The Elemental Ladder,” this game originated as a celebration ritual of a group of tree-dwelling Elves. Millennia ago, an Orc invasion overwhelmed them, forcing them to hide high above the forest floor within the canopy. The Orcs soon found them, however, and attacked with the aid of long metal ladders. A group of Elven druids and adepts ended the assault by casting *chill metal* and *heat metal* upon the Orcs’ ladders, which the Orcs were forced to abandon because they were unable to handle the pain. To commemorate the occasion, the

Elves created elemental ladders, and made them part of a tri-annual festival game. As part of their rituals, Elves show their superiority over the Orcs by climbing an elemental ladder. The game spread when human visitors saw the ritual and mistook it as a child's game. Although some consider the game to be barbaric and cruel, it has gained much acceptance among a human populace who, until a few centuries ago, resolved legal disputes through the ordeal of the hot iron.

This game is quite simple. To win, all a contestant must do is climb up the elemental ladder and then climb back down without falling. However, the game's host may activate the magic abilities of the item by uttering the command words. The elemental ladder is usually embedded in the ground so that it will stand upright. Some regular fairgrounds have an elemental ladder set up permanently, which can be easily recognized due to the scorch marks on the earth surrounding the posts. Spell casters who believe they can anticipate which command (hot or cold) the game's host will give, have been known to cast *endure elements* or similar spells upon themselves, or *chill metal* or *heat metal* on the elemental ladder in order to abate or neutralize the ladder's effects. This usage of magic is not forbidden, but rather encouraged.

Game hosts like to lull players into a fall sense of security, then use a different command word to switch the ladder's temperature from hot to cold. By then, however, the contestant is much closer to completing her climb.

Mechanics

Normally, a pre-made *elemental ladder* is used, but any metal ladder will work in a pinch if there is a spellcaster available to cast appropriate spells. The ladder is always 45 ft high, and in order to win, a contestant must climb up and down. Usually, a magic-user is ready to cast *featherfall* on those who get fairly high but can no longer hold on.

Elemental Ladder: this magic item is a 45 ft-tall metal ladder. There are three different command words. The first casts *heat metal* on the ladder, the second casts *chill metal*, and the third cancels the previous two effects. Mark the temperature status of the ladder on a scale from 1 to 7. Starting from coldest to hottest, 1 is freezing (2d4 cold damage/round), 2 is icy (1d4 cold damage/round), 3 is cold (no damage), 4 is average (no damage), 5 is warm (no damage), 6 is hot (1d4 fire damage/round), and 7 is searing (2d4 fire damage/round). Whenever *heat metal* is active, the temperature will increase one step per round,

to a maximum of 7, and it will decrease at a rate of one step per round, to a minimum of 1, when *chill metal* is active. Any creature climbing the ladder will take the appropriate damage each round.

Caster Level: 4th, *Prerequisites*: Craft Wondrous Item, *chill metal*, and *heat metal*. *Market Price*: 6,000 gp. *Weight*: 40 lbs.

Climbing a ladder requires a Climb check (DC -5), at a rate equal to half your movement rate per round, or (DC 0) to climb at your full movement rate. Though standard rules simply state you must make a new Climb check every time you take damage while climbing, since it is the surface itself dealing the damage, you suffer a penalty to your Climb check equal to half the amount of damage taken in the past round. Still, it is usually simple to climb, and how well you fare will usually depend on your willingness to take pain, rather than skill. Failure simply stops your progress for the round, whereas failure by 5 or more means that you fall.

Specifics

If a character attempts to cast a *heat metal*, or *chill metal* spell directly on the ladder itself, she can, but the person operating the ladder can simply dispel the effect by giving the third command word.

Variants and Optional Rules

Halflings have a bizarre sense of irony. Though their ladders are only 30 ft high, they require climbers to first soak their hands and feet in cooking oil, which not only gives a -4 circumstance penalty to Climb checks, but deals an extra 1 point of damage per round at temperature 6, and an extra 1d4 at temperature 7.

TOWER OF CASTILO

Target Number/DS: n/a.

In the town of Castilo, a minor archmage made his lair in a sturdy and looming tower. At one time, a Gnoll army invaded the town, and as it wrought havoc, nearly all of the town was destroyed except for the archmage's abode. Wax wrathful, he unleashed his powers upon the Gnoll army, hoping to drive them away, but though his might was impressive, it was not inexhaustible. He refused to run when the Gnolls came crashing toward his tower, and erected a mighty magical shield. The Gnolls threw arrows and rocks to knock down the shield, while the magus threw back balls of fire and hail from the sky. The battle lasted for five exhausting hours, during which time the archmage used nearly every resource and magic item in his well-provisioned tower.

The peasants who had fled from the town to the nearby wooded hills watched the battle with awe and fear, and eventually the Gnoll army turned back. But it left a crumbled and toppled tower as a symbol of their pyrrhic victory. Now, in that town, and for hundreds of miles around, whenever a great deed is celebrated, peasants gather to play this simple game, remembering the time where their sorcerer gave his life to keep the Gnoll army from their lands.

In the Tower of Castilo game, a small keg, called the Tower, is placed on the ground in the middle of a wide area, and one person from the town, usually a local celebrity, gets to be the Sorcerer. Twenty to thirty other peasants form a ring around the Tower, portraying the Gnolls. The Gnolls hurl balls or small beanbags at the Tower, trying to knock it down, and the Sorcerer must block the assault as best he can, while simultaneously trying to defeat the Gnolls. The Sorcerer can grab bags or balls that he blocks or catches, and throw them back. If a Gnoll catches or dodges, he is safe, but if he is hit, the Gnoll is out.

If the Tower is knocked over, the Sorcerer loses, and the town mourns the loss by each burying one coin near their homes. If the Sorcerer can manage to take out all the Gnolls, however, the person who played the sorcerer is awarded with any reasonable request the town can fulfill, and the town spends the night celebrating happily.

Mechanics

The Sorcerer and the Tower fill the same 5 ft square, and the Sorcerer cannot move more than 5 ft from the Tower without giving up the battle. The Gnolls form a ring around the Tower, twenty feet in radius. The keg that represents the tower is about a foot across, and has an AC of 7. If the keg is hit for more than 5 points of damage in one round, it begins to teeter, and the Sorcerer must succeed a Reflex save (DC 10 +total damage dealt) to catch it before it falls over. The Sorcerer is not allowed to pick up the keg, or touch it in any way unless it is teetering and about to fall.

A small beanbag or ball is a simple diminutive weapon, with a range increment of 15 ft, that deals 1 point of subdual bludgeoning damage on impact. The Tower cannot be destroyed in this way because it's hardness is 8, but all damage that is dealt is counted toward the above limit, whether or not it actually damages the Tower. Because of range, the effective AC of the Tower is 9.

If the Sorcerer is in the same square as the Tower, he chooses half the field, and provides three-quarter cover

to the Tower from that direction, giving it an AC of 14 (16 counting range). The Sorcerer can ready an action to try to catch a bag or ball coming from that direction, with a successful Reflex save (DC equal to the attack roll of the item). If the Sorcerer catches a bag or ball, he not only stops it from hitting the keg, but can also throw it back at the crowd of Gnolls. If the Sorcerer is hit, he is unharmed, but if a Gnoll is hit, he has to quit the game, usually going to join a cheering crowd. A Gnoll has an effective AC of 12, counting range.

Specifics

It is important to keep track of where all the balls are. Each Gnoll begins with two balls, and the Sorcerer starts with five balls. Whenever a ball is thrown by one of the Gnolls, whether it hits or not, there is a 25% chance of the ball rolling across the ground to a point where neither the Sorcerer nor the Gnolls can reach it. Otherwise, the Sorcerer can reach it 25% of the time, and the Gnolls can reach it the remaining 50% of the time. Eventually the number of balls begins to get depleted, so play starts to slow down. If the Sorcerer hoards the balls and doesn't throw them back, the crowd will usually begin to jeer, since it slows down the game to almost stopping.

Gnolls cannot go to get more ammunition, but the game keeps going as long as there is at least one ball still available to be thrown. The Sorcerer, however, has the unique ability to use articles of clothing or any item he has with him (aside from the Tower) as a weapon. He can throw shoes, jewelry, or even rocks on the ground, though this last is frowned upon unless he is losing desperately. The Sorcerer is allowed to go down all the way to his undergarments, but not to get naked. The Gnolls, however, are not allowed to throw these items back.

A monk with the Deflect Arrows feat can attempt to deflect one ball per round when it would normally hit the Tower, but the Reflex DC is only 10.

Variants and Optional Rules

Certain church authorities claim this game is irreverent. They believe that the story behind it is false, and that in truth it commemorates the stoning of a woman who was later proclaimed a saint. She died trying to protect her baby son from the stones being thrown at her by a crowd. People of Castilo nervously laugh off these accusations, but in truth, no one from the town was alive at the time of the legendary sorcerer battle, so many older members of the town prefer not to participate.

TRIPSTEP'S LADDER

Target Number/DS: n/a.

Tresket Tripstep was a notorious Halfling trickster who delighted in playing practical jokes upon his fellow tribesmen. A favorite trick was to replace an unsuspecting victim's ladder with a Tripstep's ladder (see below). Although Tripstep, himself, was eventually banished after accidentally killing the local chieftain, his tricks became quite popular and were widely copied. Through increased trade with the Halfling tribes, Tripstep's ladders can now be found in many human villages. It did not take long for carnival owners to realize that visitors would pay to try and beat the odds against successfully climbing the ladder and snagging a prize from the greased pole, if sufficiently enticed by prizes of considerable value.

Some people are known to confuse Tripstep's Ladders with Temperature Climbing, or to mistakenly claim that one is a variant of the other. Scholars who have studied the history of fair games and their origins are quick to point out how different they are, noting that the games grew from completely separate communities and have only become closely associated with one another when they were introduced to traveling fairs and festival grounds. So, though it is odd to have *two* ladder-based games with magic ladders in this book, it is not unbelievable.

Tripstep's ladder is a 15ft-tall wooden ladder with an enchantment that whenever certain rungs are stepped on, all of the ladder's rungs vanish, dropping an unsuspecting climber. The rungs that trigger this always vary randomly, but many are willing to take a risk and try to guess which rungs are safe. In many fairgrounds, for the price of one silver piece a person can attempt to climb Tripstep's ladder. A greased metal pole is stuck into the ground five feet from the ladder, with horizontal branches hanging out 10ft, 15ft, and 20ft up. A prize of some sort is hung on each branch of the pole. A person who successfully climbs the ladder can jump over to the pole and slide down, snatching the prizes on his way down. The main trick is determining whether it is better to keep climbing and risk losing everything for greater prizes, or to just take the easy prize.

Mechanics

Aside from the fact that rungs randomly disappear, climbing this ladder is easy, with the Climb check being (DC -5). However, each time the ladder is set up, the game master should determine which rungs are rigged. The climber must simply guess which rungs to avoid.

Tripstep's Ladder – there are 15 rungs on this 15ft-long wooden ladder. Six of the rungs are enchanted so

that if any of them are stepped on, all the rungs of the ladder vanish. Which of the rungs trigger this effect varies every time the ladder is set up, but the first two rungs are never enchanted. In rungs 3 through 5, one is enchanted. From rungs 6 through 10, two are enchanted, and three of the last 5 rungs are enchanted triggers. When a command word is spoken, and the ladder poles moved close enough together, the rungs return. Usually the ladder is permanently placed in the ground, so that the poles of the ladder won't topple sideways.

Caster Level: 3rd, Prerequisites: Craft Wondrous Item, *wood shape*. Market Price: 2,000 gp. Weight: 15 lbs.

To skip a rung of the ladder, the climber must succeed a Climb check (DC 5). Skipping two rungs at once is DC 12, and skipping three or more rungs (requiring you to jump and climb up 4ft without any good handholds) is DC 22. Note that a skilled climber can just climb up the poles of the side of the ladder (DC 25), bypassing all threat of the rungs. A person running the game of Tripstep's Ladder usually frowns upon this, and won't let the same person play more than once.

If by luck the climber manages to step only on sturdy rungs, he can easily jump to reach the pole nearby the ladder and grab the treasure on his way down. Dwarves and Gnomes tend to have a hard time jumping to reach the topmost branch of the pole (Jump check DC 10 for them), but they can reach the next-lower rung easily. Typically, prizes on the lowest rung are worth about 5 copper pieces, the second rung is worth about 5 silver pieces, and the top prize worth about 5 gold pieces. Catching each prize on the way down the greased pole requires a simple Reflex save (DC 5).

