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METAMORPHOSIS ALPHA 40th ANNIVERSARY

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Enter The Dragon



On the cover: The last captain of the Warden (front), and the Flying Turkey (back)!

Cover designs: Lester B. Portly

Cover art: (front) Stefan Poag, (back) Bob Bledsaw, Jr.

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Joseph

Goodman here, welcom-

ing you to Gen Con 2016! Come visit

Goodman Games at booth #413. It's hard to

believe another year has passed, but so it has. Each

year this Program Guide is one of my favorite releases, since it

recaps the year that has passed and gives hints as to the year that

will come. And, as always, we pay homage to the inspirational past

that brings us all together in mutual respect and admiration.

In this year's Program Guide, we have an incredible interview with legendary artist Erol Otus, including original sketches, never-before-published art, and material from his complete oeuvre across multiple industries.

For DCC fans, there are two new adventures (both funnels!), the spell duel tourney from last year's Gen Con, and a variety of supplemental material.

Fans awaiting our DCC Lankhmar line will find some new material as well.

2016 is a special year for the industry, as it marks the 40th anniversary of two milestone product lines - both of which Goodman Games is honored to publish. In this issue we look back at 40 years of history for both *Metamorphosis Alpha* and the Judges Guild.

Rounding it all out is a tribute to Appendix N, in the form of new fiction. Plus several other new articles!

We hope your 2016 was as good as ours — and we look forward to seeing you at the big show in Indy!

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Two More New Letters for *The Dungeon Alphabet*

by Michael Curtis • Art by Russ Nicholson and Michael Wilson



IS ALSO FOR GUARDIANS

The dungeon is home to countless treasures that compel adventurers to risk their lives in hopes of plundering its subterranean riches. Most of these treasures are protected by either their rightful owners, cunning traps, or both. But some riches are entombed with the intent to be denied to everyone, laid away under the protection of fearsome guardians that take orders from no living being. These sentinels are no mere monsters, but terrible protectors possessing capabilities far beyond those of your average dungeon denizen, all to better perform their duties. Defeating these guardians with steel and sorcery is a risky gambit and typically the sentinel must be overcome with guile instead of brute or wizardly force.

Guardians come in all manner of forms: animated statues granted false life, extraplanar denizens bound into servitude, undead spectres oath-sworn to protect a valuable relic, and magically-constructed sentinels such as golems, automatons, and juggernauts are just a few examples of the guardians that might oppose plundering adventurers. Many serve long-dead masters, continuing to defend his or her riches after their corporeal remains have turned to dust, while others are specifically employed to deprive the forces of good or evil from a powerful artifact that could swing the balance of light and dark in the multiverse. Some guardians, like the treasures they defend, should be left alone.



Ten Terrible Guardians Defending Terrific Treasures

D10 The guardian creature is...

- 1 An ephemeral nightmare that discerns the adventurers' worst fears and then assumes those forms, making it nearly impossible to attack with full strength. Prolonged battles with the guardian can drive one mad.
- 2 A sorcerous spider with webs strung throughout the world. Inflicting harm on the guardian causes the damage to be shared through its world-spanning webs. Any harm caused to the guardian is also inflicted on someone or something the attacker cares deeply about.
- 3 An oath-sworn living creature granted prolonged life by the sorceries that bind him to his duty. If defeated in battle, the magic causes the victor to become the new guardian, forced to defend the treasure until he too is defeated and the enchantment repeats again.
- 4 An animated construct that absorbs weapons and armor it comes in contact with, turning them against their former owners. The guardian becomes better protected as it incorporates stolen armor into its body and deals increased damage as it sprouts acquired blades from its fists and feet.
- 5 An incorporeal un-dead spirit that can take possession of living creatures. The guardian possesses one of the adventurers and turns him on his comrades, forcing them to fight one of their own. When that physical body is defeated, the guardian leaps into a new adventurer and the party must once again decide if killing their own is worth the riches the spirit protects.
- 6 An extraplanar creature that assumes the form of a legendary monster such as Cerebus, the Hydra, the tarasque, or similar mythical beast. The guardian draws its power from the collective myth of its assumed form, making it indestructible so long as there are those who believe in the legendary creature's existence. Only by piercing the guardian's disguise can the sentinel be defeated and the riches it guards claimed.
- 7 A creature from the Shadow Plane that lurks in the gloom, unseen by the party. It protects its charge by animating the adventurers' shadows and turning them against the PCs. The shadows can be defeated by plunging the area into darkness, but the Shadow Guardian's own power increases threefold when it is in the dark.
- 8 A clockwork construct capable of manipulating time. The guardian always strikes first, can rewind time to gain a second chance to avoid injury or successfully attack, and even pull additional copies of itself out of the time/space continuum to aid it against the adventurers.
- 9 An utterly alien thing from the Planes of Chaos that behaves in an illogical manner. Attacks and spells that cause injury make the guardian more formidable, while powers that heal or calm the creature inflict horrific wounds.
- 10 A shapeshifter that constantly assumes the forms of impervious creatures. It might transform into a lycanthrope, making it only vulnerable to silver, then change to a faerie creature struck only by cold iron, then shift into an undead beast harmed only by magic, and so forth. Unless the party has an arsenal of unusual weaponry or spells to combat it, the guardian will be almost impossible to kill.





IS ALSO FOR HAZARD

Dungeons dark and dank harbor myriad threats to life and limb: hungry monsters, terrible traps, and ancient sorcery all take a horrible toll on the adventurers who delve into the underworld. Not all these perils are intentional, however. Natural hazards and simple happenstance can also threaten the adventurers.

Hazards, unlike traps, are not the result of malicious planning or malignant intent, but natural or supernatural dangers that exist in the underworld environment of the dungeon. Hazards can range from crumbling stone that gives way when trod up to lingering aftereffects of a magical process to subterranean dangers like bad air or explosive mephitic gases. These hazards kill due to mere misfortune and not evil design, but that's of little consolation to the adventurers slain by dungeon hazards.



A Half-Score of Hazardous Happenings

D12 The hazard encountered is...

- 1 Subterranean water has eroded the stone beneath the floor of a room or hallway, leaving a cavity under the flagstones. Stepping on the eroded space causes the floor to give way, dropping the unfortunate into a water-slick tunnel that leads deeper into the dungeon or ends abruptly on jagged rocks.
- 2 The air in this location is bad, poisoned by subterranean gases. Adventurers entering into this air pocket must make saving throws to avoid passing out and asphyxiating. Alternately, the bad air might be explosive and the party risks detonating the hazardous gases with their torches and lanterns.
- 3 Mud covers a stretch of dungeon corridor or chamber, seemingly a product of natural erosion and weakened earth. The mud is in truth a patch of quicksand capable of dragging anyone entering the liquid earth to a drowning death.
- 4 An asphalt lake stretches out before the adventurers, a product of a petroleum seep at the lake's heart. The viscous raw petroleum is sticky and unrelenting, imprisoning anyone who falls into it. The substance is also extremely flammable and an errant spark can turn the entire reservoir into a hellish conflagration capable of burning the party to ashes.
- 5 The ceiling in this region is lined with "snotties," single-celled bacteria that resemble soft stalactites. Snotties are naturally acidic, dripping caustic slime down onto anything that passes, eating away at flesh, metal, and leather in moments. The adventurers might not realize the "stalactites" are something else until they begin to burn.
- 6 The area is home to a vein of eldritch ore that reacts violently when in the presence of permanent magical enchantments. The ore is difficult to detect visually, but whenever a non-consumable magical item is brought near the mineral, lightning erupts from the object, cascading about to strike other enchanted objects and electrifying their owners.
- 7 A particularly foul section of dungeon (midden, latrine, butcher's shambles, etc.) is home to disease-carrying bacteria, vermin, or other infectious vector. Adventurers searching through the area must make saving throws to avoid contracting the disease. The infection can range from mildly incapacitating to swiftly lethal and only magical or herbal healing can stop the infection.
- 8 The dungeon is located in a flood zone and is normally (relatively) dry and safe. However, when thunderstorms break in the mountains above the dungeon, swift-flowing torrents breach the dungeon, drowning and crushing its occupants. PCs exploring the dungeon when the storm hits must move fast to avoid dying in the flooded dungeon.
- 9 A naturally occurring breach between planes exists in the dungeon, periodically infecting the undercroft with energies native to that plane of existence. The dungeon may occasionally erupt in flames, be filled with howling winds, become lethally cold, or even drain the very life force from those within the underworld. The breach may be closed permanently, but will require powerful magic.
- 10 A deposit of highly magnetized lodestone is adjacent to part of the dungeon, exerting intense magnetic attraction on ferrous metals passing through the area. Metal weapons and armor are yanked against the wall/floor/ceiling closest to the deposit, possibly taking their owners with them. The magnetic attraction is so strong that only exceptional strength can tear the items free, possibly forcing the party to turn back or to venture forth lacking their best weapons and armor.
- 11 Mephitic gases birthed in the chthonic realm permeate this part of the dungeon. The gases cause confusion and hallucinations in any surface creature breathing them. PCs failing their saving throws may flee in terror from the hallucinations they experience, wander off to be eaten alone, or turn on their friends, believing them to be horrible monsters.
- 12 Subterranean bacteria infects unpreserved foodstuffs, either turning the food inedible (and possibly poisonous) or destroying it outright. Unless the party has access to magic that can purify the tainted rations, they will suffer exhaustion and its side effects if they persist exploring the dungeon. Finally, a reason to buy iron rations over normal rations—and to memorize *purify food and water*!

FORTY YEARS OF METAMORPHOSIS ALPHA: A LEGACY OF INNOVATION

BY CRAIG BRAIN

2016 marks the fortieth anniversary of the release of *Metamorphosis Alpha*, the world's first science fiction role-playing game. Goodman Games is honored to publish this iconic property. In this year's Gen Con Program Guide, diehard fan Craig Brain looks back on the forty-year history of this game!

At first glance, the history of *Metamorphosis Alpha* is fairly well documented, as is its place in RPG history. However, there's been a lot that's happened behind the scenes that has never been put down on paper in a single place. I've been asked to write this to try to explain what I can. But please note: a simple linear timeline will not come close to explaining some of the complexities of what happened, what didn't, and what is still happening.

In 1974, by pure chance, Jim Ward met E. Gary Gygax at a bookstore and the two discovered a common interest in fantasy and science fiction literature. Their discussion eventually resulted in Mr Gygax inviting Jim to write "a science fiction version of *Dungeons & Dragons*."

TSR Hobbies published the first edition of *Metamorphosis Alpha* that same year, beating Ken St. Andre's *Starfaring* to publication by about a month, with *Metamorphosis Alpha* becoming the first sci-fi RPG on the market. The game (at that point) did not have any supplements or adventures published for it. However, E. Gary Gygax did write his classic adventure, *Expedition to the Barrier Peaks*, with a goal of introducing the game to new players. TSR Hobbies provided some additional support

to the game through the pages of *Dragon Magazine*. WardCo released the first full adventure for the first edition of the game in 2010, and Goodman Games produced the hardcopy deluxe collector's edition in 2015, followed by a large range of supplements and adventures, which will receive a bit more attention later in this article.

TSR Hobbies also produced the second edition of the game in 1994 as a part of their *Amazing Engine™* line up. But once again, the game did not receive any follow-up supplements and support for the 2nd edition was limited. The 2nd edition of the game, while still popular with some groups (possessing one of the longest running online games, for instance) hasn't benefitted so well from the growing amount of support given to the other editions currently. (But who knows what the future will bring?)

The third edition of the game was the 25th Anniversary Edition (a quarter of a century!) produced by Jim Ward's own company Fast Forward Entertainment. Fast Forward provided support for the game via its website and forums, but sadly was unable to release any adventures or supplements before running into difficulties.

The fourth edition (in 2006) was produced by Mudpuppy Games, run by Jim Ward's good friend, Jim Wampler. The Mudpuppy Games' edition was ambitious, being the largest edition of the game produced at the time and the first in a hard-cover! Sadly, the only support for quite some time was provided by online forums, a small game-focused publication (covered a little later), and a PDF version of a referee screen.

Jamie Chambers and his company Signal Fire Creations licensed *Metamorphosis Alpha* from Jim Ward to produce the fifth edition of the game, which was released electronically in 2015, with the print run expected in 2016.

I can't think of another system that has 40 years of being supported through so many editions by its original author. That little 32-page book, with the funky artwork and bare-bone rules, reflected the spirit of gaming as it was in the early days of RPGs and encapsulated a lot of ideas. It took a minimalist approach that relied as much upon the imagination of the referee as much as it did the players. Those threadbare rules encouraged flexibility, imagination and role-playing by providing a simple structure that a referee could easily build upon, and make their own. I have to wonder how Jim must feel when he sees the newer editions of games publishing their 8th or 9th volume of rules and supplements, while still claiming to try to recapture that original spirit of the game. I imagine that it must seem like the gaming equivalent of taking an elevator to the

top of Mount Everest. Sometimes the best part of a gaming experience can be the work you put into achieving it and making it happen with friends. The freedom to jury-rig and improvise to “make it work” seems to still have a strong appeal that is resonating with a whole new generation of gamers, as well as some of us older, more jaded gamers who still remember having fun before all the structure set in.

Metamorphosis Alpha continues to mutate or evolve, and yet, at its core it is still very much the same as it ever was. Jim Ward is a master storyteller. The core concept of a group of primitives discovering that they are on a starship has appeal to so many different types of gamers. That kind of an unexpected plot twist is something many referees would love to be able to produce, and yet, there it is, way back near the beginning of RPG history, waiting to be rediscovered, yet again by another generation of gamers.

For many gamers, the second edition of the game gave the first glimpse of alien life to the players of the game. Unbeknownst to most, Jim’s play-test notes for the first edition included material on alien life forms. The second edition of the game was a departure from the original in a number of ways, it was a rewrite of a product that was developed as an expansion for *Gamma World* and changed to use *The Amazing Engine™* as its core mechanics, and was written by Slade Henson. The setting introduced the same Cryptic Alliances as those used in *Gamma World* and even reused artwork from that product line. The second edition had an original and outstanding map showing the *Warden* like never before, but it was no longer the flying football that we saw in the first edition. The model of the *Warden* used on the front cover was kept in storage by TSR for a while before being auctioned off some years later. The fate of that model is now unknown.

It wasn’t until Joseph Goodman managed to convince Jim to part with his treasured (and near-mythical) draft notes for the Goodman Games coffee table hardback of the first edition that the reason for the changes “introduced” in third edition and expanded upon in the fourth edition really made sense. Looking through the draft notes it becomes quite apparent where Jim was heading with Fast Forward Entertainment’s version of the game. Aliens and

phases of play featured prominently in the third and fourth editions to allow for generations’ worth of campaign play. Less “Jumping The Shark” and more of a return to the roots of the game than most people would have expected. It is an interesting exercise to sit down with the third edition and take a look at the draft notes and see how they influenced that edition.

The fourth edition started off simply as a supplement for the third edition. It was to be called “Asteroid.” I started to write *Asteroid* under Jim’s mentorship and it was mostly complete when, sadly, FFE finally went into that long dark night, as so many other small gaming companies have and will do so again in the future.

When we started on *Asteroid*, it was obvious that the d20 game edition was the leader of the pack. By the time we began the fourth edition, all conventional wisdom seemed to indicate that anything that wasn’t d20 was doomed to failure. Perhaps d20 *Metamorphosis Alpha* would have succeeded, or perhaps it would have just been yet another indy d20 supplement that would have been lost in the crowd. My own personal belief is that the time was not right for a d20 version and it would leave Jim’s IP vulnerable. Needless to say, it didn’t happen. Jim was a little nervous about going down the d20 path. FFE had some issues with d20 and d20 *Gamma World* was being produced under license from Wizards of the Coast. d20 *Metamorphosis Alpha* standing on a shelf next to d20 *Gamma World* was a legal quagmire that Jim wisely chose to avoid. Jim asked me to continue developing the fourth edition in case something arose.

In 2004, an RPG company exec asked me to arrange an introduction to Jim Ward. He wanted to make a movie of *Metamorphosis Alpha*! The company specialized in d20 SRD games, but dabbled in film. I facilitated an introduction and shortly afterwards Jim was asked to produce a script for a movie. The script I saw had a good story that showcased the setting. Unfortunately our new friend wanted to change the setting (to about 20 years in the future and place it in near-Earth orbit) and utilize an old Russian high-altitude suit that they’d already purchased as a prop. The proposed modifications of the script would not reflect the game in any edition, if Jim agreed to these changes. Things became a little uncomfortable, and even more so

and after our new friend failed to convince Jim and I to go down the d20 path with the next edition of the rules. Unsurprisingly, the deal fell through.

Jim and I, along with a group of hard-core fans, continued developing the fourth edition. The fourth edition did include one notable departure from Jim’s previous versions of the game: it included a fully-developed skills and advancement mechanic, which was included to allow Jim’s plans to be able to play in all stages of the game from the day after “the accident” right up to 300 years later with a descendant of the original crew gaining control of the ship to steer it back onto course to finish its long-delayed mission.

Jim Wampler spoke with Jim Ward, who spoke with Jim Holloway and decided that a fourth edition (a hardback, no less!) was in order. I had the honor of being invited to continue to help write it with Jim Ward, although it required being made an “honorary Jim” for the occasion, and to prevent confusion. That edition had a lot of input from some incredible fans of the game, and I got to work with three talented individuals under the Mudpuppy Games banner. Proudly sitting on my bookshelf is a copy of the Origins 2006 special Preview Edition as well as the regular print run version released after that event. For a brief period of time, we managed to support the game with *MAJOR*, the *Metamorphosis Alpha Journal and Online Resource*. It was a free, amateur publication that saw a total of 5 issues released with a sixth in the works, with great contributions from some very talented volunteers. Sadly, the workload of editing a free magazine while managing a full-time job proved almost too much. The straw that saw the end of *MAJOR* was the passing of E. Gary Gygax. I had been writing an article for *MAJOR* with Mr. Gygax’s input when he passed away. I could never bring myself to finish the article, and *MAJOR* finally ceased to be.

For sensible, legal reasons, the fourth edition could not make use of another company’s IP, so it included a “new” history that made it clear it was not *Gamma World* with the numbers filed off. The fourth edition, under Mudpuppy Games, was looking promising. We had good support on our forums and plans for a full range of supplements for a campaign arc that I dubbed “Coming Full Circle.”

JAMES M. WARD RECEIVES FIRST-EVER E. GARY GYGAX LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Metamorphosis Alpha creator James M. Ward was honored with the first-ever E. Gary Gygax Lifetime Achievement Award. The award was given out Saturday night at Gary Con in March 2016 in Lake Geneva, WI, the birthplace of TSR. Luke Gygax officiated and presented the award to Mr. Ward. 2016 is the 40th anniversary of *Metamorphosis Alpha*, and Mr. Ward's lifetime of achievement in game design is a fitting tribute to his friend and mentor, Gary Gygax, after whom the award was named. Luke's speech on Mr. Ward's credits and accomplishments was quite lengthy – he really does have a lifetime of achievement, of which *Metamorphosis Alpha* is just part. Among other things:

- When TSR published *Metamorphosis Alpha* at the end of 1976, it was the first game to explicitly mark itself as a “role playing game.” D&D did not contain that phrase at that time!
- Mr. Ward went on to write *Gamma World*, with collaborator Jake Jaquet, which was published in 1978.
- Mr. Ward was one of the first members of the TSR Millionaire Club. He and Zeb Cook each received plaques for having their products bring in a million dollars in sales to TSR in one year.
- Mr. Ward has a D&D spell named after him – *Drawmij's instant summons*, with Drawmij being his name backward.
- His other credits include *Deities & Demigods*, the *Spellfire* collectible card game, one-on-one adventure books, the *Greyhawk Adventures* hardcover for AD&D, work on the SSI computer game *Pool of Radiance*, the *Dragon Ball Z* collectible card game, the *Game of Thrones* miniatures game, and many others.
- Mr. Ward worked for TSR until 1984, then went to freelance status, then was hired back again in 1986. He continued to rise in the company's ranks until he was the Vice President of Product. He left in 1997 after twenty years of working with TSR.
- In 1989, Mr. Ward was inducted into the Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts & Design Hall of Fame.
- Now in 2016, on the 40th anniversary of the publication of *Metamorphosis Alpha*, we are pleased that Gary Con has recognized his lifetime of contributions to the field of role playing games.

Goodman Games is honored to work with Mr. Ward and publish his work, including *Metamorphosis Alpha*!



James M. Ward receives the award from Luke Gygax at Gary Con 2016.



Coming Full Circle incorporated adventures in deep space, on Mars and even a bit of time travel to undo the destruction of Earth, which was to occur at the end of *Bonnie Brown*, the first planned adventure for the game. The resolution of the story arc would end with the Earth in one piece (well, relatively), and the *Warden*, off course and lost after having gone through a radiation cloud with strange side effects in the year 2525. The full story arc would have tied the fourth edition into the first edition very neatly.

In 2005 I started up the official forums. However, prior to that there was a lot of other support already out there from people such as Paul Madison and so many others that ran campaigns on Yahoo! Groups, some of which have been online in various forms since around the year 2000. The Facebook and Google+ pages have also given *Metamorphosis Alpha* a boost in the arm and I highly recommend them both.

In late 2006, I began work on *Bonnie Brown*, an adventure module to support the game. When Mudpuppy Games went into the long night, I saved the file onto my hard drive to gather virtual dust, not seriously expecting the adventure to see the light of day. In late 2015, Stephen Lee contacted me and asked me about publishing it. That adventure was released in January 2016, providing a little more ongoing support for the fourth edition.

In 2009, WardCo came into existence. WardCo was an idea that Jim had wanted to get off the ground for a while. It was a chance to publish new and old material for the game and to keep the brand alive. The first product released was the electronic version of the first edition rulebook, followed shortly thereafter by the Lulu print version of the rules. WardCo also released a Referee Screen for the fourth edition and (in 2010) the first full-length adventure module for *Metamorphosis Alpha* first edition, *The House on the Hill*. The Lulu print edition and the RPGNow/DriveThru electronic version did a lot to help re-establish the brand, while the new module provided some long-overdue support. It also helped others gauge the level of community interest in the game. Unbeknownst to most, one of WardCo's best selling non-game items is "The Stein of Death™," a large stein commemorating a list of ways player characters have died.

Back in 2012, Jim Ward was working

with a talented author, Brian Dillingham, to bring a graphic novel to life. The concept was it would be a 3-part series with two storylines. The first was about the construction of the *Warden*, with the second being what was happening on the ship 300 years later. Sadly, printing and production didn't work out, despite a promising script by Mr. Dillingham and some top-notch artwork being produced. Hopefully the project has just been shelved, to be revived at a later date, like the movie.

Jamie Chambers approached Jim Ward in 2012 and proposed a new edition of the game, using a new system of rules, based on WoTC's d20 SRD. Sufficient time had passed and *Metamorphosis Alpha*'s IP and brand was relatively safe and well enough re-established to reconsider the d20 SRD. Jamie and Jim agreed on a way forward and work commenced on the game. However, it ran into a number of issues and was delayed. During the delay period, Jamie converted the material over to a new system, "System 26™" and wrote other new material, abandoning the d20 SRD. The delay also allowed further testing of the system, including the adventure, "The Petting Zoo of Death." The electronic version of the fifth edition was released mid-to-late 2015, with the print edition due to go to the printers shortly. Jamie is looking at what the future may have in store for the new edition.

The largest step in the revival of *Metamorphosis Alpha* can be attributed to to a handshake between Jim Ward and Joseph Goodman and the decision to produce a large-format coffee table book of the first edition. The Kickstarter was launched in March 2014 and was fully funded in less than 2 weeks. In fact the fundraising was so successful that more ideas for goals had to be were needed. This resulted in a number of additional modules, a referee screen and other supplements being produced.

Goodman Games allowed new writers (and some old) to write new products for the game, such as Jim Wampler, Michael Curtis, Jobe Bittman, Marv Breig, Jon Hook, Jon Hershberger and myself. (I apologize if I missed anyone!) For the first time, *Metamorphosis Alpha* was receiving the level of support that fans had been hoping for.

In 2015, things got even better with Goodman Games announcing the launch of a Kickstarter for *Epsilon City*, which

was funded on the first day of the campaign and again needed additional rewards as new goals were required.

Just after the *Epsilon City* Kickstarter wrapped up, John Popson announced that he and Jim Ward had agreed to make a set of custom miniatures specifically for *Metamorphosis Alpha*, while Jim Ward wrote some supporting material that would use those new miniatures. The miniatures campaign was launched in November and was fully funded in less than 3 weeks. The introduction of a line of miniatures to support the game is likely to attract even more players to the game.

I keep seeing discussions of what people think influenced *Metamorphosis Alpha* and what has been influenced by it. *Metamorphosis Alpha* was the original science fiction role-playing game; its influences included the works of Brian Aldiss, Robert Heinlein, Gold Key Comics' *Magnus the Robot Fighter* and *Sampson* amongst many others. Jim's foray into the genre was instrumental in the creation of TSR's *Gamma World* (written by Jim Ward and Gary Jaquet), and the creators of *The Sky-realms of Jorune* even acknowledge his game's influence on their own product.

There is a lot of speculation about Jim's sources of inspiration for the game and what the game has influenced. Canada's *The Starlost* (1973) is often mentioned, but Jim has stated on numerous occasions that he hadn't seen the show. *Silent Running* (1972) also often gets mentioned, which Jim has spoken well of.

I had the pleasure of corresponding with Greg Bear, the author of *Hull Zero Three* (2010) when his book first came out. I asked him if he knew of *Metamorphosis Alpha*, to which he responded that he did not. Sadly, this put a decisive end to some previous speculation on our forums that he may have played the game. A more recent movie, *Pandorum* (2009) is also likely to provide new players with plenty of inspiration. I also recommend the *Space 1999* episode "Mission of the Darrians" (1975) for further visual inspiration.

As the 40th anniversary of the game approaches, Jim Ward has just become the recipient of the inaugural E. Gary Gyax Lifetime Achievement Award, which he was presented with at GaryCon this year. I like to think that Mr Gyax would be pleased.

METAMORPHOSIS ALPHA: 4 TABLES OF 40

BY JAMES M. WARD · ART BY STEFAN POAG

To commemorate the fortieth anniversary of *Metamorphosis Alpha*, we asked creator James M. Ward to come up with a few more resources for your sci-fi games. As always, Mr. Ward was full of ideas. Here are four tables with 40 entries each, focused on minor encounter elements that can add a little more depth to your *Metamorphosis Alpha* game! Don't have a d40? No problem – roll d20 along with a control die (even/odd) to indicate if you add +0 or +20 to the d20 roll. Enjoy!

GEL NANOBOTS

All these nanobots are delivered in a one-inch cube of gelatin. The user eats the gel cube and is given a special power by the nanobots spreading through the eater's body from the dissolving cube. These powers last for 24 hours unless otherwise noted.

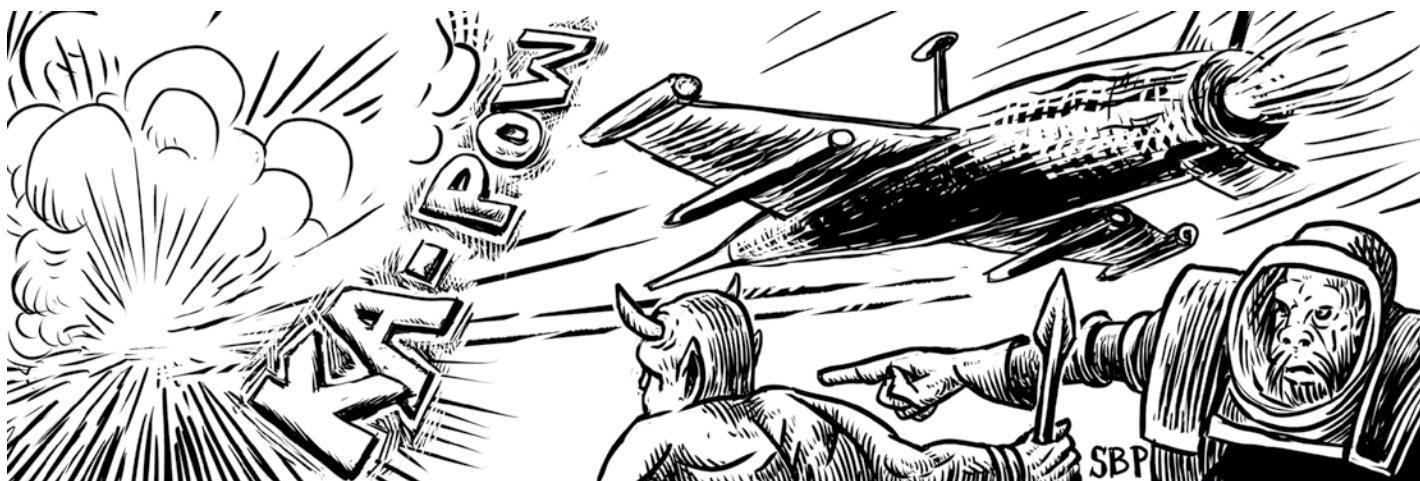
1	Charcoal cube gives the user telepathy	
2	Black cube extends the duration power of any cube to a maximum of 48 hours	
3	Onyx cube gives immunity to all plant based poisons	
4	Bronze cube gives immunity to all acid based poisons	
5	Sienna cube increases the vision of a being to double their usual range	
6	Amber cube heals 10 points of damage	
7	Copper cube increases the strength of a character to 18	
8	Indigo cube increases the dexterity of a character to 18	
9	Ochre cube allows the eater to generate a 15-point force screen	
10	Russet cube generates kinetic shields causing immunity to slugs of all types	
11	Sand cube toughens the skin giving an armor class with a bonus 2.	
12	Iris cube generates a large heat wave at a target of choice, doing 40 points of heat damage every fourth combat round	
13	Rust cube generates a field that depowers all energy cells within 10 yards of the eater	
14	Tan cube generates a sonic wave every 5 combat rounds doing 10 points of damage up to 30 yards away from the eater	
15	Wheat cube generates a wave of cold freezing large masses of water and doing 35 points of cold damage up to 15 yards away	
16	Periwinkle cube creates an immunity to all diseases and cures existing ones	
17	Blue cube allows the eater to breath under water	
18	Teal cube generates lightning every five melee rounds, doing 19 points of damage at a touch of the eater	

19	Turquoise cube increases the smell sense allowing the eater to track recent beings
20	Ultramarine cube generates a white sheen on the eater making them immune to lasers
21	Cyan cube allows the eater not to breathe
22	Indigo cube increases the attackers hitting chance by a bonus of 3
23	Sapphire cube eater can sense any power source within 100 yards of the eater
24	Aqua cube can sense any living creature within 50 yards of the cube
25	Gray cube gives the ability to generate an illusion of the ingester and move it anywhere in their line of sight
26	Mint cube eater doesn't need to eat for a week after eating this cube
27	Silver cube eater cannot be mind controlled or fooled by illusions
28	Purple cube eater can sense weakness in objects and do 10 points of damage to them at a touch
29	Taupe cube bestows the ability to sense all insects within 100 yards
30	Chartreuse cube grants the ability to be invulnerable to edge weapons or claws
31	Olive cube grants resistance to all disruptor energy
32	Orange cube makes you invisible to all robots
33	Peach cube eater can sense androids within 200 yards
34	Pink cube allows the eater to shoot E.M.P. pulses from his eyes every 60 seconds
35	Pumpkin cube generates endorphins making the devourer irresistible to the opposite sex
36	Lavender cube user can order robots as if the eater were pure human
37	Fuchsia cube user can telekinetically fly carrying as much as the eater weighs
38	Red cube bestows the ability to understand the language of animals and talk with them
39	Amethyst cube eater generates an aura to make all insects run in fear
40	Burgundy cube gives regeneration of a field of damage at 5 hit points per minute up to ten feet away from the eater



SURPRISINGLY GOOD THINGS

1	A small silver tray is on the ground. It holds a red armband, a yellow armband, and a black armband.
2	A foot-square medikit is in the bushes. It begins beeping for attention the second the characters get within ten yards. It can heal up to 50 points of physical damage.
3	A cute little floater disk-bot turns on and floats out of the rubble ready to follow your every order.
4	Some very friendly mermaids rise out of the water and offer you some fresh fish.
5	In the middle of a large thorny bush is a ripped leather holster with a shiny new laser pistol that is ready to fire.
6	A box of ten high-energy tablets is among the rubble by the door. The tablets each heal 9 points of physical damage.
7	A duralloy sword in a special sheath is in a tree. The blade does 10 points of damage per successful strike.
8	Five dark cloaks are hanging from the bushes. These cloaks cannot be penetrated by slugs.
9	An engineering robot brings you 4 communication headsets, powered and ready to use.
10	A security robot comes into the melee you are in and helps your side before leaving again.
11	You discover a campfire with a large bird almost cooked over the fire. There are seven bottles of fine wine in a box by the fire. No one is about.
12	You discover a large tin box with a cheap lock. It's easy to open and inside of it are six energy maces. Each mace does 15 points of damage per strike. The hydrogen energy cell is good for seven successful strikes per weapon.
13	You walk by a section of hill and a secret door opens. Inside you find two horticultural robots ready to do your every bidding.
14	You discover the Vigilist village and they welcome you with open arms and are interested in any equipment you might have.
15	A giant bear mutant is caught in a huge spider web trap. You free it and it becomes your faithful companion.
16	The animated plasma canon travels up to the nearest character and offers to serve the group with its massive firepower.



17	Whatever amount of water placed in this squirt rifle turns into raw acid, doing 17 points of damage a squirt from air pressure alone.
18	A hazmat suit and a special large fire extinguisher appear in the road. The extinguisher neutralizes all intensities of radiation in a 100-yard area.
19	Two highly trained war horses are saddled and ready to follow orders.
20	Four massive war dogs trot up to the group and whine for food. They serve the first character to feed them.
21	A secret military missile bot flies up to the group. It has decided to help the group and is ready to lay down a spread of missiles, though it speaks cryptically about its capabilities.
22	A purple furred ape with six arms steps up to the tallest member of the group and offers to help that individual.
23	Two black metal mesh uniforms are on the road. These suits stop all blade and axe blows from penetrating the suit.
24	A machine on the side of the road produces a large duralloy double bladed axe every Sunday morning at 10.
25	Every morning at sunrise a sailing vessel floats down the river. It appears to be unmanned. If it is stopped, the next morning another vessel exactly like the one stopped sails down the river.
26	A pair of very large hawks will help your group several times over a month in fighting off wolfoid groups. The pair circle overhead as you travel in the forest.
27	A set of large purple flowers grow on the side of the road. These blooms pull all energy bursts to them and the plants grow a little bit with each blast.
28	A set of three large beetles charge at opponents using laser pistols and the bugs attack with powerful pincers.
29	You find a set of 6 E.M.P. grenades that automatically turn off robots or other devices.
30	A small fist-sized cube is found. When it is figured out, the devices creates a 10-person tent with air conditioning.
31	A highly useful duralloy combat knife is found on the road. The handle detaches to reveal some useful hunting and fishing equipment.
32	Two white androids come upon the group. They are lost and volunteer to help the group until they find their way back to the vats.
33	Three sets of electronic belt devices are floating ten feet in the air. Once these are figured out they allow the users to fly.
34	The group finds a case of ten special canteens. They signal the user if impure water or other liquids are put in the canteen.
35	The group finds a bushel basket of head-sized mutated apples. Each bite restores three hit points of lost physical damage.
36	The group finds three military grade drones and their controlling systems. The drones each have a load of 10 fragmentation grenades and a camera system.
37	An exoskeleton suit is found that vastly increases the strength of the wielder.
38	When the power axe is figured out it does 25 points per strike.
39	The black spray can has a mist that turns flesh to dust.
40	The group finds a case of ten energy bars. Each bar doubles the speed of the eater for 60 minutes.

TRAPS FOR THE UNWARY

1	From four different directions come four different war chariots driven by Egyptian wolfoids wielding javelins and poisoned daggers.
2	From the lake by night come six pirate wolfoids using muskets and cap and ball pistols to ambush the party.
3	On a hill in the distance are five Cherokee wolfoids riding huge palomino mutant horses. They come down the hill, attacking in a rush.
4	Riding small, mutant ponies, black leather Hun wolfoids use horn bows and sabers in the upcoming battle.
5	The noise of ten wolfoids in hobnail boots come marching down the road in perfect Roman order. They are dressed in the scale mail of Rome and use the curved shields of the ancient legions.
6	Greek wolfoids armed with huge pikes and bronze shields form a phalanx and move toward the characters at a run.
7	Massively powerful tigeroids using slings throwing head-sized stones spring from the brush and attack.
8	A fifty-foot pit trap is covered in the vegetation mulch of the surrounding area.
9	An electronic motion detector activates a heavy crossbow shooting at anything that moves along a narrow animal trail.
10	Tripping a vine causes a heavy log to swing down and strike all those along the trail.
11	A very heavy net falls from the forest ceiling onto a large area on the ground between the trees.
12	Moving past a sensor in the forest causes three sets of spears to spring out and strike those at the center of the path.
13	A rain of caltrops falls from the trees. Those do light damage; however all trying to move out of the area take a great deal more damage from stepping on the caltrops.
14	An electronic full sized adult T-rex activates and attacks from the swamp line.
15	An old woman, actually a special security robot, sweeps the front porch of an old hut in the forest. She is friendly as long as the characters don't attack.
16	Two large Irish wolf hounds, actually security robots, search out the characters to make sure they have black arm bands to go along with the weapons the bots sense.
17	At the crossroads are two floating spheres. They are bombs that explode when laser weapons are detected in a ten-yard radius. Each bomb does 50 points of damage in a ten-yard sphere.
18	Three small humanoids are calmly eating grass in the area. As characters come close the humanoids expand into 15 feet tall humanoids and attack with their kicks and fists.
19	Although it appears like a clear day, as characters come into the area the atmosphere fills with a damp, thick fog.
20	A butler robot walks up to the group and demands to read each character's armband. Without an armband the butler summons a security unit to arrest the character.
21	A blinding light bursts into the area stunning normal eyes for 20 minutes.
22	A sonic blast goes off and does 10 points of damage to all without helmets.
23	An acid bomb goes off doing 15 points of damage to all within 10 yards.
24	A mutant plant throws thorns doing 10 points of damage to everything in a 10-yard sphere.
25	A metal platform is exposed on the side of the road. Any touch causes 25 points of lighting damage to erupt from it.
26	A bushel basket of apples rests on the road. Touching the basket causes it to explode for 30 points of damage.
27	A large green tube is on the table. Text on the tube says, Immortality Gel. The green gel is a 17 intensity poison.
28	Opening the door causes a set of 4 arrows to flash out at the door opener.
29	A large mutated feline is chained to the ground. Fooling in any way with the creature causes it to howl, suddenly bringing ten of the felines in the surrounding area. These creatures are ready to attack.
30	From out of the forest fly six thorny spheres at those traveling down the path.
31	A large metal bear trap snaps on the leg of the lead character.
32	A bear mutant is howling in pain as it reveals itself to be chained in the forest. Trying to unchain it reveals a mound and hundreds of large green ants on the attack.



33	There is a large boat just off the beach. Getting in the characters will be horrified to discover the boat covers the top half fin of a giant mutant fish.
34	A door is at the side of a hill. There is a red rectangle at the side of the door. The entire thing is fake and serves to summon several types of guards as characters try to open the door.
35	A small robot floats toward the group. It warns everyone away, saying that the area is owned by the Gillian. If the characters don't leave, the Gillian sends six huge war dogs at the characters with orders to eat them.
36	Two charming human females in strange electric blue suits warn the group away. They explain they are part of a cloning operation and the characters aren't allowed nearby. If pressed the two begin shooting lighting strikes (30 points of damage) at the characters using their powered suits.
37	Four red androids wearing black cloaks aim huge laser rifles at the group. The androids order the characters away from the area.
38	A holographic pedestal is on the wide of the road. Placing a living paw or hand on top of the pedestal causes a hologram copy of that placer to appear. The pedestal provides free information, but there is always something wrong with the data.
39	There is a five-foot cube of explosive in the middle of the road. On the side of the cube is a large red button. If pressed the cube explodes for 1,000 points of damage.
40	Two large missile rifles are on the road. They are rigged to explode if used. The explosion does 90 points of damage in a 90-yard sphere.

UNUSUAL THINGS

1	A red cloth that turns green when wolfoids come within one mile of the cloth.
2	Ten seeds; holding one is an instant (one use) cure versus any intensity poison.
3	When this small yellow mutant bird flies around a robot, the robot turns itself off.
4	A gummy resin that keeps insects at least 100 yards away from it.
5	A three feet long white pipe that spits out white smoke when moved within 20 yards of 10 or higher intensity radiation.
6	A circuit board glove that turns off robots at a touch.

7	A white glass rod that activates a robot at a touch.
8	Ten robotic beetles that take verbal orders and look just like foot long red beetles.
9	A case of 20 cans of delicious cola
10	A robot that appears to be an old man reading a paper in a rocking chair. He has a great deal of knowledge about the <i>Warden</i> when it was new.
11	A hologram appears and it is of the first captain of the <i>Warden</i> . He talks about the command cabin and the security used to protect it from accidental intrusion.
12	Four gallons of root beer.
13	A flowering tree grows in the middle of an empty pool. The flowers give off a scent that doesn't allow anyone within 100 yards to fire any weapon.
14	Eight saddled camels are staked out in the desert groaning from thirst.
15	It's a book made out of plastic sheets that diagram the working of the ship's main engines.
16	This is a teak case that holds 4 derringers. Each of these fires a shotgun shell.
20	This is a large duffel bag with two baseball bats, 11 baseball gloves, catcher's equipment, and four hardballs.
21	A small pistol with 5 shots; each shot drains all of the power from a target no matter how powerful the power source.
22	This is a flying carpet that holds 4 humanoid types. It obeys the verbal commands of the person riding the front right portion of the carpet.
23	This is a bubble car that holds up to 8 humanoids. It flies in the air and resists all types of energy beams.
24	This is a huge purple horse that enjoys racing over the countryside. The mount wants to serve pure humans. It is fitted with a saddle that has been specially made to allow two riders on the back of the mount.
25	This is a military powered motorbike. It has a powerful laser canon to the front and two small missile launchers aiming backward on the device.
26	This is a military armed drone. It has six mini-missiles, two Heavy Explosive missiles, two small laser rifles, and control systems allowing the unit to operate up to 10 miles away and high in the air.
27	This is a very friendly lionoid on a walk-a-bout of the ship. It wants to walk on every level and won't stop until that happens, however it doesn't mind a side adventure with your characters.
28	This slug thrower is specially made. It has a range of two miles. Its projectile does 30 points of damage. There is a case of 200 shells for the weapon.
29	This is a vibro-spear. It does 25 points of damage at a strike. The hydrogen energy cell is good for 5 successful strikes.
30	This is a hand-sized red crystal. It attracts all energy beams. It absorbs 100 points of energy damage and then turns to dust.
31	This is a ten man armored personal carrier. It's mounted with a large 50 caliber machine cannon with 5,000 shots on a belt fed system. Its energy pack is good for 90 hours of operation.
32	It's an iron box six feet long, four feet wide, and three feet tall. It has an unusually sturdy at the top. Inside the locked box are four matched sets of sabers and daggers in their brass sheaths.
33	This is a suit of power armor designed for a pure human. It allows the human to fly through the air as well as fireballs of static electricity doing 25 points of damage every other combat round.
34	This is a case of four black helmets. The helmets allow for communication with each other and any artificial intelligences on the level of the <i>Warden</i> . The optics of the helms detect infra-red and ultra-violet radiation. It takes two hydrogen energy cells to power the helm for 72 hours of operation. There is also a sensing feature that allows the wearer to strike +2 better with any ranged weapon.
35	This is a belt of seven energy grenades. The weapon system does 44 points of damage in a 10-foot sphere of explosion.
36	This is a case of 10 mutated oranges. The fruit heals 30 points of physical damage.
37	This is a metal bucket of 1,000 metal marbles. Spilling the marbles makes it impossible to stand amongst them.
38	This is a robotic deer that can be used as a mount or a scout that reports back to the deer's controller.
39	This is a robotic fem-bot that looks just like a pure human. It can melee twice as fast as a real woman. It is programmed to serve human males and follow their verbal orders. It's dressed in a cowgirl outfit.
40	This is a ruby ring that can fire one powerful laser beam every 48 hours. The beam does 33 points of heat damage.