If the climber triggers one of the rungs, he must succeed a Reflex save (DC 13) and a Climb check (DC 20) to grab onto one of the poles before he falls to the ground. If he fails, he takes normal falling damage, though the base around the ladder is usually heavily padded so all damage is subdual.

Specifics

Climbing the greased pole, with very spare handholds and a nearly smooth surface, requires a Climb check (DC 35).

Variants and Optional Rules

A slightly altered version of this item is common in many thieves' guilds. For these ladders, the rungs that are trick never change, and all members of the guild are told which rungs are safe. Usually these ladders are set up in a guildhouse, near the entrance to root out impostors.

CHAPTER SEVEN: RUNNING GAMES & FESTIVE ENCOUNTERS

This chapter offers some suggestions to assist game masters who wish to run adventures in crowded, social settings like taverns and fairs. Just as the rules earlier in the book provided ways to handle unusual situations that might crop up in a game, including guidelines for handling competitions with numerous competitors, this chapter contains advice on how to run some of the most complicated locations available for adventures, namely tournaments, fairs, and taverns.

After some brief introductory material, the bulk of this chapter, is devoted to three sample settings, all of which have been cued to use games presented earlier in this book. These settings will hopefully both provide examples of how complicated settings can be realized with only a little effort, and perhaps serve to inspire game masters as you craft your future adventures.

CREATING A TOURNAMENT, FAIR, OR TAVERN

Taverns, fairs and tourneys can serve three purposes in a typical fantasy campaigns. First, they serve as a place PCs can visit to relax, re-equip and be entertained before and after adventures. Secondly, they provide a backdrop a game master can use to display the culture or politics of his her world. Thirdly, these places serve as a breeding ground for intrigues and plot hooks. Indeed, tournaments, fairs, and taverns can be more than just an aspect of a setting, but a whole setting unto themselves, every bit as interesting and dangerous as a dungeon or the wilderness frontier.

Unfortunately, in many campaigns, these eggs of potential plot movement rarely develop beyond the first role presented above. Taverns are places where adventures are started and ended (though nowadays rarely by a mysterious stranger who needs the PCs to perform a mission of some sort, thank God). Markets and fairs, meanwhile, are places where an adventurer is re-equipped. The tournament, with its traditional focus on nobility and the joust, usually gets slightly more respect from both players and game masters, but it appears with more scarcity and often becomes regulated to a series of melee combats between PCs and nameless foes, a bit of filler to tie characters into their surroundings without really having to develop any sincere links.

There is nothing wrong with any of these approaches. Running a game is already work enough without creating more, and if all you really want is a tavern for the PCs to drink at after a hard day slaying Goblins, there is little point creating anything more than a short description and an interesting name. On the other hand, players and game masters often feel the need to take a break from the norm. If you want to use a large tournament as the setting for an adventure, then a whole host of details become necessary. These details are often unfamiliar and unexpected if all you've designed as an adventure site is a dungeon or haunted forest, and the prospect of running a game in a crowded location such as the tourney, fair or tavern is daunting.

As an example, if an adventure revolves around an assassin trying kill a noble at a tournament, not only do you need to know the details of the assassin's plan and the statistics for both the characters in question, but you'll need to know what the tournament grounds look like, what other nobles and knights will be attending, what precautions the host of the tourney has taken, when the events are on, where the assassin and noble will be during much of the tournament, and what the PCs might be doing while all this happening.

One thing that helps when working out exactly what needs to be created is understanding what role each of these different types of locations typically play in a campaign.

TAVERNS

Taverns are a mainstay of fantasy fiction and film, often becoming a part of a world's unique identity. Sadly, most of the best examples are trademarked and copyrighted, but in the majority of towns, villages, and hommllets, the only buildings that seem worth remembering are inns and taverns, often because that is where a large majority of the story's emotional intensity plays out. Creating and placing a memorable tavern in your campaign allows your players to make a similarly intense connection with your world. After they're familiar with the Brawling Pixie Inn and its patrons, players can use the rough watering hole as a signpost for identifying and remembering your campaign and the adventures they have had.

If you have never tried to create a game set in a crowded location before, try creating a tavern to begin with. Because they are a set location, taverns are easier to create than the temporary Tourney or Fair, and can pay off more in the long run because they'll usually last longer.

While you may start off with a very simple idea, repetitively using the same tavern in your games will gradually allow you to expand your clientele and descriptions as you become more and more comfortable with the location and the adventures that can be run there.

Another point in the taverns favor is that they are usually self-contained, requiring only a few short room descriptions, and they have the familiar walls to guide the PCs and stop them from wandering aimlessly from area to area. Even if the PCs do become confused or lost within a tavern's dim interior, the game master has an easily identifiable guide to drop into his session – the staff. A friendly or verbose tavern keeper or barmaid can be just what a party needs to navigate the surly den of townsfolk or scum that frequent the bar, and they have the added advantage of requiring little work to justify their presence in the location.

FAIRS

Entertainment and trade are the back-bone of any fantasy fair, with the mix of exotic merchandise and wondrous amusements attracting the crowds and holding their attention. In essence, there are two kinds of fairs. The first is the traveling fair or carnival, where a group of merchants and entertainers travel together from town to town, setting up somewhere new every week or month. The second, which is far more common, is a monthly or yearly event where merchants and entertainers from many lands can gather to hawk their wares and perform for the crowds. The fairs normally take place in the same location, typically at cross-roads, remote villages and town squares.

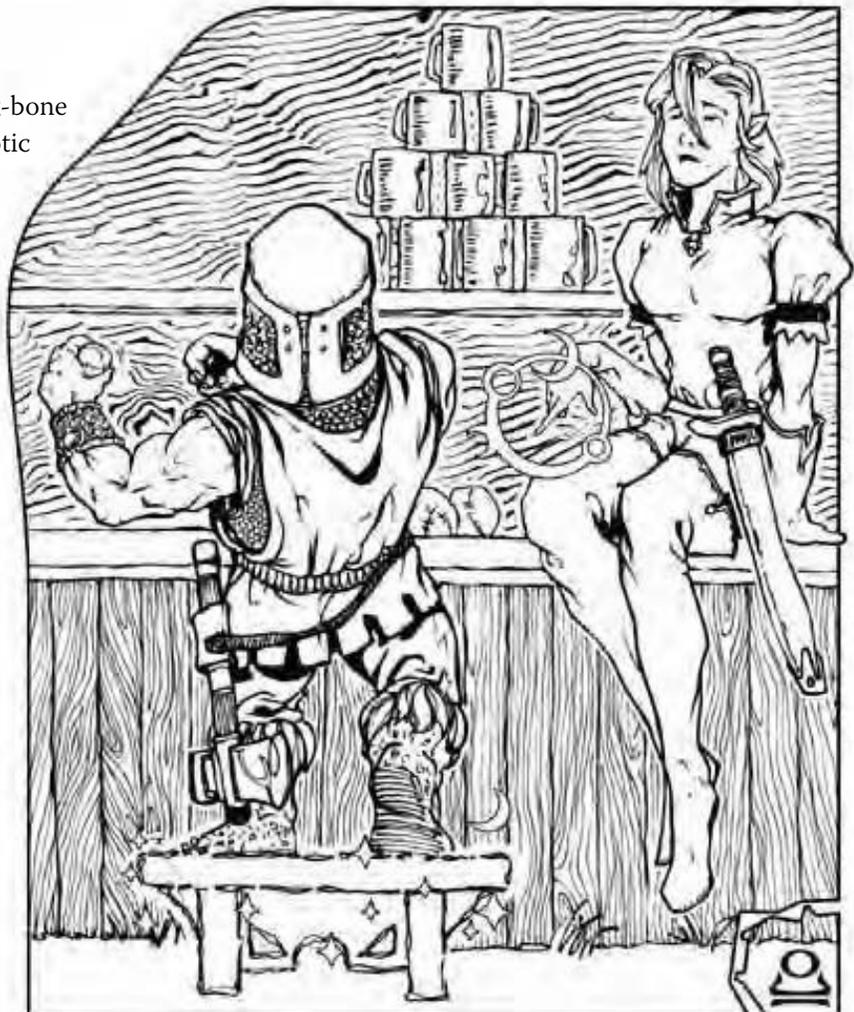
It is probably the trade aspects of the fair which will attract players to it initially, and this is one of its great advantages. In small communities and frontier towns especially, the annual fair is the best chance a party will get to sell all of their gems, jewelery and magic items, as well

as acquiring a variety of new ones with the money they pocket. A games master can use this attraction to lure the PC's to his locations, then encourage them to explore and interact with the fair-folk and the environment once they arrive. With a large crowd and a host of foreign travellers and merchants, the fair is the perfect place to introduce strange new humanoid races, foreign weapons or unknown magic.

TOURNAMENTS

While the word tournament can be used to describe any contest of skill or athletics, in fantasy games it most commonly conjures up images of noble knights, mounted and ready to engage in the joust. While the joust is the most famous of the events held at a tourney, sword lists, wrestling contests and archery contests were often just as popular, and because nearly any event will draw a large crowd, the fields surrounding the tournament grounds will often be filled with wandering merchants and entertainers, hoping to find eager customers.

Unless your campaign has set up a professional jousting circuit for the entertainment of the masses, jousts are



commonly held by nobles wishing to celebrate a holiday, a significant event in the noble's family, or even just as a display of wealth, influence and power. Tournaments are also traditionally more focused on noble characters than those with common backgrounds, and may even have strict rules forbidding commoners involvement.

One advantage that the tourney has over the fair and the tavern is its focus on combat, making it easy for new players to adjust to after their expeditions into the dungeons. Even better, a tourney gives the PCs a chance to interact and even clash with their enemies in the joust or other arenas, giving the players the thrill of defeating an opponent while leaving the evil foe alive for the game master to use again at a later date.

Of all the options presented here, however, few are so easily stereotyped as the tournament. Though most of the material presented here supports the 'traditional' medieval knightly tournament, a competition could just as easily involve samurai presenting both their martial and poetic skills, or it could entail the meeting of different primitive nations in an annual competition to see which tribe will hold power.

What follows is a brief look at building taverns, fairs, and tournament grounds for use in your campaign. The assumption made with much of the following advice is that you wish to use the location as something more than a simple backdrop, revolving instead around quick and easy ways to prepare these locations for use as adventure sites or role-playing opportunities. While there is no right or wrong way to do this, the hints and suggestions that follow should be enough to get an novice game master writing and his players appreciating the songs and games at the local fair instead of the perils and pitfalls of the dungeon.

CREATE A HOOK

Just as it is more fun to venture into the demon-cat infested catacombs beneath Pyramid of Amon-Ra than a dungeon thrown together with a random assortment of monsters and treasure, it is more fun for players and game masters to explore a tavern, fair, or tourney that has something interesting or out of the ordinary in its make-up, something that will catch the PCs attention and hold it.

The easiest place to start when designing a tavern, fair or tournament is to think of an interesting hook, an idea that will draw the players in and make them want to get involved in the new location you design. Ask

yourself what makes this place different from all the other taverns in the city? Is there anything about this fair that attracts more attention than would normally go toward such a gathering? What makes this tournament special? While it's not imperative to do this, a strong idea of what sets the location apart from others of its kind makes it more interesting to players, letting them know that this particular location is deserving of more attention and exploration than they've given their local taverns and market places in the past.

Hooks don't need to be complex to be effective. In fact, they are often more effective if they are easy to spot and understand. The sample locations that follow have been built around very simple hooks: the Market of Shadows is a fair overrun by magic and alien creatures, the House of the Badger a huge sprawling casino instead of a typical tavern, and the Black Eagle Pennant is a noble's sport that has been opened to commoners of all kinds, drawing more than the usual number of mercenaries and adventurers. A good hook is often simple enough to sum up in a few words, and can relate to the patrons, function, location, or environment. Don't be afraid to borrow ideas from books and movies, especially if something cool caught your eye. Anything that makes your new tavern or tournament stand out is going to make it easier to use as an adventure location, and more fun for both you and your players.

If you can't think of a hook to start with, don't be too concerned. Move on to the next step and work through some details of your location. You can always come back and change things if it's necessary, and often great ideas come to you while you're working and planning out other details. In short, you're better off moving forward and exploring instead of waiting around for a great idea to strike. You can always come back and make changes and corrections at a later time.