THE WAY OF SERPENTS

Fiction in the spirit of Appendix N

By Howard Andrew Jones • Art by Michael Wilson • DCC RPG stats by Terry Olson



From darkness they led him, where he had lived amongst the rats and the unseen chittering things that sang within the walls. A shirtless, barefoot slave preceded him, lantern dangling from his outthrust hand. Behind marched the guards, grim men identical in turquoise kilts, curved blades, even the tramp of their feet, so clockwork in its precision that Hanuvar left off counting his own paces to number theirs.

The procession wound its way past the cell doors standing silent and gray like so many tombstones and into the storage rooms stacked with wooden barrels and chests. To the left lay the stairs, which led to blessed sunlight and an unpleasant end. Twelve paces lay between him and that first most step, then ten – and then the slave veered right, under a stone archway. Hanuvar counted these paces too. He meant to know the way even without a lantern.

Another turn through another ancient keystone and they arrived at a hall awash with such brilliance that Hanuvar narrowed his eyes to the glare. Three days within the cell had left him vulnerable even to the relatively feeble torchlight flickering in hallway cressets.

The corridor held a mystery greater than the flood of light. Three men, bared to the waist, worked beside a pile of stone and a bucket of mortar. Without a word between them they set the stones and spread the mortar, shaping a low wall across the bottom of an open doorway. On the other side of the wall sat a basket of pearls and a shelf of jeweled goblets, bathed in lantern light. Did the Islanders mean to wall him in with the treasures? That made no sense. The ruler would earn a kingly fee for turning him over to the Dervan Empire; he'd known that was his fate ever since they'd found him half drowned on their beach. Hanuvar had assumed a Dervan ship was already on its way to retrieve him.

Of a sudden the slave set his lantern on the floor and genuflected, for he'd caught sight of the stout man in ochre wearing a jeweled head band.

"On your knees." One of the guards prodded Hanuvar with the butt of his staff.

Hanuvar smirked as he knelt. The stone was cold against his skin.

"I do not like your smile." So saying, Narata's king stepped before him. Hanuvar had not only an excellent vantage point from which to observe the ruler's sandals, flecked with precious stones of jade and onyx, but to choose his target. They'd left him no knife, but obligingly granted him a tarnished spoon to eat with, the handle of which he'd sharpened into a point and tucked into his own kilt.

Yet he did not strike. This meeting did not have the air so much of an execution as an interview. Perhaps things were not so desperate as they seemed.

"You may rise," the king said, as if he was permitting a grand luxury.

"Slow," one of the guards cautioned. Hanuvar obliged him, his eyes fixed upon the king's.

Each could count almost fifty years, but aside from olive-hued skin there were no other similarities. The king was small, balding, his chin and cheeks padded with fat. Hanuvar was a full head taller, his shoulders broad, his scarred arms and legs corded with muscle. He wore a simple gray tunic and a rough island kilt, for they'd stripped him of his own garments. His eyes too were gray, set in a weathered face stubbled with a silvery beard. They had allowed him no blades within his cell.

"I have treated you well, General" the king said. "I hope you will remember that."

He remembered the dark cell with the meager food, the pillowless stone shelf, and the doom he knew they'd summoned for him. He kept his expression bland. "I will remember all you've done for me."

"Circumstances being what they are," the king continued, "I'm willing to offer you an alternative to imprisonment and death at the hands of the Dervan."

Hanuvar said nothing.

"Are you not curious?"

He awaited details. "Speak on, oh king."

"They say you know the ways of the great serpents."

The way of serpents? Whatever he meant, he clearly expected an answer in the affirmative. "I do."

The king motioned Hanuvar's guards back. It would be but a moment's effort to lift the sharpened handle from his belt and press it to the king's throat. Only a few moments ago he would have leapt at the chance. Now he waited. It would be far better to walk free after striking a bargain than attempting to flee with a hostage.

"This morning," the king said, "a kekainen bird brought a message from the western isles. The southerners have swept forth in a great raid. Their ships fill the ocean. They have burned and looted throughout the Leneridines, and they are on their way toward Narata."

That explained only a little. Did the king truly hope to hide his wealth from the merciless southerners behind a false dungeon wall?

"Have you nothing to say?" the king snapped.

"Do you have a question?"

The king scowled. "Can you or can you not summon serpents?"

Of course not. No man alive knew how to summon the great winged serpents. Those who'd never worked with them misunderstood the nature of their relationships with humans. "I know their ways."

"And can you master them?"

Now he lied outright. "Yes."

The king stared hard at him, then nodded once. "In the center of my island lives a great winged serpent. My grandfather's father made a pact with the creature, so it would protect our island if we protected her from harm. I'm sending a priestess to remind the beast of its duty. And I am sending you to command it should it break its oath."

"And I'm to go free afterward?"

"Of course."

A lie, clearly, but Hanuvar nodded as though he believed. "I'll require the flask I carried."

The king's eyes narrowed. "My wizard tells me it's full only of ashes. Is it some magic unknown to him?"

"How do you think I controlled the serpents?"

The king nodded quickly.



"I'll want a sword," Hanuvar continued.

"When your task is through."

"And passage from the island." The king would never grant Hanuvar that, but it was crucial he thought Hanuvar believed him.

The king breezily agreed to the pledge he never meant to honor. "Certainly. Now you must hurry—the kekainen bird arrived hours ago. My priestess tells me that means the southerners will arrive near dawn. These two will lead you where you need to go."

"I'll want food." The lunch hour had come and gone without any meal. "And a shave."

"Fine. Eat quickly."

The king half turned, waving a hand, then halted in mid-motion. "Hold." He considered Hanuvar once more. "You know siegecraft, don't you?"

"Somewhat."

The irony of asking this of the general who'd brought the Dervan Empire to its knees didn't register upon the king. "This stone work – will it hold? Given time to dry?"

"Yes. But if you want to fool the southerners you have to do a better job of disguising your entry way."

The king's jowls shook in agitation. "What do you mean?"

Hanuvar advanced to the doorway. Through the opening he saw a couch, wine jars, and a food-laden table set before

gold statues and baskets with precious gems. "The southerners are old hands at sniffing out treasure. They'll see the outline of where a doorway used to be. If you want to conceal yourself, you need to rip out the doorway's edges to blend the stone with the existing wall."

The king blinked at him, turned his head to consider the masonry. Two of the workmen looked up while the other troweled mortar. "Idiots," the king said finally, "why didn't YOU point that out? Rip this down and start over! And hurry!"

They blinked in surprise then started pulling down the stones they'd just laid. Hanuvar expected they'd be killed the moment they finished their work so none could reveal the king's hiding place. He couldn't help wondering what measures the king had taken to ensure his way out should his loyal retainers be slain – or forget to open the vault.

But that was the king's concern.

II



he cliff's edge loomed just past his outstretched fingers. Hanuvar shifted his left foot, then froze as a trail of dirt crumbled beneath his sandal. It spilled down onto the upturned face of one of the twin guards—Meshtar, he thought—then plummeted the long distance to the ground below.

Meshtar shook his head like an angry dog. Hanuvar secured his footing, and with a little more leverage, found solid purchase with his fingers. He hauled himself up, dislodging an even larger stream of dirt into the twin. In another moment he had gained the plateau. Bright blue flowers blossomed on green stalks, waving in the warm air.

Hanuvar lay down on his stomach in the tough grasses and offered his hands to Meshtar. The guard grunted his thanks, then flopped down beside him to aid the others.

Next up was dark-haired Rudra, General of Narata, though general was a grand term for the commander of an island force numbering less than a hundred warriors. Hanuvar had never seen any man's hair so neatly combed. It gave Rudra's handsome features, mustache or no, a feminine cast.

Following him was the little sea priestess, Lalasa. The silver pendant of her office hung down to the azure bodice that cupped her breasts. Her flounced skirt swirled about her slender legs as they raised her. She stepped away to wipe dirt from her hands.

Finally came Meshtar's brother, Beshkar, his small eyes set and determined. Hanuvar had already decided the general was a soldier only in title. These two were a different matter. Strong, able, silent: they were the real threat.

Once he was up, Hanuvar stood, unstopped his wineskin, and drank.

It had been a long afternoon. Hours before they had advanced past huddled refugees into the jungle's depths. The island's only large settlement was a two-hour hike behind them, lost beyond the waving greenery.

"How much farther?" Rudra asked.

Lalasa answered, her voice high and clear. "We look for a bridge now, to Mount Darata." The sea priestess shook out her hair, gathered it together and tied it more tightly behind her head. She ignored the frank appraisal from the twins.

"Let's keep moving," Rudra ordered.

Lalasa pointed left. This time Rudra led, though the priestess kept close.

There were no man-made trails, but they came to a goat track, and walked it as it veered left. Hanuvar pushed past a brown vine round as his arm and stepped over a fallen tree bole thick with yellow ants.

They reached a clearing. A little round hut and goat pen sat in its center. The rickety bamboo gate stood open, and five goats cropped at the thick green grass that lay between the jungle and the cliff edge thirty paces on. A wooden suspension bridge stretched from it to another cliff side.

Rudra stepped into the clearing without hesitation.

Something crashed violently through the brushes on their right. Hanuvar whirled. A leathery, skeletal thing erupted from the jungle, leapt in front of the bridge, and opened its beak to hiss.

Rudra froze, but the twins drew steel. Lalasa touched her pendant.

The creature was half again the height of a man. Leathery skin flaps stretched between its long bony arms and its waist. It shook its blue feathered head and clacked its beak. "If you would pass, you would pay!" It rasped.

"What would you have us pay?" Hanuvar asked.

It tilted its head and stabbed the sea priestess with sharp eyes. "Give me the soft one!"

"We have fine wine with us," Lalasa countered.

The thing cocked its head, swift and bird-like.

"Yes," she said. "Fine and sweet."

"Drink!"

Lalasa looked to Rudra, who stared back blankly until she pointed at his wineskin and motioned toward the monster.

Rudra fumbled to untie the winesac from his belt. He threw it at the thing's clawed feet.

It bent down, snatched the winesac, fumbled with the stopper for a moment before biting it off. It upended it and guzzled greedily. Dark blue wine trickled down either side of its beak.

Meshtar swore in disgust.

"More!" the thing shook the empty skin at them.

"We will give you more if you let us pass," Hanuvar said.

The bird-thing's gaze shifted between them. "You will each give me the sweet."

"We'll give you one more," the sea priestess promised. "But you must let us pass. We'll leave it for you on the bridge's far side."

"All!" It flapped its arms rapidly.

"One," the priestess said. "Or we will go back into the jungle."

The bird thing hopped once, then scurried to one side. "I will watch. If you trick me, I can eat you."

"Try and we'll kill you," Rudra growled.

Hanuvar led the way onto the bridge.

The bird-thing obviously hadn't spent its spare time in maintenance. Some of the ancient planks pointed skyward, as though heavy weights had been dropped on their far ends. Hanuvar and the others stepped carefully over the gaps, through which they glimpsed a gurgling jungle stream a hundred feet down.

They soon stood on the other side. Lalasa lifted her wine-skin high so the monster would see it, then left it on the bridge. The creature was already scampering to retrieve it as Lalasa guided them into the jungle and onto a goat path.

Hanuvar listened carefully for sounds of pursuit, but heard nothing.

Lalasa called a halt a half-hour later, as the sun lowered over the palms. "We'll rest until the moon is high."

"We should keep moving," Rudra said.

"And how will we see," Lalasa asked, "with the dark jungle on every side? Now's the time to rest and eat. We'll move on soon enough."

Rudra grumbled to the twins, who started work on a small cookfire while he hunkered down on a nearby boulder and slapped at insects.

Hanuvar stepped to the clearing's edge and bent down to touch his toes. More and more each year he felt the aches and pains of old age. "You care for every weapon after use," his father had told him when he was young. "So too should you care for your body." And so Hanuvar had learned how to ease strain from his muscle groups and joints, exercising with his father each morning and night.

He had moved on to his calf muscles when Lalasa drew near. She was a shapely silhouette radiating the mixed scent of fragrant soaps and healthy female sweat. She brushed off a nearby log, sat down, and watched him. For a time there was no sound other than the calls of night animals,

one of which let out a repetitious shrieking whoop.

"You are really a master of serpents?" The priestess asked softly.

"I know their ways," Hanuvar answered. He climbed to his feet, widened his stance, and slowly rotated his arms.

"You speak the truth," she said. "There's sadness in your mind when you think of the emerald serpent."

Hanuvar paused, stared at her dark form, strove to blank his mind. He'd underestimated her. "You're a mind reader."

"No. But I sense the feelings of others and sometimes glimpse portions of their thoughts. It's like pressing up against a thin curtain. I can see what lies on the other side if the 'light' is right."

"And what do you read from them?" Hanuvar asked quietly. His head turned toward the twins, now stirring the fire embers. Rudra drank from a wineskin.

"From the general - little," she whispered. "Nervousness. Irritation. The other two... there's darkness there, and I do not wish to venture close."

"They're soldiers."

"They're killers."

"I am a killer," Hanuvar said.

The priestess grew silent. Hanuvar stretched his arms high.

She shook her head. "It's not the same. There was a boatsman in the village where I received my training, renowned far and wide for his skill. Men said he had been blessed by the gods, so wondrous was his talent. His mind felt something like yours."

He laughed lightly. "I'm not blessed."

"I am sorry they imprisoned you. They had no right. Dervan's no ally of Narata's. You should have been sent on your way."

She was young, but surely she knew the appeal of gold. He wasn't surprised so much that they imprisoned him as he was that they'd recognized him, for he'd discarded his armor during the long swim. His belt crest had given him away, and he wouldn't have thought anyone from a backwater island like Narata would have recognized it.

Hanuvar sat down beside her, his mind returning again to those impossibly long hours. A less stubborn man, so far from land, would have given up and drowned. But he had too much to do, yet. And Eledevar had sacrificed himself to transport him away from the dying city. The little priestess had called him blessed, but a blessed man would have reached his city before the siege engines had burst the wall. A blessed man could have coaxed more of his people to hear his worries.

A blessed man would not have lost his army, his people, his friends, his family.

After the Dervan shot Eledevar, the great serpent had been too wounded to fly, but it had swum on and away for three long days, faster than any Dervan ship could sail. When at last his old friend breathed his last and sank beneath the waves, Hanuvar swam to the island on the horizon.

She interrupted his musing. "Was Volanus truly as lovely as they say?" Her voice was kind. Had she glimpsed the last view of his city etched in his mind? Tendrils of smoke stretching for the sky from the ancient temples and the red-tiled homes? Could she hear the screams of his people?

"It was like any city," Hanuvar answered flatly. "There were criminals and priests, beggars and rich men, performers and warriors and bakers and cobblers. More often than not those who ruled had more money than wisdom."

"You're lying," she said after a moment.

His stare was hard, and here at closer range he could see a glimmer of light reflected in her eyes. He laughed without humor. "Her beauty was peerless, girl. But her silver towers lie shattered by the sea and the blood of her people has run into the water. Dervan crouches like a fat toad amongst the ashes."

The priestess said nothing, but he felt her recoil. Doubtless now she sensed the truth.

"I too am a killer, little priestess," he said softly. "I can recite poetry and the works of Aedara, frame witty quips, trade pleasantries with ladies of the court. But the Dervan fear me with reason."

"You will help us, won't you?"

Hanuvar studied her. "Why do you aid a tyrant?"

"I seek the serpent to help the king help his people." She paused. "At the least, the southerners will burn the city. But you know as well as I that they make a sport of hunting the islanders. Sometimes they leave the women after they rape them, but sometimes they take them, or kill them."

"So do the strong among the weak."

"Is that what you did, among the weak?"

She had a strength he had not expected. "I sought to crush Dervan before she destroyed us."

"You're a man of oaths, and principals."

"Your king will kill me when the task is done."

"Help me," said Lalasa, "and I will aid you—" she broke off as Rudra drew close. The small fire backlit the young general.

"What are you two whispering about?"

"Serpents," Hanuvar answered.

"Are you?" he asked. "I'm watching you, old man. Don't trust him, Priestess. They say he's a father of lies."

Lalasa didn't reply, and Rudra shifted under their scrutiny.

"How close are we, Priestess?"

"When we see a finger-shaped outcropping at the top of a steep slope, we'll know we're close."

"But how close are we to that?"

Lalasa breathed heavily, almost a sigh. She raised one hand to her pendant, which glowed gently, suffusing her fingers and the swell of her breasts. "I will see." She drew a deep breath and closed her eyes.

Hanuvar watched her chest rise and fall regularly. Until then he had only noticed her beauty abstractly, as a man might consider a painting or a sunrise. Now he found himself contemplating the priestess as a woman. She was thoughtful, lovely, poised. Suddenly Lalasa shook violently and her head shot back. Her eyes opened and she fell limp.

Hanuvar grabbed her as she slumped, called her name to rouse her.

The priestess moaned, blinked, but it was a moment before she focused on Hanuvar.

"Is she alright?" Rudra demanded.

Lalasa stared boldly into Hanuvar's eyes. "We are hours away, still." She sat up under her own power and Hanuvar released her.

"You found the serpent?" Rudra demanded.

"She's there. Her mind brushed mine..." Lalasa shook her head.

"Eat," Hanuvar said. Sorcerers were always weak after working magics, and he could smell something pleasant on the cookfire. "It will restore your strength. Come." She took his hand as he stood, and leaned against him for support as they walked toward the fire.

III



he great gold moon rose with its glorious silver ring, bathing the jungle in shadows. The island creatures sang and croaked and gibbered to it as Hanuvar and the others advanced through foliage. The general and the twins wielded rasankas, wide, single-edged swords, to chop the clutching leaves.

Hanuvar walked at the rear. He might have disappeared into the jungle and the others, desperate to find their serpent, wouldn't have time to follow. Yet if he fled he'd have no way off the island, and he had no weapon apart from a spoon with a sharpened handle. And Rudra carried his flask.

There might well be better opportunities ahead.

"Halt," Lalassa called, and Hanuvar found himself confronting a large dark mass.

A steep cliff wall shot free of the jungle plants and climbed vertically two hundred feet. At its height the moon shown

on a pitted black rock shaped like a finger. It pointed seaward.

They set to work clearing a path, swiping effortlessly with their rasankas, and advanced to the cliff's bottom. The smooth, ancient stone showed few handholds. There was no climbing that way. Hanuvar's eyes searched the cliff-side.

"Here," said Lalasa. She had wandered to the right. The others followed.

Thick hairy vines clung to the black stone at the point beside the priestess and stretched to the limit of their sight. Whether or not they climbed to the height of the cliff Hanuvar could not determine, for the detail was lost in the night's blackness.

"You first, old man," the general told him.

Hanuvar smiled thinly. He wrapped his hands around one of the vines and pulled, found the vines dug securely into the stone. He tilted his head back to consider the height again, then began his climb.

He moved slowly, hand over hand, finding sure purchase along the thick plant fibers. Another man's attention might have wandered, but Hanuvar knew the art of focus. It had carried him far, and it brought him to the height.

Grunting with the final pull to the top, Hanuvar arrived at a circular lake fenced by wide-leafed trees, waving now in a cool breeze that rippled the dark waters. Beyond the lake stood the final crest of the mountain.

He stepped back to the cliff to watch the progress of his companions. He heard the slightest noise, as of a tent-flap in the wind, and turned in a fighter's crouch. It was the bird-thing, on wing and bearing down with outstretched claws.

Hanuvar dropped too late. A clawed hand clipped him in the head. He lay stunned as it circled.

In one thing he was fortunate. The creature was a glider, not a true bird, and thus it struggled in the wind to gain height for its return. Hanuvar was stirring by the time it neared.

The creature hissed. It extended talons for a second strike.

Hanuvar bided his time and leapt as it neared. The bird-thing let out a raspy scream of surprise and pain, for Hanuvar's aim and its own momentum had driven the makeshift knife into its chest. They fell in a jumble of limbs.

The monster clawed at his back and Hanuvar gasped in pain. He withdrew the knife, bashed the clacking beak aside, and thrust the point deep into the thing's throat before rolling away.

He climbed to his feet as the creature thrashed out its life. By the time the others reached the cliff top he had washed out the long slash in his shoulder with wine and rigged a makeshift bandage from his tattered shirt. The twins

walked over to prod at the bird-thing while Lalasa examined Hanuvar's bandage.

Rudra seemed more concerned with Hanuvar himself. "How did you kill it?" Somehow his voice betrayed suspicion, fear, and awe all at the same time.

"I've been a warrior for more than twice your lifespan," Hanuvar answered.

"But you had no sword."

"True. I had no sword."

"I think you'll heal fine," Lalasa said behind him, "so long as you keep the wound clean and change the dressing." She tightened the bandage as she spoke. He tried to ignore the pleasant tingle on his skin as her fingertips brushed his back.

Rudra frowned. "Where do we go now?"

Lalasa stepped out from behind Hanuvar. "There."

Rudra walked closer to the water and peered in. "What do you mean, 'there'?"

"We swim." Lalasa pointed to the lake's north end. "There's an underwater tunnel that leads to the serpent's lair."

Rudra's teeth showed. "How are we supposed to do that? We can't breathe underwater!"

"The scrolls tell of the old king's journey, General. There's air in the serpent's cave, but you'll have to hold your breath for a long while to reach it."

Rudra mulled this over at the water's edge. Meshtar and Beshkar stepped up beside him.

And then Meshtar's blade flashed as he tore it from his sheath. He caught the general's chin in one hand, slashed the blade across his neck with the other. Rudra collapsed, flailing.

"What are you doing!?" Lalasa cried.

"We have two things the Dervan pay well for," Meshtar said. "We know the dwelling-place of a mighty serpent. One they will gladly kill. And we have their greatest foe. Alive. Although if he proves troublesome, there'll still be some money for his carcass."

"You killed Rudra!" Lalasa's voice shook with rage. "What about the island? Your people?"

"What about you?" Beshkar said. His brother laughed as he advanced on her. "I've wanted a taste of you for years."

"Save some for me," Meshtar said. He came forward, Rudra's blood dark on his weapon.

Lalasa fumbled for the knife on her belt, discovered it gone.

Hanuvar stepped forward, head bowed. "Don't slay me."

"I'm not interested in you right now," Beshkar said, stepping past.



Hanuvar had held Lalasa's knife against his arm. He flicked it up, drove it into Meshtar's throat, released. While the twin reached for his neck, gurgling, Hanuvar grabbed the twin's sword hilt and drew. He stepped away and kicked hard at Meshtar's knee. The dying man fell.

Beshkar screamed in rage and slashed high at Hanuvar's head.

The blow rang off his brother's sword, held stiffly now in Hanuvar's hand.

Hanuvar circled to his right. His sword arm was numb from Meshtar's terrific strike, but there was no knowing it from his expression.

Beshkar lay twitching, his bloody fingers pressed to his ruined throat.

His brother snarled. "You'll die for that!"

This time Hanuvar smashed his sword into Meshtar's before it completed its downward arc. The younger man grunted, his eyes glancing after the blade as it swung wide. Hanuvar struck and sliced half through his chest. Curious horror registered on Meshtar's face as he realized the extent of his injury, then he folded to the ground. Hanuvar drove the point down through his neck. He stepped back, glanced at Beshkar – moving fitfully still – and knelt to wipe the blade on the grass. He hadn't expected that particular development, but things had resolved well.

"Adras and Sussura but you're fast," Lalasa breathed. She gave the dying men a wide berth and walked with Hanu-

var to Rudra. While she bent to inspect his wound Hanuvar sank to one knee beside him.

"He's dead," she said.

Of course he was. "It was a professional stroke." Hanuvar rolled Rudra over to better undo his belt.

"What are you doing?"

"Taking back my flask."

The general had insisted on carrying it himself, saying that he didn't trust Hanuvar not to work sorceries against them.

Lalasa said nothing while Hanuvar shifted the dead general's belt to his own waist and compared swords, in the end choosing the less decorative but better balanced blade he'd taken from Beshkar. He replaced the general's sheath with Beshkar's, but kept his knife. He then moved on to their packs, consolidating the small amount of food and cooking supplies into one.

Lalasa watched silently until he'd finished transferring the money in their coin purses as well. "You don't mean to go on."

"No."

A chill wind blew as they faced each other. Hanuvar didn't usually bother justifying any of his decisions, but something about the priestess's stiff back prompted explanation. "Dealing with a serpent isn't the simple matter your fool king thinks."

"At least give me some of your sorcerous powder," Lalasa said.

Hanuvar patted the cap of the flask at his belt. "I have no sorcery, Lalasa. These are my little brother's ashes. I must bear them to the isles of dead."

He could see little more of her but outline, yet he felt her gaze.

"I felt the truth of your words before." She sounded hurt, confused. Betrayed.

"Eledevar was my friend – an ally of my family from old times. I have no magic other than experience and the loyalty of allies and family. And most of those are dead, now."

"So is your duty to the dead, or the living? Can't you help me with the serpent, Hanuvar? People will die if we don't gain its aid. Women and children."

"This is a wild serpent, Lalasa. It will want a sacrifice to bind our word. A blood sacrifice."

She breathed deeply and he knew then that she understood his meaning.

"Your king was an idiot to think otherwise."

"But what about its agreement with the old king?"

"An unlikely story," Hanuvar said, "and unlikely to be held

to the king's descendants, much less a representative that doesn't smell of his bloodline. One or the both of us will perish." He spoke on, though he knew she wouldn't accept his offer. "It was a fool's errand, commanded by a fool. You couldn't know. Come with me and live, Lalasa."

"I thought you were the man who spun victories from defeats, who mastered armies three times greater than the size of his own. Who devoted his life to the protection of his city, and his people. Surely you know some way--"

"There are things I must live to do, Lalasa."

Silence fell over them. She turned her back. "Leave me."

He did not, though, and she must not have cared, for she lifted her bodice over her head and dropped it beside her feet. Did she know that he admired the feminine lines of her back and the generous curves to hips? The slender ankles and tapering calves as she slid free of her sandals and shimmied out of her skirt? If so, she made no acknowledgment of it. She stood naked save for a white loincloth, vital and fragile and all the more lovely as she undid her hair and shook it free.

She stepped gracefully into the water without looking back and dropped forward with a splash. The moonlight flashed against the water kicked up by her pale feet.

Hanuvar watched from the shore, his world suddenly further diminished, companioned now only by the dead. Sometimes it seemed they were all he had left. The girl too would die if he did nothing. Yet what was her fate compared to that of the remnants of his people, who could have no hope without him? He must live.

Yet he could not let her die.

Hanuvar cursed, tore off belt and gear and clothes, and dove in after her.

IV



he clear cold water lent new energy to Hanuvar's tired body and he swam vigorously to the north side of the lake, where Lalasa waited, treading water.

"I thought you said that this was a fool's errand."

"I am a fool," Hanuvar said.

She smiled. "Take a deep breath. According to legend, it's a long swim."

"I hope you know the way."

"Everything I've read so far has proven correct. Breathe deep, and follow."

A difficult thing, Hanuvar thought, beneath the waters in the dark, but then Lalasa closed her eyes and the pendant hung about her neck glowed blue once more, lighting the water and outlining her breasts and slim belly.

The priestess sucked in a deep gulp, then dove, her dark hair streaming behind her like a black ribbon. Hanuvar followed.

There was no missing the wide, jagged cleft in the rocks at the lake edge, large enough indeed for a serpent to pass through with room to spare.

The priestess swam on through the dark cool waters, and Hanuvar swam after, following the light of her pendant as they advanced into the cleft and into a wide tunnel. How far did it stretch, and might they yet be able to escape if they ran low on air?

Hanuvar saw Lalasa swim upward before his lungs were terribly strained. The tunnel roof had fallen away, and then he breached the water, sucking in air tainted with the scent of wet rock and earth – and something else. An animal smell like roasted flesh.

They searched the gloom before striking out for a rocky shoreline. From behind came an immense splash. Something large had sent the water surging. Hanuvar glimpsed a long serpent-like coil spiral into the water and disappear.

"Swim," he ordered. He didn't add that there was no talking to a serpent that had already devoured you.

Hanuvar saw Lalasa pull up on a rocky ledge and turn, her mouth open in astonishment. Hanuvar felt a great wave rising behind him.

He did not know if he was panting from exhaustion or fear, but he reached the slippery rock and threw himself up over the rim on his belly. Lalasa grasped his hands and helped him stand.

The pendant bouncing on her chest glowed fiercely. Beyond her a thing of nightmares loomed, suspended on a gleaming, glistening silver neck, wide around as two barrels.

The serpent's skull was fully the size of a long boat, and her flaring nostrils wider than dinner plates. White hair hung from either side of her snout in a parody of a mustache, and further back, two immense slitted eyes glowed like emerald suns. The head rose steadily until it hung ten feet above.

"Name yourself, intruders!" The serpent's voice thundered off the cave walls like the ringing of great gongs, and as she spoke teeth the length of sabers flashed wetly in her mouth.

"I am Hanuvar, son of Hamli, of House Calabria, friend of the asalda known in my tongue as Eledevar. We come in peace."

The serpent head swayed closer. "You are not welcome!" The nostrils widened. "You bear the faint smell of asalda upon you, but that does not grant you entry."

"We have come at the behest of the king of Narata, oh great one," Lalasa said, her head bowed.

"Why does Nara not come himself?"

The priestess hesitated. "Nara is long dead, great one, and



his great grandson rules the island."

"Has it been so long? You humans live such meager lives."

"Our lives are all too brief," Hanuvar agreed. "And many of them are threatened even now. The people of Narata seek your aid. A great fleet of raiders nears their shores, and their defense is poor."

"The king," Lalasa said, "would invoke the pact made with you by his grandfather's father."

"The pact?" The serpent sounded almost amused. "You seek my aid, you, who clearly have no knowledge even of my name?"

"It... it was not known by the chronicler. I must ask your forgiveness--"

"You ask much, un-named woman."

"What you say is true," the priestess said, stepping forward. Nearly naked, she yet radiated the dignity of a queen in full regalia. "I am Lalasa, a daughter of the sea. And these folk of Narata are simple and forgetful and do not know the proper words or honors. But they mean you no harm, and their word is good. They still protect you, as you protect them, and they seek to invoke the pact they made with you ages before."

"Protect me?" The serpent's voice rang from the stone, rising shrilly in disbelief. "Do they think I need protection?"

Neither Lalasa nor Hanuvar dared answer.

"It is clear you have forgotten much!" The serpent's head lowered until it was almost level with their bodies. "The pact was simple, humans. I would leave you be if you would leave me to my doings and stay clear of my mountain. These simple things you have done. Your people have kept your word, a rare thing in the history of your kind."

"She would make a new pact with you," Hanuvar said.

"Would she? Where is her tribute? I do not trust the word of humans who bear nothing to seal their promise."

So it was with serpents. The taking of oaths was a weighty matter to them, and they did not trust man save when he had proven faith by sacrifice.

"I am your tribute." Lalasa stepped forward, head held high.

The serpent's head rose.

Hanuvar barred Lalasa's way with an arm and pushed her back.

"Not you - " she cried.

"She means that she brings word of tribute," Hanuvar said. "The king is old and dared not come himself, but he waits for you."

"You would have me go elsewhere for tribute?" The serpent's teeth shown.

Hanuvar spoke quickly. "The king realizes it's much to ask, and so he has made great tribute to you. With him you will find baskets of jewelry and gold. They lie hidden from prying eyes three hundred paces east from the central tower of the palace, in a chamber twelve feet beneath the courtyard."

"How did you - " Lalasa asked, but Hanuvar shot up a finger in warning without looking back at her.

"This is unorthodox," said the serpent. "Yet I see the picture of this place within your mind."

Hanuvar knew that many serpents, like Lalasa, had a sixth sense which they used to help understand the world.

"Yet why is the tribute hidden?"

"To keep it safe from the raiders. If you stop them, it is yours."

"I shall take your tribute." The serpent's head rose. "And the raiders shall perish utterly. Now leave me."

Hanuvar bowed from the waist, and the priestess echoed his gesture.

"Go! I tire of your intrusion!"

Hanuvar dropped into the water, motioning Lalasa ahead of him. Once more they struck out for the tunnel, the priestess's pendant glowing against her skin. Hanuvar didn't look back, though he felt the great eyes of the serpent burning into the back of his head. He tried not to think of it

swimming behind them, its great mouth opening wide. He didn't think it would, yet the minds of the asalda were unknowable. Who was to say that it might not take them in tribute as well?

The water outside the tunnel seemed lighter, and as they broke the surface a red glow hung in the tree limbs along the shore. Dawn had come. As the two of them swam, a long dark and rippling form with immense black wings exploded from the water and soared effortlessly into the sky.

They treaded water and watched the serpent's sinuous form glide up and eastward, beating its wings almost as an afterthought.

Lalasa didn't pause once they reached the shore, but hurried through a stand of trees. Hanuvar followed her to the cliff's edge. The whole of the island lay spread before them, and they looked down across miles of treetops. There Hanuvar could see the bridge they had crossed. And far to the left, almost hidden by a hillock, was the high brown-stone tower of the palace. The serpent dropped suddenly, descending beside it, and disappeared from view.

"You have slain the king," Lalasa said softly.

"Far better him than you. Any good leader should be willing to sacrifice himself to protect his people."

"He has no heirs--"

"Good. Perhaps your people will appoint some worthy person to lead. A wise young woman, perhaps."

Lalasa stared at him. The early light glistened on the wa-

ter drops beaded on her skin. She shivered. "How did you know the king's hiding place so precisely?"

"I counted my steps."

From her expression he saw she didn't understand, but she did not press further. "What will you do now?"

"I will inter my brother's ashes within the Isles of the Dead. Then - " Hanuvar's voice dropped. "Then I have a long journey before me."

"You could rule Narata," Lalasa said, stepping close. She stood but handspans from him now. Her eyes were great dark wells. "You are very wise. You could take on a different identity--"

"If I stayed, the Dervan would find me - and any who shelter me. Come. I'll build you a fire. And then we'll leave this mountain."

One hand reached up to his chin, stroked it, and then he snared that trim waist and pressed her to him. She turned her face up to his and their lips met as the scarlet ball of the sun stained distant waters.

Within days the first of the blackened timbers reached the shores of Narata. They continued to sweep into the eastern beach for weeks after, sometimes in the company of burned and shriveled body parts, bits of cloth, and occasional clothing articles. By then Lalasa had used her risen status to set a triumvirate in the king's place.

And Hanuvar had sailed toward the rising sun.

APPENDIX: THE BEASTS OF HANUVAR

ASALDA



he asalda are immense winged serpents, long-lived and exceptionally intelligent. Some share with dragons a desire for gold and other earthly riches, although they don't seem to hoard treasures in the same way. Those who interact with humans are more likely to accumulate treasure because they recognize its usefulness as leverage in bargaining with humans.

Most human cultures refer to them as serpents with a capital S and fear them for their great magical gifts, usually involving destructive weather effects, although some are rumored to have mastered other enchantments. All are capable of minor telepathy. With concentration they are able to read the surface thoughts of those whom they speak with. All put great stock in bargains, but, given the long life span of the creatures in comparison with humanity, they are often disappointed, frustrated or angered by what they see as a betrayal when a remote descendant doesn't recall, for instance, that his great grandfather promised never to cross a certain stream. They are great sticklers for bargains

and react quickly if they perceive an agreement has been broken. Distrustful of humans, they often seal negotiations with a blood price so that they can be sure that the human takes the matter seriously. A sacrifice of one or more humans is often necessary, although a sufficient quantity of treasure may also suffice.

There are numerous breeds of asalda, although they are broadly divided into "wild" asalda and otherwise. Wild are those who are seldom in contact with humanity and less used to their ways.

Some few have been known to ally with intelligent humanoid races, preferring either long lived humanoids or families, and sometimes serve them as mounts.

On the whole, asalda are solitary, pursuing their sorcerous researches in remote wilderness areas. They mate but rarely, and breeding results in a clutch of several dozen, jointly watched over by the male and female until they are juveniles (age 10) at which point the family parts, by preference seldom uniting again.



CRANNIK



crannik is a cunning winged humanoid with clawed feet and hands, leathery wings, and a grotesque avian head. Most lair in remote locations, preying on wild life, although some develop a taste for human flesh. Territorial, they seldom congregate except to mate, and the male leaves the female to hatch eggs on her own after a brief breeding season. While they haven't the patience for agriculture, some are known to practice rudimentary animal husbandry, especially if they have access to humanoid ruins so that they don't have to devote much effort toward building or repair.

By preference they lair in hilly or mountainous terrain, favoring lands with sharp drop-offs, for cranniks have difficulty achieving flight velocity by running and flapping their wings. It is far simpler for them to throw themselves from a high place and glide. When desperate, a crannik can manage a clumping, lumbering run, and, with much exertion, flap hard enough to achieve flight, given enough open space. They are far more agile in the air than on the ground, although they are deadly swift if those who encounter them are foolish enough to get into striking range of their talons.

A hunting crannik can glide for hours, waiting for the perfect moment to strike swiftly. They prefer to prey upon the weak or the solitary, and are wily enough to plan their attacks very carefully. They have a weakness for sweets, wine, and weak prey. Despite their renowned cleverness, they can sometimes be coaxed into dangerous situations by leaving a tempting target unguarded.

Crannik's also have a fondness for shiny things, although they've little sense of value, so that a treasure chest might contain a hoard of broken glass and pebbles with a salting of gold coins.

Crannik: Init +4; Atk claws +4 melee (1d6) or bite +2 melee (1d4); AC 16; HD 3d8; MV 20', climb 30', glide 40'; Act 2d20; SP glide-by rake (+1d attack bonus, 1d10 damage, only actions for round are move-attack-move, withdrawing move does not provoke free attack); SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will -1; AL N.

Asalda: Init +9; Atk bite +10 melee (2d12) or wing buffet +8 melee (1d12) or constrict +8 melee (2d7, special) or special (see SP); AC 21; HD 9d12; MV 40', fly 60', swim 120'; Act 3d20; SP green-lightning eye-rays (dmg equals current hp, DC 19 Ref save for half), telepathy, supernatural sense of smell, constriction, weather magic (+9 spell check, 2d10 damage); SV Fort +7, Ref +11, Will +9; AL L.

3x per day, an asalda may attack up to 4 targets within 180' with its *green-lightning eye-rays* - Damage equals its current hit points, with a DC 19 Reflex save for half damage. The asalda may *constrict* a target as an attack. Once constricted, the victim takes automatic damage (2d7) every round until an opposed grapple check vs 1d30+9 is made to escape. The asalda has a +1d attack bonus to bite a constricted victim. The asalda crits using *Crit Table DR/d16* (with green-lightning substituted for "breath weapon").

THE RETURN OF THE WILD

A Rising Threat in the Shudder Mountains

By Michael Curtis • Art by William McAusland



he Shudfolk of the mountains are a devout people, raised in the ways of the Sovereign and told to steer clear of witches and conjure-men and the dark forces they serve. It has been this way for as long as the mountain people can remember, and the Shudfolk largely deem this to be as the Sovereign intended.

Now there is something old stirring in the darkest of hollows, an entity long forgotten but rife with untapped power older than the hills that encompass it. This being has existed since the first tree took root in the rising hills, birthed when the first drops of blood fell upon rich, primordial soil. It has persisted throughout the cataclysms and catastrophes that rocked the Shudders and watched hungrily as one race departed and another arrived. A being that challenges not only the Shining Light of the Sovereign, but the Eternal Darkness of the Three: Nengal the Wild One.

What Nengal is remains unknown, even to those who venerate it under the solstice moon. Many believe it was a local deity, the primordial entity worshiped by the original men who dwelled in the mountains before they were forced beneath the hills. Others say Nengal simply is what it is, a reflection of the savagery of Nature perhaps given sentience by the spilled magics of the Hsaal. Whatever its origins, Nengal is undoubtedly a threat to the traditional Shudfolk way of life.

While Nengal may have slumbered in the hills for millennia, it is only recently that its power has returned, restored by the small group of worshippers who've turned their backs on the Sovereign, but likewise rejected the compacts offered by the Three. These men and women instead reached back to the mountain's primordial past and discovered the power that lingers in the stones, trees, storms, and beasts of the hills and pledge themselves to serving that savage majesty.

The followers of Nengal might be called "druids" in some

cultures, but that sobriquet isn't completely accurate in the Shudders. Whereas druids in other lands pledge themselves to protecting Nature and serving the Balance between Law and Chaos, the followers of Nengal have no such concerns. Nature can protect itself with tooth, claw, and storm, and Law, Chaos, and Neutrality are human concepts subservient to the wild world. Those pledged to Nengal care only for the rapture granted by the tearing of flesh between the teeth, dancing in the wild rains, and rutting like beasts under the full moon. The restrictions of the Sovereign pale before the freedoms granted by Nengal.

Servants of Nengal gather in the secluded hollows of the mountains, usually under the light of the moon or when the thunderstorms rage in the hills. They are drawn to the old stones that still stand in the places of power, sites sacred to the serpent-folk, the first tribes of men, and the Hsaal alike, drawing inspiration and energy from these locations. Their ways and litanies are taught orally and no knowledge is kept written down by the venerators of Nengal. Rites are held either unclad or dressed in the skins of fierce animals such as wolves and bears.

The oldest and most secret of Nengal's rites are performed deep in the mountains, far from prying eyes. These ceremonies are filled with blood, death, and fire, and woe unto the lost traveler that ventures too close to the wild tabernacles of Nengal on a sacred night. In these secret rites, human lives are offered up to Nengal, either by ritual strangulation in the mountain bogs, the bodies of the dead left to slip beneath tea-dark waters to feed the Wild One's hunger, or burned alive in the great wicker constructions erected and set alight in Nengal's name.

The Shudfolk so far are largely unaware that some of their number have embraced a newer (or far older) faith. Nengal's servants maintain strict secrecy and never speak of their faith where they might be overheard. Those who stumble across the Wild One's hidden ways are either con-

verted or killed in an “accident” that won’t jeopardize the faith’s secrecy.

Adventurers in the Shudder Mountains can cross paths with the followers of the Wild One in several ways. A friend or ally of the party might be concerned that a family member is taking curious trips away from home on certain nights and requests the adventurers follow him and ensure he don’t get into trouble. Tailing the family member leads the party into the middle of a Nengal ritual where the faithful will try and kill the PCs lest their secret become known by the local Shudfolk community.

Another and more unusual means of introducing Nengal and its faithful servants is to have the party approached by a witch bound to one of the Three. The followers of Nengal have claimed a spoil once utilized by the witch in her sorcery and she wants the mystical site back. Nengal’s natural power is a worthy opponent for her devil-granted witchcraft, however, and she seeks formidable allies to partner with—namely the PCs! If they acquiesce, the witch offers to use her magic and the power of the spoil for the party’s benefit. If the judge wishes to further muddy the moral waters, one of the witch’s innocent kin has been kidnapped and is intended to be sacrificed at the next rite to Nengal. The PCs must weigh the consequences of helping one who delves into black magic against the life of an innocent.



NEW PATRON: NENGAL THE WILD ONE



he Wild One is nature personified, but not the docile force of flower, crop, and newborn lamb. Nengal represents Nature, red in tooth and claw, a force grown fat on blood and bones and more feared than honored on the nights when the moon rides high. For centuries, Nengal has dwelled forgotten by the denizens of the Shudders, ignored in favor of the power of the Sovereign, its rightful tribute denied in lieu of devotions to the upstart god of the Shudfolk. But now, some have found their way back to the primordial might and terror of the Oldest of Gods and the Wild One’s power rises in the hollows.

Invoke Patron check results:

- 12-13 The Wild One fills the air with the howl of a hundred famished wolves, bears, coyotes, and other predators. All enemies within 60’ of the caster must make a Will save vs. the spell check result or be terrified for 1d3+CL rounds. Terrified creatures suffer a -1 die penalty to all action dice and saving throw rolls and are 50% likely to drop carried items.
- 14-17 Nengal grants its servant the ability to sense the vitality of living creatures. The caster instinctively knows the life strength of all creatures within 100’ (approximate number of HD/class levels and whether the creatures’ hit points are greater, equal to, or less than the caster’s). For the next 1d6+CL rounds, any attack or spell cast at a creature stronger than the caster gains a +1d bonus to damage rolls. This increase affects multiple dice if applicable (e.g. a spell that normally does 3d6 damage would do 3d8 damage).
- 18-19 The Wild One protects its servant from injuries caused by natural sources. Any attack against the caster by a wooden weapon, a natural animal’s claws or bite, or from environmental extremes such as fire is reduced by 1d3×CL points of damage. This effect last for 2d5+CL rounds or until the caster grasps ferrous metal in his hand.
- 20-23 Nengal rewards the caster unafraid to let his blood flow. All spells cast while the caster is suffering from unstaunched wounds or similar blood flow gain a bonus to their spell check equal to the caster’s level. This benefit lasts for 1d10+CL rounds. The bonus ends immediately if the caster’s blood ceases to flow.
- 24-27 The Wild One strikes at the caster’s foes, delivering a bolt of lightning from the cloudy sky, a tongue of flame from

a nearby fire, or a similar harmful touch of wild nature. The strike inflicts 6d6+CL damage (Reflex save vs. spell check for ½ damage). If the caster desires, he can split the strike between two targets, inflicting 3d6+CL damage to each.



28-29 Nengal touches the caster with the primordial power of the natural world, invigorating his mortal body. The caster gains +20 hit points, a +4 bonus to all attacks and damage, an extra d14 action die, and suffers only half damage from natural sources (as result 18-19 above). While under the effect of the primordial power, the caster cannot cast spells unless they have a connection with nature (judge's discretion). A fire-based spell would be possible, but *comprehend language* or *magic shield* would not, for example.

30-31 The Wild One connects the caster with the wild world surrounding him, plugging him into the unseen avenues of perception that crisscross the land. The caster perceives the world in a 5 mile diameter as if he were the land himself. He instinctively knows what creatures are present and where, what plants grow there, the locations of natural resources such as clean water, mineral wealth, and similar unrefined treasures, and he detects any hidden creature or foe obscured by camouflage, invisibility, or similar means. The caster can overhear any conversation occurring in the land by concentrating his senses, but doing so mutes his other perceptions while he focuses solely on the spoken exchange. While this effect is ongoing, the caster cannot be surprised by any creature present in the affected area. This effect lasts for (CL)d6+6 turns or whenever the caster chooses to end the connection.

32+ Nengal directly intervenes on behalf of its servant, laying waste to his enemies. The Wild One manifests as a force of nature, albeit an abnormal one. Its power is unleashed as a surging storm crackling with lightning and blood-red clouds, a horde of savage animals acting in concert, trees and rocks moving with purpose, or a similar form as determined by the judge. This manifestation causes (CL)d20 points of damage to all creatures in a 100' square area directly in front of the caster. The decimation is sufficient to destroy free-standing structures, uproot crops, smash wagons, and inflict similar destruction. The manifestation lasts only moments, vanishing or returning to normal conditions once the damage has been wrought.

PATON TAINT: NENGAL THE WILD ONE

When patron taint is indicated for Nengal, roll 1d6 on the table below. When a caster has acquired all six taints at all levels of effect, there is no need to continue rolling any longer.

Roll Result

- 1 The caster's face acquires a scraggly, mossy beard regardless of race or gender. The facial hair is initially sparse, but subsequent acquisitions of patron taint increase its appearance. When this result is rolled a second time, the beard increases in volume and the caster's skin acquires a faint greenish hue. If this taint is rolled a third time, the caster's skin turns forest green and his beard transforms into thick curly moss.
- 2 The caster gains the same allergy to iron as possessed by elves (see DCC RPG core rulebook, p. 57). If the caster is an elf, the allergy increases in severity and he suffers 1 point of damage each hour he is in contact with iron. If this result is rolled a second time, the caster's vulnerability increases and he suffers 1 point of damage for each hour he is in direct contact with iron. If the caster is an elf, he now suffers 1 point of damage for each turn he is in contact with iron. If rolled a third time, the caster suffers 1 point of damage for each turn he is in contact with iron. If an elf, iron weapons now do double damage to the caster on a successful hit.
- 3 The caster acquires a taste for raw meat, enjoying it with a greater gusto than even slightly cooked meat. However, he can still consume cooked meat without difficulty. If this result is rolled a second time, the caster can only

eat raw meat, but can subsist on other foods such as grains, fruits, and vegetables. If rolled a third time, only raw, bloody meat, preferably from prey slain by the caster himself, will satisfy his hunger and provide sustenance.

- 4 The caster gains an intolerance for clothing, finding it constricting and itchy to wear. He can endure garments when necessary but prefers to shed them whenever possible. If this result is gained a second time, the caster cannot abide to wear clothes for more than an hour. If forced to do so, he suffers a -1 penalty to his action dice, saving throws, skill and spell checks. If this result is rolled a third time, wearing clothes interferes with the caster's connection with the primordial world and he suffers a -1 die penalty to spell checks when clothed.
- 5 The caster's mere presence causes domesticated animals and herbivores to become nervous and flee his presence if possible. If this result is rolled a second time, the affected animals might harm themselves trying to escape the caster's vicinity, bashing themselves against barriers or otherwise placing escape above their wellbeing. If rolled a third time, the animals are likely to attack the caster in a frenzy if escape proves impossible. This taint at any level is widely considered a sign of witchcraft by the Shudfolk and the mountain folk may prove a bigger concern to the caster's health than any animal.
- 6 The caster develops an abhorrence for consecrated ground sacred to "civilized" deities. Merely stepping onto such holy ground causes the caster discomfort and he will seek to leave as soon as possible. If this result is rolled a second time, the caster must make a DC 10 Will save to even step onto consecrated ground. If rolled a third time, the caster suffers 1 point of damage for each minute he spends on sacred ground. Note that what deities are considered "civilized" are left to the judge to determine, but gods possessing no direct connection to the natural world are likely to meet the definition. In the Shudder Mountains, the Sovereign would be considered a "civilized" deity and his churches would affect a caster with this taint.

SPELLBURN: NENGAL THE WILD ONE

The Wild One is a primordial power, a personification of nature at its most savage and dangerous. As such, those casters who take steps to appease Nengal's primeval hungers gain greater benefits when spellburning. When a caster utilizes spellburn, roll 1d4 on the table below or build off these suggestions to create an event specific to your home campaign.

Roll Spellburn Result

- 1 Blood must flow for Nengal to respond. The caster gouges at his flesh with his nails or slices into his skin with a ceremonial knife fashioned from bone, tooth, or talon. The resulting damage to muscle and sinew results in attribute loss.
- 2 The caster experiences ravenous hunger that only fresh, bloody meat will appease. He feels compelled to bite into the flesh of another living creature, inflicting 1d3 damage with a successful bite. The damage is added to the spellburn total. If alone, the caster bites and devours his own flesh to amplify his magic.
- 3 Small predators (badgers, foxes, weasels, etc.) appear and swarm the caster, ripping his flesh with their teeth and talons. The spilled blood from the attacks writhes as if alive and merges with the magical forces called up by the caster. The animal-inflicted wounds manifest as attribute loss.
- 4 Nengal's presence is stronger in the wild and it fuels the caster's magic appropriately. When spellburning in a natural setting untouched by the presence of civilization (judge's discretion), the caster receives 2 points of spellburn for every ability point spent, up to a maximum of ten ability points.

PATRON SPELLS: NENGAL

Nengal grants the following three unique spells to its faithful servants. Space does not allow full spell descriptions here, but summaries of each spell's effect is provided to guide judges in creating their own.

1st level—*Howl of the Predator*: This spell drives away natural animals, sending them fleeing in a panic. At higher spell check levels, it imparts bravery and physical attack bonuses to the caster's allies.

2nd level—*Call up the Bog-Dead*: This spell awakens the corpses of those ritually-sacrificed to Nengal in the marshes and bogs, granting them a simulacrum of life. The Bog-Dead are not un-dead, but animated corpses given motion and animal intelligence by the beasts and plants that feed on their remains.

3rd—*Awaken the Wicker Man*: This spell can only be cast in concert with the flaming sacrifices of human and animal lives encased in one of the wicker constructions of the Nengal faith. This spell animates the woven man figure, allowing the burning construct to walk abroad and punish those who oppose the will of Nengal.

1970's EARTH CHARACTERS FOR DCC

By Dieter Zimmerman • Art by Doug Kovacs



he trope of “normal person from Earth becomes a hero in a fantasy realm” is a common one in fantasy literature, but the DCC RPG rules only provide occupations for fantasy characters. The following tables are for creating characters native to 1970's Earth, with a bit of artistic license. With minimal modification, they could be used for other modern or near-modern times.

Many people of recent Earth history do not carry weapons or things that can be used as weapons, so not every occupation starts with a weapon! The only pieces of equipment on the list that can be used as weapons are marked as such. Characters without starting weapons can be assumed to be trained in either club or dagger (choose or determine randomly).

Level 0 Earth characters start with one randomly determined occupation and the listed equipment for that occupation, two randomly determined personal items (roll on the Personal Items table below instead of the DCC RPG equipment table), 5d12 dollars/pounds/other form of Earth currency, and one roll on the Astrology Table (this takes the place of the Birth Augur table). Other than that, character creation is exactly as detailed in the DCC RPG core rules.

OCCUPATION TABLE (1D100)

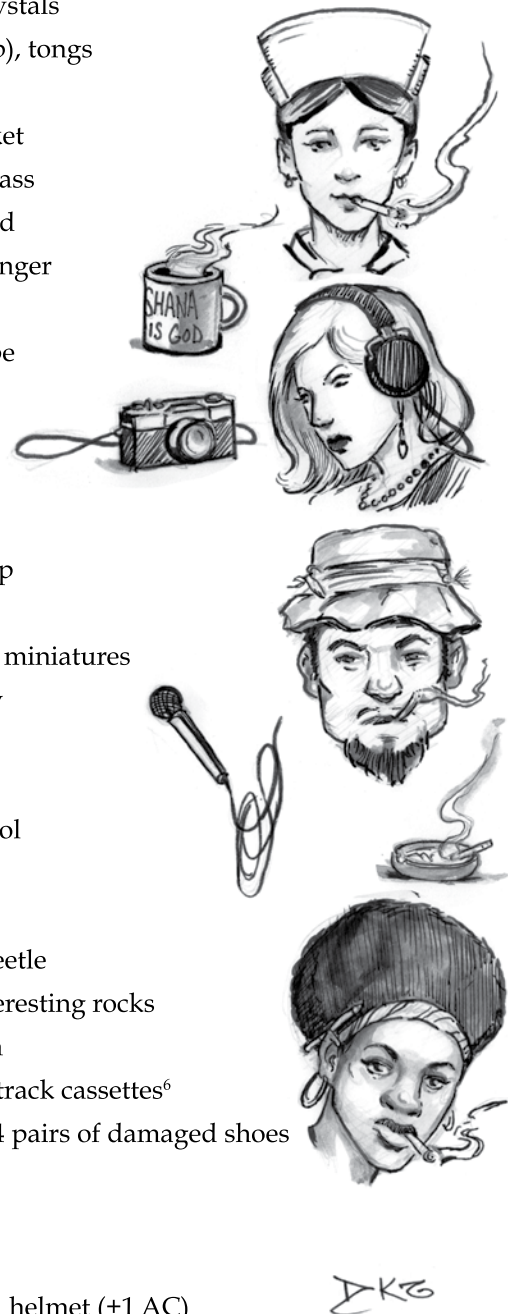
Roll	Occupation	Equipment
01	Accountant	Calculator ¹ , ledger
02	Actor	Lighter, pack of cigarettes
03	Airline pilot	Suitcase, 1d4 changes of clothes
04	Animal control officer	Animal control pole ² , small cage
05	Artist	Sculptor's chisel (as dagger), tube of paint
06-08	Athlete (d8)	
	1-2: Baseball player	Baseball bat (as club), catcher's mitt
	3-4: Football player	Helmet (+1 AC), football
	5-6: Basketball player	Basketball, sweat bands
	7: Tennis player	Tennis racket, 1d3 tennis balls
	8: Hockey player	Hockey stick (as club), ice skates
09	Bag lady	Shopping cart, 2d6 bags
10	Baker	Rolling pin (as club), bag of flour
11	Barber	Scissors (as dagger), shaving cream
12	Beekeeper	Beekeeper hat, jar of honey



Roll	Occupation	Equipment
13	Brewer	Six-pack of beer, sack of brewer's yeast
14	Bricklayer	Trowel (as dagger), 1d6 bricks
15	Burglar	Crowbar (as club), ski mask
16	Butcher	Meat cleaver (as handaxe), 1 pound of raw beef
17	Bus driver	Bus, Thermos of coffee
18	Car salesman	Keyring with 2d7 keys, toupee
19	Carpenter	Hammer (as club), 2d12 nails
20	Chef	Skillet (as club), 2d4 spices
21	Clown	Rubber nose that honks, joy buzzer
22	Computer programmer	Slide rule, stack of punch cards
23	Confectioner	Bag of taffy, 1d6 large lollipops
24-26	Construction worker	Sledgehammer (as warhammer), hard hat (+1 AC)
27	Dairy farmer	Bucket, 1 pound of cheese
28	Dentist	Dental picks, tube of toothpaste
29	Doctor	Stethoscope, vial of prescription drugs
30	Dog trainer	1d14 dog treats, small but vicious dog
31	Electrician	Spool of copper wire, screwdriver
32	Exotic dancer	Feather boa, makeup kit
33-34	Farmer ³	Pitchfork (as spear), hen
35	Fireman	Axe (as battleaxe), fire-resistant coat
36	Fisherman	Fish cleaning knife (as dagger), net
37	Fitness instructor	Dumbbell (as club), sweat bands
38	Gambler	Deck of marked cards, dark sunglasses
39	Game designer	Bag of polyhedral dice, pad of graph paper
40	Gang member	Knife (as dagger), 5-ft. length of chain
41	Garbage collector	Garbage can lid (as shield), bag of trash
42	Gas station attendant	Window wiper, tin of chewing tobacco
43	Groundskeeper	Rake (as staff), can of WEED-B-GON
44	High school teacher	Box of chalk, ruler
45	Housewife	Comfy robe, basket of dirty laundry
46	Hunter	Bow (as shortbow), deer pelt
47	Idle rich	Gold ring, expensive wristwatch
48-49	Industrial machinist	Hard hat (+1 AC), safety goggles
50	Janitor	Mop (as staff), bucket
51	Jeweller	Loupe, gemstone worth 20 gp
52	Lawyer	Briefcase, 1d6 fancy pens
53	Lifeguard	Swimming goggles, whistle
54	Mail man	Bag of mail, can of dog repellent
55	Mechanic	Wrench (as club), can of grease
56	Mime	Imaginary rope, imaginary box
57	Miner	Pick (as handaxe), lantern helmet ¹
58	Minister	Holy book, silver holy symbol



Roll	Occupation	Equipment
59	Mortician	Bone saw, jug of embalming fluid
60	Motorcycle cop	Helmet (+1 AC), handcuffs
61-62	Musician	Musical instrument ⁴ , pack of cigarettes
63	New Age guru	2d12 sticks of incense, 1d7 crystals
64	Nuclear plant worker	Inanimate carbon rod (as club), tongs
65	Nurse	Bandages, bottle of aspirin
66	Panhandler	Can with 2d20 cp, ratty blanket
67	Park ranger	Walking stick (as club), compass
68	Photographer	Camera, jug of developer fluid
69	Plumber	Lead pipe (as club), toilet plunger
70	Police detective	Revolver ⁵ , handcuffs
71	Psychiatrist	Rorschach blots, smoking pipe
72	Radio DJ	Headphones ⁶ , 1d6 records ⁶
73-76	Retail clerk (1d7)	
	1: Bookstore	1d3 books, 2d4 magazines
	2: Clothing store	1d6 nice shirts, leather belt
	3: Grocery store	Box of cereal, 1d4 cans of soup
	4: Hardware store	Hand saw, 20' nylon rope
	5: Hobby shop	Remote control car ¹ , 2d6 lead miniatures
	6: Record store	2d4 records ⁶ , flask of whiskey
	7: Toy store	Barbie doll, squirt gun
77	Scientist (1d5)	
	1: Archaeologist	Trowel (as dagger), bronze idol
	2: Astronomer	Small telescope, star map
	3: Chemist	Safety goggles, vial of acid
	4: Entomologist	Insect container, very large beetle
	5: Geologist	Small pick (as club), 2d10 interesting rocks
78-79	Secretary	Stapler, pack of chewing gum
80	Semi truck driver	Thermos of hot coffee, 1d8 8-track cassettes ⁶
81	Shoe repairman	Curved knife (as dagger), 1d4 pairs of damaged shoes
82	Soldier	Rifle ⁵ , canteen of water
83	Stable hand	Horse brush, bag of oats
84-86	Student	Backpack, 1d5 textbooks
87	Stuntman	Prop sword (as club), padded helmet (+1 AC)
88	Surveyor	Transit level, 8-ft. folding measuring stick
89	Tailor/Seamstress	Scissors (as dagger), bolt of fabric
90	Taxi driver	Tire iron (as club), map of the city
91	Taxidermist	Curved knife (as dagger), 1d4 dead birds
92	Travel agent	Briefcase, knickknack from favorite travel destination
93	TV reporter	Microphone ⁶ , 30 feet of cable ⁶
94-95	Waiter/Waitress	Steak knife (as dagger), bottle of wine
96	Welder	Steel bar (as club), welding helmet (+1 AC)



Roll	Occupation	Equipment
97	Zoo keeper	Shovel (as club), bucket of elephant dung
98-99	Your choice	Choose an occupation
00	Two jobs	Roll twice on the table, rerolling this result if rolled again

¹This item runs on batteries and has a limited life. Judges: use your best judgment, but it should last at least one full adventure.

²A successful attack with this item on a human-sized or smaller creature means the target cannot move or make any bite attacks unless they beat the wielder in an opposed STR roll. On subsequent turns the attacker can move the captured creature with an opposed STR roll.

³Some things never change. Roll 1d8 to determine farmer type: (1) potato, (2) wheat, (3) turnip, (4) corn, (5) rice, (6) parsnip,

(7) radish, (8) rutabaga.

⁴Roll 1d10 to determine instrument: (1-2) guitar, (3) banjo, (4) drum, (5) trumpet, (6) violin, (7) saxophone, (8) flute, (9) harmonica, (10) bagpipes.

⁵Firearms do 1d8 damage, but critical hits roll 1d24 on Table III (or substitute your favorite firearm rules from another source).

⁶This item requires other modern things in order to be used for its intended purpose. Get creative!

PERSONAL ITEMS TABLE (1D24)

Roll	Personal Item
1	Backpack or purse
2	Ballpoint pen
3	Brass knuckles (+1 unarmed damage)
4	Comb or brush
5	Diamond ring worth 20 gp
6	Eyeglasses
7	Flashlight ¹
8	Flask, empty
9	Folding knife (as dagger)
10	Holy symbol
11	Keyring with 1d5 keys
12	Lighter
13	Lipstick or pomade
14	Lucky rabbit's foot
15	Mirror, hand-sized
16	Notebook
17	Pack of chewing gum
18	Pack of cigarettes
19	Paperback novel
20	Roller skates
21	Sunglasses
22	Umbrella
23	Wristwatch
24	Yo-yo

¹This item runs on batteries and has a limited life. Judges: use your best judgment, but it should last at least one full adventure.

ASTROLOGY TABLE (1D14)

Roll	Sign	Lucky Roll
1	Aquarius	Armor class
2	Pisces	Skill checks (including thief skills)
3	Aries	Melee attack rolls
4	Taurus	Damage rolls
5	Gemini	Initiative
6	Cancer	Willpower saving throws
7	Leo	Hit points (apply at each level)
8	Virgo	Fumbles ¹
9	Libra	Fortitude saving throws
10	Scorpio	Critical hits ¹
11	Sagittarius	Missile fire attack rolls
12	Capricorn	Reflex saving throws
13	Cusp child	Roll again on this table (rerolling a 13 or 14). Take the sign rolled and the one that follows, and apply your Luck modifier to both things.
14	Alien stars	Roll on the Birth Augur table (DCC RPG core rulebook, p. 19).

¹Luck normally affects critical hits and fumbles. On this result, the modifier is doubled for purposes of crits or fumbles.



Not in Kansas Anymore

A LEVEL 0 ADVENTURE

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Artist: Stefan Poag • Cartographer: Steve Crompton

Playtesters: all the fine folks whose names we forgot to record from
Gen Con 2012-2015, ConGlomeration 2013-2014, CincyCon 2014,
WhosYerCon 2015,
Marcon 2013,
and others!





Not in Kansas Anymore is a DCC funnel adventure designed for 16 to 21 0-level characters. The adventure is meant to be used with characters from 1970's Earth, but because the characters are plucked from their own dimension and brought to this one, they can be from whatever setting you desire!

It is designed specifically to introduce new players to Dungeon Crawl Classics RPG. The characters are normally from our Earth, so the players need no specialized knowledge of the setting, nor do they even need any experience with fantasy role playing. The adventure provides the rules simplicity of a 0-level funnel, but the players get a taste of what leveled play is like during the climax. It can easily be run in a 3- or 4-hour time slot, even if you let players make their characters at the table.

BACKGROUND

The Prince of Dragons, Veslaumn, and his followers were exiled from their home plane after a failed rebellion. They started terrorizing their new plane, commanding local dragons with the Onus Key, an artifact stolen from Veslaumn's father. They angered Harrakwa (a deity whose portfolio includes the open sky, heroes, and memory) and a centuries-long conflict began. During this conflict, Veslaumn's lieutenant, Slagithor, was imprisoned in a volcano and the Onus Key was lost.

Fast-forward several hundred years. The conflict still goes on, but without local dragons at his behest, Veslaumn is slowly losing. Seeking to regain the upper hand, Veslaumn asks one of his human servants, the wizard Ezaurack, to free Slagithor. Slagithor will then use his abilities to find the Onus Key and bring the native dragons to heel again. Harrakwa learns of these plans and sends agents of his own to Ezaurack's volcano fortress to stop him. The heroes, led by a cleric of Harrakwa named Xallops, break into Ezaurack's castle, battle the wizard, and force him down into the bowels of the castle for a final dramatic conflict. Though Ezaurack and his minions slay several of the adventurers, the battle goes poorly. Missing a hand and nearly defeated, Ezaurack desperately calls upon his patron—the Prince of Dragons—to intercede.

Though still unable to return to his home, Veslaumn has amassed great dimensional powers in his repeated attempts. He rends time and space to aid his servant, sending the invaders to another plane in a flash of light. But having faced servants of Veslaumn before, Xallops anticipated this possibility. When his adventuring company discovered the *Window of Worlds* in area 12, Xallops called upon the divine aid of Harrakwa to enchant two dozen coins, and he scattered them in another world. Any who carried those coins would be called to take the place of the heroes should they be removed from their native plane. What was left of Xallops' band disappeared, and the player characters were ripped from their normal lives to replace them.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

So it begins with the characters suddenly in an underground chamber confronting a wounded Ezaurack. Before the characters even know what's going on, Ezaurack uses his magic to tear open the wall, allowing hot magma to gush into the room. His iguana-man minions attack the characters, and Ezaurack flees, screaming about completing the ritual.

The characters end up following Ezaurack (and/or fleeing the magma) up into the dungeons and into the castle proper, having encounters with iguana-men and traps along the way. At the climax of the adventure they come out on a ledge overlooking the inside of the volcano where Ezaurack is completing the ritual to free Slagithor from his prison. Harrakwa intercedes, granting the characters access to the memories and abilities of his former champions so they may do battle with Ezaurack and Slagithor.

Yes, 0-level characters will probably end up fighting a dragon at the end of this adventure.

JUDGE'S NOTES AND CHARACTER CREATION

This adventure is meant to be used with characters from 1970's Earth, using the 1970's Earth occupations and equipment tables elsewhere in this book (page 31). All other aspects of character creation can be the same as detailed in the DCC RPG core rules. Because the characters are ripped from their home dimension and brought magically to Ezaurack's stronghold, they can really be from any setting. They don't even have to be from the same world! If you want 1970's Earth characters teaming up with Neolithic cave-men, Shud-folk, denizens of the Purple Planet, and natives of any other world, there's no reason you can't do that.

The adventure takes place in an active volcano that is nearing eruption. The players are working against the clock to survive—remind them of this constantly. Describe how hot it is. Describe how the entire room occasionally rumbles and shakes. And if they linger too long in one place, activate the Lava Effects Progression. Start at entry 1, and every minute (or every round if you're feeling particularly evil) step up the effects until the characters either leave the area or are consumed by hot lava.

Lava Effects Progression

A wall of deadly lava pursues the players as they climb through the dungeon. It takes 10 rounds to fill area 1, and then boils its way up to the higher levels. The chart below helps add some urgency to the players' actions – if they linger, the lava's effects will get worse every few rounds.

1. Warm and glowing. The encroaching lava lights up this area as well as a torch, casting strange shadows as the molten rock oozes forward. Temperatures are uncomfortably high.
2. Toxic fumes. Lava gives off gases that will quickly kill humans. Once an area has reached this stage, characters must

succeed at a Fortitude save every round (DC 10) or take 1 hit point of temporary damage. It's time to move on...

3. Superheated air. A gust of oven-temperature air shrivels the lungs! Once an area has reached this stage, characters must succeed at a Fortitude save every round (DC 11) or take 1 point of damage. It's time to move on...

4. Exploding water. The lava hits a pocket of water, causing an instant explosion! Characters must succeed at a Reflex save (DC 12) or take 1d4 damage from superheated rock shrapnel.

5. Volcanic lightning. Ash particles in the air ignite with static charges! Characters must succeed at a Reflex save (DC 14) or take 1d4 damage from miniature lightning bolts.

6. Hey, it's lava! A flood of lava engulfs this area. Everyone in the room takes 1d20 damage each round.

PLAYER START

Each character's day has been perfectly normal so far, except for the odd foreign coins they each found in the morning. The day unfolds uneventfully for each of them (work, school, social activities, or whatever else they get up to during the day). But just before sunset, all of that changes. A great inexplicable explosion of sound and light robs them of their senses. As they begin to recover, read this text:

The first thing you notice even before your sight and hearing return is a painful scorching heat at your back. Your vision fades from black into red, and you hear voices shouting around you, gradually getting louder as your hearing improves. There is a rumble you feel as much as you hear, and you stagger to keep your footing.

After a moment, you realize the shouting is very near you. There are screams of pain and anger, as well as a caustic voice that shouts, "What is this?! Who are these interlopers?! Kill them, I must release Slagithor from his imprisonment!" Your vision has recovered enough to see dark shapes moving through the red light. You focus on the shapes, and your only thought is that you've somehow stumbled onto a movie set.

Half a dozen short men in realistic rubber lizard costumes wielding sharp-looking spears move cautiously toward you. Behind them, a statue of a dragon with outstretched wings towers against a wall of black rock. Directly in front of the statue is a man in cream-colored robes and pauldrons made of rainbow-hued scales. He holds a staff in one hand; the other is a bloody stump clutched close to his abdomen and trailing blood down the front of his clothing. He glares at you with reptilian eyes and bares pointed teeth.

"Go on then, kill them now!" the one-handed man hisses. He turns his back to you and disappears behind the giant statue. The lizard actors advance threateningly toward you.

Have the players immediately roll initiative and start the combat. The "men in lizard costumes" are, of course, actually humanoid iguana-man warriors. The strange man who escaped is Ezaurack, the wizard who calls this stronghold home.



The characters are in area 1. The circular domed room is carved from dark igneous rock, 50 feet across and half that high at its peak. The red light comes from lava pouring in from a crack in the south wall. The wreckage of a mighty battle fills this space: several dead iguana-man, broken spears, shattered scimitars, and scorched stone. An armored human figure lies motionless on the ground near the lava blast. His chest is caved in, making the armor useless, but a silvery sword and shield lie next to him.

The lava fills the room in ten rounds. In two rounds the armored figure – that of Ballobart, the warrior who accompanied Xallops on his quest – will be consumed by lava.

Behind the statue, a crevice in the wall reveals a narrow stairway winding up into the rock.

Iguana-man Warriors (6): Init -1; Atk spear +0 melee (1d6) or claw +0 melee (1d4); AC 12; HD 1d10; hp 5 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref -1, Will +0; AL N.

Ezaurack: Init +2; Atk magic bolt +3 ranged (1d8); AC 14; HD 6d6; hp 30 (currently 13); MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +4; AL L.

Area 2 – Lair of the Iguana-Men:

This dark, echoing space stinks of sulfur and reptiles. Columns of igneous rock rise floor to ceiling every few feet, creating a natural labyrinth. The cavern is filled with hot volcanic steam, limiting your vision. Panicked, inhuman voices cry out occasionally, sometimes in the distance of the cavern and sometimes frightfully close by.

This huge cavern is the home of Ezaurack's iguana-men. Thanks to the volcano, pools of boiling mud and sudden steam geysers are everywhere – just what the iguana-men like. Of course, these are also constant threats to any characters that venture inside, and the iguana-men won't be happy to see intruders.

Due to the pending eruption of the volcano, this cavern is rapidly becoming geologically unstable, which is causing a mass iguana-man evacuation out the back. This area isn't an environment to explore—it's a cauldron of dangers that will eventually consume any characters who linger. Give the adventurers up to three random encounters from the table below (roll 1d12). If they continue wandering the steam-filled maze after that, they will hear stone cracking as a massive fissure opens at the back of the cave and lava floods out. The party will have four rounds to escape before the lava fills the chamber.

If any characters attempt to help iguana-men escape the volcano, they should receive appropriate karmic rewards (perhaps a point of Luck).

d12	Random Encounter
1-2	Nothing but mud and stink.
3	Boiling mud. One character must make a DC 11 Reflex save or fall into a pool of boiling mud that causes 1d3 damage.
4	Steam geyser. Everyone within 30 feet must make a DC 11 Reflex save or suffer 1 point of damage from inhaling boiling sulfurous steam. The resulting cloud will linger for 1 minute, obscuring all vision regardless of light sources.
5	Glowing fungus. A fist-sized fungus that gives light equivalent to a candle. If picked, the fungus will keep glowing for 15 minutes.
6	Bug farm. This hive is the size of a loaf of bread and has the consistency of cardboard. It's full of sluggish cave wasps. The iguana-men eat these insects. Should the bugs be angered – if their hive is thrown, for example, or if exposed to flame – they will swarm the nearest humanoid. A wasp swarm automatically inflicts 1 point of damage to humans, and the victim must make a DC 11 Fortitude save or be nauseated, suffering a -2 to all rolls for the next 10 minutes; the swarm disperses after its initial attack. The iguana-men are immune to the wasps, thanks to their scaly hides, and enjoy eating them.
7	Antidote vial. A stoppered glass vial containing a thick amber liquid. Multicolored scales glint in the amber. This is an antidote to the poisonous lizards in area 10.
8	Iguana-man child. This knee-high spratling is desperate to find its clutchmates, and is terrified by the “squishy ones” (i.e., the adventurers). Iguana-man, child: Init -1; Atk claw -2 melee (1d3); AC 8; HD 1d4; hp 2; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref -1, Will +0; AL N.
9	Iguana-man adult. This iguana-man isn't happy to see the adventurers, but won't fight unless attacked. He or she would rather find the rest of their family and escape through the passages in the rear of the cavern. A typical iguana-man adult carries a simple tool made of stone or bone, such as a crude hammer or a needle. Iguana-man, adult: Init -1; Atk club or claw +0 melee (1d4); AC 10; HD 1d8; hp 4; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref -1, Will +0; AL N.
10	Iguana-man warrior. This spear-wielding iguana-man will attack the characters immediately, shouting for reinforcements. If the iguana-man is still alive after 2 rounds, 1d4 other warriors will arrive to help repel invaders. Iguana-man Warrior: Init -1; Atk spear +0 melee (1d6) or claw +0 melee (1d4); AC 12; HD 1d10; hp 5; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref -1, Will +0; AL N.
11	Iguana-man shaman. This club-wielding iguana-man will gibber and howl at first contact, attempting to curse the invaders. When nothing seems to happen, it will attack. Each shaman wears a simple necklace of colorful stones and small brass trinkets threaded through a leather strip. Iguana-man Shaman: Init +0; Atk club or claw +0 melee (1d4); AC 10; HD 1d8; hp 4; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref -1, Will +2; AL N.
12	Halfling prisoner. The halfling was found by the iguana-men on an excursion out of the volcano. They were saving him to eat at a celebration next week, but he has escaped their clutches and is trying to find his way out. He does not know anything about Ezaurack or what is going on in the volcano. (If the players are already getting low on characters, he could serve as a replacement character.)

Area 3 – Shadowed Stairs:

The heat rises behind you. The passageway ahead is filled by stairs climbing up into the rock, and at the top of the stairway stands a motionless humanoid figure, shrouded in shadows.

The stairway is trapped. Pressure plates cause short spears to shoot up from the floor, impaling unlucky adventurers (1d7 damage, DC 13 Reflex save to avoid). The pressure plates can be wedged with rock chips or wooden splinters, stopping them from activating, but this will take time that the PCs might not have. Anyone removing a spear from the trap can use it as a weapon; the wielder suffers -2 to attack rolls in melee and -4 if thrown due to the poor quality. There is one trap at the bottom of the stairway, and one trap in the middle of the stairway.

The trap at the top of the stairway has already been trig-

gered. The figure at the top of the stairs is a dead human thief, impaled and held upright by a spear jutting from the floor into the underside of his chin. A small amount of money (3d6 silver coins), a sharp dagger, and thieves' tools can be found on the corpse of Nando Parbullet, one of Xallops' company. If a character feels like stripping a dead body, they can remove a set of leather armor sized for a small human.

Area 4 – Dragon Chapel:

This room has a sinister stillness. Against the opposite wall you see a dragon statue, a smaller version of the one in the domed room, with a lectern in front of it. Four wooden pews take up most of the room.

This room is a smaller version of the ritual chamber (area 1), approximately 30 feet across. The dragon statue against

the far wall is about 8 feet high. Before the statue is a wooden lectern. The statue is enchanted with an aura of fear; it requires a DC 12 Will save to enter the chapel, unless the character first says the Dragon Prince's name.

Placing a weight of at least 5 pounds on the lectern causes a secret door on the wall to open, and removing the weight causes it to close. Behind the secret door is a winding crude stairway that comes out in a passageway ahead of the dead thief in area 3.

Ezaurack fled through here, using the secret stairway to avoid the spear traps. If any character thinks to track Ezaurack from the hallway outside, they will notice a small trail of blood leading into the chapel and up to the secret door.

A close examination of the lectern reveals dust patterns indicating a book recently sat atop it. A unique reptilian warrior was left behind to work the secret door, and he ambushes the first character in the room with a spray of blood from his eyes as he hides behind the statue. If captured, he will reveal the secret of the door in exchange for his life; he then flees to the iguana-man lair (area 2) to attempt escape through the far tunnels.

The horned lizard-man can use an action to spray blood from its eyes, covering one creature. The blood contains noxious chemicals that make humans sick. Sprayed creatures must make a DC 14 Fort save or lose 1d4 points of Stamina for an hour and spend their next action vomiting. The horned lizard-man can spray blood three times.

Blood-spraying Horned Lizard-man: Init +1; Atk horn +1 melee (1d4) or crossbow +0 ranged (1d6); AC 13; HD 1d10; hp 5; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP blood spray; SV Fort +1, Ref -1, Will +0; AL N.

Area 5 – Lair of the Komodo-Men:

This natural cave is lit by the red light of deadly lava covering much of the floor. The lava pumps from a crack in the southeast wall, filling in the low parts of the uneven ground. Islands of high ground stick out of the lava lake, but it's only a matter of time before those too are submerged. On the far side of the room stands an eight-foot-tall, powerfully muscled reptilian humanoid making panicked noises as the lava gets closer to it. On the near side of the room, just feet in front of you, stands another.

The creatures are komodo-men, and they are trying to escape the lava flow. Unless the characters have been particularly noisy, the nearer of the two has its back to the characters. The characters have one round to decide what to do before it notices them and attacks in frenzied terror.

If a fight breaks out, the komodo-man on the far side will get its courage up enough to leap the lava from island to island and join in. Jumping from one dry spot to another requires a DC 10 Agility check. It takes three successful checks to get all the way across, and a creature can make only one check per round. Failing a check causes 1d8 points of damage.

A large stone box about five feet square sits on the far side.

This is where the iguana-men leave offerings for the superior komodo-men. When the stone slab lid is removed, the box is found to be full of meat, mostly still on the bone. Nothing valuable is immediately visible, but if a character takes a couple rounds to dig through the meat, they will find a silver band still on an arm. The armband magically gifts its wearer with the ability to recall all 187 verses of the Ferwhian national anthem and to sing it with perfect pitch.

Komodo-men (2): Init -1; Atk bite +2 melee (1d8 plus paralysis) or claw +2 melee (1d4); AC 13; HD 2d10; hp 12 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP paralytic bite (DC 12 Fort save or paralyzed for 2 rounds); SV Fort +2, Ref -1, Will +0; AL N.

Area 6 – Lower Guardroom:

This square room is a scene of carnage. Iguana-man corpses cover the floor and the walls are sprayed with their orangish blood. Stairs at the far side of the room lead up, while a faint moan comes from the open doorway to your right.

A great bloody battle was fought here. Dead iguana-men and their shattered weapons litter the stone-tiled floor. Under a dead lizard warrior, Ezaurack's missing hand can be found, with an ornate brass ring still on it. This ring is a minor magical item – the *Eye of Aristobulus*. It has three charges of the spell *color spray* (a wizard or elf can use his normal spell check when casting it; all others cast it with 1d16 + Int modifier) and allows the wearer to change the color of their own eyes at will. The former power is activated when the wearer says the word "color" twice in a row and sacrifices 1 point of Strength, Agility, or Stamina. The latter power is activated simply with a thought. Whoever wears the *Eye of Aristobulus* automatically knows how to activate its powers.

A pool of red human blood is on the east side of the room, smeared on the tiled floor and trailing off into a passageway. A short flight of steps, covered in blood, takes the characters to a small dungeon with six cells. The cells are plain and empty, but on the floor before them is a human man bleeding out onto the floor.

The man is Xallops, the cleric of Harrakwa who brought the adventuring party here. He has a short gray beard and wears a long leather robe, open in the front and decorated with eagle feathers on the shoulders. He moans in pain as he bleeds out from a nasty gut wound. When approached, Xallops clasps a silver amulet around his neck and rasps, "Are you the ones who found the coins? Thank Harrakwa you are here. You must succeed where we failed." He has only moments left to live, but will try to impress upon the characters the importance of stopping Ezaurack from freeing Slagithor. He gives one character the amulet, which is actually a whistle in the shape of a bird with outstretched wings. When blown inside, it is just a normal whistle, but if blown under the open sky, it makes the sound of a screeching hawk. It also has the effect of calling on Harrakwa for divine favor (as per cleric rules, but non-clerics may also use it). If a cleric of Harrakwa uses it, it grants +2 to the spell check for divine aid.

Any number of iguana-man spears and short swords can be



recovered from the battle scene. In addition to Harrakwa's amulet, Xallops has a finely crafted mace that can be found on the floor nearby. His robe is effectively leather armor.

Area 7 – Chamber of the Sky Lizard:

The far wall of this vast chamber is an enormous barred opening, beyond which you see mountains and the setting sun. The light glints off an enormous mound of treasure to the right, and outlines the massive shape of a sleeping dragon on the floor.

Natural light can be seen from the hallway outside the room. A wide semicircular stairway leads down into a huge chamber. The most noticeable thing in the room is the full-grown, dragon-like creature. It is actually a sky lizard, a distant cousin of the dragon with only animal intelligence, but the characters likely have no way of knowing that. In any case, the creature was already slain by Xallops' company. It has burn marks all over, cuts and slashes, and one side of its skull is caved in.

The far "wall" of the room is just giant steel bars, and visible beyond them is a lovely mountain vista. The characters are high on the side of a mountain. They could slip between the bars, but the mountainside drops off steeply immediately outside.

When it finally fell, the sky lizard partly crushed the mechanism that raised and lowered the bars. The ruined remains are in the room's northwest corner. The PCs could salvage 50 feet of iron chain, several metal bars that would serve as clubs, and some miscellaneous gears.

The floor against one wall is covered with bones, meat,

and other such reptile food remains. The floor against the other wall is covered with a pile of treasure, almost as tall as an average human. The remainder of the hoard is coins, gems, jewelry, chalices, coffers – all of them valuable, none of them weapons. One of the characters might find a watch or ring of theirs that mysteriously went missing a couple weeks ago, snagged via Ezaurack's *Window of Worlds* (area 12).

Hiding in the pile of treasure is a young sky lizard who breathes fire at the first person who disturbs the gold. It will remain in the pile of gold, only attacking those who come close enough. If attacked with ranged weapons, it will once again bury itself in the treasure; otherwise it will fight until slain.

Sky Lizard, young: Init +3; Atk bite +2 melee (1d8); AC 14; HD 2d10; hp 12; MV 20' or fly 30'; Act 1d20; SP flame breath (see below); SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will -1; AL N.

Flame breath: Every other round, the young sky lizard can breathe a spray of flame at attackers in a cone 10' long and 10' wide (up to four characters in front of it). The fire does 1d10 damage, but a DC 13 Reflex save allows characters to avoid it.

Area 8 – Hall of Veneration:

Once this was a grandiose room, featuring a gilded throne to your right and three enormous stained glass windows ahead. But the hall looks as if a bladed wind swept through here, shattering one window and destroying most of the room's ornamentation.

This throne room, 50' x 50', is where Ezaurack fed his ego

with the worship of his reptile followers and the occasional dragon-minded visitor. The outside wall had three stained glass windows. The first is intact and depicts Veslaumn, the Dragon Prince, and his allies being exiled from their home plane. A dozen dragons are falling through the sky, mystical forces burning the Draconic rune for “exile” on their foreheads. The second has been shattered from the outside, and shards of colored glass cover the floor of the throne room (this is where Xallops’ adventurers made their entrance). The third window shows the Dragon Prince sitting atop a mountain, his tail wrapped all the way around it, various humanoids at the base of the mountain kneeling to him, and dragons flying in “V” formations in the sky behind him.