GENERAL NOTES

Once you've got your hook, it's time tease out the idea a little more. Ask yourself a few questions about your location, with a particular eye toward what adventurers can see and do while they're there. A fair on the back of a giant turtle may well be innovative and interesting, but if all the PCs can buy while they're there is stale bread and a few yards of cloth, it isn't going to hold their attention for long. In journalism, writers are taught to cover the five W's in a given story – Who, What, When, Where and Why. Answering these questions about a news story generally means the journalist has covered everything

the audience may wish to know. Asking the same questions about your location means you have a better chance of being ready for the questions your players may ask. Start asking questions that start with one of the five W words, and make a few notes about the answer. If you find yourself getting stuck, some good questions to start with are:

- ◆ Who runs the fair, tavern or tourney?
- ◆ Who frequents the event?
- ◆ Where is it being held?
- ◆ Where do the crowds come from?
- ◆ When is it held?
- ◆ What is there for the PCs to do while they're there?
- ◆ What can they buy?
- ◆ Who can they see?
- ◆ What can they see?
- ◆ What does the location look like?
- ◆ What character classes are particularly common there?
- ◆ What races?
- ◆ What are the PCs doing here? (Usually the most important question)

To begin with, you don't need a great deal of information. If you can generate around four or five short paragraphs, you usually have more than enough material to cover any basic information the PC's may need.

Once you've got a general description, take a few moments to re-examine it and pick out a few points that are most likely to be noticed by a group of PC's. As a general rule the three main elements that PC's tend to notice are events (regular tavern performances by a bard attracting huge crowds, rituals that open a market, theme nights at a tavern), market stalls and merchants that deal in items of use to an adventurer (weapons, magic items and general equipment), and various forms of entertainment and relaxation (music, food and most importantly, beer). While the general notes you took when answering the questions above may include some of these things, it's usually worth devoting a little more detail to them. Take each element and run through the five W's again. What kinds of entertainers are there? What types of weapons are being sold by the merchants? What do they charge for them? What games are played? What tournaments are taking place? What do the PC's need to do to become involved?

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES

One of the hardest things about running an adventure in a crowded, public location is that there is little homogeneity to the PCs surroundings. Dungeon can be described room by room, and their features stay more or less the same the entire way through. If one room in the tomb of Zuygar was constructed of stone and featured cave paintings, then the odds are the rest of the tomb was created with the same materials and features similar decoration.

Compare this to a market or tourney, where there are no walls to guide the characters in preset directions, and the environment is rife with changing faces, sounds, and cultures. Even a simple stroll through a fair or market can expose a PC to dozens of merchants, each trying to hawk a different type of ware. Trying to plan in detail every stall, or every member of the crowd, is an exercise in futility. Even the most prepared game master's will find their players going places and talking to NPCs they haven't had a chance to detail. One of the inevitabilities of running a game in a crowded location like these is that the game master will be forced to improvise.

To assist in this process, it may be useful to compile a list of common sights and descriptive elements. Using the list, an improvising game master can quickly scan the elements and use them to build a description. There are no right or wrong things to include in the list, although it is best if they are kept general. Some areas to focus on might be how the area smells, how well lit it is, the composition and mood of the crowd, as well as common sounds and sites. While not all of these elements will come together in every description, having a menu lets a game master pick and choose what he needs.

As an example, consider a group of PCs going shopping in their local trade-fair. While searching through a merchant's pavilion for potions and rare herbs, they suddenly spot a nemesis observing them from the tent's entrance. Noticing he's been spotted, the nemesis flees into the crowds while the party gives chase. Instead of simply informing the PCs that they chase their foe through the market crowds, the game master looks at his list of descriptive cues.

Noticing the cues suggest that merchants at this fair use well-spaced rows of tents when selling their wares, and that occasional troupes of jugglers and tumblers dressed in bright costumes perform among the more somberly dressed crowd, his description includes the flash of green

as the fleeing villain runs down a juggler. While the baffled entertainer stoops to retrieve his dropped batons, the PCs rush past and knock him down again, much to the crowds amusement. The PCs have no trouble keeping their foe in sight, because the red cloth on his magic cloak makes him easy to spot among the gray-clothed townsfolk, and the wide spaces between the merchant tents don't provide many opportunities to slip into the shadows.

SITES OF INTEREST AND THE GUIDE NPC

Rather than improvise every market stall and performer the PCs may visit, take the time to flesh out a few sites of interest before running your new location. Usually these sites will require little more than a paragraph or two of description, again running through the five W's to come up with the information. When creating the sites of interest, it's a good idea to cover at least one market stall of interest to adventurers, the details of at least one show or performer, and one site of interest that relates to an event. If you have the time and inclination, create a more than one. These sites become your show pieces. They are the places you would prefer to PCs to find. While they will never negate the need to improvise at some point while running your location, having these sites of interest at least gives you a few places where you're prepared for the PCs to go.

One trick to help game masters and players unfamiliar with such an open environment is to create a Guide NPC. The specifics of who this is will naturally vary from location to location, but in essence each is designed to serve the same role. They know more about the location than the PCs, and they can use this knowledge to offer suggestions, advice and directions to parties who are beginning to become frustrated or lost among the crowds and bustle. Whether they come in the form of a helpful barkeep at the local tavern or a bard seeking employment as a PCs herald at the Joust of the Seven Kingdoms, these NPCs can be a game master's best friend when a lagging plot needs to be nudged in the right direction. They also allow the game master to guide PCs toward the areas he's prepared in advance. If the PCs are walking through a market, and one character suggests he needs to buy a new weapon, where does the game master direct him? While the market is full of blacksmiths and weaponsmiths hawking their wares, the game master has only prepared one stall in advance and the PCs have already established it's on the other side of the market. Should the game master not want to improvise a new stall on the spot, he can use the Guide to gently nudge

the PCs back to the preprepared location, mentioning the skill of the weaponsmith and the small discount the merchant gives to business brought in by the PCs new guide friend. (Don't always expect this to work, but it sometimes pays off).

It is best to keep such NPCs at low levels, especially if they're intended to follow the party around for a significant period of time. Their role is as a storytelling tool, not a method to overshadow the PCs or to make them feel stupid. It is also advised to use them sparingly, and to make their presence as a game master's tool as light and unobtrusive as possible. There a few things more irritating to a player than knowing the game master doesn't trust them to know where to go or what to do, and some resent the presence of an NPC whose only role is to point out directions and things the PCs missed. There are many ways to disguise such characters, perhaps as friends, family, or employers, and is often doubly useful to have a guide NPC be someone the PCs were going to deal with anyway, since it gives them more chance to bond with that character. In permanent fairs, most cities, and some tournaments, it is worth keeping in mind that homeless children can serve as professional guides, touring the PCs around for the entire day at the price of a copper or two. The guide PC doesn't always need to be a single entity either; a helpful city guard can serve admirably in a fair or tournament setting, as can the staff of a large tavern.

ENCOUNTERS

Dungeons, despite the choices they offer a player, are a reactive adventuring environment. When a PC reaches a T intersection, the players have a choice of left or right. There is no option for going through the wall, or heading any direction but the ones preset by the walls (at least until they reach about 9th level). Adventures set in tournaments, fairs and taverns require players to be more proactive, relying on them interacting with the location and the NPCs who inhabit it to get the most out of the experience.

While the presence of a guide NPC can help with this, another option open to the game master is to create a series of encounters or events that can be thrown into the game at a moments notice. In a dungeon, these encounters would normally be with wandering monsters or magical effects. In these crowded locations, the encounters are instead chance meetings with NPCs, or the PCs witnessing some event that will have some form of consequence should the PCs fail to act. Spotting

a rogue picking someone's pocket is one example, as is meeting with a haughty noblewoman who feels the need to belittle adventurer's after another group of treasure-hunters killed her brother. The idea of these encounters is a simple one, in that it puts the PCs back in a reactive environment. Game master's are encouraged to use these when play is lagging rather than at random intervals. Should the players show signs of boredom or confusion, pick an encounter from the table and let them revisit some familiar ground.

To create adventures in a crowded location, the easiest thing to do is find ways to link together a number of encounters in a rough storyline or sequence of events. As an example, take the simple plot of an assassination attempt on a noblewoman at a marketplace.

The first encounter may be something simple, like having an enchanted dagger one of the PCs owns stolen, then giving chase to the thief and potentially losing her in the crowd. While it may seem like just another theft, the party realizes something may be up when they face off against a black-clad half-Orc in a game of drunken daggers, and the half-Orc accidentally walks off with another weapon of the PCs after the match. Later in the day, the PCs witness a noble-woman being assassinated. As they rush to investigate, they realize that the weapons sticking out of the woman's back are the daggers that once belonged to their own party members. About this point, the guard can be heard forcing their way through the crowd.

Three simple events have then locked the PCs into an adventure, where they must search the crowded markets for an thief and a half-Orc who have framed them, while avoiding the assassin who wants them out of the way and the guard who want to bring them in for murder.

A FEW WORDS OF ADVICE

As mentioned numerous times above, running an adventure in a crowded location full of stores, ale tents and entertainers is much more work than running a dungeon. It can also be much more rewarding, because it gives the PCs a chance to do things their characters wouldn't ordinarily do. They have to talk to PCs more, they have to think their way out of problems instead of relying on their swords, and it gives players with more points in skills than base attack scores a chance to really shine. When you're preparing to run a game, there are a few simple pieces of advice it pays to keep in mind:

You can't control everything.

While this is mentioned in almost any game mastering advice columns you'll see, it never stops being important, especially when you're trying to run a setting this big. There are no walls directing the PCs in a fair or tournament, so PCs are naturally going to go places you didn't expect. While there are a few suggestions presented above for keeping PCs on track, you also have to understand when to let them go. Insisting they follow your Guide to a preprepared location or that they stop a brawl that's brewing in the local tavern is only going to frustrate your players and make them wish they were back in the dungeon. Let your players explore and investigate as they will, and be prepared to improvise when necessary.

PCs will expect access to goods and services.

Encounters in most campaigns are balanced on the assumption that PCs are cut off from services such as healing and the ability to find a safe place to rest and recover their spells. Once you put them in the town tavern, at a fair, or in a tournament, this expectation is suddenly gone. If the PCs know a temple to the goddess of healing has been set up a block from the tavern, expect them travel the block when the bounty hunter wounds the Dwarven fighter in a brief confrontation. If they know they can buy spells from the scroll-merchant at the fair, expect PC wizards and sorcerers to go through their spells and head toward the merchant to stock up on more. When the PCs are attacked by a powerful force, they will expect the local guard to help them out.

Some game masters have a natural inclination toward blocking these types of moves, making it difficult for PCs to access the goods and services they need. Resist this urge when you can. The access to goods and services is one of the things that make a tavern, fair, or tournament interesting and different from the dungeon. Also, realize the PC's foes have access to these same goods and services. Imagine the surprise when, after the PCs and their foe break from battle, they meet again at a local temple, both sides seeking healing.

Remember you know more than the players.

One of the easiest things to forget when running a game in a location like this, particularly when running adventures that involve investigation or intrigue, is the fact that you know more about the setting than the players ever will. While it may be obvious to you that the PCs should head toward the tent of magical miracles to find the disguised vampire, the PCs only have as much information as you've given them. What you may see as an obvious clue,

they see as just another piece of background information. Be patient with your player's choices, especially while they're getting used to this new type of location and the adventures that come with it. Be prepared to guide them gently where you want them to go, and be prepared to scrap your plans and wing it when it becomes obvious that they're following clues and paths you never even considered.



THE BLACK EAGLE PENNANT

Duke Marcus, the Black Eagle of Iron Keep, is one of the most highly respected members of the king's court. A rich and well-known knight, the Duke isn't a regular host on the tournament circuit. In recent memory, only three tournaments have taken place at Iron Keep, and all were to celebrate the knighting of one of the Duke's sons. News that Marcus' youngest son, Briar, was recently knighted has generated a great deal of interest in his most recent tournament, dubbed the Black Eagle pennant.

The Duke has declared four competitions over the course of the four days: the joust and field lists, as well as competitions in archery and unarmed combat. What has set the Black Eagle Pennant apart from many other tournaments in the kingdom is the Duke's decree that anyone can enter, whether they are a noble knight or common born. This has drawn a larger crowd than is usual for such a tournament, and the Duke has received both praise and criticism for his bold move. The rewards offered to the winner in each competition are rich, and have attracted the attention of a number of warriors, fighters and monks eager to participate, in addition to the nobles and knights who normally follow the tournament circuit. A number of clerics have arrived for the event to offer their services to those wounded, and in the case of several of the more militant clerics, to participate in the events themselves. With the Duke's declaration of a holiday for the tourney's duration, peasants have flocked to the event, followed by a multitude of bards, jugglers, tumblers, and petty musicians hoping to make a few coins by entertaining the crowd between bouts and in the evening when competition is closed for the day.