The rest of the room is a mess of shattered wooden benches, torn tapestries, and miscellaneous vandalism. When the adventurers arrived, Ezaurack was in area 6, so they quickly smashed everything they could reach before moving on. If they had stayed to investigate the throne, they might have found a secret panel on the right side of the base. There are two unusual notches at the top of this panel, and if both notches are pressed simultaneously, a latch opens to reveal a square compartment. Nestled inside the velvet lining of the hidden compartment is a hefty ruby-colored unhatched egg.

Area 9 – Kitchen:

Although it doesn’t have any modern appliances, this room is easily recognizable as a kitchen. A fireplace dominates the far wall, and a large butcher block fills the center of the room. An assortment of pots and pans hang from the ceiling above the butcher block. Everything in the room is clean and in its proper place, except for a large ceramic bowl sitting on the butcher block and a wooden spoon next to it.

Ezaurack is fond of fine food, but his tastes have changed dramatically as his patron taint makes him more reptilian. Pantries and cupboards are full of ingredients, some edible and appealing to humans, and some not: there are containers of live crickets, spiders, mice, and other small creatures. The bowl on the table is a mixture of brown rice and live grubs. Many of the utensils and cooking knives in the room can be used as improvised weapons (1d4 damage each, automatically destroyed on a fumble).

Ezaurack’s cook is a short chameleon-man who blends into the surroundings as the characters open the door. It hides behind the butcher block and attacks with a meat cleaver if someone approaches. It isn’t enthusiastic about combat and will try to escape as quickly as possible. If it manages to get out of sight of the characters, it will attempt to hide and ambush them again.

The cook’s chameleon powers make it an excellent assassin. It has the ability to sneak silently and backstab as a thief at +5 each, so it gets +5 on its first attack and scores an automatic critical (1d6 on Table II) if it hits.

Chameleon-man Cook: Init +1; Atk cleaver melee (1d4); AC 11; HD 1d10; hp 5; MV 30’; Act 1d20; SP blending (sneak silently +5, backstab +5); SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +0; AL N.

Area 10 – Ezaurack’s Study:

This room is part library, part chemistry lab, and definitely decorated by someone who loves lizards. Shelves cover the walls from floor to ceiling, full of books, vials, and taxidermied reptiles of numerous species. One shelf holds a huge terrarium where dozens of small lizards run among the plants. A table of white marble occupies the center of the room. Atop the table sit dozens of empty glass flasks, tubes, and vials. Everything in the room is impeccably clean and organized.

A typical-looking wizard’s study, though very tidy. Bookshelves full of books, vials, spell components, and mystical-looking knickknacks. Several things of interest can be found here:

- Books of history, magic, and mythology can be used to piece together the Dragon Prince’s identity and background. There are a couple books of spells which can be useful for a character who wishes to become a wizard later. There is an entire shelf devoted to books on the “multiverse” and ways to travel between worlds. The books are organized by subject, and very neatly placed on the shelves.
- Several shelves are covered in vials of various colors and shapes. Most of the vials contain inert liquids used in Ezaurack’s alchemy. Some are pungent, some are sweet, some are odorless and tasteless, but they all have no noticeable effect on their own. Properly mixed by a knowledgeable alchemist, they could perhaps produce magical effects, but that ability is currently beyond the characters. Each vial is labeled with an alchemical rune denoting its contents, and the runes can be deciphered if the correct book can be found on Ezaurack’s shelf.
- There are five tiny ceramic jars of a strong acid. If a jar of acid is poured or splashed on something, the target takes 1d5 damage the first round after coming in contact with the acid, 1d4 damage the second round, and 1d3 damage the third round. After that, the acid still stings, but has lost enough potency that it no longer causes damage.
- The most noticeable shelf holds a terrarium with a dozen brightly colored lizards living inside. The lizards secrete a poisonous liquid from under their scales, and if one is touched the character must make a DC 12 Fort save every minute. The character loses 1d3 points of Stamina for each failed save. The poison affects the character until they make a successful save, or until they reach 0 Stamina and die. 1 point of the Stamina loss per d3 suffered is permanent, but the rest can be healed back normally. An antidote for this poison can be found in area 2.

Area 11 – Ezaurack’s Chamber

This room is dominated by an elegant canopied bed with carved wooden posts. The floor is covered with fine rugs, and the walls with beautiful tapestries. All the bedding has been torn off the bed, and several tapestries removed from the walls. They have

been piled in one corner of the room in a nest-like arrangement. A small book sits on a table next to the bed.

Ezaurack has found the bed becoming more uncomfortable as Veslaumn makes him more reptilian, so he fashioned a place to sleep that is more to his liking. The book is written in Ezaurack's own hand, and it tells the story of Veslaumn's war with Harrakwa from a very biased point of view, using language that is almost religious in its veneration of dragons.

Hidden under the bed is a painting. It is clearly a portrait of Ezaurack: the cream-colored robe and rainbow scaled armor on his shoulders are a dead giveaway. But it is Ezaurack before he started following Veslaumn...one hundred percent human.

Area 12 – The Window of Worlds:

A pale blue light spills into the hallway as you open the door. The light emanates from a marble basin about 6 feet in diameter in the center of the room. An empty chair sits next to the basin. The rest of the room contains glass display cases and shelves filled with artifacts from across time and space.

The basin is the *Window of Worlds*, which Ezaurack created with Veslaumn's guidance. The basin does not contain any sort of liquid, but rather two-dimensional images of other planes of existence. When the characters look in the basin, the current scene is of one of the character's homes. The side of the basin next to the chair has a panel with five buttons on it, arranged in a diamond shape with one in the middle. The middle button changes which world the *Window* sees. The buttons on the right and left scroll through different places on that world. If the button on the bottom is pressed, the light in the room changes to pale green, and items can be passed from this world to the scene in the window. Any item of fist size or smaller that is dropped into the basin when the light is green will appear in the scene. This is how Xallops got the enchanted coins to the characters. If the top button is pressed, the light turns pale orange and items from within the scene can be brought to this world through sheer force of will. A DC 18 Personality check is required to bring any handheld item through. Larger objects are impossible to bring through.

The cases and shelves are full of things that Ezaurack has brought through from other worlds: a gold trophy engraved with the words "The Blighters – Xcrawl Champions 4752"; a stack of magazines titled "Steam Music Monthly"; the skull of what might be a gorilla or Neanderthal; jewelry from a culture that none of the characters recognize; a wooden stick carved and painted to look like a colorful snake; a baseball autographed by Reggie Jackson. Many of the things on display are of interest, but few are of immediate use or value. There are a few futuristic weapons of various designs, but no ammunition.

Let the characters play with the basin and admire the artifacts for a while, but don't let them forget they are on an erupting volcano and time is pressing.

Area 13 – The Inferno of Slagithor:

A glowing rune hangs in the air in front of this door. Anyone who opens the door without saying the Dragon Prince's name sets off the ward. An electrical bolt shoots through the character, causing 1d10 points of damage. A DC 14 Reflex save will avoid the damage. The rune is for "lightning," and can be identified with one of the books in area 10. Once the ward is triggered, it vanishes and anyone can go through the door safely.

The door opens onto a balcony of heavy stone slabs that juts out over the inside of the volcano's crater. At the far end, about 100 feet away, the one-handed wizard is embroiled in a ritual, chanting mumbo-jumbo while waving his one good hand around. A small reptilian assistant holds open a large book in front of him. Harsh volcanic smoke rises all around, burning your lungs, and below the balcony glowing lava churns and spits.

Six winged draco-men with curved swords glide down from their posts above the doorway to keep the characters busy while Ezaurack completes the ritual. If the players have not defeated Ezaurack in two rounds (unlikely), he chortles with victory. The lava bubbles and explodes, shaking the whole mountain, and a dragon made of black rock shoots up from the volcano and lands on the balcony. Lava drips from its horns and wings. A rune is carved into its stone forehead. This is Slagithor, the Keeper of the Key. He is not at full strength due to his long captivity, but he is still more than a match for the characters.

At some point the players will probably think to blow the bird whistle they got from Xallops (see area 6). When this happens, the sky becomes blotted with birds of all colors and sizes, which land on every available perch above the battle zone. Through the intervention of Harrakwa, the characters are infused with some of the power and memory of the adventurers who came here to defeat Ezaurack. Each character (up to 14) temporarily gains the following: +12 hit points, +3 AC, +2 to all saves, and +3 to attack. Additionally, these characters gain abilities and memories of the absent adventurers. Divide the 14 Hero Memories (see opposite page) more or less evenly – and preferably randomly – amongst the characters. If a character dies during the battle, randomly redistribute their Hero Memories to characters that are still alive. In other words, no matter how many characters there are, all the Hero Memories remain in play. If there are more characters than there are Hero Memories, extra characters do not get the memories *OR* the bonuses to hit points, armor class, etc. They're on their own.

Characters who gain the ability to cast wizard or elf spells will not lose the spells no matter how poorly they roll, but they can still fail, misfire, and gain corruption. Characters who gain cleric abilities earn disapproval as normal. Sadly, such characters do not have the knowledge of how spell-burn and sacrifice work.

If the characters did not get the whistle from Xallops, or choose not to blow it, the fight will probably be very short.

Draco-man (6): Init -1; Atk falchion +1 melee (1d8) or claw +0 melee (1d4); AC 12; HD 1d10; hp 5 each; MV 30' or fly 40'; Act 1d20; SP gliding; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +0; AL N.

Draco-men have membranes under their arms that allow them to glide. Their primary goal is to prevent the heroes from interrupting the ritual before it is done and their first targets will be characters who move toward Ezaurack or try to disrupt the ritual with ranged weapons. Their first attack will be gliding down, trying to sweep adventurers off the edge into the lava, then gliding back up with the volcano's rising hot air.

Iguana-man Assistant: Init -1; Atk claw +0 melee (1d4); AC 12; HD 1d6; hp 3; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +0; AL N.

The assistant will stand his ground and hold the book until the ritual is completed, but after that he will do everything possible to avoid combat.

Ezaurack: Init +2; Atk magic bolt +3 ranged (1d8); AC 14; HD 6d6; hp 30 (currently 13); MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +4; AL L.

Slagithor, the Keeper of the Key, average-sized old dragon: Init +8; Atk 2 claws +5 melee (1d8), bite +5 melee (1d12), tail slap +5 (1d20) and spell; AC 18; HD 12d10; hp 60; MV 50'; Act 4d20+1d20(spell); SP spell, breath weapon, damage reduction, immune to fire, locate object, volcanic portal (see below for all); SV Fort +8, Ref +8, Will +8; AL L.

Level 1 Spell: *Ekim's mystical mask* (+2 spell check).

Breath Weapon (1/day): Volcanic ash in a 1d3×10' radius cloud aimed up to 60' away; 1d6 heat damage; obscures vision for 1d6 rounds as a smoke weapon.

Damage reduction: Slagithor's stony hide reduces the damage of all blows against it by 1 point.

Locate Object: Slagithor can detect the Onus Key from any distance on the same plane.

Volcanic Portal: By diving into a volcano, Slagithor can teleport to any other volcano on this plane.

Slagithor will battle the players until he reaches 20 hit points. His mission to recover the Onus Key is more important than killing some pesky adventurers. At that point he will play dead, falling to the floor of the balcony (and crushing some heroes if he can manage it) and then rolling off into the volcano. He then escapes using his *volcanic portal* ability.

AFTER THE BATTLE



f the heroes defeat Ezaurack and Slagithor, the birds perched around the volcano form a swirling avian vortex around them. Moments later, the birds disperse and the heroes find themselves standing in a grassy field at the base of a mountain range. The ground shakes and in the mountains they see a plume of ash and lava spew into the sky. Ezaurack's lair is no more.

Though the additional abilities granted by the Hero Memories quickly fade, the memories themselves stay with the

characters the rest of their lives. Harrakwa knows the characters will be lost in this new world, so he grants them memories of other fallen heroes to help them. Each surviving character can roll a second occupation from the table in the DCC RPG rulebook to represent memories of a life that is not theirs. This may result in a human character having memories of being an elf, dwarf, or halfling. If you want to allow such a character to choose a racial class, it could provide some very interesting role playing opportunities.

Not far from the characters' drop point lies Dorcaster, the town Xallops inhabited. His temple is now untended, and the townsfolk will have a lot of questions for the heroes (particularly if any of them have Xallops' robe or bird amulet). Xallops was well-loved there, but if the characters are honest and heroic they can win the town's trust. If the heroes recovered any gold from Ezaurack's sky lizard, they could begin their adventuring careers already wealthy. Use your best judgment there.

HERO MEMORIES

1: *The wind whistles around your helmeted head as your feathered steed plummets towards the giant at the edge of Hermit's Rift. Your lance is aimed right at the giant's breastplate, but can it penetrate the armor, even at this speed? At the last second you change tactics, spearing your foe through the knee. With a roar, he topples into the Rift, and thus is slain Kruychek Tusk, lieutenant of the Crimson Wheel.*

Your character gains a 1d6 deed die for use with Mighty Deeds of Arms (as a level 4 warrior).

2: *Your once-silvered armor is now muddy and battered. Your muscles scream with exhaustion every time you move. This dark-skinned foe is your equal. You've been clashing with this mysterious warrior for what seems like hours, but you can't let your guard down. Suddenly, the tip of her blade drops an almost imperceptible amount. An opening...or a trap? Only one way to find out! Your longsword darts out in a quick thrust and catches her in the throat! Just like that, the battle is over. Your foe gurgles, 'May Yhorè bless you,' as her life fades away. Odd.*

Your character gains a 1d20 crit die on Crit Table IV, and a 19-20 crit range (as a level 4 warrior).

3: *You've only got once chance at this, so you'll have to be quiet and quick. You creep up behind the fat man – the LYING BASTARD! – and make eye contact with the beautiful Fenna over his shoulder. She winks at you as she distracts him with flirty conversation. With a practiced movement you plunge your dagger into the merchant's kidney, and the marketplace erupts into chaos.*

Your character gains backstab +7, sneak silently +7, and a 1d16 crit die on Crit Table II (as a level 4 lawful thief).

4: *You don't want your soul eaten, so you run. You scurry across the clay shingles of the rooftop with the Dusk Orb clutched under one arm. The Sunless Council's nether-cat is close behind you, threatening to disembowel you with claws of solidified night. Without warning, you slip! You slide down the steeply canted*

roof, and fall several storeys...into a wagon filled with soft animal pelts. That's lucky!

Your character gains a 1d6 Luck die (as a level 4 thief).

5: The well-dressed trader looks around in disbelief, surprised to find that the fallen statue of Loffo Mirthgirdle hasn't crushed him. His eyes suddenly fix on you. 'A halfling, of course!' he chortles, hugging you. 'You're my good luck charm, lassie! Why don't you travel the realm with me and keep me safe? A life of wealth and adventure?' Yes indeed, you think. Bonderbrook is far too small a town to contain you much longer.

Your character gains the Good Luck Charm ability (as a halfling).

6: The advance is slow and methodical. You push the scrabbling rat-kin to the far end of the cavern with your shield in one hand, thrusting at them with your stout blade in the other. In close formation on both sides of you, your cousins do the same. Sor-row hangs heavy in your heart. Muddolin grins through his wild beard as you look at him. 'Come lad, what's wrong? This is usually your favorite holiday!'

Your character gains the Sword and Board ability and a 1d4 deed die (as a level 2 dwarf).

7: 'Daughter, you must be calm,' your mother says to you soothingly. So radiant she is, even in her grief. 'Your father was older than the Gathering Tree, and he has passed peacefully.' But you can feel the tension at the ceremony, and you sense the slightest sting of cold iron emanating from your father's open casket. Your mother is lying to you.

Your character gains infravision (60'), immunity to magical sleep and paralysis, and heightened senses (as an elf).

8: You chuckle as the dust clears. 'I told you that column wasn't sturdy,' you say. You laugh again as your human companion clumsily gets to his feet, his heavy silver armor looking so out of place in the moldy Tomb of Erererer. But as you suspected, the fallen stonework reveals a hidden passageway. A slight breeze comes into the chamber from the newly revealed egress, and you nearly gag on the overpowering scent of...gold. LOTS OF GOLD.

Your character gains Underground Skills +2 and the ability to smell gems and gold (as a level 2 dwarf).

9: 'Help him,' the birds chirp at you in their sparrowy way. 'If Harrakwa decides he is to be helped, then he shall be helped,' you reply as you kneel over the moaning man in the underbrush. He is a city man, but not an average one by the look of his leather garb and sheathed fighting knives. A black arrow with green fletching sticks from his gut. With a twist, you yank the arrow out, and mutter a healing prayer. You feel Harrakwa's power flow through you into the man. He will live...but who is he and where did that arrow come from?

Your character gains the ability to lay on hands with a +4 spell check (as a level 4 neutral cleric).

10: You stand in The Catechism Nest high in the mountains, still breathless and aching from your climb. The Feathered Ava-



tar nods at your answer to its final question, and your heart fills with pride. None have had this honor in uncounted generations! The Feathered Avatar motions to a large egg, which you grasp in both hands. As your fingers crack open the shell, the divine might of the Sky floods your soul.

Your character can cast blessing with a +4 spell check (as a level 4 cleric).

11: You mutter a prayer to Harrakwa as the bandits approach the entrance to your temple, and a sparrow flies from the roof of the church to land on your shoulder. Behind you in the nave, the citizens of Dorcaster cower. You stand boldly in the doorway between the two groups. 'Come now, friends,' you say to the bandits, 'there is no need for violence. Walk away and I will not harm you.' After a tense moment, the bandit leader nods. 'We'll go elsewhere for now.'

Your character can cast holy sanctuary with a +4 spell check (as a level 4 cleric).

12: You hesitate before you utter the final syllable of the spell. 'There is no coming back from this, Aranta,' whispers the dying oracle. 'The King of Elfland knows your heart now, as does everyone in the Nornwood.' So be it, then, you think, and you speak the last word. The Pool of Clarity freezes solid. Blinding, agonizing cold sears the inside of your skull, and your eyes literally turn to ice.

Your character can cast chill touch with a +4 spell check (as a level 4 elf).

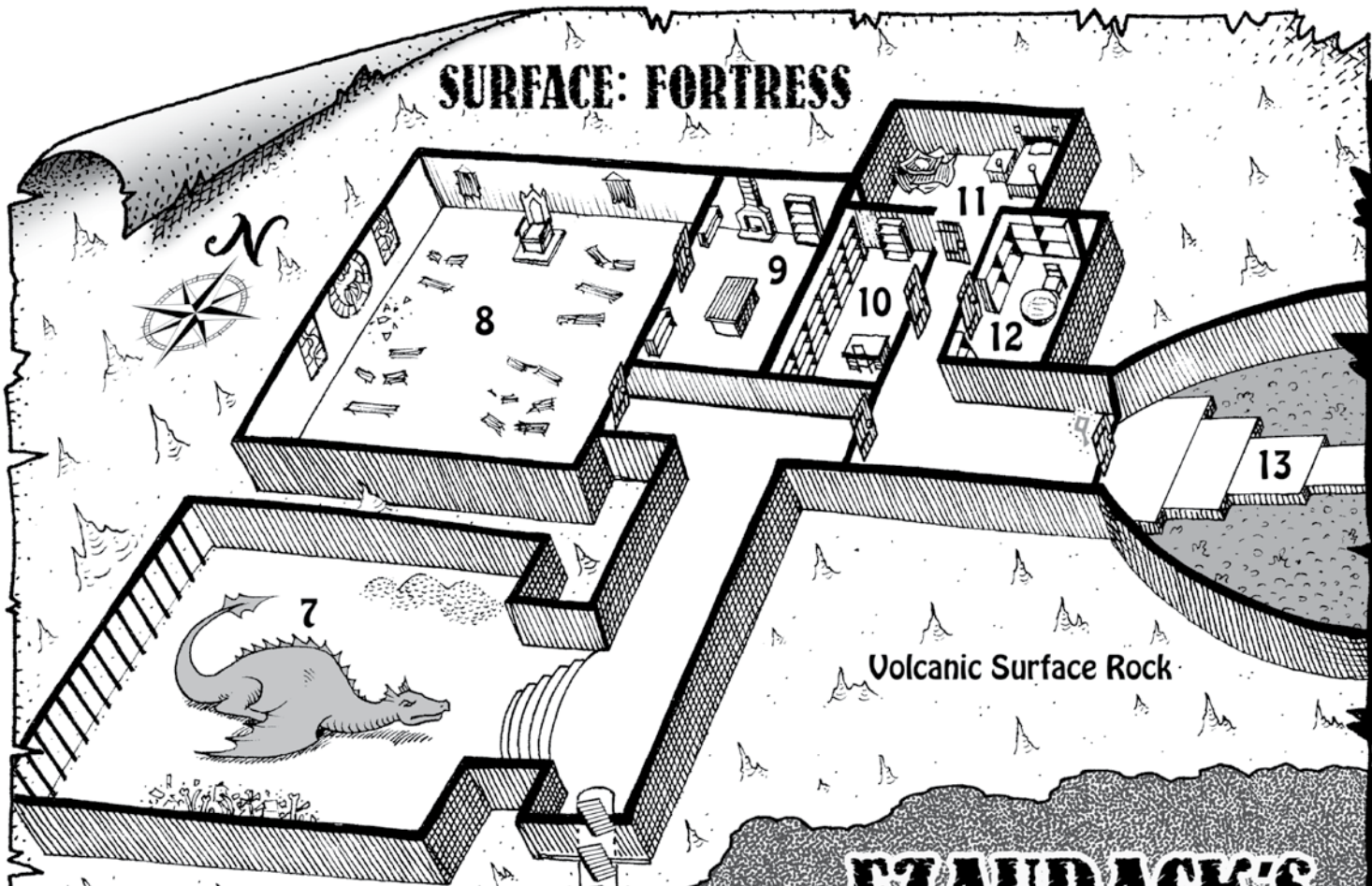
13: The skeletons just keep coming. No matter how many brittle skulls you shatter with your staff, there are more. Lailan wheezes, her elderly frame leaning on you for support. Her magic is spent. You have to remember what she taught you if you're to get out of this alive. Focus. Remember the words. Twist your fingers into the unnatural positions. Draw the energy, and release! You are startled as four ghostly arrows fly from your fingertips and four skeletons are blown apart! Lailan falls to the ground beside you with a smile of pride on her lips and a skeleton's rusty blade in her chest.

Your character gains the ability to cast magic missile with a +4 spell check (as a level 4 wizard).

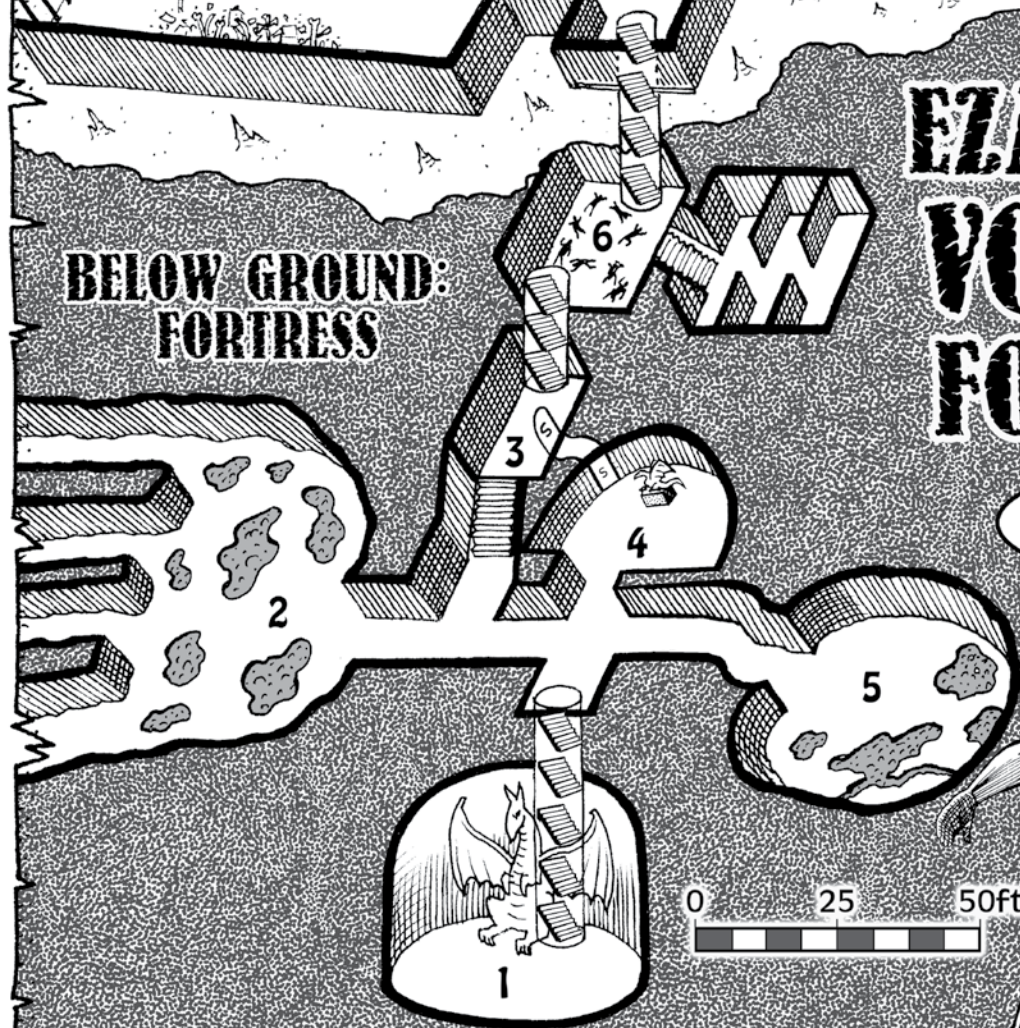
14: The Halfling stares at you with a mischievous smirk on her lips as the whole tavern looks on. It would not do for a powerful wizard such as yourself to show uncertainty, but her bravado is unnerving. She suddenly leaps out of her chair, hurling something in your direction. With impressive alacrity (if you do say so yourself) you summon a shield of glowing golden energy to deflect the attack. A half-eaten loaf of bread bounces off the magic barrier, and the tension is defused by the tavern's laughter.

Your character gains the ability to cast magic shield with a +4 spell check (as a level 4 wizard).

SURFACE: FORTRESS



BELOW GROUND: FORTRESS



EZAURACK'S VOLCANO FORTRESS

FAR OUT MAN!



55 (rough)

RAT-SNAKE

A LANKHMAR WAGERING GAME WITH DICE

by Michael Curtis • Edited by Jen Brinkman • Art by Doug Kovacs

But the Mouser had made his throw, and the odd dice of Lankhmar had stopped with the matching symbols of the eel and the serpent uppermost, and he was raking in triangular golden coins.

– “The Bleak Shore” by Fritz Leiber



Rat-Snake originated in Lankhmar, but quickly spread to gambling dens, barracks, and alleys throughout Nehwon. It requires two six-sided dice to play. Serious Rat-Snake players and casinos use specialized dice inscribed with the image of a rat on the one-pip face and a snake on the six-pip face, but it can be played with standard gambling dice simply by treating a “1” as a rat and a “6” as a snake. In some gambling dens, dice from an even older form of this game are used. These scavenged dice feature the image of an eel in place of a snake, but are treated as serpents when used in Rat-Snake.

Rat-Snake is played with two or more players, called a “ring,” who take turns throwing two dice. In gambling dens, the players compete against a house who covers the wagering. In less formal games, such as street corners or in barracks, the other player(s) act as the house, paying the thrower’s winnings from their own pockets and collecting his losses, splitting the payments and collections equally among themselves.

PLAYING RAT-SNAKE

Step One: The current player (known as the “thrower”) antes six coins. These coins are typically gold rilks that represent his store of grain and called the “silo,” but other denominations may be wagered if the house and/or other players agree.

Step Two: The thrower rolls two dice. There are six possible results: **two rats** (or two one-pip faces, also called “rat’s eyes”); **two snakes** (or two six-pip faces, also called a “twist”); a **rat on one die** and a **number of pips ranging from two to five on the other**; a **snake on one die** and a **number of pips ranging from two to five on the other**; a **rat on one die** and a **snake on the other**; or **both dice showing pip faces totaling between four and ten**.

Step Three: The roll determines the fate of the thrower.



- If the result was **two rats** or “rat’s eyes”, the thrower loses his entire silo of coins and play passes to his right. The former thrower can either leave the ring or remain, making side bets and awaiting the dice to come his way again.
- If the result was **two snakes** or a “twist”, the thrower wins a number of coins equal to the current stakes in his silo. He may then either pass the dice to his right or continue to play.



a "6". Rats and snakes also do not cancel each other out as they do when otherwise rolled in the game.

Step Four: Play continues with the current thrower until he is unable to meet the ante of six coins or decides to bow out when play allows. The next player then becomes the current thrower and the process begins anew.

SIDE BETS

Players not currently throwing can place side bets against the house or one another, wagering on the result of the thrower's roll. These other players wager the thrower will either "rat out," "twist a win," "guard the grain," "fill the silo," "lose his grain," or "check the silo." If the thrower rolls two rats, he "rats out" and the house pays 3:1 odds.

If the thrower rolls two snakes, he "twists a win" and the house pays 3:1 odds.

If the thrower rolls a rat and a number of pips, he "loses his grain" and the house pays 2:1 odds. If the thrower rolls a snake and number of pips, he "fills the silo" and the house pays 2:1 odds. If the thrower rolls a snake and rat, he "guards the grain" and the house pays 3:1 odds.

If the thrower rolls pips on both dice, he "checks the silo." This result pays nothing, and requires the side-betting player to double down on his bet and wager whether the check result will be either a "match," "lose," or "gain." If he correctly predicts the result of the check as a "match" (meaning the second roll equals the first), the house pays 4:1 odds. If the player correctly predicts the check as a "lose" (the roll is less than the first throw) or a "gain" (higher than the initial roll), the house pays 2:1 odds.

If there is no house, non-throwing players can still make side bets, but the losers' wagers are won by whichever non-throwing player(s) correctly predicted the thrower's outcome.

Special thanks to: The Dungeon Games Sunday Crew (Bob Brinkman, Jen Brinkman, Jim DeVasto, William Ferry, Kirk Kirkpatrick, and Bill Porter) for their rigorous and enthusiastic playtesting of Rat-Snake. May you always roll a twist with a full silo!



- If the result was **one rat with a number of pips on the second die**, the thrower loses a number of coins equal to the number of pips on the second die from his silo. If this reduces his silo of coins to zero, he is out and play passes to his right. If the thrower has coins remaining in his silo, he can increase his ante back up to six coins and continue to play, or bow out with his remaining stakes.
- If the result was **a snake with a number of pips on the second die**, the thrower gains a number of coins to his silo equal to the number of pips. He can then either take his winnings and pass the dice or continue to play. If the result was **a snake on one die and a rat on the other**, the thrower neither gains nor loses any coins and may continue to play or bow out. This roll symbolizes the snake eating the rat before it could devour the silo's grain.
- If the result was **two dice with pips on both faces**, the thrower must immediately roll again. This is called "checking the silo." The result of this second throw or "check" determines the thrower's fortune.
 - If the result of the check is equal to the number of pips on the first roll, the thrower's silo remains the same and he can either bow out and pass the dice or throw again, starting a new round.
 - If the result of the check is greater than the number of pips on the first roll, he wins a number of coins equal to the result of the initial throw. For example, the Gray Mouser rolls a 3 and a 5 on his first throw, resulting in a total of 8. He must check the silo and rolls again, throwing a 4 and a 5 for a result of 9. He wins eight coins, an amount equal to his first throw, adding the coins to his silo. He can either take his winnings and leave the ring or throw again, starting a new round.
 - If the result is less than the thrower's initial roll, the player loses a number of coins equal to the first throw (not to exceed his silo). If his silo is reduced to zero, he is out. Otherwise, the thrower can either continue to play (increasing his stakes back to six if the loss reduced his silo to less than that amount) or bow out, passing the dice to the right.
- NOTE: When "checking the silo", a roll of a rat is treated as a "1" while a roll of a snake is considered

THE HAND OF ST. HEVESKIN

by Michael Curtis • Edited by Jen Brinkman • Art by Doug Kovacs



Heveskin was a devout priest of the Rat God sent into the Eastern deserts a century ago to spread the Doctrine of Vermin to the lavish cities of the King of Kings. He met his demise there, martyred in the service of his deity, but his loyal followers made off with Heveskin's right hand before the body was burned as an offering to the strange Eastern Gods. The Temple of the Rat elevated Heveskin to sainthood for his efforts and horrible demise. It's said that his hand is imbued with the Rat God's power and the main temple in Ilthmar is searching for this relic in the Eastern Lands, hoping to recover it.

The Hand is a mummified hand with its wrist wrapped in frayed brown silk. A bronze cuff adorned with red-orange topazes encircles the Hand's wrist stump (300 gold rilk value). When its powers are unused, the Hand's fingers are splayed, but curl into the palm when one or more effects have manifested.

Anyone bearing the Hand of St. Heveskin can call upon its power by thrusting the severed appendage forward and speaking the saint's name (which is also inscribed on the wrist cuff), causing one of five divinely inspired phenomenon to manifest. Each time the Hand is used, one finger of the appendage folds back until all five are clenched into a fist. The Hand's power renews with the rising of the moon and the fingers become splayed once more, allowing its power to be used up to five more times that day.

If the Hand's bearer uses the relic and he is not a follower of the Rat God, a d6 is rolled and the table below determines the result. When the Hand is employed by one who venerates the Rat, the user chooses which effect occurs but also rolls 1d6; on a roll of a "1," the Hand's effect occurs at double strength.

Rat-Snake dice should be rolled when using the Hand of St. Heveskin whenever possible. "Rat" results on these dice make it clear when the Rat God favors his adherents and when it punishes those audacious enough to steal a portion of his divine essence.

d6	Effect
1	If the user is not an adherent of the Rat God, the deity is incensed at the bearer's audacity and inflicts 2d6 damage on the user. All "1"s (or rats) on the damage dice are rerolled, keeping the second result. If the user is a follower or agent of the Rat God, the chosen effect manifests at double power (save DCs are unaffected).
2	A ghostly rat head the size of a large man appears within 30' of the user. The head snaps at a single target (bite +5 melee, 3d6 damage). The target also must make a DC 15 Fort save or suffer an additional 1d6 damage from disease.
3	1d3 rat swarms appear at the user's position and attack his enemies. The swarms remain until dispersed or 2d6 rounds elapse.
4	The Hand instantly decays up to 1d6×100 pounds of grain, corn, rice or similar stored crops within 60', rotting the foodstuffs into a rancid mass. Rat God followers reroll "1" results when determining the amount of stored food affected, keeping the second roll.
5	The Hand <i>lays on hands</i> as a DCC RPG cleric with +1d6 to its spell check (Rat God worshipers reroll if the result is a "1") using a d20 action die. The relic is considered chaotic for alignment purposes. If the spell check result is a natural 1, the user suffers 2d6 damage.
6	Gray beams streak from one finger, striking 1d6 targets within 90'. Each target must make a DC 12 Fort save or suffer 3d6 damage. Rat worshippers can reroll "1"s both when determining the number of targets and damage suffered, keeping the second result.

FAFH RD AND GRAY MOUSER STORIES, BY PUBLICATION DATE



Publisher's Note: As you may know, Goodman Games has a license from the estate of Fritz Leiber to release Lankhmar products. As we work towards our final release date, it has come to our attention that some fans may wish to read (or re-read) the seminal Fahrd and Gray Mouser stories. What better way to prepare yourself for the new game? However,

modern publishers over the years have collected the works in different orders. The reading experience is certainly better if the stories are read in the order of their *original* publication. Here then is that list. The works in **bold** are the most important stories - if you're going to read any, read these. We suggest you dive in to the works of Fritz Leiber in this order - and enjoy!

Short Stories, Novellas, and Novels

The Jewels in the Forest (1939, as "Two Sought Adventure")

The Bleak Shore (1940)

The Howling Tower (1941)

The Sunken Land (1942)

Thieves' House (1943)

Gray Mouser: 1 (1944)¹

Gray Mouser: 2 (1944)¹

Adept's Gambit (1947)²

Claws from the Night (1951, as "Dark Vengeance")

The Seven Black Priests (1953)

Induction (1957)

Lean Times in Lankhmar (1959)

When the Sea-King's Away (1960)

Scylla's Daughter (1961)³

The Unholy Grail (1962)

Bazaar of the Bizarre (1963)

The Cloud of Hate (1963)

The Lords of Quarmall (1964)⁴

Stardock (1965)

The Swords of Lankhmar (1968)

Their Mistress, the Sea (1968)

The Wrong Branch (1968)

In the Witch's Tent (1968)

The Two Best Thieves in Lankhmar (1968)

The Circle Curse (1970)

The Snow Women (1970)

Ill Met in Lankhmar (1970)

The Price of Pain-Ease (1970)

The Sadness of the Executioner (1973)

Trapped in the Shadowland (1973)

The Bait (1973)

Beauty and the Beasts (1974)

Under the Thumbs of the Gods (1975)

Trapped in the Sea of Stars (1975)

The Frost Monstreme (1976)

Rime Isle (1977)

Sea Magic (1977)

The Mer She (1978)

The Childhood and Youth of the Gray Mouser (1978)⁵

The Curse of the Smalls and the Stars (1983)

Slack Lankhmar Afternoon Featuring Hisvet (1988)⁶

The Mouser Goes Below (1988)⁶

"The Tale of the Grain Ships": A Fragment (1997)

Swords Against the Shadowland (1998)⁷

¹ "Gray Mouser: 1" and "Gray Mouser: 2" are each short poems. They can be found in the *Ill Met in Lankhmar* (White Wolf Publishing 1995)

² "Adept's Gambit" was actually the first F/GM story ever written (1936), but was rejected by *Weird Tales* and didn't see print until 1947.

³ Began as "Tale of the Grain Ships" in 1936, but the story became the prototype for "Scylla's Daughter" and later *The Swords of Lankhmar*.

⁴ Harry Otto Fischer wrote the first 10k words of "The Lords of Quarmall" in 1936, but it was Leiber who finished the tale and saw it published in 1964.

⁵ "The Childhood and Youth of the Gray Mouser" was written by Leiber's long-time friend and co-creator of Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser, Harry Otto Fischer. It was published in *The Dragon* #18

⁶ These two stories were combined into one when published in *The Knight and Knave of Swords* (1988)

⁷ *Swords Against the Shadowlands* was written by Robin Wayne Bailey and was authorized by Leiber.





THE WAY OF THE DRAGON

The Gen Con 2015 Spell Duel Tourney Module

By Harley Stroh • Art by Doug Kovacs, Peter Mullen, and Stefan Poag • Handout design by Matthias Weeks



Gen Con 2015. Scores of fell wizards and soul-haunted warlocks, sorcerers and witches descended into the wine-dark depths to do battle for the pleasure of Father Dagon. Wizard flesh was sacrificed to power mighty rituals, reality was rent asunder, and more than one soul was lost to the phlogiston.

Father Dagon was pleased.

One year hence. Long-sunken Y'ha-nthlei slouches towards the sun-lit realms. Cyclopean columns break the frothing waves, and the stink of sea-bottom hangs in the darkening skies.

Once more practitioners of the dark arts turn their steps towards the rocky shores, in hopes of winning the cold, clammy imprimatur of Father Dagon. Many shall compete, some will rise, but in the end only one will stand as Master.

BASICS

Spell dueling tournaments pit casters against one another in single combat. Each player is presented with a pre-generated character and a grimoire. Victors face off against new opponents and at the end of the tournament, the character with the most wins is hailed the champion.

In Gen Con 2015, there were well over one hundred characters vying for the champion belt. At the end of the four days there were four contenders with the same number of wins. These casters paired off, with the victors facing each other in a final epic clash of wills and fell sorcery.

Though conceived as an event for experienced players, the Gen Con tournament drew a number of players that were new to DCC RPG. At Gen Con we were fortunate enough to have the Sons of Dagon, Eric Nice and Rick Hull, on hand to orient new players. Judges should anticipate the need to acquaint players with the general DCC spellcasting mechanics, though after a few rounds returning players can aid in teaching new players.

Due to the unexpected influx of new players, it is recommended that the pregens are limited to 4th level, avoiding the second action die. (Though, at the time of this writing,

the notion of a 10th-level spell duel tournament sounds both alluring and terrifying.)

DAGON SPELL DUELS

Magic behaves strangely in the Realm of Dagon – or more accurately, magic behaves strangely at the whims of Father Dagon.

The spell duels are resolved by working through the pairs of duelists. One pair plays out a single round, and then the next pair plays a round, and so on. When a caster is slain, enchanted, or is otherwise unable to continue, a new player with a new character sits down to take the open spot. At Gen Con we had three pairs of casters playing simultaneously, but a smaller, equally-riveting tournament could be run with two or just a single pair of dueling casters.

SEQUENCE

1. Both casters roll Initiative (1d20 + Agility modifier). Winner declares a spell or makes a physical attack on the opposing caster. Note: Initiative is rolled anew every round.
2. If the opposing caster has an appropriate spell (see Counterspell Families, below), he may counter. Otherwise, the opposing caster may “take the hit,” and if he survives, take his own action.
3. If countering: Both sides secretly declare any Luck burns or spellburns. See Player Handout A.
4. Both sides make their spell checks and then reveal their burns.
5. Compare spell checks results on Table I; the caster with the higher spell check rolls the indicated die on Table II: Counterspell Power; and the judge adjudicates the results. In case of a tie, the judge rolls 1d7 on Table III: Wrath of Dagon.
6. Continue round with next pair of spellcasters. Repeat until all the pairs have played their round and then begin again with new opponents as necessary.

CHANGES FROM TRADITIONAL SPELL DUELS

Wizards and sorcerers familiar with traditional spell duels should review the following.

- Momentum is not used or tracked.
- Both the attacker and the defender use the same counterspell table (replacing Table 4-6 in the core book).
- Mercurial magic is not used.
- All burns must be recorded (in secret) prior to the initial spell check.
- Phlogiston disturbance is replaced by the Wrath of Dagon table.
- Lost spells, burned Luck, and spellburned attributes are not regained between rounds or duels. Thus, even the luckiest and cagiest of casters will only survive for so long before being felled by a new challenger (and ensuring that no one player can dominate the table for long).

DAGON SPELL DUEL MATRIX

The original spell duel matrices favored the caster with the higher initiative, to the detriment of a defending caster with a superior spell check. Hearing the furor in the cosmos, Dagon has leveled the field. The caster with initiative still gets to pick the spell (thereby determining the “tenor” of the duel), but secondary results are identical, whether the caster is the attacker or the defender.