A small fair has grown around the tourney, with many local taverns setting up ale tents, while merchants from all races are setting up stalls to hawk arms and armor to those who aspire to become a part of the tourney. The Duke's guards patrol the street and tournament fields hourly, their red and black livery always visible somewhere in any crowd. Although they attempt to keep the peace, the energy and exuberance of the tournament seems to have infected the fair. Small scuffles and brawls crop up out of nowhere, and small tents offering games of chance and skill to the common man seem to appear everywhere.

Description Notes

The heavy smell of sweat and blood hang over the crowd for the duration of the tournament. During the daylight hours, the air is filled with the sounds of steel on steel, the screams of the wounded and the roar of the crowd. At night the screams are replaced by drunken revelry, the common folk dancing their way through the streets to the sound of the minstrels' jigs and reels. The crowds of commoners wear little colour, their clothing mostly dull gray, brown, or white. Here and there are patches of colour and movement: armored knights riding toward their next event, groups of warriors and fighter and the occasional splash of bright red or green as a well clad noble moves past with their entourage. Further from the competition areas, the air is filled with the scent of cooking meat, and the sound of music is mixed with the heavy ring of a blacksmiths hammer.

Events, Stalls and Entertainment

Apart from the various competitions associated with the tourney, there is only one great event which is scheduled for the final evening. Duke Marcus has announced a ball to close the tourney, inviting a selection of nobles to dance and dine alongside those who won events over the course of the tourney, as well those the Duke believes to have outfitted themselves well and in the spirit of knighthood. These invitations will even be extended to those of common blood, should the Duke see a feat of great skill or moment of great charity being given over the three days in which the tourney runs.

Ale and food are sold in great quantities while the tourney is in progress, with many of the local taverns and breweries setting up tents where people can eat and drink away from the heat and crush of the crowd. Occasionally a vender can be found wandering through the crowds, selling strips of mutton or pork on sliced bread for the price of a few copper coins to those who don't wish to leave the excitement of

the tourney. While the ale tents dominate, stalls set up by merchants and blacksmiths are almost as common, selling a wide assortment of weapons and offering to help repair the armor of those who enter into the lists. Several Dwarven smiths make their presence known over the course of the tourney, the high quality of their axes and blades showing their worth in the field lists, and a few scattered Gnomes have set up stalls displaying innovations their people have come up with in the field of warfare and weapon crafting.

While the primary source of entertainment for many is the tourney itself, minstrels and performers of all kinds mingle through the crowds beyond the fields of competition. While several ale tents will support small groups of minstrels, the streets and paths will be filled with an assortment of tumblers, jugglers, puppeteers and petty magicians eager to please the common folk and earn a few coppers. Two performance groups of great renown has been commissioned by Duke Marcus specifically for the Tourney, although neither group is above gathering a few extra coins from the crowd on top of the Duke's payment.

Running the Tournament

All events at the tournament are held as elimination contests, except for the field lists, which are run as a grand melee. Rules for quickly adjudicating these events can be found in Chapter One.

The first day of the tournament is devoted to the wrestling and archery competitions. Of these, the wrestling has attracted the most attention with a variety of entrants. The participants include roughly twenty soldiers and mercenaries, more than a few burly farm-hands and blacksmiths who believe their size will give them an edge, and a scattered collection of monks who style has trained them in numerous locks, twists and other techniques of close-quarter combat. First prize for the wrestling contest is 500 gp and a *potion of bull's strength*. The soldiers and mercenaries have a Combat Rating of 4, while the farm-hands and blacksmiths have Ratings that range from 2 to 6. Even the weakest of the monks has a Combat Rating of 7, and the event will be won by a lithe, brown-skinned monk named Tengian (Combat Rating 9) if no player characters enter the contest.

The archery field is slightly more exclusive, and the prize of 500 gp and a quiver of 20 *+1 arrows* is slightly richer than what is on offer for the wrestling. There are a number of reasons for the few entrants in this list. The bulk of the

problem can be blamed on the Duke's preference for training his guards and militia in the crossbow instead of the bow, while the fact that three of the entrants are Elven rangers from the nearby Sioness woods has doubtless frightened off a number of potential contestants. Despite the slim field, there are still a number of peasants and mercenaries who have entered to try their luck. Most of the mercenaries have a Combat Rating of 5, at least, although all three of the Elves have a Combat Rating of 12, and if no player characters compete, the prize will go to the most skilled of the Elven rangers, a burly Elf named Elistrin.

The second day is devoted to the field lists. Forty-six warriors have signed on to participate in the field lists, the majority of them guardsmen from the nearby castle with a few scattered adventurers and mercenaries. Only a few knights have signed on, preferring to spare themselves the risk of injury in favor of chasing the larger purse attached to the joust. Those nobles who have signed on for the field competition usually excel in the arts of hand-to-hand combat, and are clear favorites to win. All combat in the field lists is meant to be with the flat of the blade, dealing subdual damage only. Inspectors will also be carefully wrapping every combatant's weapons in heavy cloth to lessen the damage of even clubs. The first prize is a *+1 small shield* and a purse of 800 gp. Of the forty-six warriors, nearly half are novices with a Combat Rating of 1 or 2. The remaining warriors vary in competence from average to challenging, and exact rating can be determined by rolling 1d4+4. If no player characters enter this event, it will be won by a Dwarven warrior named Kharad. Although Kharad only has a Combat Rating of 6, hardly the highest in the contest, he tipped the odds in his favor through the judicious use of concealed magic.

The final day is given over to the joust. Unlike many who sponsor tournaments in the district, Duke Marcus has opened the lists to those without noble blood. There are fourteen combatants enrolled in the joust, of which only eight are noble knights. Those that remain are an assortment of adventurers and mercenaries, including Pirmis and Randolph, a pair of peasant born Paladins that see this joust as a chance to prove their skill. The prize for the joust is a *+1 dagger*, a purse of 1,000 gp, and the Black Eagle Pennant itself. The mercenary entrants have Combat Ratings of 3, while four of knights are rated at 5 and three are rated at 7. Pirmis and Randolph are both Combat Rating 9. Should no player characters enter the event, the joust will be won by the favorite, the Duke's son Briar Heltanholn (Combat Rating 12).

LOCATIONS AT THE BLACK EAGLE PENNANT

The Lists

Located in the center of the tournament grounds, the Duke has set aside an area large enough for all the competitions he has sponsored to take place. A number of wooden seats have been built around the lists, and it is bordered on both ends by a series of brightly coloured tents. The tents are for the use of knights and other competitors in the joust, providing them with a place to strap on their armor out of the crowd's view, as well as giving them somewhere private to mentally prepare for the competition. For all other competitions, competitors are lined up and displayed to the crowd before taking to the field. During the day, a large crowd is gathered around the lists to watch the events. At night, the area is somewhat sparser. A small squad of guards is left to guard the empty lists, ensuring that no one attempts to tamper with the grounds in the darkness.

The Nobles' Stands

The Nobles' stands look out over the lists, seating only a third of the number that can cram in the two commoners stands despite matching both common stands combined in size. For the duration of the Tourney, the Nobles' stands are the best place to find Lord Marcus and his family, as well as a collection of other nobles and knights who are not participating in the tourney. While the other stands are typically loud, behavior at in the Nobles' seats is more reserved. A small tent behind the stands holds a makeshift kitchen, where lunch and wine is prepared before it is served to Marcus and his guests. When no events are being held, the Nobles' stands become something of an attraction unto themselves. In addition to the gathered nobility, these stands also have a large flagpole standing behind the Duke's throne. Hanging here, alongside the Duke's coat of arms, is the Black Eagle Pennant. This silk, silver stitched flag depicts a stylized version of the Duke's own symbol, and will be awarded to the knight who wins the joust, in addition to his monetary prize.

The Griffon's Claw

Little more than a large pavilion and two wagons full of ale barrels, the Griffon's Claw is a makeshift facsimile of one of Iron Keep's most popular taverns. The temporary tavern is also advertising itself as the home of the Amber Ale Pennant, a small competition to be held on the final night of the tourney with a prize of two barrels of ale. The contest itself is a variation of the archery competition, where contestants forgoing the bow and instead throwing a single hand-axe at a target painted onto an ale keg. The winner is the person who both gets closest to the center of

the target, and manages to breach the barrel and spill the ale within. While meant to be a good-natured imitation of the archery competition, the Amber Ale Pennant is attracting almost as much attention as the competition it imitates. The crowds in the Griffon's Claw are often large, and the ale flows quickly and cheaply, rising to a small riot on the night of the Pennant.

Mercenary Village

In opening the field lists to those not of noble blood, the Black Eagle Pennant has attracted fighters and warriors from a large variety of backgrounds. A good number of those who have arrived at Iron Keep to participate have been mercenaries and professional soldiers, seeing the tournament to both win some gold as well as display their skill at arms to the visiting nobles who may have need of a good sword arm at a later date. Though a number of these mercenaries have come in small groups, rarely larger than two or three at a time, the inns and taverns throughout the small town that borders the keep were stretched to their capacity. The tent village is composed of those mercenaries and wandering warriors who haven't been able to find a bed in town, the ranks swollen by the arrival of two small companies but one day before the tourney. It's estimated that more than a hundred men are camped here, often drunk and prone to fistfights among themselves. The Duke has ordered his guards to keep a close eye on the small community, in the interests of keeping the peace throughout the tourney.

Tenneglen's Circus

Composed of but seven people who serve as both entertainer and acrobat, Tenneglen's circus is small by anyone's standards. Although a number of entertainers groups petitioned for the Duke's patronage during the tournament, Tenneglen secured due to a combination of their leader's charismatic sales pitch and the quality of their performance. Every member of the circus's tumbling troupe is a minor master of arcane magic in addition to their physical skills, and their tightly choreographed shows are a mixture of acrobatic skill, illusionary visuals and magically assisted buffoonery. The current leader of the circus is Darrood Firestep, a talented bard, juggler and acrobat who took over from old Tenneglen almost 5 years ago. Darrood's performances are loosely choreographed, consisting of a blend of juggling tricks and complex leaps and twists off two ladders he has set up on the stage. When not making enough money from their shows, Darrood and the other performers will often challenge members of the audience to games of elemental ladders or quickstep.

Blacksmith's Row

The heat along Blacksmith's Row is higher than anywhere else in the tourney, despite the mild weather. Five of Iron Keep's seven armories have set up temporary forges here, and the remaining two have representatives manning small stalls toward the edge of the row. The armor smiths make their coins by repairing and strengthening the arms and armor of the tournament competitors, as well as selling short swords and daggers to the gathered crowd. Conversation is nearly impossible when close to the makeshift forges, and the crowd here is thinner than in other areas of the tourney. A small scattering of small children is often found sitting along the row, seemingly unconcerned with the repetitive clang of hammer on steel. For the young, the row provides the best place to see the tournament's champions and villains as well as offering a good view of the smiths at work.

Turg's Monsters and Mythical Beasts

This small circle of cages is used to display an assortment of strange and magical beasts to the curious crowds. It is run by Turg Tinwhistle, a Gnomish animal trainer and illusionist who uses his magic to create creatures that have never truly existed in nature. The majority of his sideshow is fake, consisting of caged farm animals and a few dire creatures whose appearance is drastically altered via magic. The only truly dangerous beast he keeps is a displacer beast he bought from some adventurers a few moths ago, and even then Turg is wary about keeping the creature. Turg's illusions are particularly strong, and he has constructed his cage's to ensure that no one can get close enough to touch or otherwise interact with his creatures and destroy the spell.

GUIDE NPC

Baron Lenkary (Male, NG, Human Aris 6/Exp 2)

Baron Lenkary is something of an oddity around court, a noble whose training was based around knowledge rather than the arts of war and knighthood. While not trained in swordplay, Lenkary has exhibited an excellent grasp of military tactics. While not trusted by many of the Kings knights, he has struck up a firm friendship with Duke Marcus. While Lenkary respects the Duke's Charisma and skill on the battlefield, the Duke has found in Lenkary a man he respects for his intelligence and natural cunning. The pair engage in a friendly sort of rivalry, each trying to out-do the other and placing a number of minor bets as a way of keeping score.

While a tournament would normally hold little appeal for the Baron, he finds himself at the Black Eagle pennant

out of respect for Marcus and his son. To keep himself amused, he plans on placing a number of small wagers over the winners of the various events. He is more than willing to make himself known to those he favors as winners well before the event, and his tastes tend to run toward adventurers. Should any of the PCs participating in the tourney look capable enough to win an event, Lenkary will find them to wish them luck and inform them of his wager with the Duke. While not willing to cheat in order to win, Lenkary is familiar with a few of the knights and warriors who have entered the various competitions, and is more than willing to share his knowledge of their tactics and fighting style with his favored contestants.

ENCOUNTERS AT THE TOURNEY

A fight breaks out between Oryth, a half-Orc mercenary warrior, and Sir Dreylliss, one of the Duke's Knights. Nearby PCs will notice that the Knight started the brawl, taking offence at an off-hand comment made by the half-Orc and using it as an excuse to start a melee, drawing his sword and making dire comments about the half-Orc's tainted blood. The guard will likely break the fight up before anyone is seriously hurt, but Dreylliss reputation means that Oryth will be arrested unless one of the PCs who wasn't involved in the fight is willing to vouch for his innocence.

Boffle, a Gnomish tumbler and illusionist from Tene Glenn's circus, is performing a quick warm-up show in the crowd. AS the PCs pass by, they may notice a young, human pickpocket slowly working the crowd as they focus on the performance (spot DC 15). While the natural assumption may be that Boffle and the thief are working together, it is simply a case of the human rogue taking advantage of a situation as it presents itself.

The PCs encounter Briar, the young knight the tourney is being thrown to honor, preparing to get into a brawl with a number of mercenaries who have insulted his father. While the young man is the size of a small bear and a capable warrior, the numbers against him are four to one and none of his men-at-arms or fellow knights are close enough to assist him. If a fight does break out, Briar will be beaten but not badly wounded. Word of the fight will spread like wildfire through the community, and a dour mood will settle over the rest of the tourney.

One of Turg's Monster's escapes, a small dire badger that has been magically altered to appear as a horned, three-tailed creature with scales and glowing yellow

eyes. Its fearsome appearance has frightened most of the peasants it encounters, and its disappearance hasn't yet been noted by any of Turg's staff. PCs who have visited the zoo recognize the creature, and may wish to capture and return it. Those who haven't may well kill the dire badger, disrupting the spells that alter its appearance and discrediting the Zoo forever more.

The PCs cross paths with Bolro, the half-Elven herald responsible for organizing the tourney. Bolro bears a strong resemblance to the duke, and is in fact the duke's illegitimate son. Although he is happy with his station in life, being forced to organize a celebration for his younger half-brother's knighthood is grating on Bolro's nerves. If any PCs are entered into a competition at the tournament, Bolro will snap at them, telling them off for making him come searching for them and not being in the waiting area they were assigned to.

Like Lord Lenkary, a number of petty nobles attending the Tourney are placing large bets on the result. While the majority of these try to tip the deck in their favor, few are willing to cheat outright. The PCs suddenly come to the attention of one who is, being attacked by a small group of trained warriors who seek to subdue or disable any PC competition in an event. The attackers are mostly mercenaries, but their leader is a trained warrior and highly respected member of his noble patron's household guard.

THE MARKET OF SHADOWS

Filled with little but ancient willow trees and an air of ancient awe, the Vale of Asalar leaves a faint feeling of discomfort on all who visit. If this weren't enough to discourage visitors, and the surrounding Grey hills are dangerous and rife with caves that lead to the dark realms beneath the earth. On but one night a year, from sunset on the winter solstice until dawn's first light, does the Vale come alive. On this night it is the home of the Market of Shadows, a trade fair where creatures from the dark realms beneath the earth, the people of the surface world, and creatures from planes far beyond either can gather and exchange goods in peace. Violence is not permitted within the Vale during the Market, and prejudices and hatred of all kind is set-aside for an evening when all races can gather and exchange goods, knowledge and song. Those who attempt to break these traditions are set

upon by the market wardens – mysterious, gray cloaked entities that teleport those who engage in combat to a place far beyond the markets borders. With this peace in place, the sights of the Market are often strange beyond belief: Paladins drinking alongside beholders or vampires, Orc warriors buying blades of good Dwarven steel and surface Elves joining with their dark Elven cousins in song, giving voice to the sorrow caused by the rift of hatred between their people.

Many talk of the Market of Shadows, but few commoners ever make the journey through the hills to see it. It is a market for the very rich, the very powerful and the truly adventurous. Merchants who set up stalls at the Market often sell items that are magical, rare or exotic, and often their wares are all three. Elves have a strong presence among those who attend, and many wizards of power will either arrive or send a representative before the night draws to a close. Dark Elves, mind flayers and duergar clans emerge from their realms beneath the world, and fey creatures of all types seem to emerge from the very trees as nightfalls. It is whispered that some who attend the market are from other worlds: servants of good and evil from other planes, and travelers from places far beyond. Adventurers often make the journey, seeking to spend their gold on strange new items of magic, or simply to indulge in the multitude of unknown pleasures the Market offers those with money and a taste for the unusual. For some the experience of the Market is an adventure unto itself.

The origins of the market are hazy, at best. Some say that it has always existed, that the dark core at the heart of every mortal soul has made it necessary that such an event is available. Others claim a powerful wizard first organized it, or that it's the scheme of an ancient lich who is using the market's visitors to scout out new magic. One of the more popular arguments is that the Market is the creation of the Fey Lords, Kings and Queens of the Fairy who seek to buy what their people cannot steal from the mortal world. Whatever rumour is believed, it is usually accepted that whatever force created the market is also responsible for the Market Wardens. The Wardens are as much a mystery as the market's origins, consistently silent and impartial. They only interact with those who attempt to commit violence within the Market's borders, flocking toward any fights that break out and teleporting any aggressor's miles away from the Vale. Large groups of combatants are scattered far from one another, and it is said that not everyone the warden's transport ends up in the same plane or realm.

Description Notes

The night of the Market is always clear, and the winter air is crisp and cool on the skin. Strange lights dance from tree-top to tree-top, occasionally drifting low and hovering over the head or shoulders of those who pass underneath. The Market fills the entire vale, lighting it up with flickering torches supplemented by the random gleam and shine of dozens of magical effects. The snowy paths between the tents and stalls are well trod, turning to slush by the night's end. Anyone passing the welcome stone can hear the sounds of teleportation and gates opening every few minutes. Voices hawk their wares in a dozen languages, some never spoken in the world on any night but that of the Market. Grey-cloaked Wardens are ever-present, looming over the crowds with their cowl covered heads bowed as they glide silently through the throng. Strange beings brush shoulders with creatures that would otherwise be scorned by the surface races. The air is filled with the sounds of laughter and greetings, echoing softly off the tree-covered hills.

Events, Stalls and Entertainment

It is said that anything can be found at the market, should one spend enough time looking. While this is likely true, it is not the trove of magical treasures that most adventurers believe it to be before their first visit. True, few of the stalls deal in mundane items, but the magic favored by those who attend the market is less practical in nature. Many stalls deal in items of minor magic, like enchanted dusters that will clean a room on their own, or perfectly crafted crystalline cats that are animated and behave as a normal feline would. Although of little practical purpose to an adventurer, these items are quickly bought by the servants and representatives of the wealthy, seeking such strange items as status symbols and talking points. Other stalls deal in items of great rarity, with uses few mortals can fathom. It is not uncommon to see stalls where goblin adepts offer passers the chance to buy bottled cat whispers or the last sigh of a stone. While mortal attendee's often stare at such items in bewilderment, a great deal of such merchandise seems to be sold to visiting fey, wizards and creatures from other planes.

Of the magic's favored by adventuring bands, stalls selling potions, scrolls and wands are easy enough to find. Other types of magic item are also available, but there are fewer beings willing to deal in such merchandise and the demand for such items is steep during the night of the Market. Those in the know often warn adventurers that prices rise according to demand, and it is sometimes

easier to pry an enchanted staff or ring from a sleeping dragon than pay the price demanded by a Market merchant.

While there seems to be relatively few entertainments at the Market when compared to other fairs, few would argue that those performers who do make their way there are among the best in the world. Few but the bravest or most foolhardy bards are willing to pit their skills against the myriad of sights to be found at the Market, but those that do find the opportunity to reach audiences they had never dreamed of.

A few organized events always seem to draw a crowd. Drar's Ale Tent often ends the night with an impromptu game of Halfling Toss that is both frantic and well attended, and the gathering of Elves and dark Elves under Cearlayn to play the arrow game often draws the attention of new visitors. Without a doubt, however, the most anticipated event during the Market is the annual match of Baal'meral. The match usually involves the most well-known and powerful wizards and sorcerers at the Market, many of who would normally consider themselves above such petty concerns. Competition is fierce, with all participants casting off their inhibitions and playing a high-spirited and frantic game. The Market matches are known for their innovative approach to the rules, with the creative use of available spells being the order of the day. Some wizards are known to research new spells specifically for the event, seeking the advantage of surprise whenever possible against such skilled opponents. Betting is fierce along the sidelines of this game, and the winning team is showered with praise and free drinks until the close of the market.

Finally, many of the regular visitors to the Market have become a form of entertainment unto themselves. The strange sights and beings are more than enough to keep a young or inexperienced visitor in a permanent state of awe. The most famous of these is the sight of Tarvus, a pit fiend, and Korvandar, a solar, who use the market truce to come together and play chess, discussing news of other planes and drinking mortal brewed ale. Few in any realm have seen a sight such as this, and many priests and scholars of theology make their way to the Market at least once for this reason alone.

LOCATIONS AT THE MARKET OF SHADOWS

The Welcome Stone

This large, weathered granite boulder was originally

brought to the Market nearly four centuries ago by a clan of Dwarves. The flat top of the stone is inscribed with a dozen easily remembered runes, making the stone the favored place for those traveling to the market by teleportation magic to arrive.

Drar's Ale Tent

No-one in their right mind believes Drar runs a tavern when he's not at the market. This short, misshapen gnoll leads a bandit gang that maintains a small lair in the hills that surround the Vale, and his ale tent sells a variety of drinks his band of bandits have liberated or stolen in the month preceding the Market. Quality varies from year to year, but the low prices and haphazard variety seem to attract a number of customers who return every year for both the drinks and the atmosphere. The interior of the large, patched ale tent is rustic, but Drar does have two forms of entertainment to keep the crowds amused. The first is a game of troll-bridge that's been run every year for the past decade, gradually attracting a number of regulars who regard it as one of the market's greatest spectacles. The second is the traditional game of Halfling toss, played by the gathered patrons once the gnoll calls for last drinks near dawn. This last event has never been pre-organized, but few patrons aren't prepared for it by the night's end. Many of the larger patrons will have spent the night eyeing off their smaller companions, calculating which of them is lightest and most aerodynamic, while the smaller customers usually have a number of escape routes planned for when the chaos breaks loose. It is generally agreed by all involved that the game is greatly equalized by this process, and anyone capable of heaving a contestant into the snow covered ground beyond the tent's entrance is usually greeted with a cacophony of applause from the gathered spectators.

The Tuirian Chorus

Considered the masterwork of the half-Elven bard Domatha, the Tuirian chorus has toured many nations throughout the world. Consisting of a full dozen singers, this choir has members from a variety of races. While the core members of the group are a quintet of Elven bards, Domatha's direction weaves in the voices of a pair of harpies, a young silver dragon, a trio of lillend and half-fiend Dwarf whose demonic parent was a succubus. The tent that houses the Chorus has been magically enchanted to dampen the sound, so only those within can hear the concert. The price of ticket is a mere five gold coins, but the experience is said to be one of unearthly beauty and transcendence.

The Baal'meral Field

The Baal'meral field at the market is crude by any race's standards, but the enthusiasm of the participants usually transcends the lack of a polished playing field. No one is entirely sure who sets the field up – often it is already there when the market begins. Even those who have sat in the Vale watching the empty space where the field is set up can offer no clue. All offer a similar story; either falling asleep or looking away for but a moment, then realizing with a start that the field has suddenly arrived. The match always begins in the very middle of the solstice, although it has been discovered in recent years that the Market Warden's aversion to violence doesn't extend to quick games of Conjunction Combat played on the field in the time leading up to and away from the Baal'meral game.