Table I: Dagon Spell Duel Matrix

		ATTACKER'S spell check																				
DEFENDER spell check		>11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30+	
	>11	Tie	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	d7	d7	d8	d8	d10	d10	d12	d12	d14	d16	d20	d24	d30	
	12	d3	Tie	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	d7	d7	d8	d8	d10	d10	d12	d12	d14	d16	d20	d24	
	13	d4	d3	Tie	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	d7	d7	d8	d8	d10	d10	d12	d12	d14	d16	d20	
	14	d5	d4	d3	Tie	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	d7	d7	d8	d8	d10	d10	d12	d12	d14	d16	
	15	d5	d5	d4	d3	Tie	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	d7	d7	d8	d8	d10	d10	d12	d12	d14	
	16	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	Tie	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	d7	d7	d8	d8	d10	d10	d12	d12	
	17	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	Tie	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	d7	d7	d8	d8	d10	d10	d12	
	18	d7	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	Tie	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	d7	d7	d8	d8	d10	d10	
	19	d7	d7	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	Tie	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	d7	d7	d8	d8	d10	
	20	d8	d7	d7	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	Tie	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	d7	d7	d8	d8	
	21	d8	d8	d7	d7	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	Tie	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	d7	d7	d8	
	22	d10	d8	d8	d7	d7	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	Tie	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	d7	d7	
	23	d10	d10	d8	d8	d7	d7	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	Tie	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	d7	
	24	d12	d10	d10	d8	d8	d7	d7	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	Tie	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	
	25	d12	d12	d10	d10	d8	d8	d7	d7	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	Tie	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	
	26	d14	d12	d12	d10	d10	d8	d8	d7	d7	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	Tie	d3	d4	d5	d5	
	27	d16	d14	d12	d12	d10	d10	d8	d8	d7	d7	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	Tie	d3	d4	d5	
	28	d20	d16	d14	d12	d12	d10	d10	d8	d8	d7	d7	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	Tie	d3	d4	
	29	d24	d20	d16	d14	d12	d12	d10	d10	d8	d8	d7	d7	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	Tie	d3	
	30+	d30	d24	d20	d16	d14	d12	d12	d10	d10	d8	d8	d7	d7	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	Tie	



Table II: Counterspell Power

The caster with the higher spell check is referenced as the **attacker**. The caster with the lesser spell check is the **defender**.

Roll (variable)

- 1 Push-through d4: roll 1d4 and subtract this from defender's spell check. Defender's spell takes effect at this lower result, and attacker's spell takes effect *simultaneously* at normal spell check result.
- 2 Push-through d8: roll 1d8 and subtract this from defender's spell check. Defender's spell takes effect at this lower result, and attacker's spell takes effect *first* at normal spell check result.
- 3 - 5 Overwhelm: attacker's spell takes effect and defender's spell is cancelled.
- 6 Overwhelm and reflect d8: roll 1d8 and subtract this from defender's spell check. Attacker's spell takes effect *simultaneously* at normal spell check result, and defender's spell check is reflected back on him at this lower spell check result.
- 7 Overwhelm and reflect d8: roll 1d8 and subtract this from defender's spell check. Attacker's spell takes effect *first* at normal spell check result, and defender's spell check is reflected back on him at this lower spell check result.
- 8 Overwhelm and reflect d6: roll 1d6 and subtract this from defender's spell check. Attacker's spell takes effect *first* at normal spell check result, and defender's spell check is reflected back on him at this lower spell check result.
- 9 Overwhelm and reflect d4: roll 1d4 and subtract this from defender's spell check. Attacker's spell takes effect *first* at normal spell check result, and defender's spell check is reflected back on him at this lower spell check result.
- 10 Reflect and overwhelm: attacker's spell takes effect at normal spell check result, and defender's spell check is reflected back on him at normal spell check result.
- 11-12 Dire overwhelm: attacker's spell takes effect at normal spell check result, and defender's spell check is reflected back on him at normal spell check result. Additionally, the defender suffers 1d5 points Strength damage.
- 13-15 Ruinous overwhelm: attacker's spell takes effect at normal spell check result, and defender's spell check is reflected back on him at normal spell check result. Additionally, the defender suffers 1d8 points Strength damage and 1d3 points Agility damage.
- 16-19 Devastating overwhelm: attacker's spell takes effect at normal spell check result, and defender's spell check is reflected back on him at normal spell check result. Additionally, the defender suffers 1d10 points Strength damage and 1d5 points Agility damage.
- 20-24 Overwhelm and Recover: attacker's spell takes effect at normal spell check result, and defender's spell check is reflected back on him at normal spell check result. Additionally, the defender suffers 1d12 points Strength damage, 1d8 points Agility damage, and 1d3 points Stamina damage. If the defender dies, the attacker can consume his soul, recovering 1d3 attribute points.
- 25+ Overwhelm and Recover: attacker's spell takes effect at normal spell check result, and defender's spell check is reflected back on him at normal spell check result. Additionally, the defender suffers 1d14 points Strength damage, 1d10 points Agility damage, and 1d5 points Stamina damage. If the defender dies, the attacker can consume his soul, recovering 1d5 attribute points.



Table III: Wrath of Dagon

Tied spell checks upset Father Dagon. Roll 1d7 to determine the result of his ire.

Roll Result

- 1 For the remainder of the duel neither wizard may cast any spells. The duel must be settled by traditional combat.
- 2 Father Dagon sighs, exhaling a foul miasma over the proceeding. Both casters must make DC 20 Fort saves or suffer 1d14 damage.
- 3 For the remainder of the duel, both casters suffer 1d4 points of damage per spell level any time they attempt to cast a spell.
- 4 Searing rain falls from the heavens. All current duelists (**all** character in play at the table) suffer 1d12 damage (Fort save DC 15 for half).
- 5 For the remainder of the duel, both casters suffer -1d to all spell checks (Will save DC 20 to avoid).
- 6 Father Dagon emerges from the deeps and devours both characters. (Both characters die, no save.)
- 7 Bolts of lightning fill the skies, striking the wizards. All current duelists (**all** characters in play at the table) must succeed on DC 20 Fort saves or die.



COUNTERSPELL FAMILIES

As per traditional spell dueling, any attack spell may be countered by *dispel magic* or by an identical attack spell. In addition, the strange magic of Dagon allows for a greater range of counterspell combinations. The following spell families cover the 1st and 2nd level spells.

Ray: *Magic shield, magic missile, ray of enfeeblement, scorching ray*

Touch: *Chill touch, flaming hands, Nythuul's porcupine coat*

Cloud / Spray: *Choking cloud, color spray, Ekim's mystical mask*

Enchantment: *Charm person, sleep, Ekim's mystical mask, scare*

Fire: *Fire resistance, scorching ray, flaming hands*

SPECIAL NOTES & ADJUDICATION

Momentum & mercurial magic: The courts of Dagon permit none of the trivialities that can accompany normal spell-casting. Momentum is not tracked, and no mercurial magic effects come into play.

Patron invocation: Inviting another patron into the realm of Dagon always courts disaster. The spell fails, regardless of the spell check, and the caster automatically invokes the Wrath of Dagon.

Loss of spell: Certain spell duel results can reduce the check result of the attacker or defender. A wizard loses a spell for the day only if his *initial, unmodified* spell check is below the minimum threshold. If the attacker's initial check summons sufficient eldritch power to set the spell duel in motion, he does not count as losing the spell. The same goes for the defender's *initial, unmodified* spell check. For clerics, the same rule applies in regards to their accumulation of disapproval.

NOTES FROM THE ROAD: ENTER JIM KELLY...AND THE DRAGON



hough not immediately obvious, DCC the RPG takes portions of its DNA from the 1973 cinema classic *Enter the Dragon*. Gary Con 2011 – the same convention that would see the development of the spell duel rules, and arguments for and against including Satan (“Cultists are boring ... the PCs need to fight Satanists!”) – also saw one designer levy the command, “Jim Kelly is the coolest! The game needs Jim Kelly.”

The command was immediately subverted by other designers noting that there was also a gamer named Jim Kelly in attendance at Gary Con, and that perhaps *he* needed to be included in the game as well.

Mighty Jim Kelly (kung fu legend, not the gamer) received a cover homage in DCC #74: *Blades Against Death*, but it wasn't until Gen Con 2015 that *Enter the Dragon* returned, in the form of a spell duel tournament, *Enter the Dragon*.

Conceived as a mid-level alternative to the 0-level epic funnel, *Enter the Dragon* mirrors its namesake by pitting hundreds of spellcasters against one another in mortal combat for the pleasure of foul Father Dragon. Many casters enter, but only one leaves.

Like the 0-level funnel, players were able to drop onto the game at any point over the three, 4-hour sessions. For the price of a generic ticket, each player was provided with a pre-generated wizard and a personalized grimoire. Players were seated opposite one another and immediately thrust into a spell duel to the death.

The surviving wizard was pitted against another fresh caster, in a gruesome, arcane king of the hill, and the line of fresh challengers ensured that no one character could dominate for very long.

Over the course of the convention, we saw tactics and counters emerge, dominate, and then be undone. Initially, most wizards (rightly) focused on spell burning, hoping to deal as much damage as possible.

(And indeed, when a foe has 20 hp or less, a *magic missile* launching 3d4+2 missiles, each dealing 1d10+4 dmg, is guaranteed to get the job done.)

But as tactics evolved, some casters pioneered more creative measures. Perhaps the most dramatic came in one of the later games, when a caster won initiative and elected not to attack, but instead cast *enlarge* on himself, burning the majority of his stats to ensure a maximum result.

In the moment it seemed like a strange move, and perhaps a deadly waste of initiative. But for readers like myself who haven't memorized the spell result, I'll share it here, in all its horrifying glory:

The caster transforms himself or one target into a giant of truly godlike proportions. The target grows to a height of up to 100', at the caster's discretion. The target's statistics are similarly improved due to his new size, to a maximum benefit of +10 to attack, damage, and AC if he reaches the full 100' height. At that full height, he also receives a bonus of up to +100 hit points.

As the player read the result aloud, the rest of us stood dumbstruck, stunned. The caster had just transformed himself into a god, with a spell duration likely to last several duels.

The tournament had been cleverly, fairly, and completely broken.

But the duel wasn't over. Facing down the looming giant, the young sorceress scanned her grimoire and picked the best offensive spell she had – the humble *ray of enfeeblement*. The titan failed his save, and took a mere 1d6 points of Strength damage. Then we realized the *enlarged* caster – the god-like giant with over 100 hp and an untouchable armor class – had burned all his stats.

The titan tumbled earthward, defeated. I can't recall if it crushed the sorceress in the fall, but I know that Ref saves were involved to evade the avalanche of giant-flesh.

And so the tournament proceeded, with wizards treading the knife's edge of burning enough stats to win a duel, while not weakening themselves to the point where the slightest stat loss could spell their doom.

Fate played its own part, with some casters surviving duels thanks to the vagaries of dice, but no one caster could depend on Luck for long. In the end hundreds of casters had passed into the realm of foul Dragon, and only four remained, facing off against one another in a final epic showdown.

And as for *Enter the Dragon*, the adventure where a team of wizards (and thieves? clerics?) infiltrate an island spell tournament to slay a rogue king? That is a DCC adventure for another day.

Way OF THE DAGON

I beseech you the influential, together with others, to accept this covenant pact in the pursuit of power immeasurable. I willingly give my body and fortune to those who are bound beyond the veil...whatever consequences shall come!

☐

STRENGTH

☐

LUCK

☐

AGILITY

☐

STAMINA



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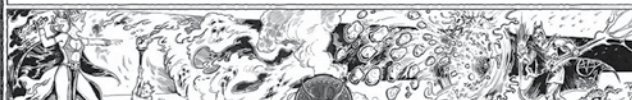
LUCK

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HOW TO RUN A DCC RPG TOURNAMENT FUNNEL



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

TOURNAMENT FUNNEL RULES AND FORMAT

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

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

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

TOURNAMENT FUNNEL LOGISTICS

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

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

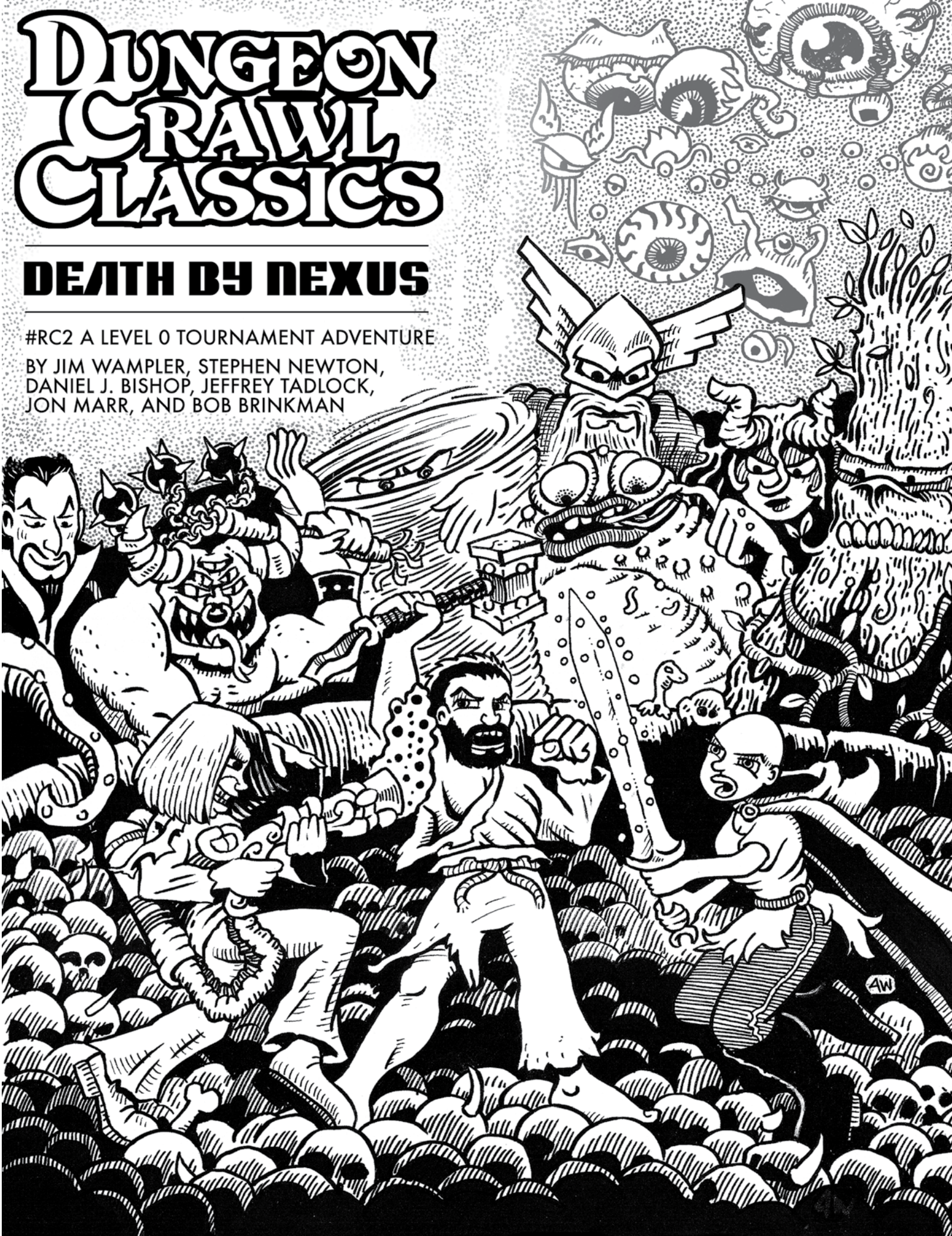
Keep the action rolling — The wise tournament judge is prepared to keep the action moving at a brisk pace. Adventures that have been specifically written for the tournament format will aid in this by being specifically constructed in a way that discourages parties from splitting up, or that do not challenge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

DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS

DEATH BY NEXUS

#RC2 A LEVEL 0 TOURNAMENT ADVENTURE

BY JIM WAMPLER, STEPHEN NEWTON,
DANIEL J. BISHOP, JEFFREY TADLOCK,
JON MARR, AND BOB BRINKMAN



DEATH BY NEXUS

A Level 0 Tournament Adventure by the DCCabal

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Take One for the Team - Stephen Newton • The October Wood - Daniel J. Bishop

Any Given Thursday - Jim Wampler • The Garden of Forbidden Power - Jon Marr

Playtesters: (North Texas RPG Con 2015) David Baity, Michael Bolam (2nd place), David Crimm, Chad Dodd (3rd place), Eric Hoffman (1st place), Ginger Hogard, Tony Hogard, Nicholas Johnson, Gabriel Meister, Jonathan Perkel, Timothy Schneck, Thom Wilson, Brendan Wolfe, Zachary Zahringer.

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INTRODUCTION



Death by Nexus is a DCC RPG Tournament adventure based on the character funnel format. This adventure is designed for 9 players, with each player having only 1 level-0 PC. As each PC dies, the controlling player taps out of the game, and a new player rotates into the game with a brand new PC. The tournament adventure is scored by ranking individual PCs by largest number of encounters survived. Players eliminated from play may re-enter the game with a new PC when another seat opens up at the table.

The tournament will be played for a pre-designated amount of time. Players are scored in the tournament as follows: For each encounter survived (an encounter being defined as any time in which initiative is rolled to begin a combat), stamp the player's character sheet once with the "I Survived!" stamp. When a PC dies, likewise stamp that player's character sheet with the "Dead" stamp. Remind players to hang onto their character sheets for later event scoring. At the end of the event, the players with character sheets that show the most stamps for encounters survived will be ranked, and the top three numerical survival totals will be awarded 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place respectively. Any ties will be settled by a d20 dice-off between the tying players.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND



The Nexus of the Planes is the still-point between all the varied planes of reality. Here live The Prime Ones — those that are and have always been, that exist above and beyond the gods. Embodying the Multiverse, in all its inconceivable infinities, The Prime Ones regard the concepts of Law, Neutrality, and Chaos as quaint ideological curiosities no more worthy of serious thought or debate than those of existence versus non-existence. Still, once in every 10^9 years, even the eternally laconic Prime Ones consider the alignments of gods, demons, and even mortals as worthy of casual examination, and perhaps their sporting entertainment.

Deciding that their multi-planar wagers are most fairly settled by a contest not of the mightiest representatives of these concepts, but by the lowliest, The Prime Ones have selected level-0 representatives from each of the three alignments and brought them to the Nexus of the Planes in order to pit them against each other in bouts of gladiatorial combat. In a Hyper-Arena especially reduced to the first three dimensions for the comfort of the combatants, each side is pitted against the others in six rounds of gradually escalating matches.

Multi-dimensional weapons and arms are supplied to all sides, and each round is fought on a separate and distinct playing field that offers certain advantages and disadvantages of movement and cover. Outside the Hyper-Arena is a planar viewing gallery (which resolves itself to the PCs' eyes as the vague impression of stadium seating in the sky) that hosts an audience of thousands of Prime Ones, along with their more familiar gods and patrons sitting in the "cheap seats."

ADVENTURE SUMMARY



Death by Nexus accommodates 9 players at a time divided into three teams, with each team consisting of one of the three alignments. Each team is overseen by a god of that alignment, who is responsible for doling out weapons and magic items to be used, as well as sending in new level-0 player characters when a PC on his team is killed.

Each round of the 6-round tournament is played on a different specially-constructed arena field, with its own set of terrain features, weapons, and magic items. Unless otherwise specified, a tournament round only ends when all three PCs on the same team die within the same melee round, defeating that team. When this happens, the PCs on the other two teams (who lived through that combat round) are declared winners of that tournament round and receive "I Survived!" stamps on their character sheets.

Otherwise, PCs that die during any given tournament round are merely replaced by new player characters as a new player taps into the tournament.

Tournament Team Coaches

Law	Yddgrrl, The World Root
Neutrality	Ithaa, Prince of Elemental Wind
Chaos	Obitu-Que, Lord of the Five

(Information on these patrons can be found in the DCC RPG core rulebook, pages 354-356.)

STARTING THE ADVENTURE

As you are going about your mundane lives as peasants in your local village, you feel something within you shift and change. Looking up from the ditch you are digging, the plowshare you are pulling, or the caldron of gruel you are stirring, you feel a strange warmth begin at your chest, where the crude talisman of the god you worship is suspended on a hemp twine necklace. The warmth quickly blossoms into a searing heat, as you reflexively clasp the phylactery tied about your neck. The man-shaped tree root that is your symbol of Yddgrrl, the small pouch of desert sand said to contain a gust of Ithaa's breath, the tiny finger bone of a child sacrificed in flames to the Lord of the Five, Obitu-Que — all these things glow white hot, and in a flash you are not where you were.

You appear alongside many others in what at first appears to be a blinding maelstrom of twisted colors and light. You feel the inside of your head begin to overheat with the threat of bursting into flames, when the sights before you begin to resolve themselves into less maddening shapes. You see a flat and nearly infinite plane stretched out before you. Standing nearby are the deities that you worship, gigantic in all their majesty and glory. An immeasurable distance further still, you see a ring of shining metal galleries filled with hundreds of what you imagine must be your lords' fellow godlings and deities, all apparently quite animated and interested in the proceedings that are about to take place. And towering into the sky above them are... The Prime Ones. You do not understand how this name came suddenly to your mind. You are certain you did not know this moments ago, yet the memory of it seems to have been with you always.

"Welcome to the Nexus of the Planes!" a voice booms from within your mind, seeming to come from everywhere at once. "Here we will conduct games to determine which of your petty gods' so-called alignments is the superior universal philosophy. We do you great honor by bringing you here. Your linear existences will come to their natural conclusion here, but you may yet participate in matters that decide the fates of dimensions in the multiverse beyond your ken. Let the games begin!"

ICE, WIND, AND FIRE

Area 1-1 — Ice, Wind and Fire: *In a burst of blue-white light you now find yourself in an arena composed of two drastically different environments. On one side, there is a field of jagged, black volcanic rock cut through by streams of molten lava and twisting vortexes of fire. On the other side, torrents of ice pellets and snow blow down upon a frozen glacial plain pitted by ice rifts and ice bridges. Cut into both the ice and lava, an emerald path winds towards a low mound where three elemental creatures are engaged in a raging combat. A living column of fire pounds flames against an ice creature with crystalline limbs like a tree,*

while a sentient tornado whirls around them both. The sounds of cracking ice, roaring flame, and howling wind peals through the chamber as the creatures strike at each other.

Each of your teams sees a unique set of weapons displayed in ornate racks near them, beckoning you to enter the fray and slay elemental and opposing team members alike.

The Hyper-Arena: The playing area is shaped like a broad ellipse 125' long and 75' wide. The area is divided roughly in half with one end being a wasteland of basalt rock and magma vents, with the other side comprised of snow-covered granite. The PCs associated with fire (Chaos) and ice (Law) enter from opposite sides of the arena at the head of emerald-colored paths winding through their respective volcanic and ice terrain. The PCs aligned with air (Neutral) begin on a silvery cloud platform 30' above the floor over the center of the arena; the cloud is capable of supporting even non-flying creatures. A rack holding three weapons is located in each team's starting area (see map).

The emerald-colored paths meet at the center of the arena atop a low mound of basalt rock. The mound is roughly 30' in diameter. A twisting moat of lava partially circles the mound on the fire side. The molten red lava pours into a bottomless ice crevasse circling the ice side of the mound. Crossing either moat without aid of the emerald path requires a DC 12 Agility check to avoid a fiery death or plunging into the icy crevasse.

The environmental effects are uncomfortable but bearable at the center of the arena. In all other places, unless protected by magical resistance (offered by the elemental weapons), leaving the starting area or the emerald path requires the characters to make a DC 10 Fort Save or take 1d3 hit points of damage.

The Weapons: The weapons in the racks are magical in nature, but their enchantment is solely powered by the corresponding elemental type. As the battling elementals weaken, so do their associated weapons. Start tracking combat rounds when the first weapon is plucked by a PC from the rack. For every round after the first, the battling elementals will begin damaging each other for 5 hit points per round. When an elemental reaches 20 hit points or lower, their corresponding weapons lose their +1 attack bonus. At 10 hit points or lower, their corresponding weapon loses its resistance and glide special ability (if applicable). When an elemental is killed, its associated weapons lose any remaining powers and become non-magical.

Note that if the PCs begin to damage the elementals, these effects may be accelerated.

Fire Weapons (Chaos)

Finger of Fire (javelin +1): melee (1d6+1) ranged (1d6+1); SP resist heat (up to 15 points per round); *Fiery Ray*: once per round shoot a narrow jet of fire for 1d4 damage (60' range).

Srinka's Searing Brand (red hot poker +1): melee (1d8+1); SP resist heat (up to 15 points per round); *Searing Heat*: successful hit inflicts +1d4 melee damage.

Brimstone Cleaver (molten battle axe +1): melee (1d10+1); SP resist heat (up to 15 points per round); *Flaming Strike*: on a critical hit, roll 1d14 on Crit Table III (DCC RPG rulebook, p. 84).

Ice Weapons (Law)

The Ice Fang (ice pick +1): melee (1d8+1); SP resist cold (up to 15 points per round); *Frostburn*: successful hit causes +1d4 melee damage.

Frozen Shard (spear +1): melee (1d8+1); SP resist cold (up to 15 points per round); *Freezing Ray*: once per round shoot a ray of ice for 1d4 damage (60' range).

Icy Death (polearm +1): melee (1d10+1); SP resist cold (up to 15 points per round); *Chilling Strike*: on a critical hit, roll 1d12 on Crit Table IV (DCC RPG rulebook, p. 85).

Air Weapons (Neutral)

Byzons's Breath (bow with 12 miasma arrows +1): ranged (1d6+1, range 60'); SP glide (use air current to glide up to 30' vertically, move 60' per round); *Sonic Shock*: successful hit causes +1d4 damage.

Cynactra's Storm (lightning staff +1): melee (1d8+1); SP glide (use air current to glide up to 30' vertically, move 60' per round); *Sonic Blast*: on a successful hit, target must make DC 10 Fort save or take -1 penalty on attack rolls.

Cloud Burst (cloud mace +1): melee (1d6+1); SP glide (use air current to glide up to 10' vertically, move 60' per round); *Sonic Boom*: critical hit range expanded to 17-20, roll 1d8 on Crit Table II (DCC RPG rulebook, p. 83).

The Elementals: The elementals battle at the center of the arena where the fire, ice, and air converge, and will continue to battle and weaken each other if left unmolested (note the effects of this on elemental weapons above). If an elemental is attacked by the PCs, roll on the table below to determine its reaction.

Table 1-1: Elemental Reactions

Roll 1d5 Reaction to Attack

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Elemental goes berserk! The elemental gains a one-time triple attack and attacks the three nearest PCs simultaneously. |
| 2 | Elemental takes a swing at you! The elemental attacks the PC that attacked it first. |
| 3 | Elemental is enraged! The elemental attacks whichever PC attacked it last. |
| 4 | Elemental ignores your puny attack! The elemental continues to attack another elemental. Roll 1d3 (reroll if result is self): (1) Ice; (2) Air; (3) Fire. |
| 5 | Elemental Fury! The elemental gains a one-time double attack and attacks the other two elementals simultaneously. |

Elemental, Ice: Init +6; Atk freezing touch +10 melee (2d6) or ice bolt +8 missile fire (2d6, range 40'); AC 16; HD 8d8; hp 30; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP freezing touch, vulnerable to fire and heat, elemental traits; SV Fort +8, Ref +8, Will +8; AL N.

Elemental, Air: Init +8; Atk slam +8 melee (2d6) or hurled object +8 missile fire (1d6, range 100'); AC 16; HD 8d8; hp 30; MV fly 50'; Act 1d20; SP cyclone, pick up opponent, elemental traits; SV Fort +6, Ref +10, Will +6; AL N.

Elemental, Fire: Init +6; Atk burning touch +12 melee (3d6) or flaming bolt +8 missile fire (2d6, range 40'); AC 18; HD 8d8; hp 30; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP burning touch, vulnerable to cold and water, elemental traits; SV Fort +8, Ref +8, Will +8; AL N.

OVER THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

Area 1-2 — Over the Edge of the World: *Reality bends and warps as your last conflict ends, and your next begins. Your lips peel back from your teeth as a guttural howl of agony is wrenched from your throat. You howl in pain and madness as every fragment of your body is torn asunder, and you feel yourself falling sideways through strange dimensions until you emerge into a primordial vortex of light and sound.*

You find your pain replaced by warm bloodlust as a new body begins to shape itself around your soul. No longer do you carry the weak, mortal, flesh you once knew. Indeed, you are re-birthed into an image fashioned at the capricious whims of your patron gods. You are no longer wholly mortal, but you are not yet divine.

As your dimensional free-fall continues, you look about and take in the surroundings and your opponents. The forces of Chaos have coalesced into bat-winged demons armed with forked glaives that drip hellfire. The unbiased, androgenous forces of Neutrality ride atop celestial mantas and lower their lances which crackle with strange energies. Accompanied by the rapturous cries of the seraphim, the angelic forces of Law float above all, feathered wings slowly beating time to the heartbeat of the universe as they draw swords that shine with divine light.

The Hyper-Arena: The playing area is a 100' wide dimensional vortex which is infinitely long both above and below. The transformed PCs are all falling through the vortex at approximately the same speed so that they appear to float along side each other like sky divers (see map).

It might seem difficult, at first, to track movement in the three dimensional plane of the vortex. However, the battlefield is a sphere, one hundred feet across, within the wormhole and is best viewed as a circle. With all characters capable of flight of some fashion, simply figure that the adversarial groups are clustered along the edge roughly 100' away from each other at the beginning. This means that characters can easily move in for close combat, or stay distant and fire from range.

It should be noted that 50' up or down from the starting positions of the PCs is also the rough maximum vertical distance a character can move. If characters try to stretch the battle too high or low, they exit the protection provided them from the raw forces of creation that they are falling through. Touching the horizontal barrier of the vortex produces the same result. Such an action is instantly fatal as every particle of their newly created soul encasement explodes outward in blinding light. The outer beings have no patience for cowardice — they desire death.

Replacement characters appearing in the midst of the combat appear at their faction's starting point within the spherical battlefield, fully transformed and armed as noted below.

Transmogrifications: The physical changes that befall the PCs do not alter their stats or abilities, except as noted below under weapons.

Weapons: The weaponry provided the combatants does damage as per the normal DCC RPG rules in addition to the exceptional abilities listed. The eldritch powers of the weapons activate using a d20 spellcheck, and spellburn may be used. While weapons can, in theory, be taken from embattled opponents, the weapons (and mounts) of vanquished combatants dissolve into the void and may not be claimed by other warriors.

The Seraphim (Law)

The chosen of Law are clad in flowing white robes, with long platinum-colored hair and eyes that burn with a radiant blaze. They maneuver within the void using their enormous, white-feathered wings allowing flight at a rate of 60'. They sweep down towards their foes, armed with heavenly long swords that can fire beams of divine light.

Heavenly Sword (long sword +1): melee (1d8+1); SP *Divine Light* (per *paralysis* spell, DCC RPG rulebook, p. 264).

Acherontic Servitors (Chaos)

The Acherontic servitors of Chaos have oversized batwings, allowing them flight at a rate of 50', and all have a twisted, chimerical appearance, including ram horns, cloven hooves, horses manes, moose antlers, etc. They are armed with flaming polearms that fire jets of flame.

Flaming Glaive (polearm +1): melee (1d10+1); SP *Soul Flame* (per *scorching ray* spell, DCC RPG rulebook, p. 192).

The Arbiters (Neutral)

The Arbiters of Neutrality are hairless, genderless, and raceless humanoids, bearing no signs of distinguishing physical appearance and providing no visual clues of a bias towards Law or Chaos. They are also the only group given a natural protection — a tough rubbery hide (+3 AC bonus). The Arbiters sit astride massive celestial mantas (with a movement of 40' and capable of a charge of 80') while armed with shimmering energy lances that fire bolts of lightning.

Energy Lance (lance +1): melee (1d12+1); SP *Energy Bolt* (per *lightning bolt* spell, DCC RPG rulebook, p. 222).

Hazards of the Vortex

Falling: Characters paralyzed, knocked unconscious, or dismounted will free-fall through the void at a rate of 25' per round. If this falling action causes a PC to exceed the maximum lower height boundary of the safe zone, instant death befalls that PC (as noted above). Another PC may, of course, attempt to grab a falling comrade before this happens.

Chaos Storm: *The rushing of the ethereal winds grows to a howl as the cosmogonic forces build until they erupt into a storm that sweeps through the vortex arena. A shower of stardust, coupled with flashes of promethean fire, wash through the area, causing unpredictable tidal forces. Buffeted, you struggle to retain control of your orientation amidst the storm.*

Every three rounds a whirlwind of raw energies rips through the void. When this happens, all PCs must make a

DC 12 Agility check or be left tumbling out of control by the storm's passage, taking one round to recover.

Typhonic Armageddon: After the ever worsening Chaos Storm has raged through the vortex three times (nine rounds), on its next appearance (round 12) it escalates into a nightmarish explosion of colliding anti-matter and matter. In the spirit of a DCC RPG funnel tournament — and acting as an all-important stop-gap if the scenario drags on too long — the Typhonic Armageddon slays all combatants. The Prime Ones do not like cowards and they certainly do not like sluggards who refuse to promptly cater to their alien desires. Should this happen, read the following to the players, then award every remaining PC a "Death" stamp.

The worsening storm grows quiet for a moment, and there is calm all around you. Even the buffeting caused by your fall through the cosmic whirlpool seems to still itself for a moment as the very multiverse holds its breath. Then, as the eye of the storm passes, the celestial winds return, raging in a hellish frenzy. Some of your foes are hurled away from the combat, exploding into a cascade of blinding light as they cross the boundaries of the battlefield; others are torn asunder by the gale as it strips away their soul's material casing. All of you die screaming.

TAKE ONE FOR THE TEAM

Area 1-3 — Take One for the Team: *Your team emerges onto a rocky platform, your vision obscured by a swirling pinkish-gray smoke. A slight wind builds and begins blowing the wispy fog away. You see before you two rough-carved, crystalline columns standing inside a circle of blood splashed onto the ground in a 20-foot diameter. Each of the translucent columns contains a barely discernible glowing artifact.*

As you slowly approach to examine the devices trapped inside the column, you hear a spectral voice speak to you in your alignment tongue:

"It amuses the Prime Ones to observe which of your pointless and archaic mortal motivations drives what you flesh-wearers call "strategy." Will it be Cooperation? Aggression? Self Preservation? Or perhaps Greed? To help you know your true selves, we have offered each team two implements — one offensive and one defensive. And all that you need to do to unlock one of these items is to kill someone within the blood circle. That person could be foe... or ally."

The Hyper-Arena: The playing area is an equilateral triangle 75' long on a side. Each corner of the triangle features two crystalline columns standing within a 20' circle of freshly splashed blood. The PCs of each alignment team appear in their respective corners of the playing area just outside the blood circle. Replacement PCs appear at these same points (see map).

Weapons: Each team has two items available for capture — one offensive and one defensive, as detailed below.

The Blood Circle: If a PC kills another character while both are standing within a blood circle, the PC striking the killing blow will hear the same spectral voice ask him to "choose your Implement of Motivation." Once the PC makes that choice, declaring that he desires either the offensive or de-

fensive item, the appropriate column shatters and the item immediately appears in the PC's hands. The PC then immediately undergoes major corruption. The judge may use one of the corruptions provided in the appropriate sections below, or use the Major Corruption table (DCC RPG rulebook, p. 118).

The Implements of Motivation: Each item has a unique ability but to optimize for gameplay all have the same mechanical benefits: offensive weapons offer +2 attack modifier, and defensive weapons provide a +2 AC bonus.

The Implements of Law

The Sword of Purity: A great two-handed, golden sword which trails flames as it swings.

(Two-handed sword +2): melee (1d6); SP target must make DC 12 Agility check or catch fire for +1d6 fire damage the following round.

The Shield of Order: A flawless great shield made of magical translucent material which makes a deep booming note when struck.

(Shield +2 AC): SP attackers who strike wielder and miss must make DC 12 Fort save or make attacks at -2 penalty for next 1d4 rounds.

Major Corruption of Law:

- PC's skin color becomes a shining, reflective silver.
- PC's head and shoulders become perfectly rectilinear.

The Implements of Chaos

The Jaws of Silgard The Profane: A pair of bloody jaws affixed to the end of a staff; the jaws continuously bite "zombie style."

(Staff +2): melee (1d6); SP targets hit by staff must make DC 12 Will save or uncontrollably start screaming obscenities.

Cloak of the Ghoul: A cloak made of desiccated human flesh.

(Cloak +2 AC): SP wearer has a one-time ability to spread the cloak with both arms (Dracula style) to turn Lawful PCs using a d16 + Personality modifier turn check (DCC RPG rulebook, p. 97).

Corruption of Chaos:

- PC's skin transforms into a soft, rubbery, hairless, gray substance like putty.
- A talking, demonic parasitic head forms on the chest of the PC. It constantly criticizes the PC's decisions and actions.

The Implements of Neutrality

Scythe of Withering: Old age eventually claims both the Lawful and Chaotic alike. This scythe, whose handle is composed of a petrified strand of intertwined coarse gray hair, has the ability to immediately age any target struck with it.

(Scythe +2): melee (1d6); SP DC 12 Fort save or age 1d4 x 10 years, -1 hit point for every 20 years aged (the judge is also encouraged to come up with creative effects of aging such as mottled skin, teeth fall out, hair falls out in clumps, sagging flesh, etc.).

Snakeskin Jacket: The wearer of this jacket receives a +2 AC bonus due to its hypnotizing patterns, making the wearer difficult to target.

(Jacket +2 AC): SP wearer has a one-time ability to start crooning using the hymnal voice of the patron god L-Viz, causing all who hear his voice to swoon and bringing this PC to the top of the initiative order.

Corruption of Neutrality:

- The PC grows a long, pointed tail like that of a sting ray.
- The PC's skin becomes covered with unremovable sea barnacles.

THE OCTOBER WOOD

Area 1-4 — The October Wood: *Your teams are assembled in a forest of skeletal black oak trees, the ground thick with the fallen leaves of countless seasons gone by. The air is crisp and cold, with the taste of oncoming winter. The iron-grey banded clouds in the sky resolve themselves into rows of seating, where patrons, gods, and other strange beings sit looking down at you. The seats seem to have a different plane of gravity, 90° to your own, so that the creatures stare straight down at you, their strange faces filling the sky from horizon to horizon. The woods are endless. Thousands of dark grey urns populate the spaces between the trees, each tilted haphazardly like long abandoned tombstones.*

The Hyper-Arena: The playing area is a heavily wooded forest roughly 125' square, beyond which lie only unscalable and towering cliff faces. Each team randomly appears in one of the four corners of the wooded landscape. Replacement characters will arrive in these same spots, landing in the same area of those of their alignment (see map).

Upon arrival, each team will hear their respective patrons whisper into their ears in their own alignment tongue, "*Do not break the urns unless you feel lucky – each contains a sacrifice to the Lord of Samhain, and may bring weal or woe upon whosoever frees it.*"

If used as such, the trees provide cover (-2 penalty to all ranged attacks). Thick, gnarled roots thrust up everywhere beneath the thick carpet of leaves. Anyone attempting to run or charge through the woods must succeed in a DC 10 Reflex save or fall prone while taking 1d3 damage.

Weapons: At each starting point lies a pile of weapons and equipment, with enough for each PC to have one of everything. The equipment heap contains three each of the following:

- Chainmail armor (+5 AC), sized for whoever picks it up
- Shield (+1 AC)
- Longbow and quiver with 12 arrows (ranged 1d6, 70/140/210)
- Long sword (melee 1d8)

Note: Donning chainmail requires 3 rounds (2 for caravan guards, mercenaries, and the like). A character cannot use both a long bow and a shield, nor can dwarves or halflings use a long bow at all.

The Urns of the October Wood

The Urns of the October Wood can be broken automatically by a melee attack, or by a successful ranged attack against AC 16.

Melee attacks made against any other person or creature that result in a natural “1” always inadvertently break an urn. On a natural “20”, in addition to any other critical hit effects, the attacker may additionally choose to have his attack shatter a nearby urn.

Whoever breaks an urn rolls 1d30, modified by Luck, and consults the table below.

Monsters summoned in this way do not act immediately unless noted in the table result below. These summoned monsters roll initiative at the beginning of the next round, and act accordingly thereafter. Summoned monsters only last 1d3 rounds. When their summoning time is up, or when they are reduced to 0 hit points, they collapse and transform into a pile of rotten leaves.

Table 1-4: Urns of October Wood Contents

Roll 1d30 +
Luck mod Urn Contents

-2	A baleful red light surrounds the PC, rapidly consuming him until only a skeleton remains. The skeleton attacks the nearest ally immediately, and remains until itself or all its allies are vanquished (DCC RPG rulebook, p. 426).
-1	As “-2”, above, but the light only causes 1d6 damage, and the PC is not transformed if she survives.
0	As result above, but the light only causes 1d3 damage.
1	Rhinoceros! Targets PC first, and then closest allies. Init +2; Atk gore +5 melee (1d5+3) or trample +2 melee (3d6); AC 18; HD 5d8; hp 31; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +8, Ref +3, Will -2; AL N.
2	Captive spell: Emerikol's entropic maelstrom. Spell check +6, PC is center of target area (DCC RPG rulebook, p. 213).
3	Poisonous serpent immediately bites PC! Fort DC 15 or die; 1d3 hp damage on success.
4	Black flames set PC on fire! (DC 10 Reflex save avoids, otherwise 1d6 damage)
5	Ghoul! Targets closest creature, then stops to feed for 1d3 rounds before targeting next-closest creature. Special: Lasts 2d5 rounds, collapses into pile of tiny bones rather than leaves (DCC RPG rulebook, p. 414).
6	Captive spell: <i>Magic missile</i> . Spell check +3, PC is target (DCC RPG rulebook, p. 144).
7	Giant vampire bat! Targets PC's nearest ally (DCC RPG rulebook, p. 396).
8	White ape-man! Targets (1d7): (1-4) PC; (5-6) PC's nearest ally; or (7) PC's nearest foe (DCC RPG rulebook, p. 395).
9	Cave octopus! Targets closest creatures (DCC RPG rulebook, p. 398).
10	Captive spell: <i>Enlarge</i> . Spell check +0, PC is target (DCC RPG rulebook, p. 139).
11	Stone giant! Does nothing unless attacked; attacks those foolish enough to attack it (DCC RPG rulebook, p. 414).
12	All monsters on the field immediately turn into piles of leaves.
13	PC gains a 1d5 Deed Die for his next attack only.
14	Skeleton! Immediately targets and attacks PC (DCC RPG rulebook, p. 426).
15	Skeleton! Immediately targets closest ally of PC (or PC if no allies remain), (DCC RPG rulebook, p. 426).
16	All enemy monsters on the field immediately collapse into leaves.
17	PC that breaks urn granted is two attacks per round until PC dies or moves on to a second opponent after the first.
18	Captive spell: <i>Paralysis</i> . Spell check +3, PC determines targets (DCC RPG rulebook p. 264).
19	PC gains a 1d3 Deed Die for 1d6 rounds. If granted another Deed Die, this Deed Die is instead moved +1d on the dice chain.
20	Hell hound! Attacks PC's nearest foe (DCC RPG rulebook, p. 417).
21	An emerald light heals PC of up to 1d3 damage.
22	All enemy monsters on the field switch targets as the PC directs.
23	Captive spell: <i>Strength</i> . Spell check +6, PC is target (DCC RPG rulebook, p. 198).
24	PC gains a 1d3 Deed Die for the rest of this combat. If granted another Deed Die, this Deed Die is instead moved +1d on the dice chain.
25	An emerald light heals PC and PC's allies of up 1d3 damage.
26	Ogre! Attacks as directed by PC (DCC RPG rulebook, p. 422).
27	An emerald light heals the PC, or any character chosen by the PC, for up to 1d7 damage.
28	Captive spell: <i>Magic shield</i> . Spell check +6, PC is the target. Other team members may be affected if spell check is high enough (DCC RPG rulebook, p. 146).
29	Captive spell: <i>Magic missile</i> . Spell check +6, PC determines targets (DCC RPG rulebook, p. 144).
30	PC is surrounded by a green-gold glow that grants +1d3 additional hit points to the PC and raises AC by +1 for 1d3 rounds.
31	As “30”, above, but all surviving team members gain this benefit.
32	As above, but all surviving team members gain +1d5 hp and +2 AC until the October Wood scenario is resolved.
33	The next member of the PC's team (including the PC) to be slain is instead fully restored to life with full hit points.