Fey Stones, Philters and Fire Wands

While this stall has no official sign or title, many people identify it by the short phrase yelled at those who pass it by its proprietor, an awakened grizzly bear named Bruin. Dealing primarily in potions, minor magic wands, and a small collection of ioun stones, Bruin claims to be the representative of a trio of Dryad sorcerers. The quality of his goods keeps him held in high regard by those who frequent the market regularly, and he has been known to give a good deal to adventurers capable enough to perform small tasks and missions for his mistresses. Any kind of potion or wand that mimics a 1st or 2nd level arcane spell can be bought from Bruin, usually at the market price listed for that item. Ioun stones are slightly more expensive, usually 20% more than the listed price, but Bruin is known to have a variety of stones that are hard to find elsewhere and often seem to create goodwill between the wearer and any fey they encounter.

The Willow of Wisdom

Referred to as one of the two great trees of the Market (the other being Cearlayn, see below), the Willow of Wisdom is a large willow tree on the eastern edge of the vale. The tradition surrounding it was started almost a century ago by the centaur sage Poryphon. Considered one of the greatest scholars in the fields of history, the planes and arcane lore, Poryphon was continually approached with questions for nearly a decade after his retirement. In order to be left in peace, the centaur eventually decreed that he would freely answer any question put to him on one night of the year, at the Market of Shadows. For years knowledge-seekers sought out the elderly sage, eventually leading to a small gathering of scholars under the willow where Poryphon usually sat. Despite the centaur's death nearly a decade ago, a small group of sages still gather

beneath the Willow's branches and answer the questions brought to them.

Blades of Wonder from a Hundred Worlds

The wooden sign outside this tent is written in a dozen languages, only half of which can be recognized. One of the few places that deal with magic weapons in the market, the Blades of Wonder tent is run by a fiendish lizardfolk sorcerer named Zelzadek. Nearly any type of magic weapon is available from Zelzadek for 50% more than its market value, although he stores none of them in the tent during the market. Customers are allowed to peruse a large book which contains the history and details of all of Zelzadek's current merchandise, and the sorcerer will teleport away to collect the weapon once a sale is on the verge of being made. His booth is busy, but he rarely seems to sell much over the course of the Market. A number of adventurers admit to meeting with Zelzadek outside of the market, although such dealings have always been the sale of weapons to the creature, not buying them from him. While he is willing to accept gold for one of his blades, one of his preferred methods of payment seems to be sucking a fragment of his customer's life force into a silver sphere. No one knows exactly what the sorcerer intends to do with the life force he accumulates, but it would appear that he places a great deal of value on those fragments of life he receives. Those willing to permanently lose 2 Con points to Zelzadek's sphere can often get a significant discount on their purchase, usually buying the item in question for market price (or less, at the game master's option). This damage cannot be healed by anything less than a *wish* or *miracle*.

Cearlayn, the Arrow Tree

The second great tree of the market, Cearlaun is a white pine of enormous height that sits on the Vale's western edge. While pines aren't native to the area, an Elven druid Ardurial transported Cearlayn to the Market centuries ago. A small crowd of Elves, both those born on the surface and those from beneath the earth, often gather beneath the pine to play the tree game, one of the few games common to both races despite their separation. Many surface-dwellers believe the dark Elves are disadvantaged in this game – the version they play in their underground home usually requires magic to cause "branches" to sprout from a well sized stalactite. While they may suffer slightly from the unfamiliar playing field, the dark Elves consider themselves to have an edge in the competition. While the night-vision of their surface cousins is good, the star-lit night of the market is like bright daylight after the gloom of the dark Elves caves.

Valan's Dark Delights

Valan is an aging mind flayer whose stall sells a variety of food and drink that rarely find its way to the surface world. Dark Elf spider-candies are always popular, and a good trade is usually conducted on mushroom ale, the variety of jelly's and breads made from cave moulds and funguses and the expensive goblin ichor-wine. This last item is best known as an acquired taste, mulled from a peculiar breed of underground grape and a diluted poison ichor gathered from a giant centipede. This 8 strength alcohol is usually served in a small cup (16 AU). Valan's business is usually with representatives of noble houses, but a small group of adventurers with obscure tastes and a desire to reap the benefits of their wealth are slowly becoming a larger portion of his market.

GUIDE NPC

Mugglegloom (Male, CN, Satyr Bard 2) is a young satyr who has recently started training in the bardic arts. He originally made his way to the market with the intention of performing, but he developed stage fright after a trio of ghoulish warriors snarled at him while he was warming up in Drar's Ale Tent.

Rather than admit to his fear, Mugglegloom is trying to salvage his pride by pretending to know more about the market than he actually does. He seeks out other visitors who have the look of first timers, picking those who look particularly confused or lost, and offers them a tirade of advice and directions. Most of what he says has some use, but it is obvious to anyone he encounters that he knows far less than he claims. Mugglegloom will try to attach himself to a party of adventurers in possible, claiming that he will be their guide. In reality, he's simply becoming more and more nervous as he runs into some of the darker creatures that attend the market.

ENCOUNTERS AT THE MARKET OF SHADOWS

A skilled dark-Elf pickpocket makes his way through the crowd. When he spots the PCs, he sees them as a chance for a big score, using a detect magic to spot any small magic weapons or bags of holding. If he spots something magical within easy reach, the dark Elf will try to lift it (Pick Pockets +12). If he's spotted, the dark Elf will flee through the crowds. If they don't notice the theft, or fail to catch the pickpocket, they may spot him selling their equipment to a fey creature of some kind in the shadows of a merchant's tent toward the end of the evening.

A dark-skinned Dwarf from a recognized evil clan starts abusing the PCs, insulting their race and skills as warriors

or magicians in an attempt to provoke them to combat. Should the players draw steel or cast a spell on the dour warrior, the Dwarf will make no attempt to retaliate or fight back. His amusement for the duration of the Market is getting over-enthusiastic adventurers into trouble with the Warden's, and he knows better than to get thrown out himself.

The PCs come across a small group of Wizards practicing for the Baal'meral match. All the wizards are of high level (10th and above), and it should include at least one familiar face if high-level wizards are well known in your world. If the party's lingers to watch the practice session for a few moments, one of the wizards trips and sprains their ankle. Looking around for a replacement for their wounded teammate, the Wizards may ask any PC wizard or sorcerer higher than 8th level if they'd care to participate as a replacement.

A Pit Fiend named Geldroun approaches the PCs, introducing himself as an inter-dimensional procurer of mercenaries and fighting forces. He offers the PCs a number of tasks, offering huge amounts of gold for seemingly simple tasks and asking only that they sign contracts in blood. If the PCs fail to read the contracts correctly, they find themselves *geased* into performing seven evil tasks for the fiend (example could be assassinating a Lawful Good paladin, helping an evil rebel force overthrow an empire, destroying the credibility of a powerful church, capturing an aasimar wizard and delivering him to forces of evil, etc), Although the tasks will be difficult and will definitely tip the balance of the world into evil's favor, the PCs will be well rewarded by Geldroun once the tasks are done.

A drunken pixie flits awkwardly through the crowd, only narrowly avoiding collisions with other people in the crowd. As the PCs notice him, the Pixie runs into the armored chest of a gnoll fighter and collapses to the snowy ground, dazed and confused. The Gnoll picks up the dazed fey-creature and examines him, eventually slipping the Pixie into a pouch as a later snack.

The PCs cross the path of a blue-furred minotaur wearing the robes of a Druid. If the minotaur notices the PCs watching him, he gives them a wide smile and introduces himself as Merthell. Merthell is unfailingly polite, and explains to the PCs that he's never before visited the market and he's slightly lost. He offers them each a round of ale if they'll help him with his tasks. Merthell needs to visit the Willow of Wisdom, as well purchase some minor

potions from Bruin's stall. If the PCs assist him his ale-tent of preference is Drar's, where he hopes to round out his first trip to the Market by participating in the annual game of Halfling toss.

Market Warden

Medium-Size Outsider; HD 6d8+24; hp 51; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30ft; AC 18 (+3 Dex, +5 natural); Atk +7 melee (Greatsword, 2d8+3); Face/Reach 5 ft × 5 ft/5 ft; SA: Teleporting Touch; SQ: Danger Sense, Teleport, SR 20; SV: Fort +8, Ref +8, Will +6; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 18

Skills: Intimidate +11, Knowledge (Market of Shadows) +10, Listen +10, Search +10, Sense Motive +10, Spot +10;

Feats: Expertise, Improved Disarm

Climate/Terrain: The Market of Shadows

Organization: Pair (2) or Patrol (6-8)

Challenge Rating: 6

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always Neutral

Advancement: –

Tall, silent humanoids that wear dark robes and heavy cloaks, no one has ever seen the face or skin of a Market Warden. They are never seen in the vale outside of the Winter Solstice, but during that time they seem to have a supernatural awareness of what transpires. Their role as guardians is rarely called upon, with creatures of all backgrounds recognizing the advantages of keeping the Market of Shadows peaceful and open.

The origins of the Market Wardens is the subject of much conjecture and research, and every year at least a few wizards attend the market of shadows with the sole intent of observing and studying the Wardens and their powers. Although this rarely leads to solid conclusions, there has been enough evidence gathered to suggest the Warden's aren't from any mortal realm, although none have been able to place them as native to of the outer planes.

While the Wardens can be slain, it is generally agreed that there is little point in doing so. As soon as one group of Wardens is defeated, another group will appear out of the very air. Whether this is a new group of wardens, or simply the same group reborn, is the subject of hot debate. Current theories suggest that the Warden's are manifestations of the vale itself, and that the vale is somehow sentient and capable of crafting the Warden's forms out of the energy generated by the commerce and atmosphere at the Market. While generally laughed

at in scholarly circles, it is growing a small number of believers among the market patrons.

Combat: While visibly armed with swords, Market Warden's aren't prone to acts of violence, and rarely harm any creature. They have never been known to initiate combat, instead reacting to fights started between other beings. Their first tactic is always the use of their teleporting touch, falling back on the swords only as an absolute last resort. They use their ability to teleport freely about the Market to their tactical advantage, frequently using the ability to keep opponents flanked and off guard. While they use their swords to weaken and discourage foes, they have never been used to kill an opponent during the market.

Danger Sense (Su): The Market Warden's are automatically aware of any violent act within the Market of Shadows.

Teleport (Su): A Market Warden can teleport without error to any location within the market of Shadows as a partial action.

Teleporting Touch (Su): While within the boundaries of the Market, a Market Warden has the power to teleport any creature it hits with a touch attack. Unwilling targets can make a Will save (DC 17) to avoid the effect, but those who fail are teleported between 10 and 100 miles in a random direction.

THE HOUSE OF THE BADGER

For those who know nothing of the rumours, the Badgers appears to be just another fest-hall and ale house along the Road of Seven Silvers, perhaps one to be avoided as slightly larger and rowdier than normal. Those with an ear for rumour, however, recognize the Badger as one of the largest and most successful gambling dens and concert houses for five countries, famed for its high stakes games of chance, varied clientele and high standards of entertainment.

It is difficult for the new visitor to work out exactly who the House of the Badger caters for. Originally it was frequented by a crowd best described as seedy, an assortment of mercenaries and sailors on leave seeking to crush as much ale and fun as possible into their free time. These days, the reputation and quality of the Badger draws a more diverse crowd. Gamblers of all types flock

there, and it's said that one can't be called a professional in the world of cards and dice until a week has been spent at the Badger's tables. Halflings are also a common sight, seeking to test the inherent good fortune of their race in the pursuit of gold. The rich and the bored among the nobility often seek the Badger out as a change of pace, while adventurers with more gold than sense often visit seeking to expand their fortune without facing the dangers of the dungeon. Many of these visitors come out with significantly less gold than they entered with, and those that walk away with an empty purse often moan that the dangers of the dungeon are preferable. On any given night, the crowds around the Badger's gaming tables and show rooms will be from all walks of life, turning the room into a riotous blend of colour and accents.

There is no such thing as a bet to high to be made at the House of the Badger. In the past, games of all types have escalated to the point where participants have been willing to bet their life or even their soul on the chance of a big win. It is whispered that games are played in secret rooms of the badger that routinely revolve around life or death, and that owner, Badger Bryce, is willing to pay good coin for any game or contest that can excite his regulars jaded gaming palette. On any given night there are at least three stages that need to be filled at the Badger, and a steady stream of entertainers, singers and performers seem to find work. Few seem to last longer than one or two nights before the crowds bore of them, and it is generally agreed upon by bards that performing for a week on one of the Badger's stages is a sign of impending greatness.

The city guard rarely seems to bother the Badger or those who frequent it, a relationship maintained by a healthy tip from Bryce as the start of each month. Few people try to steal from those within either, a fact that is whispered about often. The most popular rumour claims that this freedom from larceny is reliant on Bryce's former position as a head of the thieves' guild, while others say it is a role he has never abdicated. If asked, Bryce typically points out the crew of observant and imposing guards and bouncers he hires to keep the peace, pointing out the enchanted lenses he buys which increase their ability to notice minor details and spot thieves. For many, the aura of safety that surrounds the Badger is one of its primary drawing points. While many will loose their gold, there is some comfort in knowing that those who win are likely to get their newfound fortune home without the threat of violence or theft.

Description Notes

The Badger is a large building, easily bigger than it seems on a first glance. The entire building is a mass of rooms and hallways, confusing at the best of times and twice as hard to navigate when addled by ale and to many people. The air is often muggy and warm from the crush of the crowds, and smoke from a multitude of pipes seems to hang thick in the air. The scent of the Badger's famed spiced boar remains thick in many rooms, and it is uncommon to walk into a room where at least one patron isn't helping him or herself to a serve. The sound of music from a nearby stage or minstrel can be heard in nearly every room, and a small knot of drunken patrons will often start an off-key chorus from a variety of bawdy drinking songs. Conversation is rarely an option, unless it is conducted at a shout to get over the noise. People tend to dress up for their visits to the Badger, so clothes tend toward the wild and exotic. Bright colours are everywhere, and everyone seems to be wearing an assortment of gleaming jewels on their necks and fingers. Through it all stand the Guards, universally tall men wearing heavy leather tunics who's keen eyes stare out through the crowd, searching out those attempting to steal or cheat. Few who visit are comfortable under the guards scrutiny, and the observant can often tell those who have caught the guards attention by watching for the grimace of discomfort as it moves through he crowd.

Events, Stalls and Entertainment

When building the House of the Badger, the Dwarven rogue Badger Bryce set out to create something more than a simple gambling den. As a Dwarf who appreciated culture and art as well as valuing a hand of cards accompanied by ale and a rousing song, a large portion of the Badger's diversity can be traced back to its owner's own vision.

The House of the Badger is a big building, three stories high and as large as a warehouse behind its facade. Rumours say that it is even larger than that, using secret passageways and underground chambers to connect with other buildings, seemingly abandoned, that share the same city block as the Badger. Whether this is true or not, it can be agreed that there is a great deal to see within the Badger, and far more than one person can in the space of a single evening. There are dozens of rooms within the Badger, many of them bars or dining rooms where patrons can gather to drink, dine and gamble their coin. While a number of these rooms seem indistinguishable from one another, others have rapidly formed their own character based on the games played within, the performers chosen

to perform there and occasionally around the employee's that Bryce has entrusted to keep control. At the heart of each level is a giant kitchen, bustling nerve centers that cater to all the dining rooms and bars on the level they share. The quality of food at the Badger is excellent, although the cost is slightly more than usual, and the spiced boar roasted over an open flame is a favorite among many regular visitors.

In addition to the bars, there are numerous rooms set aside for the display of art or physical performance. At times there seems to be no logic or reason to this layout. Some visitors have simply stumbled upon a new room, its doorway recently unlocked to reveal a collection of paintings, on their way from one bar to another. In the case of a famed bard or chorus of singers Bryce will arrange a room where the music can be appreciated free from the distractions of the crowd. Visits by musicians of such caliber are rare, however, and the skills and preferences of most musicians finds them performing in one of the many common bar rooms in front of the gathered crowd.

The House of the Badger also maintains three regular events that draw in a number of patrons, each from a variety of backgrounds. Foremost among these is the weekly matches in the Squashgoblin league, held in the arena constructed in the earth beneath the building. The Badger is one of the few places Squashgoblin is played outside of Dwarven kingdoms, and the rotating roster of seven teams consists of the best players Bryce can poach from the more traditional competitions. While several Dwarves who have made their home in the city regard the competition as a disgrace, it is popular among younger Dwarves and a number of other humanoid races. Recent talk says that Bryce is even considering the start of a non-Dwarven Squashgoblin league, allowing teams of mixed race to compete against each other in this traditional Dwarven sport.

The second major draw are the monthly nights of Stageless Play, run by an innovative young half-Elf thespian named Xygar, a protégé of the colonel who invented it. Still in their early stages, these nightly events can often draw up to three dozen patrons seeking to play, the groups often including Bryce himself among the participants. Games are usually held at the theatre, much to the chagrin of the usual theatre director whose works run there for the rest of the month. Xygar is attempting many new innovations in the field, including the addition of non-player actors who take on minor roles in his tales. Recent calls have

asked for the number of games to be increased to twice a month, or even more, and Bryce has promised Xygar a complete playing space if the games popularity doesn't wane in the near future.

The final draw is also a monthly event, held on the final full moon under the watchful eye of Bryce himself. A longtime fan of the game Gin and Rabbits, Bryce runs a high-stakes game that draws participants from around the country. With a jackpot typically rising to ten or twenty times higher than they'd ordinarily climb, the game draws a lot of hopefuls as well as spectators eager to see who wins. Bryce himself plays in the event, and can be considered one of the best card players in the city. Many aspiring card sharks come with the intention of beating the Dwarf to make a name for themselves, but few succeed.

To randomly determine the skill and population of a room in the House, simply roll a d10. On a roll of 1-3, the room can be considered low stakes, on a roll of 4-7 can be considered average, an 8 or a 9 the room is challenging and a roll of 10 indicates the room is high stakes and well worth being wary of. There is only one room in the Badger that routinely gambles at an epic level, and that's the Platinum Tables. See the Professional Gambling rules in Chapter One for details on different levels of play.

LOCATIONS AT THE HOUSE OF THE BADGER

The Entry Hall

The hallway leading into the Badger is long and wide, its floor covered by a thick layer of deep blue carpet. Near the entryway is a small desk where guests can check their cloaks, weapons and other effects that would be out of place inside. A small group of guards watches over the guests as they exit and enter, keeping an eye out for known troublemakers and thieves among the crowd. A small display case runs the length of the hall, containing a row of mummified hands. While nothing marks the case, it's fairly common knowledge that the hands once belonged to thieves who were caught trying to rob the Badger's customers.

The Badger's Den

The Badger's Den is named for being the room most frequented by Badger Bryce, the portly Dwarven rogue who owns the House of the Badger. The largest bar in the building, it has enough space to seat over five hundred patrons around its gaming tables and long bar. The

Badger's Den receives the bulk of the Badger's customers, being closest to the overworked kitchens and having the largest range of ales and wines. Bryce tends to play the host with those who choose to frequent the den, moving from table to table to meet everyone and play every game. He's friendly with his regulars, often pausing to offer them a free drink, a small loan or advice on a show or event in another room he thinks may interest them. In keeping with the atmosphere that Bryce prefers, a large band is often commissioned to play in the Den. Bryce's preferences run to folk songs and chants, although he encourages the musicians to play to the customer's moods instead of his owners. The Badger's Den can be considered a challenging gambling room.

The Platinum Tables

This small room is set aside for those who regularly play stakes far beyond that of the Badger's typical patrons. Card games are more common here than in any other room of the Badger, although any game that can be agreed upon is allowed, and the atmosphere is often quieter and more civilized. The Platinum Tables are the Badger's only Epic level gambling tables, a fact that novices realize within moments of arriving at the tables. The majority of the Badger's ordinary customers are frightened off by the higher prices and great skill exhibited at these tables. A large portion of the crowd here consists of bored nobles, truly successful gamblers and wealthy adventurers, with a scattering of merchants rich enough to afford the high stakes. Some people come to the platinum tables to watch, and a number of novice adventuring and mercenary companies try to blend in here, mixing with the nobility in the hopes of finding a commission.

The Shrine to the Dice

To hear regulars of the Badger call this small room a shrine often confuses newcomers, especially those who chance to look inside. The room itself doesn't seem like much, with a mural of three Halflings playing dice painted on the wall and a small iron cauldron filled with coins sitting in the middle of the floor. No god is worshipped here; instead gamblers come to pay respect to the idea of luck itself. The coins are often seen as an offering by professional gamblers, most donate a few gold on the nights they have a big win, and others will throw in their last copper in the hopes it will turn their luck around when they return. Unlike much of the Badger, there is no attempt to turn a profit here. Bryce and his staff empty the cauldron at the end of every evening, distributing the accumulated coins among the poor of the city.

The Pin

The Pin is a basement bar devoted to one of the Badger's two brutal draw cards – Bear Wrasslin'. The Pin is regarded as one of the less savory rooms, with the clientele running toward those who enjoy the site of blood and an uneven fight. Run by the slightly crazed Ernie, the bar contains a deep pit and a cage for the four bears patrons can choose to wrestle with. Ernie is only at the Badger for one week of each month, and during this time an assistant to Mr. Bryce manages the fees and prices. Though Crazy Ernie's events are beloved, it pains the owner of the casino that the man can't properly manage his money. Instead of the silver piece charged to wrestle a bear on Ernie's normal circuit, the Badger charges 50 gold pieces.

A standing prize of several hundred gold pieces (200 gp per hit die of the bear) has been put in place at the bar, enticing many to attempt the dangerous sport. Mercenaries and warriors who are down on their luck are the most common participants, although occasionally a northern barbarian finds this event the perfect opportunity to prove his strength. Even if the bear beats the contestant, they're usually given free healing. Badger Bryce has considered bringing in a few new, non-declawed bears to raise the stakes, but Ernie won't cooperate.

The Scorched Bar

This small bar is set toward the back of the building, fairly close to both the kitchen and a doorway to a yard that contains the Badger's small well. The Scorched Bar often seems quiet when compared to the rest of the Badger, and there always seems to be a crowd of first-timers who find their way here believing they've achieved a respite from the crush of the crowd. Those few who fail to ask about the bar's name, carved in the wood above the counter, often discover it in the three hours before dawn when the two barmaids lead a rapidly growing crowd in a game of Everyman's Fireball. An ale-mug of coins is often collected as a pot before the game starts, usually totaling 4d6 gp in a variety of coins, and a barrel of water is kept on hand in case things get out of control. Both Dennira and Pyrinda, the Barmaids Bryce trusts with this Bar and it's patrons, are longtime fans of the game and are often the winners at the end of the night.

Aluveral's Theatre

Theatre and performance of all kinds have always appealed to Bryce, so he maintains a small theatre in the heart of the Badger. Run by the reed-thin writer and director Aluveral Drumatha, the theatre is devoted to

putting on a quality season of classics and new works. Recently, the theatre has been set aside for the craze of the "Stageless Play," a trend that has Alluvial worried. While Xygar was once an actor in the director's troupe and Aluveral respects his ingenuity and enthusiasm, he also fears the implications the young half-Elf's game has for the future of the theatrical arts. While Alluvial isn't enthused by the Play-Game events, their popularity with the crowds and Bryce's enthusiasm for them has left him with little choice but to agree to run them.

Squashgoblin Arena

The underground level of the Badger is taken up by a large Goblin-squash arena, it's playingsurface surrounded by an observation level. The arena is one of the few known to exist outside of the Dwarven homelands, and the five teams of Dwarves that Bryce keeps on his pay role are among the fittest and best in the world. On the nights of a Squashgoblin game, a small crowd will gather around the observation level to cheer.

GUIDE PPC

Badger Bryce (Male, CN, Dwarf Ftr3/Rog3/Exp6)

This thick set and corpulent Dwarven rogue got his nickname for the thick white stripe than runs through the center of his dark hair and beard. Easily in middle age for a Dwarf, few who frequent the house of the badger know anything of his youth. While it is generally acknowledged that he received some training as a thief, no one knows where those skills were gained or whether they were responsible for the wealth that created the House of the Badger. Bryce himself is typically vocal on the matter, putting forth three contradicting stories in the same breath. Those genuinely curious in the Dwarf's background often complain that his past remains a mystery not because so little information is known, but because he offers so many choices that it is impossible to investigate them all. It is known that he has some connection with the local thieves' guild, as well as contacts inside the town guard, and his stories have claimed he was once a part of both.

Bryce is definitely in his element at the House of the Badger. He spends every evening moving through the crowds in a good mood, offering advice to those who are wagering money and free ale to those he recognizes as regulars. Occasionally he has been known to work the tables himself, dealing a game of cards. Few people have ever seen Bryce beaten in this situation, but he is never short of challengers. He particularly likes gambling with

adventurers, provoking them into larger and larger bets until they find themselves in debt to House of the Badger. Usually these debts are paid off through the sale of equipment, but particularly competent adventurers often find themselves repaying the jolly Dwarf by completing a quest for one of his many contacts.