Spells contained in the urns go off immediately when the urn is broken. If a “1” is rolled on the spell check, the PC breaking the urn suffers the effects, regardless of the result shown in the table result.

ANY GIVEN THORS DAY

Area 1-5 — Any Given Thorsday: *You have been transported to the End Times. The red skies above you rain fire, punctuated by flashes of heat lightning, as the snow-covered ground below you quakes. It's as if the entire planet is preparing to break apart. There is an unmet call to battle hanging in the very air, as you are suddenly transformed, the better to meet this ancient challenge.*

The Lawful team have been changed into a semblance of the Aesir, as each one of you takes on the aspects of Thor, Heimdallr, and Tyr. The Neutral team are changed into the trickster god Loki and his children, the monstrous wolf Fenrir and the Midgard Serpent Jörmungandr. The Chaotic team finds themselves changed into the Jötunn — the men-devourers Surtr the fire giant, Ymir the frost giant, and Hymir the mountain giant. The rolling thunderclaps seem to be singing a Wagnerian chorus in the sky above you, as Ragnarök begins with the first blow struck...

The Hyper-Arena: The playing area is divided into three zones which represent each side's starting position. The Lawful team begins outside the golden gates of Asgard, the Chaotic team begins next to the World Tree Yggdrasil in an endless wasteland of snow-covered volcanic rock, and the Neutral team begins in the middle of Bifrost (the rainbow bridge), which spans the first two areas for 120' (see map).

Hel's Tears: Once every 3 rounds, the sky rains liquid fire, as Loki's daughter cries for the passing of the old gods. Randomly target one PC, who must then make a DC 16 Reflex save or be struck and killed by a flaming meteor.

Weapons: All PCs receive weapons, attacks, and special abilities appropriate for the god into which they are transformed. All weapons and items are tied to their god, and cannot be used by other PCs. When a PC dies and a replacement PC is brought in, that PC always possesses his given weapon or item.

Transmogrifications: At the beginning of the scenario, all PCs are transformed into one of the Norse gods. Assign these transformations randomly by alignment. When a PC dies, his transformed role is assumed by the incoming player with a new level-0 PC (see PC deaths below). Transformed level-0 PCs temporarily lose their starting equipment, but keep their ability scores, bonuses, saving throws, hit point totals, and armor class, except as noted in the individual god descriptions.

Goals of the Gods: The Lawful team must defend the gates of Asgard and allow no members of the other two teams to touch the gates. The Chaotic team must likewise defend the world tree Yggdrasil, located at the rear of their area. The Neutral team may make a run for either side, or attempt to act as gatekeepers on the bridge, whichever they deem most appropriate as a strategy.

Rangnorok victory conditions: The scenario ends if one of two conditions is met. As is true throughout the tournament,

if all three PCs of a team die within the same combat round, the surviving members of the other two teams are declared victors and the scenario ends with a survival stamp awarded to all PCs still alive at the end of that round. The scenario also ends if any PC belonging to the Lawful or Chaotic teams is able to reach and touch the other side's defense goal (the Gates of Asgard or Yggdrasil), at which time the side who failed to defend their goal are instantly killed and the surviving players awarded survival stamps.

PC deaths: When each PC dies in this scenario, after the combat round ends, the action is momentarily frozen as a Valkyrie mounted on a winged pegasus flies down from the thunderheads above. The Valkyrie will dismount, reach into the body of the fallen god, and draw forth the PC's spirit, as the sky above sings in a chorus of a thousand voices for the fallen hero. The Valkyrie then carries the dead PC's spirit away to its final destination (Valhalla for the Lawful team, the holy mountain Helgafjell for the Neutral team, and dark realms of Hel for the Chaotic team). Play resumes when the spirit of the next PC entering the tournament re-animates the fallen godling. Gods revived in this way have full abilities and are restored from any in-game effects (such as a severed appendage).

Armaments of the Gods

The following weapons and magic items are given to the PCs at the start of the scenario. No weapon or magic item may be used by any PC other than the one for which it is intended. All weapon power or ability spell checks are 1d20.

Thor, god of thunder (Law)

Mjölhnir (war hammer +10) melee (1d16+10), missile fire (1d14+10, range: line of sight); SP hammer always returns to owner within 1 round, target deafened by thunderclap (even on a miss) for 1d3 rounds, +18 hit points.

Heimdallr, the all-seeing (Law)

Gjallarhorn (great horn +8) horn blast attack (1d20, range 100'); SP *wizard sense* (DCC RPG rulebook, p. 245), possess-or cannot be surprised; +16 hit points.

Tyr, one-handed god of war (Law)

Teiwaz (rune sword +9) melee (1d12+9); SP (versus Fenrir only: rune sword +12 melee (1d12+12); +14 hit points.

Loki, the trickster god (Neutral)

Guggnir (Odin Spear +4) melee (1d8+4); SP *polymorph* (self only), (DCC RPG rulebook p. 243); +12 hit points.

Fenrir, the monstrous wolf (Neutral)

Magic item: Tyr's left hand on a ribboned chain

Atk wolf bite +8 melee (4d4, critical hit severs an appendage); SP +14 hit points; versus Tyr only: wolf bite +10 melee (5d6, critical hit severs Tyr's right hand).

Jörmungandr, the Midgard Serpent (Neutral)

Atk venomous bite +8 melee (1d10, DC 12 Fort save or in-



stant death from poison); SP +18 hit points; versus Thor only: venomous bite +10 melee (4d4, DC 15 Fort save or instant death from poison).

Surtr, the fire giant (Chaos)

Atk flaming sword +10 melee (1d14, DC 14 Reflex save or target catches fire for 1d6 damage per round), boulder throw missile fire (1d16, range 100'); SP +18 hit points.

Ymir, the frost giant (Chaos)

Atk ice club +9 melee (1d12, DC 12 Reflex save or target is frozen for 1 round and takes 1d3 ice damage), boulder throw missile fire (1d14, range 80'); SP +16 hit points.

Hymir, the mountain giant (Chaos)

Atk tree club +8 melee (1d10, DC 10 Reflex save or target is knocked prone), boulder throw missile fire (1d14, range 80'); SP +14 hit points.

THE GARDEN OF FORBIDDEN POWER

Area 1-6 — The Garden of Forbidden Power: You find yourselves in a large rectangular garden of raked white sand and enormous smooth stones. Three ornate wooden bridges cross a pool which divides the garden in half. Six-foot wide brass bowls filled with fist-sized pearl-white stones rest at opposite sides, one accompanied by a wooden statue of Yddgrl some 15 feet away,

the other by a bronze statue of Obitu-Que, also 15 feet from the brass bowl. An air sculpture of Ithaa hovers high above the garden, surrounded by dozens of flitting, ethereal shapes. The garden is encompassed by a thick mist, but you can just detect a purple undulating hill to one side of the garden, and a number of terraced hills to the other. A four-foot tall wall surrounds the garden, guarding against a fall of at least 40 feet into the mists below.

The Hyper-Arena: Though not immediately apparent to the players, the PCs have been shrunk to an inch in height and have been transported to a tabletop zen garden on the cluttered desk of a mad sorcerer (the purple hill is the wizard's cloak, and the terraced hills large tomes). The sorcerer's zen garden features:

Brass Bowls: The stones filling the bowl next to the statue of Yddgrl are marked with the symbol of Chaos which glows a dull red. Those next to the Obitu-Que statue are emblazoned with the glowing blue symbol of Law. *Note that the stones provided near each statue are of opposite alignment to that nearest statue.* When a character lifts a stone of like alignment, they hear an ethereal voice utter, "Feed your master and gain a blessing of power." Picking up a stone of the opposite alignment results in the PC receiving a shock for 1d4 points of damage.

The Statues of Law and Chaos: The statues of Yddgrl and Obitu-Que have exaggerated mouths that are forced wide open. Transporting stones from the brass bowl across the garden, and dropping them into the open mouths of the

Table 1-6A: Blessings of Power

Roll 1d20 (x3)	Weapon Type	Weapon Bonus	Special Power
1	Battle axe	-1 to hit	Mutually Assured Destruction: On the first successful strike wielder and target both detonate and are killed. Everyone within 5 feet takes 1d4 damage.
2	Blowgun	(no bonus)	Pop Goes the Weasel: +1d6 damage on hit, but excited wielder must make DC 12 Will save or have head pop off in a fountain of blood.
3	Club	(no bonus)	Ring Around the Rosie: On a hit all within 10 feet (including wielder) must succeed on a DC 10 Reflex save or fall down.
4	Crossbow w/8 bolts	(no bonus)	Stick and Move: +1d3 damage on hit, wielder teleported to random location in area.
5	Dagger	(no bonus)	Turncoat: +1d3 damage on hit, but wielder must succeed on DC 12 Will save or randomly switch factions next round. Roll 1d3: (1) Law: (2) Neutrality: (3) Chaos.
6	Dart	(no bonus)	(no special power)
7	Flail	(no bonus)	(no special power)
8	Hand axe	(no bonus)	(no special power)
9	Javelin	(no bonus)	(no special power)
10	Longbow w/8 arrows	(no bonus)	(no special power)
11	Long sword	+1 to hit	+1d3 damage
12	Mace	+1 to hit	+1d4 damage
13	Polearm	+1 to hit	Bloodtaker: Wielder is healed for 1/2 of damage delivered on a hit.
14	Shortbow w/8 arrows	+1 to hit	Chicken Summoner: On successful hit a brood of chickens are summoned, wildly pecking the target for 1d4 rounds. (No damage, but target is -2 to all activities.)
15	Short sword	+1 to hit	Fireburst: +1d6 fire damage on hit.
16	Sling	+2 to hit	Death Scythe: On a successful hit, wielder can immediately attempt an attack on a second target within 5 feet.
17	Spear	+2 to hit	I'm Huge! With each hit wielder grows a foot, gaining +1 to attacks and damage. If +6 is reached the wielder's skin pops and he dies in a messy spray of gore.
18	Staff	+2 to hit	Every Rose Has Its Thorns: +1d3 to damage, and all foes within 10 feet must make DC 8 Reflex save or be wrapped by thorns for 1d4 rounds. Trapped targets can attempt to make another save on subsequent rounds and thereby free themselves, but failing these saves causes 1d3 thorn damage.
19	Two-handed sword	+2 to hit	Power of Grey Skulls! On a successful hit, lightning strikes for +1d6 damage, and all foes within 10 feet must make DC 10 Fort save or take 1d3 electrical damage.
20	Warhammer	+3 to hit	Vorpal Blade: On a successful hit, the weapon decapitates all zero-level foes; or does +1d8 damage to creatures with more than 1HD

appropriate patron will result in a powerful new weapon appearing in the hand of the transporter (see **Table 1-6A: Blessings of Power** below).

Lawful and Chaotic PCs appear weaponless next to the brass bowl filled with the stones marked with the symbol of their alignment. The statue of their patron on the far side of the garden is clearly visible. Taking a like-aligned stone across the garden and dropping it into the mouth of their patron god's statue results in a weapon of power appearing in their hands, a gift from their patron!

Characters of a differing alignment from a patron statue who approach within 10 feet of that statue will feel a growing electric charge. If they come within 5 feet they suffer a shock for 1d3 damage.

The Air Sculpture of Neutrality: Neutral characters appear on one of the three bridges, equipped with the normal items created during character generation, including weapons (if any). When they first appear, one of the ghostly servants flitting about near the avatar sculpture of Ithaa de-

scends and whispers: "We exist to serve, oh wise one. Command us!"

Rather than attacking during a round, Neutral players can elect to command the servants to act. Judges should be prepared to handle a variety of clever requests, but in general, the servants powers are constrained to these abilities:

Attack: The servants can attack anywhere in the garden, but their shocks are weak. (+0 to attack, 1d3-1 damage)

Push: Servants can deliver a strong shove, capable of triggering a Reflex save for someone on top of a stone or in some other precarious position.

Trip: Characters in the process of moving can be tripped: failing a DC 8 Reflex save causes the character to tumble to the ground. Failing a DC 10 Strength check causes any carried item to fall from their hands.

Carry: Servants can carry a willing target up to full move through the air, and are able to cross the pool, pull a character out of the water, or raise them to the top of a stone.

Bridges and Pool: Each bridge is some 30 feet in length and 8 feet wide, arching gracefully over the pool. Falls into the water 20 feet below only deal 1d4-2 points of damage. But a DC 8 Agility check is required to climb out onto the slippery sand bank, and for each round in the water there is a 1 in 6 chance the character will be swallowed whole by the giant goldfish inhabiting the pool!

Tall Stones: Each tall stone can be climbed with a DC 8 Strength or Agility check. Characters on top of the stones can only be attacked by ranged weapons or pole arms, and receive a +1 bonus to ranged attacks on those below. However, if the character takes damage or is pushed, they must make a DC 10 reflex save or fall to the sand below, suffering 1d4 damage.

The Surrounding Wall: Characters who cross the wall and attempt to leave the garden fall to their death through the mists onto the hardwood desk below.

Inhabitants of the Study

To complicate matters, a number of (to the PCs) gigantic occupants of the sorcerer's study can appear either randomly or whenever a judge wants to liven up the action!

Table 1-6B: Inhabitants of the Study

Roll 1d10	Result
1-5	Giant Army Ants: A mob of ants appear and cross the battlefield. Each ant appears 3' long. They move in a fairly straight line without lingering, attacking anything in range.

6-8

Giant Dragonfly: A seemingly enormous Dragonfly swoops in and attempts to acquire a quick meal.

9-10

Grim Paws the Cat: Appearing as a titan-sized beast, Grim Paws bats at a random character with a huge paw before bounding out of view. If the character fails at a DC 14 Reflex save he is immediately crushed! All characters on the battlefield must succeed at a DC 8 Reflex save or fall down; those on the stones must pass a DC 10 save.

Giant Army Ant Mob: Init +2; Atk mob bites +3 melee (1d4); AC 12; HD 1; hp 8; MV 30; Act 1d20; SP driven off when hp reach zero; SV Fort =1, Ref +0, Will +0; AL N.

Giant Dragonfly: Init +3; Atk grab +3 melee (1 hp); AC 10; HD 1; hp 7; MV fly 30'; Act 1d20; SP on hit, target must make DC 11 Reflex save or be carried away; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +0; AL N.



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APPENDIX N INSPIRATIONS

It is well known that DCC RPG was inspired by the literature of Appendix N. Less well known is that most published DCC adventures are also inspired by such works. As the publisher, I often ask authors to read (or re-read) Appendix N works to channel certain creative senses into their writing. The same is true of certain other 1970's influences.

In the following articles, several DCC authors explain how Appendix N inspirations have influenced their own writing for DCC publications. I hope this gives fans a glimpse of the creative process, and provides some inspiration for your own personal projects. For Goodman Games, these works have produced a steady stream of inspiration, as well as publishing opportunities. Our license to produce RPG supplements grounded in the world of Fritz Leiber has already been announced. And at Gen Con 2016, we plan to announce another license to publish the works of a famous Appendix N author – one you can read about in the following pages!

APPENDIX N INSPIRATIONS: PERIL ON THE PURPLE PLANET

by Harley Stroh



Peril on the Purple Planet harkens back to the fantastic planet-hopping adventures of Appendix N, where simple men are cast across the cosmos and into the roles of heroes by virtue of their physical strength, cunning and indomitable humanity. Often termed “planetary romances” or “Swords & Planets,” the genre is best embodied by Robert E. Howard’s *Almuric* and Edgar Rice Burroughs’ *Barsoom* series.

These are worlds of strange vistas, deadly environs, and mysterious technologies – yet can still be conquered by a good sword arm and clever mind. To DCC judges, these alien worlds offer the most precious of all substances: the Unknown. Every new monster bears the threat of death, every new treasure has limitless possibility, and the best a PC can hope for is to survive another day.

Our goal with the Purple Planet was to invoke those same elements – dangerous exploration, ancient mysteries and deadly foes – and fashion a new world ripe for discovery.

Working from *Almuric* and *Barsoom* we turned to the visceral works of Frank Frazetta, creating a catalog of visual inspiration for the Purple Planet. Hordes of slouching Neanderthals; helmed ape-men; hulking beasts, lurking atop ridges and creeping through fetid swamps; forgotten cities that stink of the breath of reptiles and burned wax.

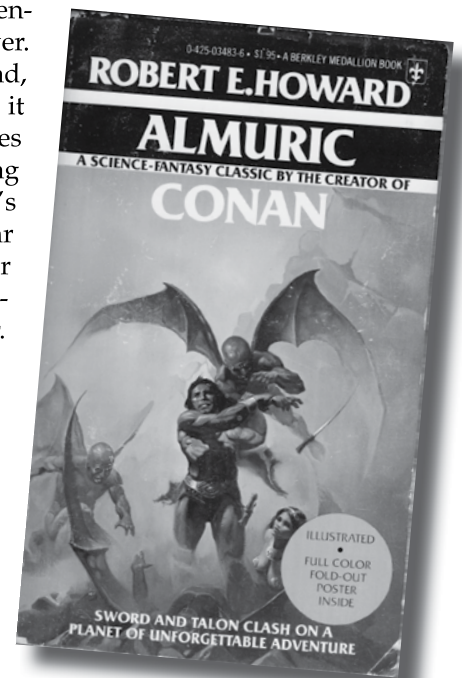
Those familiar with the art of the DCC RPG know Doug Kovacs’ cover art often informs and transforms an adventure. This was especially true for the Purple Planet. But whereas the dramatic cover for *Sailors on the Starless Sea* resulted in material changes to the adventure, the Purple Planet’s sprawling, panoramic triptych (part cover, part handout, all badass) had a more profound, subtle influence:

Kovacs’ painting for the *Peril on the Purple Planet* is argu-

ably the best cover rendered for any RPG, ever. Evocative, kinetic, and, most important of all, it created more mysteries than it solved, leaving space for each judge’s imprimatur. The bar had been set and our writing had to do justice to the book’s cover.

The balance of the world was born from a chaotic stew of science-fantasy sources. On reflection, the majority of the sources were visual, rather than literary: Moebius’ concept art for Jodorowsky’s unmade rendering of Frank Herbert’s *Dune*; Mike Grell’s *Warlord* comics; Old Osprey military artbooks; and the wealth of advert art from early issues of *The Dragon* (hundreds of games, desired, yet seldom owned). Add the melancholic strains of a dying world, whose inhabitants are caught in a futile, forever-war, and the Purple Planet began to come into focus.

What lies in store for the Purple Planet? (For all its epic scope, the original box set detailed only a single, lone plateau.) Jim Wampler gave us our first glimpse, but nearly an entire world waits to be explored. And your PCs – at the heads of their own warbands, armed bloodied swords and blazing pistols – are the ones to do it.



APPENDIX N INSPIRATIONS: AGAINST THE ATOMIC OVERLORD

by Edgar D. Johnson III

When Joseph gave me the opportunity to write DCC #87: *Against the Atomic Overlord* he began by giving me a reading list. Prominent on that list were Edgar Rice Burroughs' Venus novels, Margaret St. Clair's *Sign of the Labrys*, Sterling Lanier's *Hiero's Journey*, and Fred Saberhagen's *Changeling Earth*. He also suggested the comics *Hunter*, *Rogue Trooper*, and *ROM the Space Knight*. All of these (and more) found major or minor places in the adventure, once it was written.

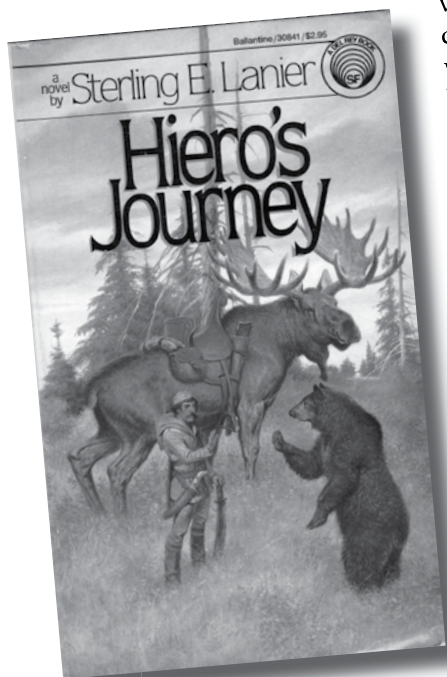
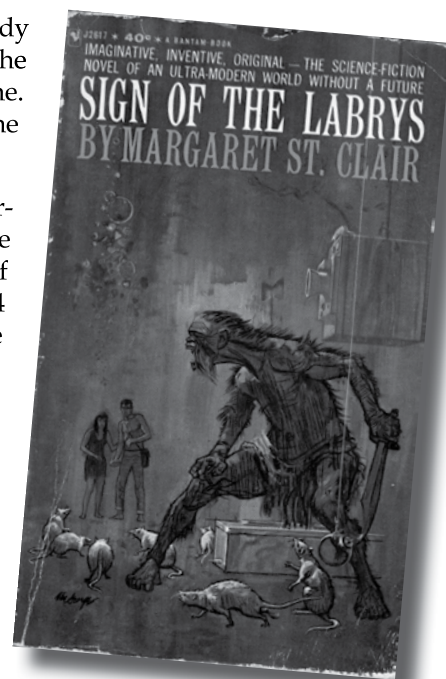
Joseph has asked me and several other DCC authors to tell our readers a bit more about how that happened: How does the literature of Appendix N get transformed into a DCC adventure? As he explained, "The goals are twofold: (a) explain to the reader how you can transform fiction inspiration into playable game material, and (b) inspire the reader to go read these original works and perhaps expand their own game based on them." That sounded, to me, like a neat idea. Here, then, is my response to those two goals.

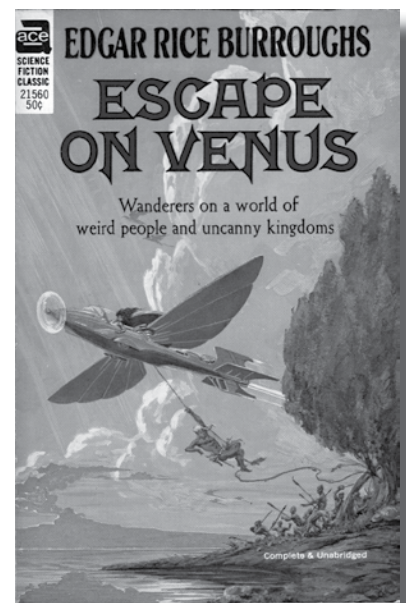
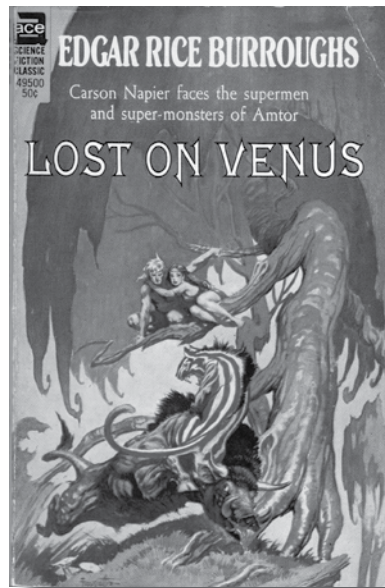
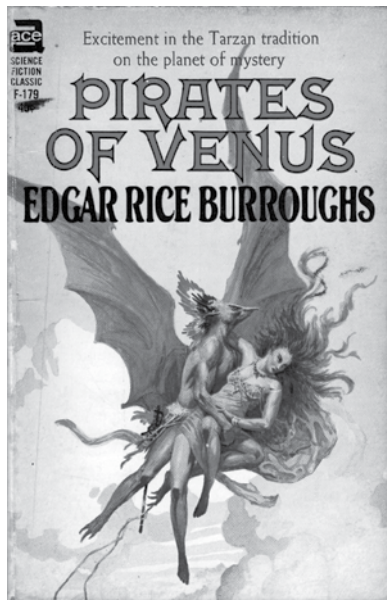
When I was commissioned to write my adventure, the Dark Master's initial instructions included several key themes, a "book report," and a basic outline for the adventure. He told me to read the source material that had informed his own inspirations and to deliver an adventure that captured three broad themes: (1) "Travel to an alien planet. Not another plane. An alien planet"; (2) "Sorcerer as oppressive emperor. Rebellion"; and (3) "Atomic war, post-nuclear landscape, missile silos, scrapped tanks. Of course this is a fantasy adventure so it's never spelled out in such explicit terms." And so the process began.

I'd be lying if I said it was easy. I've written elsewhere about the difficult process of writing this adventure (*Goodman Games GenCon Program Guide*, 2014). It's difficult to tell where Joseph's and my own inspirations coincide and diverge. I don't think what I delivered him was quite what he'd imagined at the beginning. It's even a bit difficult to tell where my own experiences and personal mythos are prominent, and where the Appendix N inspirations are foremost. Suffice it to say that, in the writing, I served three masters: Joseph "The Dark Master" Goodman, the Appendix N authors (some more than others), and the hidden recesses of my own psyche. Each contributed something

to the process. I've already told you some of what the Dark Master asked of me. Now I'll try to explain the Appendix N influences.

I started with Burroughs, and read the entire *Venus* series of his novels (written 1934 to 1970). Initially, these novels were the least of the influences on this adventure. Travel to an alien planet? Check. I didn't like these books nearly as much as Burroughs' *Barsoom* and *Pellucidar* novels, and didn't plan to use a whole lot more out of them, beyond the alien planet. Eventually, though, I also included another element of those works, one I didn't even think about at first: The idea for the various factions in the adventure. In the *Venus* novels, the protagonist interacts with separate groups of Venusians, each with different styles, and each at least somewhat antagonistic to the others. Oddly enough, it wasn't until much later in the writing process that this element of Burroughs' writing found its way into my own work. It really came through to me when I discovered that I needed my NPCs groups to have motivations and opposed interests, to really give the PCs a reason to make a choice about alliances with one of them. It ended up being one of my favorite parts of this adventure: Knowing that each faction had a particular perspective, and reasons to care about the outcome of the adventure. This is a literary principle that can apply to any DCC adventure. When your NPCs care about things, and have consistent motivations, then you have some idea what they might do (and how).





Margaret St. Clair's work, *Sign of the Labrys* (1963), had probably the least influence on *Atomic Overlord*, in terms of plot. The main thing I took from it was a vague idea about the Undercity, as her characters in that novel spend a good deal of time among underground rooms, changing locations, and (in game terms) potential adventure hooks. The protagonist has an overarching plan, but finds a lot of distractions along the way. It's a bit like judging DCC: You may have an adventure and a goal for your players, but what their PCs do in terms of actions, interactions, and so forth, may throw your adventure off the rails. That's not a problem, though. You roll with it, and everyone has a great time at the table.

Sterling Lanier's *Hiero's Journey* (1973) was one of the bigger influences on my adventure. In that novel, you find a hex-crawl through city and wilderness, and a dungeon crawl through the stronghold of some mind-dominating evil "wizards." There was a lot of rich material to choose from. The biggest elements I used were mind control (with the villains of the piece becoming the Overlord), the post-apocalyptic landscape with its mutant flora and fauna, and Hiero's "morse," a telepathic moose-horse hybrid, which was reimagined as the Urah's mounts in *Atomic Overlord*. I also was intrigued by the idea that Hiero, the title character, didn't go it alone. He was helped along the way by a variety of supporting characters. In the same way, I made sure that each faction had some NPCs who could help or hinder the PCs. Again, as a DCC judge, it's important to recognize that the players need people in the game world. They can't do everything alone, and don't know everything there is to know. Having good NPCs and NPC groups gives your players a handle on your game without having to be (like Hiero) mind-readers.

Perhaps the most important influence on my thinking for this adventure was Saberhagen's *Changeling Earth* (1973). In that novel, the protagonists are supported by a sentient artificial intelligence. It has a plan. It also is opposed by a deadly, almost demonic, enemy: Another intelligence, like itself, but one bent on destruction and enslavement. Failure

means death and worse for the heroes of the story. More importantly, for me, the "good" AI is willing to sacrifice itself to save the world. From that novel I wrote the NPC Itai (a vulgarization of I.T.) and found inspiration for the Great Egg. In Saberhagen's world, the device killed the good AI and made the world a more natural and magical place. It died that humanity could live. It also took out its nemesis in the process. Clearly this tension between salvation and destruction plays a big part in my adventure. There's only one way to destroy the Overlord, and it means making the world of Mezar-Kul (which is Turkish for "graveyard ash," if anyone wondered) a very different place. It also means that Bad Things also could happen, should they fail in this mission. Things could get worse.

Also, though I didn't enjoy them nearly as much as the novels, the comics that Joseph suggested, *Hunter* and *Rogue Trooper*, also made an impression. The main thing I got out of them was the idea that conflicts could last a very long time, and that long-suffering warriors are transformed by their participation in war—a bleak sentiment, one indicative of the times in which they were written: The Cold War and the post-Vietnam era. My inspiration for both the Overlord and the Urah can be traced back to this influence. I liked the idea that the Overlord (a battle AI, designed to pacify the city) could persist after its designers were long dead. I liked the idea that the Urah, genetic warriors a la the Rogue Trooper, could continue their dedication to the struggle over decades or even centuries, simply because that's what they were designed to do. It's not a pretty idea, but one that carries a great deal of emotional freight, for me. That brings me to the hidden influences, my own, and how my brain interacted with Appendix N in crafting this adventure.

In the end, the connection between Appendix N and adventure design depends on the interpretation of the author. My interpretation of these novels wasn't just from the words on the page, but also from other books, video games, films, and other inspirations. So, Margaret St. Clair and Sterling Lanier showed me what a post-apocalyptic landscape

looked like. *Fallout 3* (2008, Bethesda Game Studios) also had a profound influence. Fred Saberhagen showed me what an AI might sacrifice to remake the world, but the Great Egg had as much debt to the GECK device in *Fallout 3* as to *Changeling Earth*. The Urah were in part inspired by the *Rogue Trooper* comic, but probably more so by my own Marine Corps experience (Ooorah! Get it?), and even more so by the movies *Soldier* (1998), with Kurt Russell, and Ralph Bakshi's *Wizards* (1977). Finally, I listened to a lot of music while I was writing. While they are not direct influences, in the sense that characters or situations derive from them, certain bands created the right mood for this setting: Motörhead (1916, Deaf Forever, Iron Fist, and other songs about the hell of war), Sleep (Jerusalem/Dopesmoker, because it's one long dirge that captures the sense of futility I feel for the people in this adventure), GWAR (because they are aliens, and because the singer, Dave Brockie died while I was writing. Where do you think I got the name "Da'brok," anyway?), High on Fire (because they are so heavy), and others were in heavy rotation as I wrote this.

Anyone running a DCC game already knows that a lot of the influence on *Dungeon Crawl Classics* RPG is from Appendix N. When Gygas and Arneson wrote the "Original

Game" they were under the influence of Appendix N. But remember: They took that literature and made it their own. Their game and Joseph Goodman's are very different takes on that literature. That's a good lesson, I think: We need inspirations for what we do. We have to have something to think with, and to think about. The goal is not simply to imitate the originals, but to channel and inhabit them. They have to be read and appreciated, but we also have to be authors, and we have to be ourselves.

My adventure ended up being about Appendix N literature, but it also ended up being about me and my own influences, that is, my own ability to create stories. It's my sincere hope that our readers and players will also go back and revisit these great, old stories, but also that they will use them as inspiration to tell some great new stories of their own, stories written at the gaming table with their friends and families. I hope you get inspired by Appendix N, and give other people at your table some inspiration, too. I even hope that your stories might include references to the Purple Planet, to the Shudder Mountains, and even, I dare say, a planet called Mezar-Kul. The best thing about gaming is sharing a story, writing a story, with your friends. What could be more fun than that?

APPENDIX N INSPIRATIONS: THE CHAINED COFFIN

by Michael Curtis



n a world where Lovecraft and Tolkien have become part of the cultural mainstream, there are as yet unrecognized geniuses of the phantasmagorical and the weird awaiting discovery in the shadows, beyond the reach of the public eye. Some of these masters composed stories well situated in the realm of Sword & Sorcery, while others' works transcend easy categorization, being unique in setting, tone, language, or structure. Although a great many of the names on the famed Appendix N are easily identified as fantasy or science fiction authors, one name seems oddly out of place among those scribes of the fantastic: *Manly Wade Wellman*.

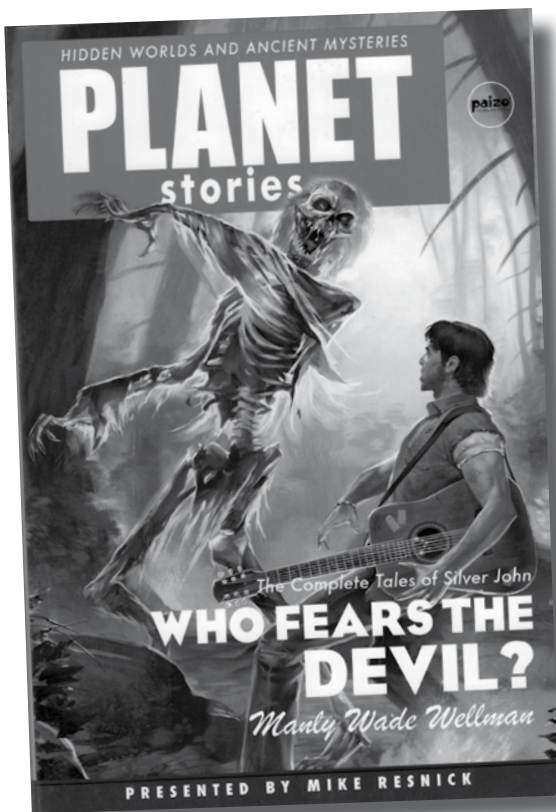
At first glance, it appears difficult to reconcile Wellman's place on the Appendix N list. He is, after all, the writer who beat William Faulkner out of the Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine Award and whose non-fiction was nominated for a Pulitzer. Respectability seems at direct odds with tales of the weird, the fantastical, or the futuristic, especially during the period Wellman was writing. Don't let the mainstream accolades fool you, though: Wellman's heart thrummed to the beat of the bizarre and the horrific, making him no less deserving of a place on the Appendix N list than Lovecraft, Leiber, Moorcock, or Burroughs.

To the reader unfamiliar with Wellman, I envy you. There is a fabulous storehouse of literary treasure awaiting you, one that will not only thrill and entertain, but inspire you to

plunder that vault of its jewels and use them to adorn your DCC RPG campaigns. This article provides a brief overview of some of Wellman's most famous stories—his Silver John tales—as well as tips on how they can be beneficial to your DCC campaign and provide guidance on how to transform Wellman's written creations into gameable ideas suitable for the playing table.

Wellman's stories, especially his Silver John tales, naturally lend themselves to the game table. This is due in part to Wellman's ability as a storyteller. He weaves details and descriptions with a talent akin to that of the old man sitting in the corner by the fire, telling yarns as old as the hills to the next generation. Wellman's language and mental imagery, often derived from the vistas and people around him, paint beautiful thought pictures. I suspect he'd have made one hell of a DCC RPG judge!

But mental pictures and pretty language mean nothing if they lack a good tale to lend themselves to. Luckily, Wellman's stories are fit seamlessly into those we usually tell around the game table. Most follow a similar structure: Silver John, the wandering musician and storyteller in this case, encounters evil and malignant forces in the wilds of the Appalachian hills and hollows. This is not unlike what the PCs face at every game session and judges looking for inspiration to introduce new material into their campaigns need only read a few of Wellman's stories.



The following few brief synopses are only a sample of the literary and gameable riches that awaits the DCC RPG judge in Wellman's body of Appalachian tales. In addition to the basic premise of each tale, I've also touched upon what the judge might take away from the story and utilize in his or her own campaign.

"O Ugly Bird!" the very first Silver John story, demonstrates what to expect in Wellman's Appalachian cycle tales. In this yarn, John crosses paths with a conjure-man who has the locals under his fiendish thumb, terrifying them with both his magic and a ferocious-looking buzzard that is decidedly unnatural. Judges seeking to give an evil wizard a more interesting familiar than a black cat or bat should definitely give this one a read, as should anyone else looking to start with Wellman's Silver John stories.

"Old Devlins Was A-Waiting" features a spell that transcends time and space, calling up a fearsome figure John must face off against. That figure is no less than Devil Anse Hatfield from the famed Hatfield and McCoy feud. For a judge with an elaborate campaign world history, such a spell might summon a wizard who once threatened the world with his magic or a warlord who caused the earth to tremble under his steel-shod tread. Can the PCs stop the spell or, failing that, turn back that which it called from the depths of history?

"The Little Black Train" is the tale of a proud woman suffering under a potent death curse. She believes she's shaken off the fatal enchantment and celebrates her renewed future with a mountainside shindig. Unfortunately, it soon appears that she might not have escaped her certain fate and it's up to John to turn aside the Little Black Train. Given there's a whole appendix in the DCC RPG rules devoted to curses, "The Little Black Train" provides some unique suggestions on their effects and how they can be countered. Sometimes you just need a good tune...

"The Desrick on Yandro" is the story of a greedy businessman seeking gold in the mountains. His rudeness and disdain for the customs and beliefs of the Appalachian people gets him in over his head with some of the stranger things

that call those old hills home. This story is a veritable Appalachian bestiary awaiting translation into game terms.

"Owls Hoot in the Daytime" presents the tale of a secret location high in the hills, a place of old evil, unnatural events, and a guardian who must keep that evil at bay. When John decides to see if there's any truth to the old legends, he encounters both a fabulous treasure and a horrific force that might predate the world itself. This one is a role-playing adventure in and of itself, one featuring monsters, treasure, interesting NPCs, and even a giant possum who might be more than it seems.

Once you've had the chance to acquaint yourself with Wellman's stories, you'll indubitably want to incorporate some of those wonderful characters, creatures, and magic into your DCC RPG game—assuming you can tear yourself away from the tales to do so! Luckily, *The Chained Coffin* has already done some of the work for you, taking inspiration from Wellman's work and other traditional American folklore to create a DCC RPG campaign setting unlike any other. But there's far more waiting to be developed into game terms and put to good use in your home campaign. Let's talk a bit about how to do that.

Translating Wellman into gameable terms can broadly be relegated into two methods: straight conversion and inspirational elaboration. Straight conversion is the most common way game masters adapt material from other media formats into game form. The game master encounters a cool new monster, magical item, or spell and decides how best to represent that thing using his or her favorite game's rules mechanics. Inspirational elaboration goes a bit further, challenging the judge to create entirely new mechanics or rules based on a concept or conceit encountered in non-gaming matter.

DCC #85 *The Chained Coffin* is primarily straight conversion. I was captivated by Wellman's Silver John stories and wanted to create a DCC RPG adventure and setting that called to mind the unique landscape and culture of the Appalachians, doing for role-playing games what Wellman did for literature.

Given Wellman's talent, converting some of his ideas into gameable form was easier than doing so with the works of a lesser author. Wellman's descriptive language provided a solid base to begin the adaptation process. Let's take a look at the monster the Abandoned from *The Chained Coffin Companion* and see how it I developed it, transforming a creature from one of Wellman's stories into a critter to haunt the Shudder Mountains.

The backstory of *The Chained Coffin* involves an ancient race who settled in the Shudder Mountains before the dawn of time, then vanished for reasons I'll not reveal here. These ancient inhabitants delved deep into the mountains, excavating strange ores and honeycombing the hills with mines. When they vanished, they left behind a race of monstrous foremen that still dwell down there in the dark.

This background element tied in really well with aspects of

Wellman's story "Shiver in the Pines," a tale which inspired some of the Shudder's own history. I won't ruin the story for those who've not read it, but suffice to say that John and some acquaintances encounter a creature I wanted to convert over to DCC RPG.

I started with the brief description Wellman gives of the creature in that story – "[It] looked like a big, big man wearing a fur coat; until you saw the fur was on his skin, with warty muscles bunching through. His head was more like a frog's than anything else, wide in the mouth and big in the eyes and no nose. He spread his arms...and took hold with his hands that had both webs and claws." – and used that as a basis for my version.

With these details in mind, I opened the DCC rulebook and started looking for a foundation to build upon, something pre-existing that would provide guidance as to how strong, tough, deadly, etc. my creature should be. "Big, big man" sounds about ogre-size to me, so I'll assign it HD comparable to that of an ogre as given in the rules. It has fur, but nothing about a thick hide, so I'll take the ogre's AC of 16 and knock it down a few points to 13. It's not a lumbering brute, so we'll bump the speed to 30 feet, assign a slightly weaker melee attack, changing the slam to a claw to better fit Wellman's description. As it dwells in the dark, infravision is a natural advantage and we'll keep the saving throws comparable. To finish off the Abandoned, I want to give it a special power or advantage to differentiate it from the ogre it started as. An event in "Shiver in the Pines" suggests the creature can grab you and drag you down into the dark, so the Abandoned gets a grapple attack bonus to reflect that. And we're done! A brand new DCC beastie walks from Wellman's work into your campaign world.

Inspirational elaboration is a little harder to do, but the effort is worth the reward. The satisfaction of creating something entirely new, be it for your own gaming group, a convention game, or publication, makes the mental struggle and sweat worthwhile.

When you elaborate on material, you're not simply filing off the serial numbers of something that already exists, but taking a kernel of an idea and cultivating it into a new, odd, terrifying, or evocative creation of your own manufacture. In many cases of inspirational elaboration, you might begin with taking a pre-existing mechanic or system (possibly one from an entirely different game system than the one you're playing) and tweaking or building upon it until you get something utterly new. Here's one example of how inspirational elaboration led to a unique new magical power in the Shudder Mountain game material:

Music plays an important role in the Silver John stories. Not only does Wellman use American folk songs as a means to evoke the Appalachians' unique character, but Silver John often depends on the song themselves to provide the lore he needs to overcome evil or to turn aside a malicious force. For example, in "Where Did She Wander?" it's a song that tells the dark tale of Becky Til Hoppard and it is music that undoes an awakening evil in "Can These Bones Live?" I

wanted to incorporate the power of music in the Shudder Mountains setting, but there was no direct correlation between Wellman's tales and the DCC RPG rules. I guess I'd just have to elaborate.

I could have created an entirely new character class, a variant of the bard, for example (a class which was inspired by Silver John if the stories about the early days of D&D are true). However, I wanted to touch upon the idea that music is universal; that anyone, regardless of class or race, could possibly learn a song or two that might possess intrinsic power capable of being turned against the evils of the Shudders or to otherwise impose supernatural effects. It made more sense to put the power into the songs themselves than into the person performing them. Thus, the concept of the Old Songs in the Shudder Mountains came to be.

I decided to use a simple game mechanic similar to a spell-check, but even more basic. Personality appeared the best modifier for resolving Old Song checks, reflecting the need for a forceful personality, personal charisma, and showmanship to invoke the music's powers. From there, it was simply a matter of including a governor of sorts, a means to prevent the PCs from whipping out an Old Song every time they ran into a giant possum that failed to take a liking to the party. That led to the Stamina cost for using Old Songs, a means to serve as both a check against misuse as well as demonstrate the physical toll of calling on the ancient power in the music of the mountains. With the game mechanics nailed down, it was just a matter of cooking up a few Old Songs to add to the campaign setting. I could have included more, but, like patrons, I thought the judges (and perhaps even the players) should create their own songs to personalize their own campaigns and cater to their personal tastes. And there we have it: a unique game mechanic and campaign-specific power that lends its own distinctive touch to the Shudder Mountains, inspired by the stories that Wellman penned.