The most notable item Badger possesses is a pair of *lenses of true seeing*, which allow the wearer permanent true seeing. Badger doesn't wear this expensive item himself, but rather gives them to a trusted servant who always stay close by but out of sight, making sure no one cheats the owner. Badger Bryce's Knowledge (gaming and gambling) check is at least 21, but feel free to make it as high as you want.

ENCOUNTERS AT THE HOUSE OF THE BADGER

A very drunk Halfling runs into the party and offers to buy them a round of drunks. His name is Timkin, and the lucky rogue has just won over three thousand gold coins in a game of cards. In his drunken state, he's being very generous with his winnings, buying rounds for the entire bar and offering meals and gifts to everyone around him. Good-natured PCs may wish to try and control the Halfling, while less honest characters may see this as an opportunity to good to pass up.

An outlander barbarian, drunk and broke after spending a few hours at the table, becomes increasingly aggressive with his gambling companions. He complains vocally about being cheated, accusing everyone at his table of swindling him. Should anyone oppose his statements, he will attempt to start a brawl or even draw his longsword and attack.

The PCs walk into a bar where a game of Drunken Daggers is brewing. A pair of mercenaries are putting increasingly large amounts of gold on the side



of a bar, with daggers sitting by them. It already stands at 100 gp, rising by 10 gp every few minutes. A young half-Elf rogue has already taken one of the seats, and if no players are interested in participating, he will eventually face off against a merchant's bodyguard when the prize money reaches 170 gp.

The PCs encounter Xygar as the half-Elf is looking for Non-Player Actors in his current round of Stageless-Play Game. The actors he hired as to serve as the Evil Party of adventurers hasn't shown up in time, and he needs people who can replace them fast. Spotting the PC party, he runs over to explain the game to them, begging them to come spend a few minutes in the theatre pretending to be a group of overly melodramatic evil-doers.

As the party wanders from one room to another, they hear an argument in a nearby room. Although there is no access to the room from the hallway they're walking through, and PC succeeding in a Search check (DC 7) can find a small crack or hole in the wood to watch the argument taking place. The two people involved are both Elves with tanned skin and dark hair, and their discussion takes place in a tongue foreign to the PCs. After several minutes of heated exchange, one of the Elves draws a rapier and runs his companion through.

The PCs are approached by Goerez, a Gnome and one of the Bryce's assistants. Goerez is one of the most vocal supporters of a non-Dwarven league for Squashgoblin, and often clashes with one of Bryce's Dwarven assistants over whether non-Dwarves are capable of making the game interesting. Unlike his Dwarven counterpoint, Goerez thinks the skills that make Squashgoblin exciting are the result of training and not some natural Dwarven trait. Tired of their fighting, Bryce has insisted they both put their money where their mouth is. Both Goerez and his adversary must compose a Squashgoblin team from the patrons in the tavern, Goerez using non-Dwarves and his opponent picking using non-professional Dwarven

players. After three hours, the teams will assemble and play. Goerez has 5,000 gp riding on the game's outcome, and is more than willing to split 1,000 gp among his teammates if he wins.

APPENDIX: TABLES & RANDOM STUFF

RANDOM STALL CONTENTS AND MERCHANT'S WARES

Merchants shops, tents and stalls are common locations that PCs, yet no DM will be prepared to create details of every stall and market at a tourney or fair. To quickly generate the quality and contents of a merchants stall, roll once on the Merchandise Quality table and once on the Stall Contents table. The combined result gives you a good starting point for determining the contents of the stall.

Merchandise Quality and Stall Contents*

Roll (1d6)	Quality	Notes
1-2	Poor	Poor quality stalls usually suffer from a lack of range, or sell inferior product. A merchant who sells nothing but daggers could be considered poor, as would a stall that sells mushrooms and herbs gathered from the wild. They normally tend to be cheaper than other stalls, but their products are often inferior.
3-5	Average	Average quality stalls tend to have a wide range of goods, selling items that meet the prices and quality outlined in the Players Handbook.
6	Good	Good quality stalls tend to deal in masterwork items, or produce and foodstuffs of exception rarity or high quality.

*Spell casters will average between level 1-3 for a low quality stall, 4-7 for an average stall, and high levels for a good quality stall. They charge the rates listed in the Players Handbook for any spell they cast. Stalls that sell magic items tend to focus on temporary items such as potions, scrolls and wands. The sale of permanent items is best left to preprepared locations, and is outside the scope of a random system. Some Dungeon Masters are known to object to the sale of magic items altogether, and may wish to treat these stalls as either straight spell-casters or even a mundane specialty store.

QUICK ENTERTAINERS

The following six entertainers can be used to spice up a setting you've created, or as a quick description when the players stumble across a performer or enter a tavern you weren't expecting.

The Velistin Brothers

A trio of Halfling acrobats whose show involves a series of flips, somersaults and handstands. Each Halfling wears a tunic dyed bright red, and they carry brilliant yellow ribbons that whip around them as they twist and turn, creating a flurry of colour.

Roll (d20)	Contents
1-4	Fresh fruit, vegetables, eggs and other produce
5-7	Dairy, baked goods or prepared foods
8-10	Meat, Fish, Livestock or Poultry
11-12	Prepared Foods, Restaurant or Drinking Tent
13-14	Cloth or Leather Goods
15-16	Metal Goods
17-18	Weapons or Armour
19	Specialty Store (Jeweler, Animal Trainer, Scribe, Sage, Alchemist, <i>etc.</i>)
20	Cleric, arcane spell caster or magic item sales*

Brultag Runetusk

A half-Orc bard who enhances his tales of ancient battles through the use of ghost sound and dancing light spells. Brultag has a preference for battle-tales told from the human perspective, and he prefers to tell the stories of the common soldier rather than repeat the stories of heroes.

Mellianor Silver-tongued

A half-Elf historian, who accompanies his tales with a gentle rhythm beat out on a small drum. Mellianor is only a part time performer, spending the rest of his time tutoring noble's children in the fields of history and heraldry. His stories are vivid and exciting when told by him, but attempts by other bards to repeat the tales often results in them seeming stale and dull.

The Thanduur Quartet

A quartet of Dwarven minstrels, playing songs from the more well known Dwarven epics on a violin, drum, harp and cello. The quartet grew out of an orchestra for Dwarven opera's, and their style tends toward bold and bombastic sounds. They are quite capable of filling a crowded tavern with noise, and the echoes when they play below ground are said to last for days.

The Iron Scale

The iron scale is a small clan of kobolds who were trained by the Elf Tunianan, a skilled bard and monk. The kobolds perform a short routine of tumbling tricks and sparing moves for the entertainment of the crowds, accompanied by Tunianan's singing.

Bennebek's Tales of Wonder

A puppet show with a stage on the back of a converted wagon. While most of the puppets are of the traditional marionette style, the show is enhanced by the presence of a few automated puppets and the judicious use of illusion magic. The proprietor, a Gnomish bard named Bennebek, is a scholar of ancient tales and fairy stories and prefers to aim his shows toward children.

TWENTY POTENTIAL MENU MEALS

Meals are part and parcel of any tavern experience, and most players will order a meal at least once in their adventuring career. The table below can be used as a quick description – simply roll 1d20 and tell the player what their character is eating, or can be used to generate a quick menu before the PCs make their decisions about their meal.

Roll	Meal and typical cost
1	Bacon with sliced bread & fried eggs (1 sp)
2	Garlic and fish broth (1 sp)
3	Smoked Mussels with pepper & thick-crust bread (3 sp)
4	Baked salmon steaks (4 sp)
5	Grilled squid with pepper (4 sp)
6	Baked shark with sliced potato (5 sp)
7	Fresh herring in oatmeal (6 sp)
8	Eel stuffed with bacon & sea weed (6 sp)
9	Honey-roasted ham with baked potato (4 sp)
10	Sausage and onion pie (3 sp)
11	Beef stewed in brown ale with Dwarven bread dumplings (3 sp)
12	Pastry-wrapped chicken & melted cheese (5 sp)
13	Roasted duck, seasoned with sage, ginger & rhubarb sauce (5 sp)
14	Milk boiled chicken on mushrooms and rice (3 sp)
15	Roasted beef, with fried potato, garlic & parsnip (4 sp)
16	Baked lamb with tomatoes, olives & garlic oil (5 sp)
17	Veal with mushroom sauce (5 sp)
18	Sole fish in red wine sauce (6 sp)
19	Barbequed pork on bean sprouts (3 sp)
20	Lamb stew with cranberries & dumplings (2 sp)

HOUSE SPECIALS OR IMPORTED ALCOHOLS

While wine, ale and beer are a staple part of most adventurers' diets, they often get glossed over when the characters start drinking. In the real world, wine and alcohol is given a great deal of respect or scorn depending on its brewer or country of origin. Why should it be any different in a campaign world? Presented below are several new types of alcohol, including information on their origins, cost per glass drunk and strength of the beverage.

Measures					
Shot glass/mouthful	1	Wineskin (pint)	4	Keg (3 gallons)	96
Small glass (cup)	2	Large Flagon (quart)	8	Small Barrel (10 gallons)	320
Mug/glass (pint)	4	Jug (two quarts)	16	Large Barrel (40 gallons)	1280
		Large Pitcher (gallon)	32		

Drink Name	Description	Serving & price	Str
Gelifein Pale	A wine fermented by merfolk using a unique type of sea-weed. The wine's texture is murky and green, and its taste is quite heavy. Many surface folk liken it to drinking grass.	Glass: 1 sp, 12 AU	3
Alwyr Red	A sweet elven desert wine, brewed by a reclusive clan of elves. It tastes strongly of cherries.	Glass 8 cp, 8 AU	2
Fyana Flight	An elven beer, light and easy to drink in large quantities. Those unused to drinking it find its taste very dry.	Flagon: 12 cp, 8 AU	1
Ginglebarney Walnut Stout	A thick, dark beer flavoured by walnuts. It is produced by the Ginglebarney Brewery, headed by a clan of gnomes known for their ability to drink copious amongst of alcoholic beverages.	Mug: 1 sp, 16 AU	4
Goblin Ichor wine	Made by tribes of goblins who live in the Howling Caves to the north. The wine's unique taste is created by fermenting a breed of underground grape with the poisonous ichor of a giant centipede.	Glass: 1 gp, 16 AU	4
Ursahk's Dark Wine	The first foray attempt of the famed half-Orc brewer Ursahk into the creation of wines. While his ale is known to be among the world's best, the taste of this wine is not considered a success by any race except, strangely, the elves.	Wineskin: 1 sp, 40 AU	10
Rumblekin Mead	The product of the Rumblekin Halfling clan. The honey for their mead is gathered from the hives of specially trained giant bees, and is known to have a strong and heady taste.	Mug: 2 sp, 8 AU	2
Dwarven Peat Beer	So named for its thick consistency and dark taste, is one of the most potent beers known to man. While not as strong as the famed Dwarf spirits, Peat Beer has a small contingent of devotees who have come to appreciate its earthy taste.	Mug 2 sp, 20 AU	5
Orcish Ale Stout	A thick, murky drink, bitter in the extreme.	Mug 3 sp, 12 AU	3
Dwarf Spirits	A drink famous on hundreds of worlds for its strength, Dwarf Spirits are, perhaps, the strongest drink around. One drink has been known to knock a man out, and dwarves pride themselves on their superior constitution and ability to drink these spirits.	Small Glass, 8sp, 28 AU	14
Faerie Dark	It is rumoured that this sweet liquor is brewed by dark elves. While this is probably not true, any who drink more than their Alcohol Threshold of this drink find themselves illuminated by <i>faerie fire</i> until the sober up.	Small glass, 1gp, 10 AU	5
Hospitaler's Mead	A strange drink of average taste and a herbal taste, this light mead has the effect of healing 1 hp of damage for every 2 AU drunk.	Mug, 8sp, 8 AU	2
Serpent's Tongue	A nasty tasting spirit, this drink is poisonous to all except goblinoids (which accounts for its popularity in human bars). Each AU drunk does 1 hp of damage to the drinker.	Small glass, 5 sp, 10 AU	5
Small Ale	A common drink found in most inns and taverns, small ale is cheap and plentiful	Flagon, 1 sp, 8AU	1

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