Although this article focuses on Wellman's work, hopefully the lessons it seeks to impart are universal. A judge armed with these pieces of advice can go forth and plunder his or her favorite authors for new DCC RPG material, creating a richer campaign world and new challenges to confront the players. At the very least, I hope I've inspired you to familiarize yourself with Manly Wade Wellman's stories, either for the first time or to reacquaint yourself with his wonderful backwoods yarns. Even if you choose not to adapt those stories to your DCC campaign, the enjoyment of reading these literary treasures far exceeds the time and cost to track them down. Maybe I'll see you someday in the backwoods. I'll keep a sitting stump free for you and a jug of good hill liquor waiting!

APPENDIX N INSPIRATIONS: THE 998TH CONCLAVE OF WIZARDS

by Jobe Bittman



As gamemasters and game designers, I believe we have one fundamental job: to ignite the imagination. The individual elements of a game system, such as rules and mechanics, balance, art direction, and layout blend together to serve this primary goal. Games that enflame the imagination of participants on some level have more longevity than those that miss this mark—regardless of design flaws in the underlying game system. As a game designer, I aspire to create living games, games that are actually played, rather than dead games that collect dust on the shelf. Inspiration is the key to longevity.

Every experienced gamer can rattle off a list of games with clunky or broken mechanics that they had a great time playing. Why is that? In my experience, the success or failure of a game session (or a campaign) hinges on several factors outside of control of the game designer, mainly the skill of the gamemaster or participants, and the interest level of all participants. Though the designer has little opportunity to intrude upon this space, there are ways to influence it.

The skill level of the gamemaster (or a game facilitator in the case of GM-less games) has a large impact on the success of a game session. Having a rules expert at the table keeps the momentum of the gaming session moving forward. Many times the rules expert and the gamemaster are the same person. Experienced gamemasters will be able to gauge the level of player enthusiasm at the table and take corrective actions to make sure everyone has fun. This person often takes on the responsibility of taking notes, manufacturing props, and printing character sheets or handouts.

Gamemasters have the largest impact on the success or failure of a gaming session. However, the largest factor determining the players' interest in joining a gaming session in the first place is the overall interest of all participants in the game's subject matter. An easily understandable, and internally consistent game system is a good foundation, and a motivated gamemaster creates enjoyable gaming experiences, but the subject matter is the largest determining factor on initial – and continuing interest. In effect, the designer is creating a gaming simulation of a particular imaginative world. This could be anything from a licensed property, such as the *Star Wars* universe, to a genre-specific amalgamation of worlds, such as Tolkeinesque high fantasy.

In the '70s, war gamers were so inspired by their favorite novels that they created a new class of games to allow their imaginations to live in those fantastic worlds. In "Appendix N" of the *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons Dungeonmaster's Guide*, Gary Gygax acknowledged many of these influential writers by name. In a sense, the entire hobby of tabletop roleplaying games is founded on this desire to inhabit the imagination. Our simulations need to satisfy the desires of the audience to populate those worlds.

Now that we have an idea of what makes a game successful at the table, how do we incorporate these ideas into our game design? To me, gaming rules are a set of programming instructions lacking the breath of life. The program needs a talented performer to translate the material to the tabletop—the gamemaster. The best way for a game designer to connect with this performer is to become a great gamemaster. Run as many games as you can. Game with for your friends, family, and coworkers at every opportunity. Run public games at your local game stores and conventions. Find memorable source material, for instance, among the Appendix N list. Study the source material you are trying to simulate, and then write to the gamemaster in yourself. Commune with this spirit over your shared appreciation of an imaginary world. Write with enthusiasm, and your passion will inspire the reader who in turn fires up the imagination of his or her players.

One of the Appendix N authors that inspires me is Jack Vance. The adventure *The 998th Wizards' Conclave* was my attempt to capture some of the ideas that inspired me in his writing. To conjure up the world of the Dying Earth, I started by rereading the entire series of stories and picking out interesting elements. The overall setting of Ciz, the travelling space city, was inspired by Vermoulian's space-faring palace in the story, "Morreion". During my reading, I kept a running list of unique words and phrases that I later used to imbue the adventure text with a Vancian tone. A number of themes emerged including strange customs, magical technology, and colorful magicians.

Strange customs: The world of Dying Earth is riddled with insular communities governed by superstition and bizarre customs. Cugel the Clever (among other characters) runs afoul of the nonsensical rules of conduct in backwater towns as he treks across the countryside. In *The 998th Wizards' Conclave*, this theme is explored in the Law of Ciz, an ancient legal system enforced without emotion by the city's robotic protectors. Convicted criminals are imprisoned in cubes of solid matter and stored in the Tower of the Right Brigade (yes, that's a Bad Brains reference). The player characters have no foreknowledge of the ways of Ciz and must discover the proper mode of behavior on their own.

Magical technology: Jack Vance blurs the line between science fiction and fantasy in the Dying Earth series. Magic and technology are often indistinguishable from one another. Around the same time as I was working on the Vance-inspired adventure, I had just read "Roadside Picnic" by Arkady and Boris Strugatsky which features an alien technology typified by single-purpose devices that seem to violate the laws of physics. I combined these two ideas to create my own alien technology for *The 998th Wizards' Conclave*. In contrast to a magic item, the suggested alien technology of Ciz has a single purpose that may only be useful if the players use their ingenuity. For example, one item is a black

plate that floats 6 inches above the ground and can support 300 pounds of weight. By itself, the item does not have an immediate application. However, clever players could use the properties of the device to make their own magical item, perhaps attaching a number of plates to a boat to make a hovercraft.

Colorful magicians: The Dying Earth series is filled with flamboyant magicians like Lucounu the Laughing Magician and Rhialto the Marvellous. Vance's magicians have intensely driven personalities that sometimes border on the sociopathic. The spellcasters adorn themselves in ostentatious clothing that they feel befits their station. In *The 998th Wizards' Conclave*, these tropes are seen in the members of the Star Cabal in Ciz. Each magician hails from a different planet and has a unique style of dress that is detailed in the read-aloud text. The cabalists have their agendas and goals that are mostly at cross-purposes.

THREE CASTLES AWARD



ongratulations to two Goodman Games authors for their recent award nominations! Each year, the North Texas RPG Convention gives out the Three Castles Award for excellence in RPG design. The judging panel always includes old-school RPG luminaries, and the 2016 panel was Christopher Clark, Allen Hammack, Erol Otus, Merle Rasmussen, and Steve Winter. Michael Curtis was nominated for DCC #83: *The Chained Coffin*, and Harley Stroh was nominated for DCC #84: *Peril on the Purple Planet*. Both Michael and Harley produced brilliantly imaginative adventures, and we are excited their contributions have been honored in this way.



APPENDIX N INSPIRATIONS: DOOM OF THE SAVAGE KINGS

by Harley Stroh



oom of the Savage Kings was born out of daydreams, looking down the Roaring Fork Valley. Looking down from the continental divide one sees dark ridge after dark, rocky ridge, each masked in its own shade of gray, before the sun vanishes into the lowlands. It calls to mind the second stanza of Robert E. Howard's poem *Cimmeria*:

*Vista on vista marching, hills on hills,
Slope beyond slope, each dark with sullen trees,
Our gaunt land lay. So when a man climbed up
A rugged peak and gazed, his shaded eye
Saw but the endless vista - hill on hill,
Slope beyond slope, each hooded like its brothers.*

As a DCC player and judge, I am fascinated by that crux moment immediately following the funnel: when the PCs rise above the thronging masses, bloodied swords in hand, a diabolic patron's True Name on their lips. In a gray, grim world, a first level DCC PC is something to be marveled at. I wanted an adventure that would frame 1st-level PCs as dangerous outsiders and reavers in the mist, whose arrival – be it for weal or woe – always heralded violence.

From there it was a short leap to the epic tale of *Beowulf*, and its eponymous hero, coming to the aid of Hrothgar, defending Heorot against foul Grendel. How desperate the King of the Danes must have been to welcome a northern warlord into his lands, and how spiteful he must have been when a foreigner accomplished what his own warriors could not. The rude politics of Hirot, with its doomed infighting, desperate and duplicitous measures, all served to further muddy the waters, leaving the PCs unsure of who to trust.

The Hound of Hirot was drawn from Arthur Conan Doyle's classic Sherlock Holmes mystery *The Hound of the Baskerville's*. When aiming for non-gonzo DCC monsters, a good rule of thumb is to take a very easily imagined beast and move it one step into the weird. Players have a solid imagination as their foundation (nearly everyone has experience with the unexpected quickness of a dog bite), turned up just far enough that it becomes the *Other*. The mundane is made alien, and a PCs' horror becomes a little more real thanks to the players' imagination.

The remainder of the adventure fell in line with these sources. The Serpent Mound was drawn from Neolithic long barrows, crossed with the Native American Serpent Mound, and a generous helping of exaggeration and fantasy. The mound's false treasures and their death trap owe their mechanics and attitude to Gygas's *Tomb of Horrors*, and the water spirit is a tribute to Rose Estes' first *Endless Quest* adventure book.

Finally, the names of the harried, desperate folk of Hirot are all anagrams of the brave souls who were first to pre-order the DCC RPG. It only seemed fitting to honor those willing to take this first adventure with us.

While DCC #67, *Sailors on the Starless Sea* was written prior to *Doom*, *Sailors* was conceived and created during a period when the rules were very much still in flux; the elements that would come to define the DCC RPG were not yet codified. In contrast, *Doom of the Savage King* was written with the benefit of a solid, formalized ruleset. In this respect, even though *Doom* was written after *Sailors*, it remains our first, authentically DCC adventure.

AN ILLUSTRATED INTERVIEW WITH EROL OTUS





Erol Otus is a living legend among fans of classic role playing games. At the young age of 19, he moved from sunny Berkeley, California to wintry Lake Geneva, Wisconsin to take on full-time employment as a fantasy artist for fledgling publisher TSR. Although Erol only worked for TSR for three years from 1979-1981, he was influential in the appearance of iconic D&D works released during TSR's peak. His work appears in virtually every memorable D&D and AD&D release of the early 1980s. Erol's distinctive style is a product of many influences, among them a deep appreciation for fantasy and science fiction as an art form across multiple media – written word, physical sculpture, and illustration. And Erol *games*. You can tell it from his art.

Erol eventually left TSR and went on to many other projects. For decades he dropped out of the print-and-paper RPG scene, eventually going into computer game art. But he never stopped gaming. In the early 1990's he worked for video game publishers on legendary titles like *Star Control 2*, and was still playing tabletop RPGs regularly. He was an under-the-radar regular at DunDraCon and other events on the San Francisco convention scene. When Goodman Games set out to produce an old-school line of adventure modules in 2002, Joseph reached out to a friend in California, who knew Erol from the con scene. The result of that dialogue was the cover to *DCC #3: The Mysterious Tower*, written by Joseph Goodman with cover art by Erol Otus. From there, Erol proceeded to paint the covers for *DCC #0*, *DCC #3.5*, *DCC #4*, *DCC #8*, *DCC #10*, *DCC #13*, *DCC #18*, *DCC #25*, *DCC #30*, *DCC #34*, *DCC #50*, *DCC #C9* and *The Dungeon Alphabet* – as well as interior art on many more projects for Goodman Games.

Word got out that “Erol Otus is back!” Soon Erol's plate was filled with numerous requests from many old-school publishers, and he's been a busy man ever since. Things came full-circle when Erol provided interior illustrations for DCC RPG, and he has now completed a cover painting for an upcoming DCC RPG adventure module, which Michael Curtis will author.

Now, nearly 15 years after Erol's return to the industry, he sat down with the Goodman Games crew to discuss the whole journey: his early days at TSR, the work he's done since then, and everything in between.





Preview page, left: "A is for Altar" from *The Dungeon Alphabet*.

Previous page, top left: Cthulhu art from the legendary first printing of *Deities & Demigods*, subsequently redacted due to licensing issues in later printings.

Above and previous page, right: "G is for Geas" from *The Dungeon Alphabet*.



Above: Cover for DCC #8: *Mysteries of the Drow*.

Below: Some of the toys that inspired Erol Otus.

EARLY DAYS

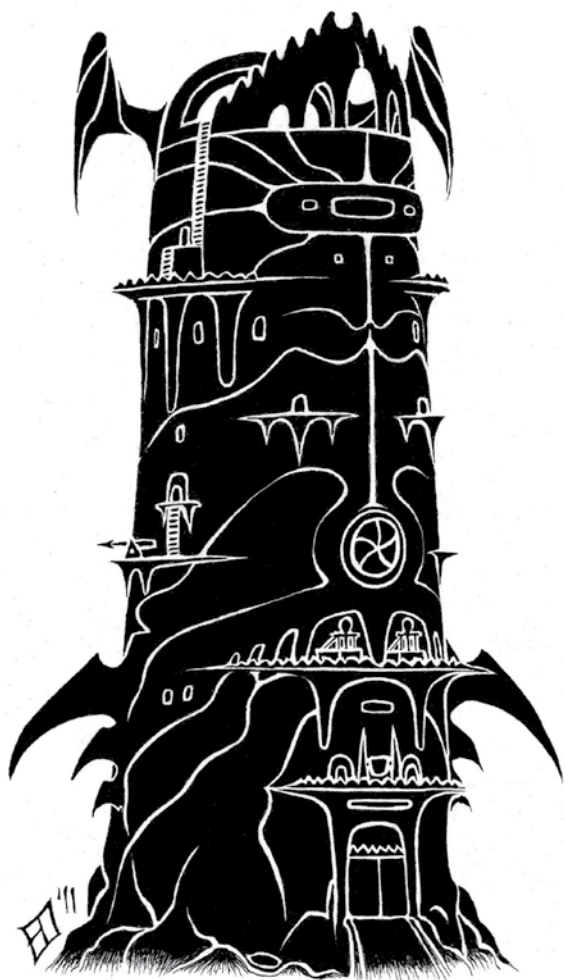
Where did you grow up?

Berkeley, California.

What games did you play growing up? What games do you still play?

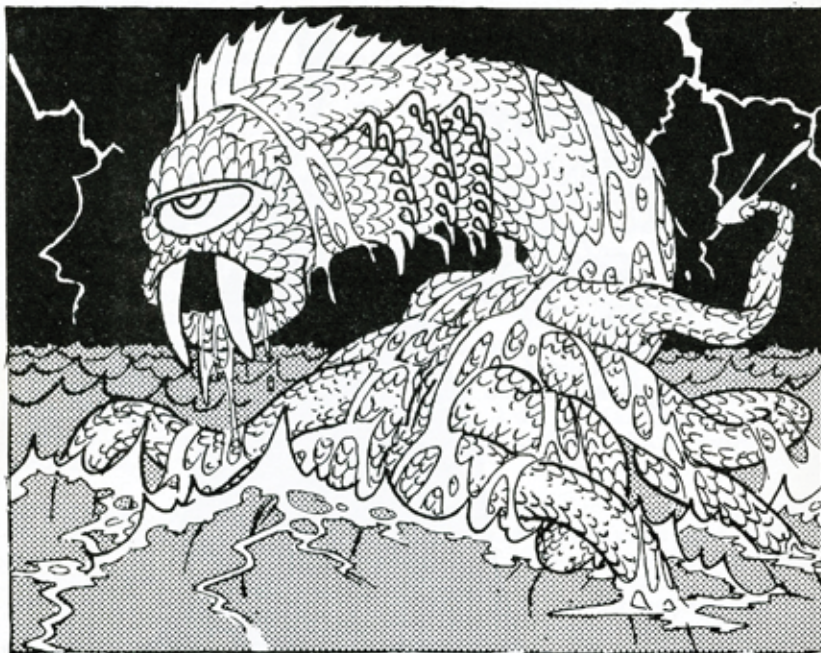
Growing up, I mostly made up games with figures like *Horrible Hamilton* and my collection of rubber monsters. Later, wargames on hex maps. *Star Fleet Battles* was a big favorite. Then *D&D* of course. Lots of computer games since the '80s and '90s. Currently *AD&D* 1st edition and the occasional *Arkham Horror*.





When it comes to making art, what is your favorite medium?

India ink on illustration board and acrylics on illustration board/canvas.



What got you into doing D&D art?

We had been playing a little *Chainmail*. Then *D&D* appeared in the little boxed set at our local game store. Once we started playing that, there were no further questions. I was already doing fantasy and sci-fi illustrations and this was a perfect fit. I started drawing magic items, monsters, and maps.

Upper left: "Mythusus Tower," a rarely seen T-shirt commission.

Upper right: "Unknown Sea Beast" from *Booty and the Beasts*, © F.A.E.

Lower right: "Odysseus," previously unpublished. From a project that never saw the light of day.

TIME AT TSR

When did you start working at TSR?

Summer of '79.

How did you get your job at TSR?

I had been sending unsolicited illustrations into the Dragon. One of them turned into my first published color illustration, which was written up by Gary Gygax: the Remorhaz. (I have since been informed that it may have been written by Rob Kuntz – no one knows for sure.) More followed, including the Ankheg. So my work was floating around the offices. When Dave Trampier quit, Dave Sutherland started seeking a replacement. He called me up and they flew me out for an interview.



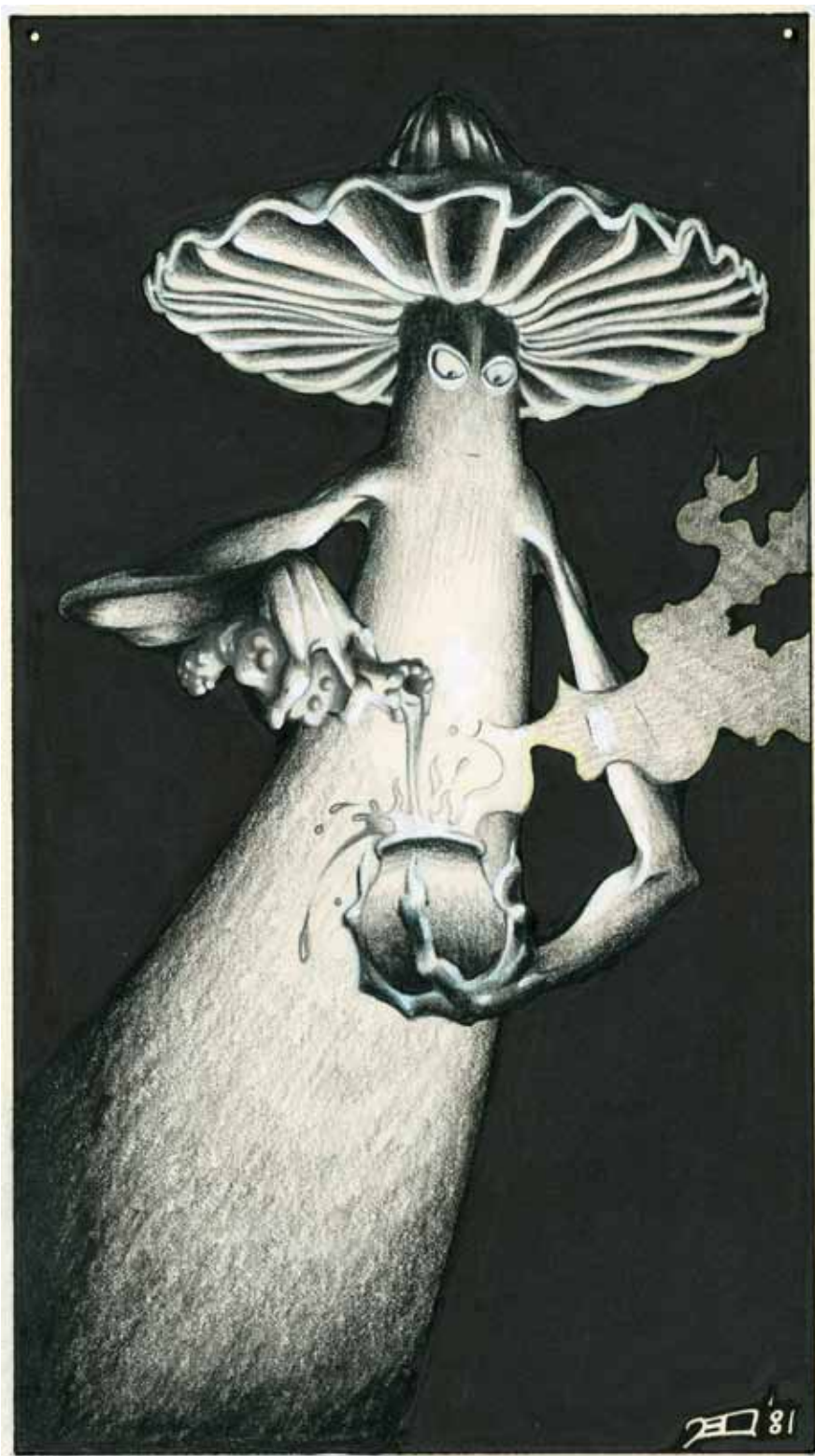
Above: Erol Otus (left) and Dave "Diesel" Laforce (middle) throw a pie in the face of TSR co-owner Brian Blume at a company picnic.

Below: A party during the TSR era. From left to right Zeb Cook, Paul Reiche, Erol Otus (in beret), Joe Orlovski, Lawrence Schick's head, Jeff Dee, Evan Robinson, Josie Schick, Skip Williams, Kevin and Mary Hendryx, and Pat Price.



Above: Paul Reiche, Erol Otus, and Kevin Hendryx. "Kevin had a lot of extra Scottish stuff."





Myconid Alchemist. From A4: *In the Dungeons of the Slave Lords*.
© TSR / Wizards of the Coast.

When you started at TSR, what was the company like? How many employees did they have, where was the office, what was it like working with Gary Gygax, etc.?

In the beginning I worked closely with art director Dave Sutherland. It was my first time living away from home, and he could tell I was a little shell-shocked. He helped me with finding some housing and I got set up in a little space upstairs at the *Dragon* magazine. The main TSR office was in a large rambling building on the corner in the heart of downtown Lake Geneva, WI. It had a lot of character. The Dungeon Hobby shop was on the ground floor, manned by Ernie Gygax. In the basement was a large great space for gaming. Gary I saw and talked to occasionally, but he wasn't working directly with the artists.

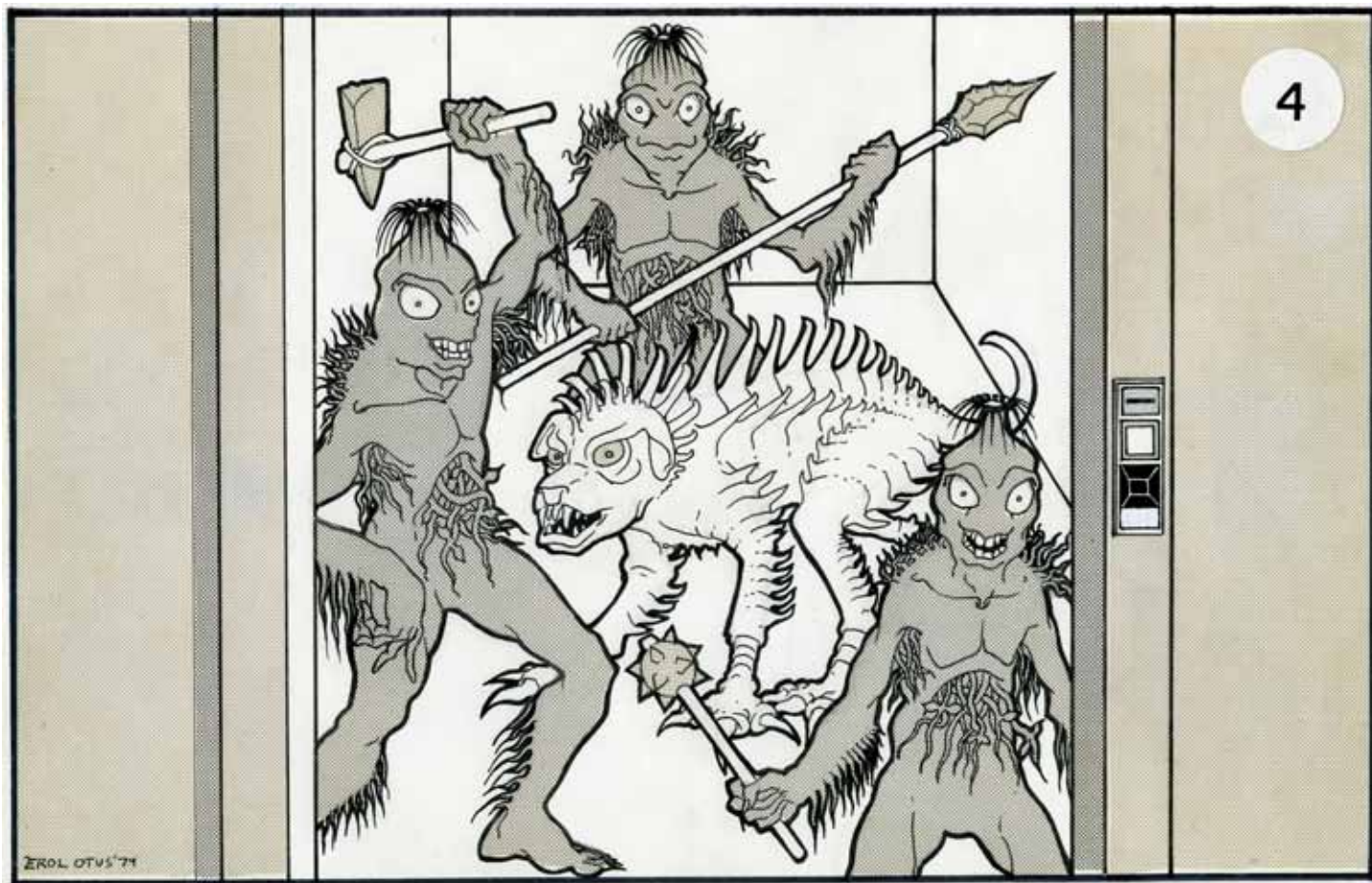
How did TSR change over the years?

I was only there '79-'81. During that time it didn't seem to change much to me at all, other than growing a bit. There was a problem in '81 when a lot of my friends were fired. That was a big change.

Who were your co-workers in the art department?

For a while at first, it was just me and DSCIII, then Jeff Dee, Bill Willingham, Jim Roslof (art director), Dave Laforce, and toward the end of my time there Jim Holloway came on.

Vegepygmies. From S3: *Expedition to the Barrier Peaks*.
© TSR / Wizards of the Coast.



What was it like working with the other artists?

I enjoyed being around other artists and seeing their work but I'm not very collaborative. We would coordinate to make sure our illustrations weren't contradicting some element of story or gameplay, but other than that I didn't actively seek out advice or opinions.

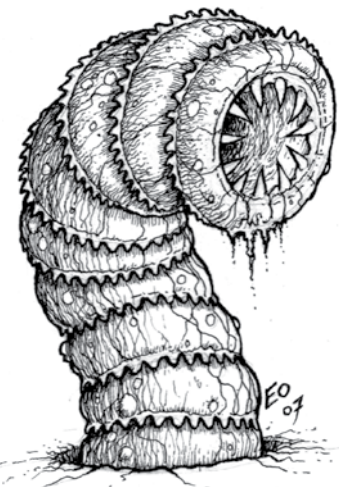


What was it like working with the TSR game designers / writers?

Day to day, they would describe the various subject matters up for illustration. It was fascinating work. I remember working with Harold Johnson and Jeff Leason on *The Lost Shrine of Tamoachon* and being very happy hearing the description of the Gibbering Moucher. Jeff made a strange sound, “vlee vlee,” describing the noise it made.



Gibbering Moucher. From *C1: The Hidden Shrine of Tamoachon*. © TSR / Wizards of the Coast.



Fiendish purple worm. From *DCC #52: Chronicle of the Fiend*.

How did you like living in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin?

It was a great adventure that I wouldn't trade or change for the world, but I do not miss the weather and mosquitos.

In Lawrence Schick's adventure *In the Dungeons of the Slave Lords*, there is a tribute to you using an anagram of your name: "A scroll of drawings of the demons of the Abyss by the great Drow artist Ool Eurts." What's the story behind that anagram? And are there any other tributes/Easter Eggs hidden in published modules?

I think Kevin Hendryx and Lawrence Schick came up with it. Ool is a good name. He signed one of the *Deities and Demigods* Cthulhu mythos illustrations. For more tributes and Easter eggs, seek the module B3 *Palace of the Silver Princess* with the orange cover.



Detail from B3: *Palace of the Silver Princess*. © TSR / Wizards of the Coast.



Tell us about the Dead Kennedys symbol on the Gamma World GM's screen.

I'm a fan of the Dead Kennedys and their logo seemed well suited to the outfit of the heroine in that image. It was a kick to put it there of course since nobody appeared to know what it was at the time.

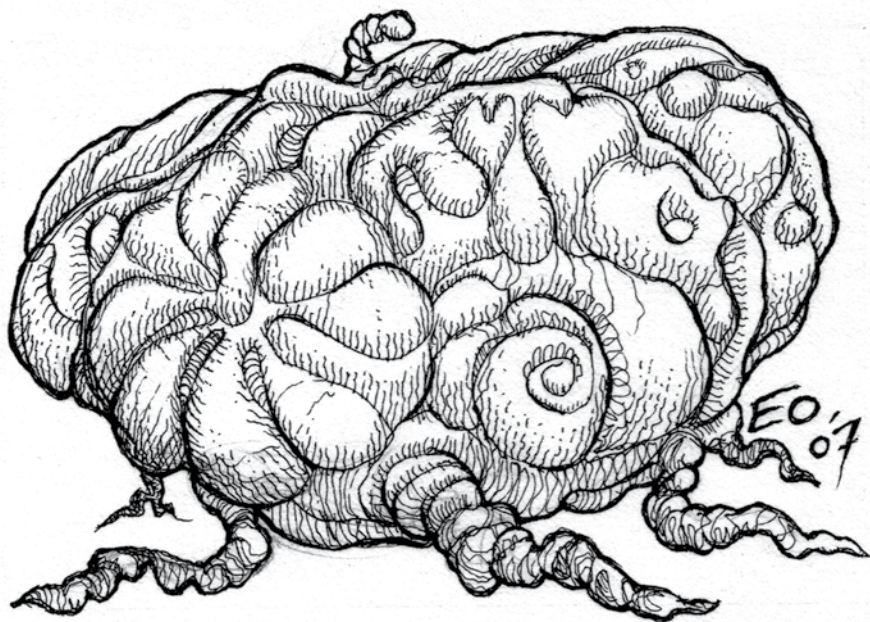


Jengenritz, burned svirfneblin ghost, from DCC #13: *Crypt of the Devil Lich*.

What led you to leave TSR?

I was 19-21 years old. The years passing felt long and full. It seemed to me that I had been at TSR quite some time and I was missing out on other parts of life. In addition, several friends had been fired so there was some isolation and resentment from that. Finally I was growing tired of TSR's "keep original artwork" policy.

Opposite page, upper left: "The gasbag," from DCC #52: *Chronicle of the Fiend*. Upper right: "The Kristol" is a magic item Erol drew for one of his campaigns in the '70s. It can banish an enemy to another dimension where he can only escape by adventuring through a series of four worlds, represented by the four levels within the Kristol. Lower right: interior illustration from *RPGA Newsletter* #3.



It's been said online that many of your TSR-era originals were thrown in the trash. Is it true? What's the story behind this? How much of this art still exists?

It is true as far as I know. There was an art director who decided to clean house and just tossed quantities of art into the garbage. I understand that quite a bit of the art was rescued from the trash by a person who then sold it. I have a small quantity of TSR-era originals and I imagine there are many pieces held by collectors who purchased them from the garbage bin phantom. I also heard that TSR held auctions as well, selling off originals. This

I don't know much about. Work I did for the *Dragon* and RPGA newsletter were not subject to TSR's keep original policy.





Above: "Zoq-Fot-Pik" from *Star Control 2*. © Atari. Below: The Tandelou, from *Starflight III*. It looks pixellated by modern standards but was state-of-the-art video game illustration in its time.

TIME AFTER TSR

What game-related projects did you work on after TSR?

Shortly after TSR, Paul Reiche, Lawrence Schick and I worked on some projects, but none made it to the publishing stage. I did some freelance work for computer games while working full-time at Island Graphics, a graphics software developer. Most notable would be some artwork, music, and writing for *Star Control 2*. Eventually I moved full-time into computer games.

The other computer game I've worked on that is worth mentioning is the recent *Skylander* series, which is very good.

Did you stay "in the industry" or migrate to other occupations?

After leaving TSR, I went back to UC Berkeley and studied painting. After that I attended the Academy of Art in SF as an illustration major. While at



school I worked part time for Unison World, a graphics software developer. In 1985 I started full-time at Island Graphics. In 1993 I began working at game developer Spectrum Holobyte/MicroProse as a lead artist. After several name and ownership changes that studio closed in 2000. I worked for Games.com until 2001 when I joined Toys For Bob.

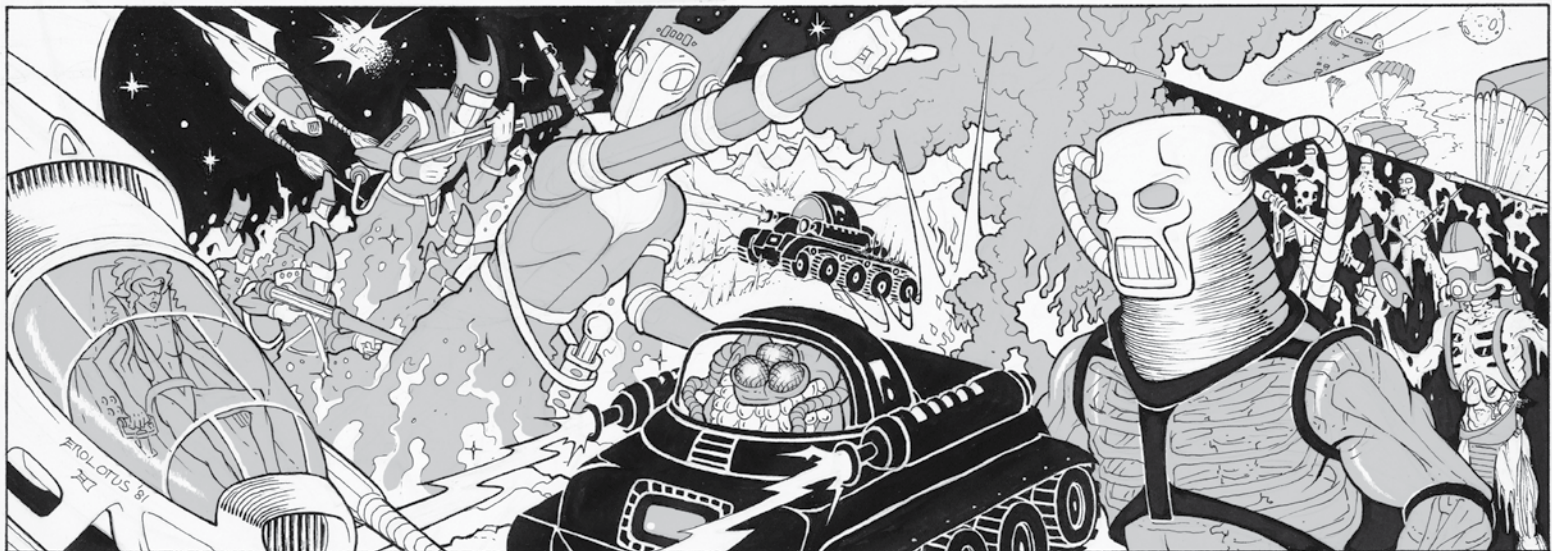
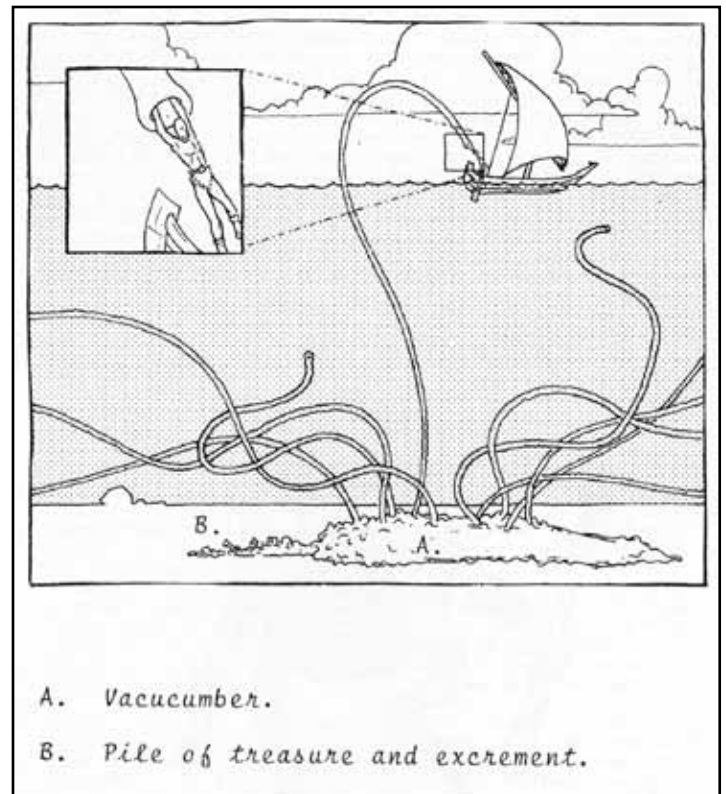
GAMING

What is your favorite game?

AD&D 1e. but I've enjoyed many computer games quite a bit starting in the early '80s with *Archon: The Light and the Dark*, then in the '90s with *Star Control 2*.

Do you play in an active RPG campaign?

Yes. We have a couple of 1e campaigns going, Owen Hershey's game that started in 2004 and my Island Town campaign begun in 2008. Also a 5e game has started up.



Top: "The Vacuumer" from *Booty and the Beasts* © F.A.E.

Bottom: From the *Revolt on Antares* mini-game by TSR. © TSR / Wizards of the Coast



What games have been your favorite over the years? Have you always loved D&D or did you spend time on other games?

D&D is number one but I've enjoyed many computer games quite a bit starting back in the early '90s with *Star Control 2*, *Doom* and its descendants, RTS beginning with *Dune II*, then *Command & Conquer*, and *Warcraft*. Currently I play MMORPGS.

How does your art influence your gaming, and vice versa?

This comes most into play when I am DMing and illustrating new monsters, magic items, and other things the players might encounter. I have a great preference for games that use figures on a plot board with the maps for encounters drawn out. These visuals are not only fun, but they open up a level of game play detail otherwise not possible.

Do you run conventional D&D games or create your own adventures? Are your own adventures as trippy as your art?

Conventional in that they use 1e rules, but will usually include some new mechanics. And they are original content. Trippy I can't say but I try to surprise and entertain myself with what I create and hope that resonates with the players/audience.

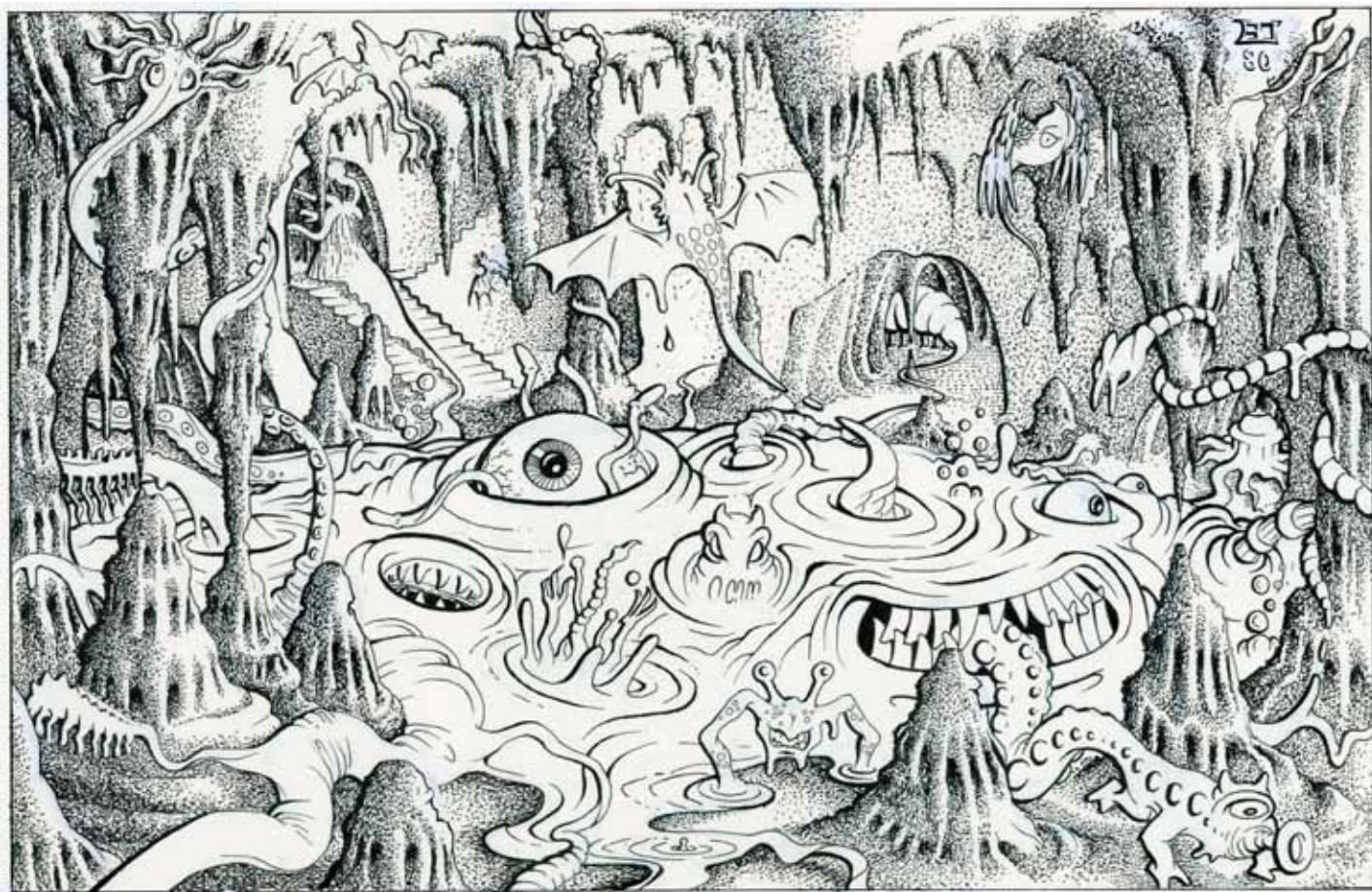
Above: Cover to DCC #30: *Vault of the Dragon Kings*.

Opposite page: Album art for A Lord Weird Slough Feg, "Down Among The Deadmen."

Was the distinctive style we know you by always there to some extent or did it emerge over time?

There's some kind of constant, but it does undergo changes over time. These days I'm more conscious about how style can be adjusted based on the project. In the past I'd think about the content of the illustration and the medium I was using, but not style. It just happened.





What keeps your art so refreshingly weird?

That's a nice description. Thinking about this, I'm coming up with answers that could get a bit long. A good way to put it is that I can't do it any other way and be happy with my work.

Many of us love your Cthulhu art in the 1E *Deities & Demigods*. What is your favorite Lovecraft story? If Goodman Games publishes a *Cthulhu Alphabet*, will your work grace its pages?

"The Statement Of Randolph Carter" is my favorite. I heard Fritz Leiber read this on Halloween night 1975. I was reading Lovecraft at the time, but had not yet read this one. It really scared me. I wasn't sure of the date, but the interwebs reveal much. Thank you *Berkeley Barb* for your web archive of period newspapers!

I hope there is a *Cthulhu Alphabet* and that I can contribute to it.

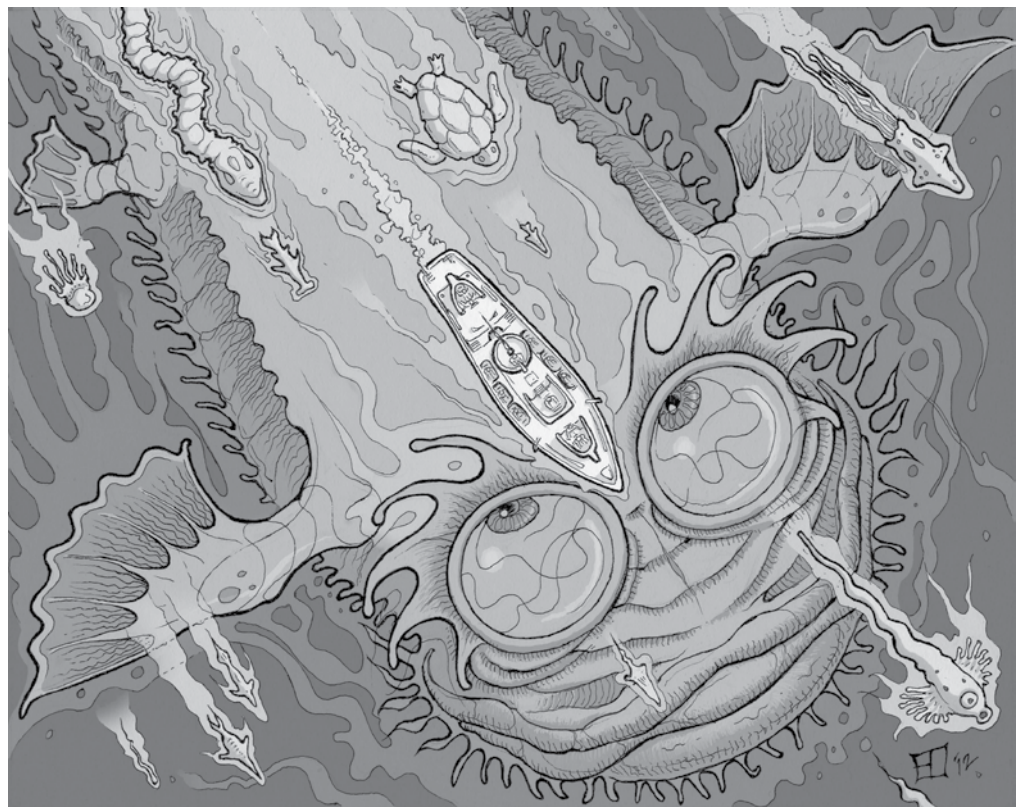
What artistic techniques did you use when you started at TSR?

Ink on illustration board and paper. Acrylic on illustration board. There was also an interesting technique to produce the monochrome color module covers and playing aids. I would draw a separate black and white illustration for each different density of the color, then these would be aligned with registration marks. The final color piece existed nowhere except on the printed products. The cover for Non-Player Character Records is a good example.



What techniques do you use now? How are they different?

The same but with the addition of some amount of digital work. In some cases all the coloring is added to a pen and ink drawing. Sometimes all that's needed is some touch up or adjustments after scanning.



Opposite page: Shub Niggurath, from *Deities & Demigods*.
© TSR / Wizards of the Coast.

Upper right: A favorite monster drawing from childhood

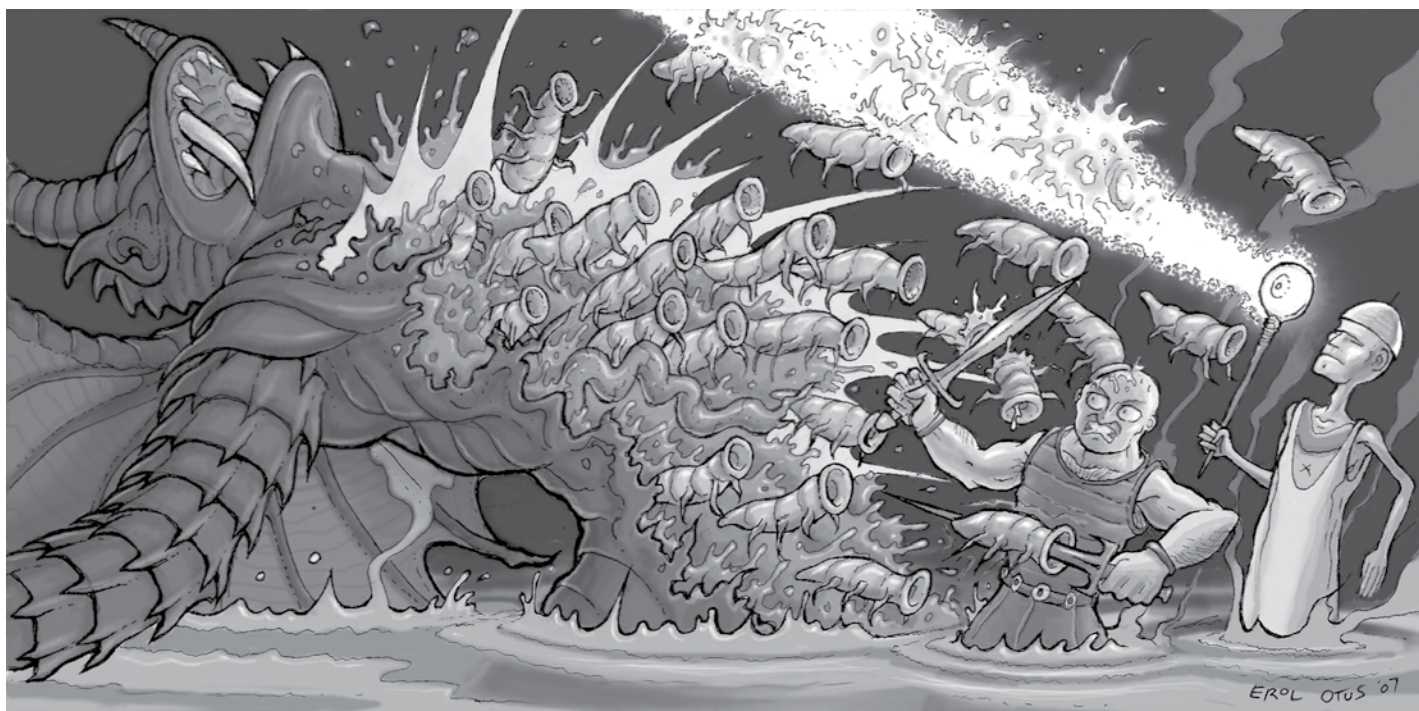
Lower right: "Taloonan," from Erol's renowned *Island Town* adventure.



What are your thoughts on working digitally versus in pen-and-ink and paint?

Digital work is a great time/labor saver. This comes to mind every time I begin an acrylic painting and need to mix up the colors I'm going to use. Digital also gives great freedom to explore without fear: undo! At the same time something is lost. There is no physical original and there is something brave about using the physical media.





Opposite page, top: Cover art for *Non-Player Character Records*. © TSR / Wizards of the Coast

Opposite page, bottom: Concept sketch for a computer game monster.

Above: A pit fiend being destroyed, from level 13 of *DCC #51: Castle Whiterock*.

Below: Cover to *DCC #18: Citadel of the Demon Prince*.



How do you stay inspired?

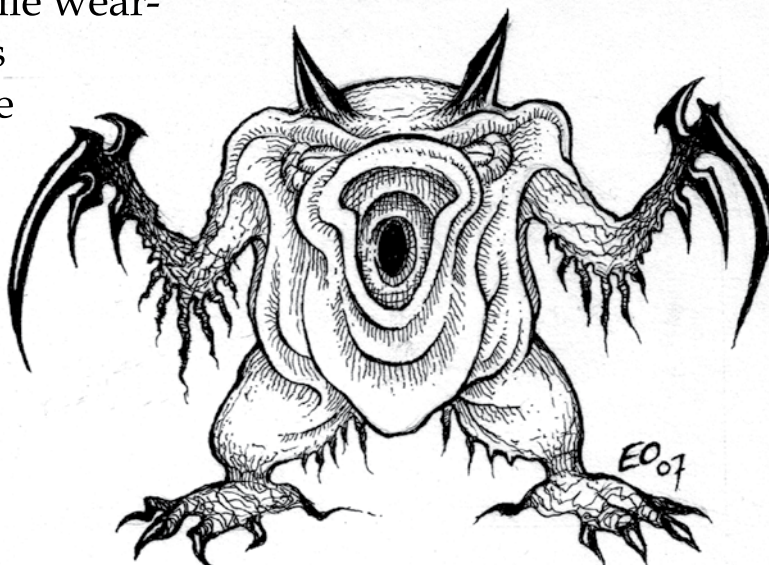
Every piece is an unknown challenge. An opportunity to bring something about that never could have been otherwise.

In many of your famous paintings, you create light and shadow by containing the light source within the frame. It's a torch in the cover of the Basic Moldvay D&D, and your cover for *Tomb of Horrors*. It's light shining through an open doorway in the cover of *Dragon 55*. It's the illumination from a magic ray in the cover of *Dwellers of the Forbidden City*. Many of your contemporaries did not do this, instead having the lighting coming from off-frame. What's your rationale for doing this, and are there times when you feel it isn't appropriate?



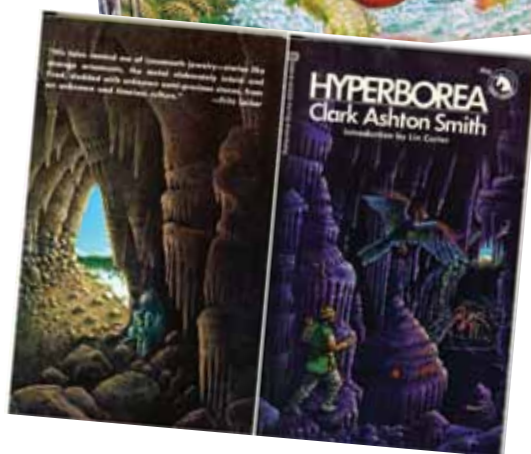
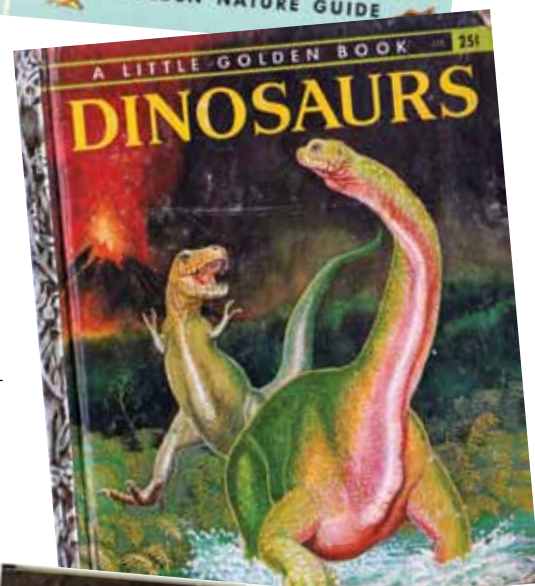
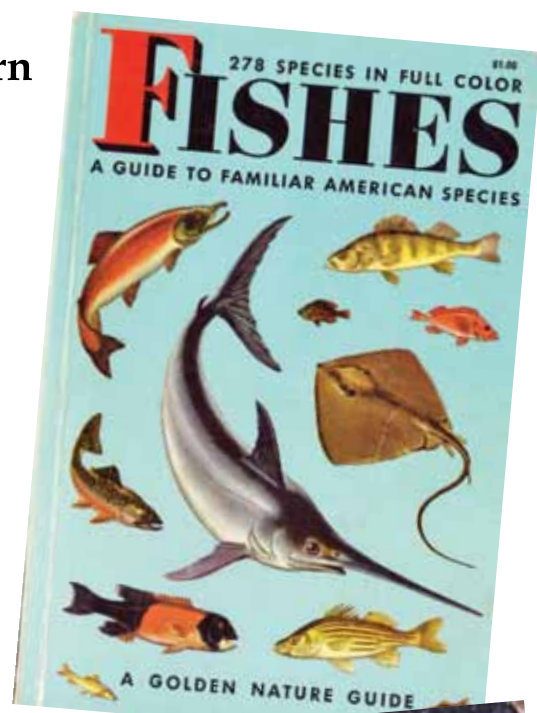


Torches and light sources were a big part of my early D&D gameplay experience. So was cargo capacity for loot. I often tried to show adventures working with these elements. Dungeons can be dark and I wanted to provide a reason why things could be seen. At the same time, light sources like these are a good way to affect the mood. Sometimes I also drew characters very short on equipment and garments. This was partly a homage to fantasy artwork in which the heroes often appeared in some harsh climate fighting a terrible foe while wearing nothing but a loincloth. It's also nice to consider how, if the magic was powerful enough, this would make sense. For example, some tiny shorts that granted an armor class greater than any sort of normal armor, but was not cumulative with other garments.



Some of the works that inspired many modern artists were the TSR-era books like *Monster Manual* and *Deities and Demigods*, as well as comic books and other pop culture stuff. Many artists would try to copy the drawings by you, Trampier, Sutherland, and others, and apply what they could learn to their own fantasy drawings. What work or artists did you admire and emulate before you became a professional?

Natural history books from my childhood were a big inspiration. Dr. Seuss's "Clark" from *One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish*, the *Sleep Book*, and *The 500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins*. Covers of fantasy and sci-fi paperbacks by Frazetta and Roy G. Krenkel. Black and white horror magazines like Warren's *Creepy* containing work by Bernie Wrightson. Moebius in *Heavy Metal*. And there is this cover of Clark Ashton Smith's *Hyperborea* that sticks in my mind.



Chalakasens, from DCC #13: *Crypt of the Devil-Lich*. The first-place scorer in the Goodman Games Gen Con 2004 Dungeon Crawl Classics tournament won a drawing of his character by Erol Otus. This is that drawing.



Three wizards dividing treasure, an image inspired by the works of Jack Vance. From the Moldvay *D&D Basic Set*. © TSR / Wizards of the Coast.

Some artists create work that motivate authors to write. Some authors pen images that beg to be turned into visual art. Which authors/works do you find inspirational?

Jack Vance. The way he creates serious deadly situations infused with humor just feels so right. When I was drawing the three wizards dividing treasure, I heard them speaking to each other in Vancian dialogue. I still do.

Lovecraft and Clark Ashton Smith for otherworldliness and things man was not meant to know.

Howard and Burroughs. Tolkien.

It can be assumed that your work draws inspiration from fantasy and science fiction sources, be they fiction, motion pictures, comics, etc. What other genres influence you and do you think your fans would be surprised to learn of those?

Paintings by Kandinsky, Miro, Klee, De Kooning, and Tobey have a direct influence on my abstract paintings, and an influence on my illustration's composition and rhythm.

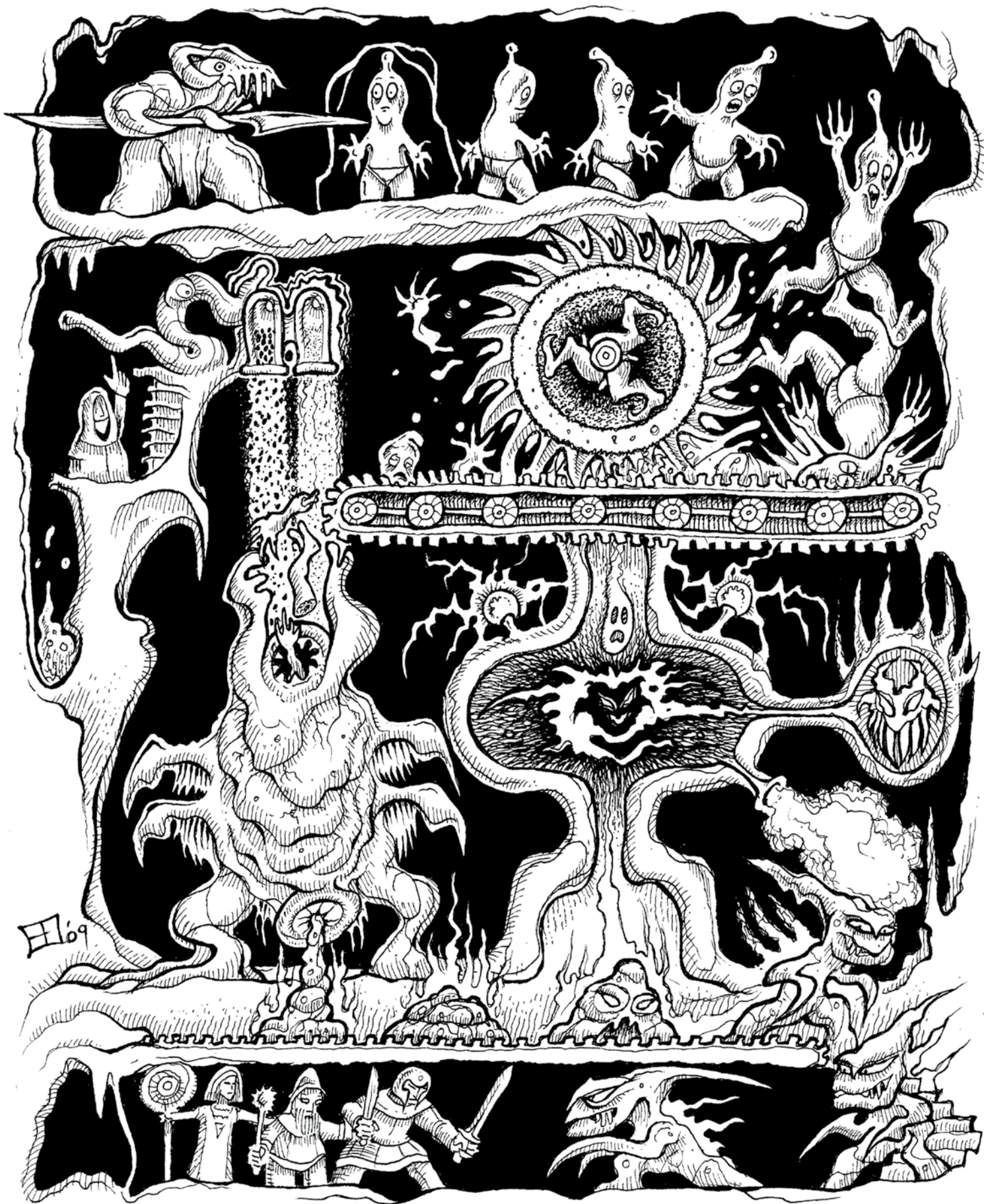
Below: Abstract painting. Personal work.



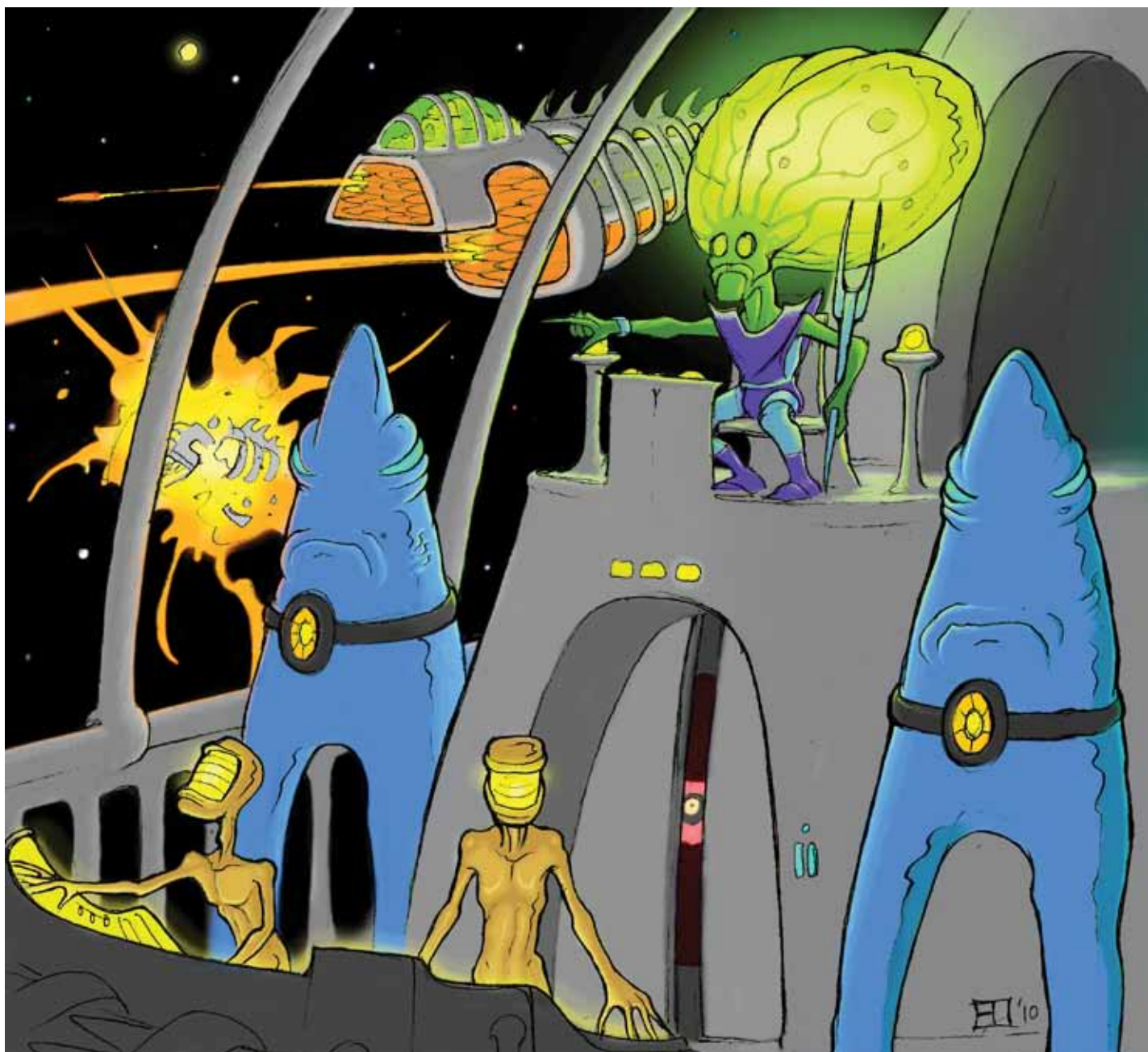
Do you ever get “artist’s block?” If so, what do you do to move yourself past it? Is there any common element of fantasy illustration (swords, helmets, armor, wounds, spell effects, chainmail bikinis, etc.) that you just never get tired of drawing?

The time it takes to come up with an idea at the start of illustration varies. If it's taking longer than expected, I stop thinking about it. Then later, while doing something unrelated, it will appear.

I never get tired of drawing wounds, spell effects, monsters and their monster parts. Also unusual human faces. Hats/helms. Magic items.



"Z is for Zowie," from the *Dungeon Alphabet*.



Most DCC fans will connect your name with the work you did at TSR, but what was the project you have worked on (RPG-related or not) that you really enjoyed and perhaps felt didn't get the attention it deserved?

Fight On! magazine is packed with goodness. *Shadow out of Providence*, by Ezra Claverie, and *Dwimmermount*, a mega-dungeon.





Above: "Shoggoths Feeding," from *Shadow Out of Providence*.

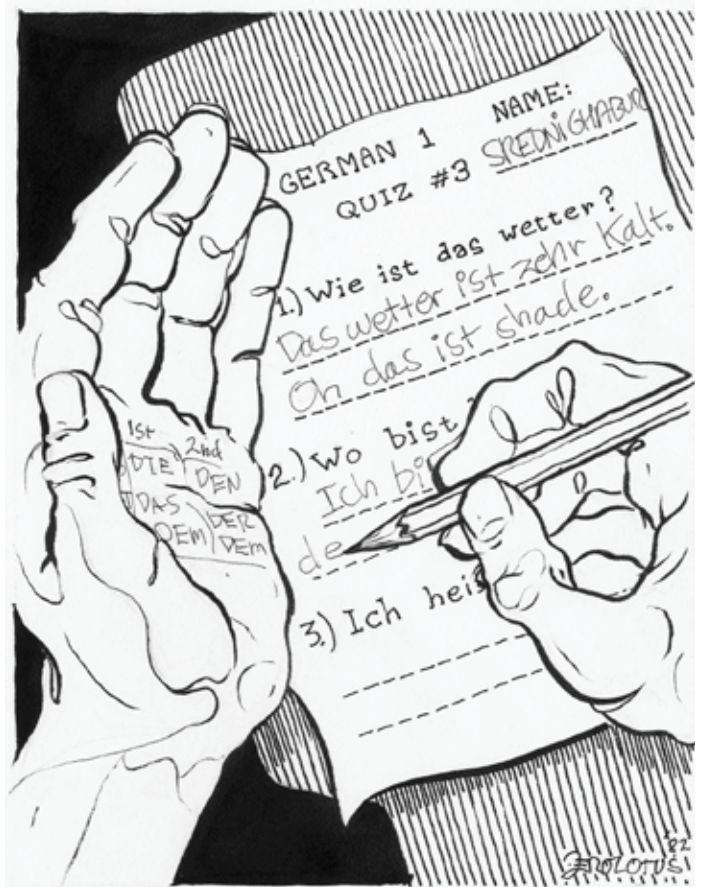
Opposite page, top: Cover for *Fight On!* #8.

Opposite page, bottom: Sketch for *Shoggoths Feeding*.



Many gamers have never heard of *Alma Mater* but for those who have, it's a cult favorite. How did *Alma Mater* come about? Did it really get banned from Gen Con? Looking back on it decades later, what do you think of it now?

Some Canadian gentlemen contacted me about the project. A cool idea. I took up the assignment, which ending up being a lot of fun. This was done after I had left TSR and moved back to Berkeley so I was physically far away from Gen Con at the time. I heard about it being banned at the con and thought "that's stupid." There are some good illustrations in there.





Opposite page, top: "Turms and Three Liches," from *Dwimmermount*.

Above: Cover for DCC #50: *Vault of the Iron Overlord*.

Opposite page, bottom: "Cheating At the German Test," from *Alma Mater*.

Bottom: Cover for DCC #34: *Cage of Delirium*.





As I review the art that will go with this interview, I'm once again reminded of your fondness for the color green. Many of the cover paintings you did for Goodman Games have a dominant color scheme of a murky olive green. Why do you paint with this color so often? What about it appeals to you so much?

I do like green, no question about that. It's versatile. Happy things, terrible things, all can benefit from green. I believe it's true that humans can see more greens than any other colors.

Above: Cover for DCC #4: *Bloody Jack's Gold*.

Opposite page, top: Cover for DCC #C9: *Tomb of the Blind God*.

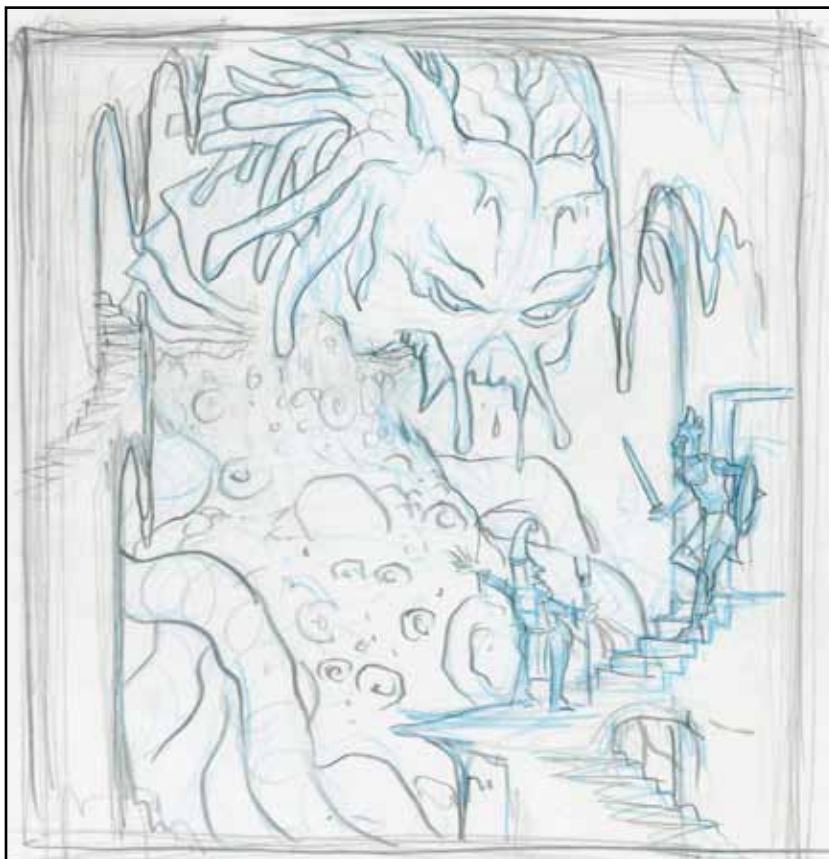
Opposite page, bottom: Cover for DCC #25: *The Dread Crypt of Srihoz*.



The color green also figures prominently in one of your most famous paintings, the cover art to *Dragon* #55. What is the story behind this painting? What inspired it? What is this image titled, in your mind?

While on staff at TSR I did the occasional freelance piece for the *Dragon* magazine. These works were not subject to TSR's "keep originals" policy. This was one of two paintings I created for covers. The assignment was open; i.e., come up with a painting and if they liked it they'd use it. It's about multiple things, mainly how the audacity of the adventurer can sometimes be misplaced. I've thought about what this might be titled in the past and never settled on anything. Perhaps a contest is in order.

Publisher's note: send your title suggestions to info@goodman-games.com along with a note on how Erol's work has influenced you! Our favorite entry will win something cool! Deadline of December 31, 2016; winner will be selected after that.



Above: A study for the cover of *Dragon* #55.

Opposite page: The cover art for *Dragon* #55, scanned directly from the original art. Compare this to the original *Dragon* cover and you will see this scan contains the full margin edges of the illustration, which were originally cropped on the *Dragon* publication.

Did you paint any other covers for *Dragon*?

I only had one *Dragon* cover published. The other painting I submitted was "The Smiling Drow." It was rejected as a cover because of the human embryo earrings it was wearing. Instead it was published on the interior pages of *Dragon* and later included in the book *The Art of the Dragon Magazine*.







Tell us about "The Thing Wall," the painting you've created for an upcoming DCC RPG adventure module.

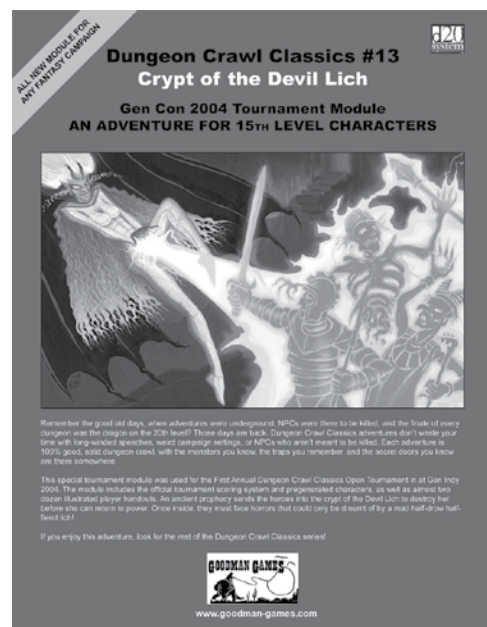
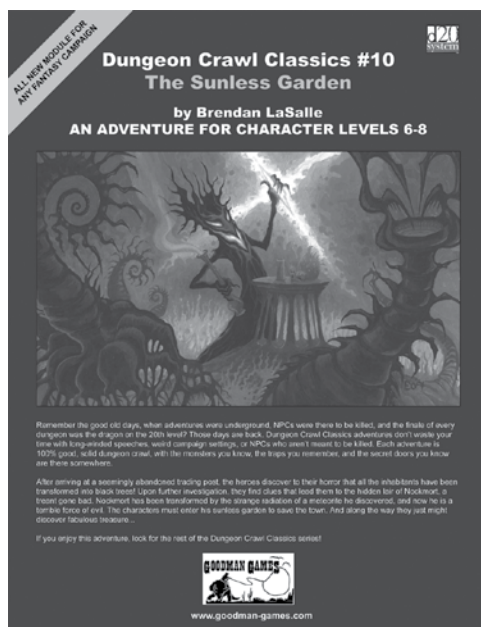
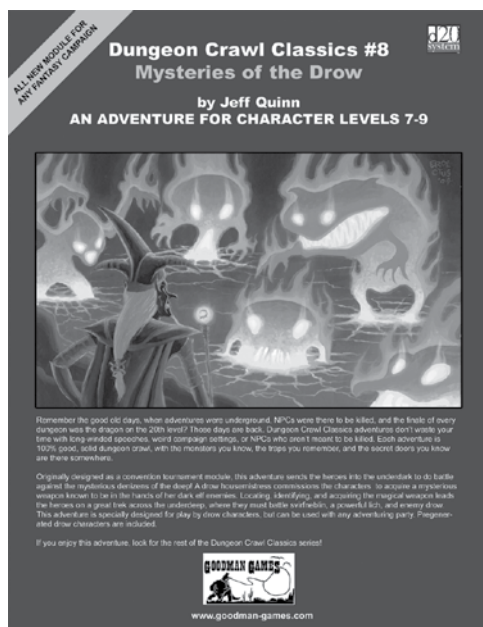
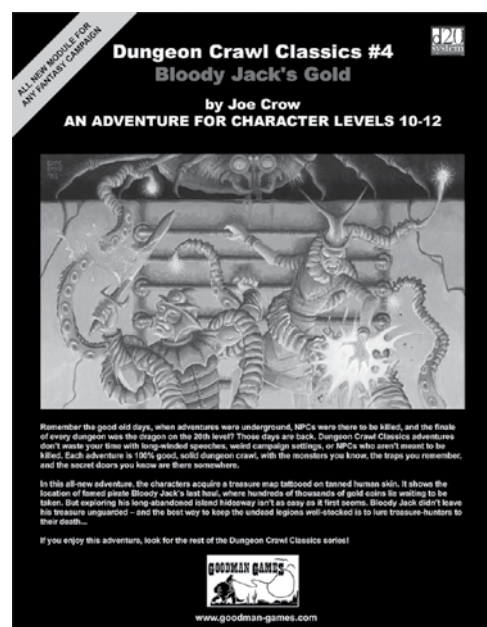
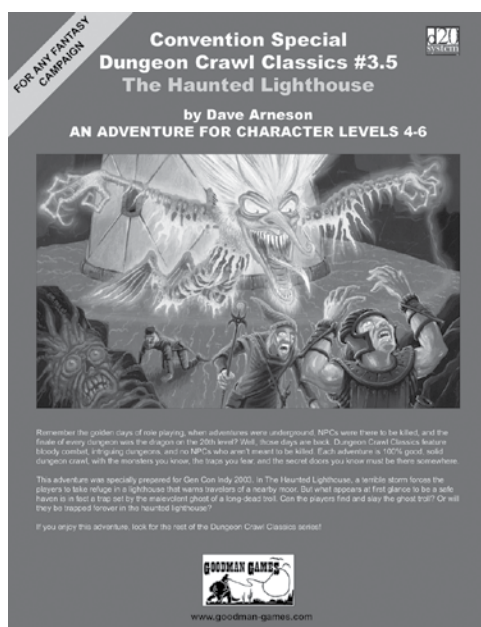
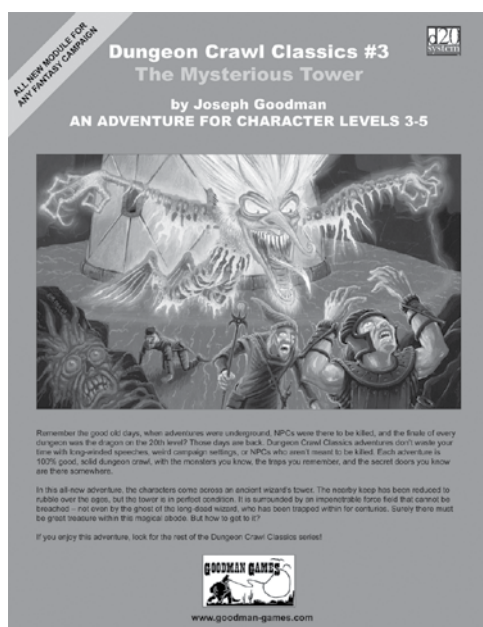
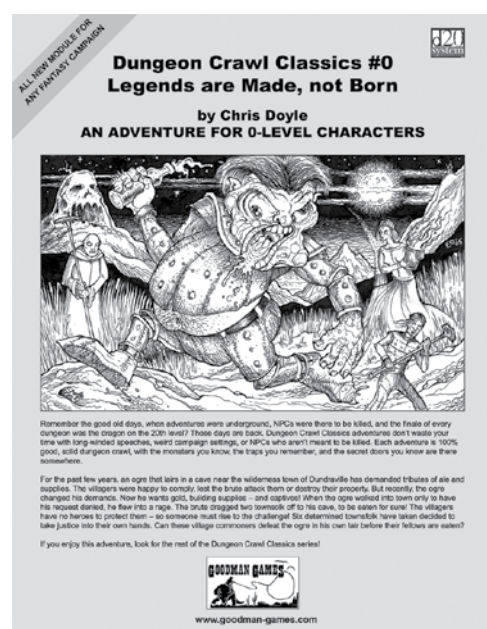
Joseph Goodman approached me with an excellent idea. I would paint a cover for a module, which would then inspire the author/designer. He suggested several elements that might be incorporated: adventurers, Cthulhian flavor through monsters, a sacrificial virgin, and several other things.

I saw a wall or cliff with apertures through which the appendages of an otherworldly entity reached out with purpose. Keeping in mind the illustration would fuel in some part the content of the module, I wanted to raise some questions. Its full form is hidden behind the structure; will it be revealed? Is the seemingly helpless being upon the pedestal a sacrifice, or something else entirely. What is the adventurers' stake in this? They appear to be at a moment of decision making.

My favorite part of an illustration is coming up with the idea, so this project was a great pleasure.

Thanks Erol for taking the time for this interview!

The art of Erol Otus has graced the covers of many Dungeon Crawl Classics modules over the years, and appeared on the interiors of even more. Here is a gallery of Goodman Games products featuring cover art by Erol Otus.



APPENDIX D: YTHOTHIAN LICHE KINGS

An expansion of the Purple Planet Author's Edition Glossography

By Harley Stroh • Art by Stefan Poag

Not un-dead in the traditional sense, the ancient ythoth ("corpse kings") are readily mistaken for animated cadavers. Dessicated from centuries of exposure to the warp and pockmarked from habitual abuse of the ythoth mushrooms, the liche emanate the foul odor of flesh rotting on the bone. Their rattling breath carries a hoary stink, and their gaunt faces and taut skin gives the impression of blued vellum, stretched to the point of tearing. Liche commonly wrap their diseased bodies in filthy bandages, further reinforcing the appearance of un-dead.

Amongst dimensional raiders, liche kings are spoken of in apocryphal whispers: withered ythoth who are ancient beyond comprehension and command entire armadas of raiders; who are no longer subjects to their addictions, yet dine on the brains of astral captains; whose mental powers rival the gods. The truth is less grandiose, though no less deadly.

The hazards of the warp and vastness of the High Astral ensure that very few dimensional raiders survive to become corpse kings. Driven by an insatiable craving for the ythoth, liche prey upon weaker dimensional raiders, seizing their caches of greenstones and ythoth mushrooms. Captured sailors are conscripted into the crew; captains are beheaded, their rich, fungi-saturated brains offering a brief respite from the liche's destructive addiction¹. The brain of a fellow liche is prized above all.

Liche survive the predations of their brethren by rallying whole fleets of dimensional raiders to their banners. A successful liche might have a dozen ships sailing under his command, stalking the High Astral in search of lone vessels and small flotillas. They commonly make their lairs from the wreckage of captured ships, chaining together flotsam to create a maddening maze of hulls, masts, ropes, canvas, and catwalks, defended by ravening ythoth addicts bent on slaughter.

Corpse kings rely upon psychic powers to augment their ruined bodies. Whether in combat, or simply rising from their elaborate divans, a liche can summon considerable mental energy to its aid.

A corpse king wields weapons through mental powers alone, with a range of 100'. In lieu of an attack, a liche can spend an action die to fly, stop an incoming attack (melee or ranged), or strip a weapon from his foe's grasp (DC 10 Fort save to to avoid) – and likely turning that same weapon against its former master.

Finally, every liche king has unique psychic powers, born from centuries of ythoth consumption. Judges should roll on the following table or pick powers to their liking. As above, powers are activated for a single round by spending an action die. Except when noted, the target's Will save DC is equal to the roll of the action dice (1d24).

Liche King: Init +5; Atk phase sword +10 melee (1d14) or by weapon type +10; AC 10; HD 9d8+6; hp 63; MV 20' or fly 45'; Act 5d24; SP disarm foe (DC 10 Fort save to avoid), telekinesis (up to 200 lbs.), psychic powers; SV Fort -3, Ref +2, Will +7; AL L.



¹ See Appendix F: Brain Leeches & Other Ephemera for additional information on the strange appetites of the Liche Kings.

PSYCHIC POWERS OF THE LICHE KINGS

1d14	Psychic Power
1	Domination: Liche mentally targets single character within line of sight. Will save or fall subject to the liche's mental commands. Action and save must be repeated each round domination is maintained.
2	Telepathy: Liche "hears" the thoughts and emotions of all creatures within 60'; Will save to conceal.
3	Apportation: Liche causes object weighing 50 lbs. or less to teleport between two points, both within line of sight. If object is held by a PC, Will save to avoid.
4	Psychic crush: Liche mentally targets up to 3 characters within line of sight. Will save or target stunned for 1 round.
5	Stone skin: Liche's skin takes on the hardness of stone; AC improves by +10.
6	Phase shift: Liche shifts in and out of astral plane at random; any attack suffers 25% miss chance.
7	Dispel magic: As per spell (DCC RPG core rulebook, p. 208); d24+7 spell check.
8	Teleportation: Transport self and items carried to a known location within 500 miles.
9	Pyrokinesis: Mental energy causes object within line of sight to catch flame for 1d6 damage; no save.
10	Psionic blast: Liche crushes foe's mind; Will save or 1d5 Int damage. Targets reduced to 0 Intelligence are rendered mindless vegetables.
11	Soul drain: Liche consumes target's soul, within line of sight. Target suffers 1d16 damage (Will save to avoid). Lost hit points are added to liche's total for the next hour.
12	Psychic Thief: Cleric, wizard, or elf loses 1 memorized spell (determined at random, Will save to avoid). Stolen spells may be cast by the liche (1d24+7 spell check).
13	Roll twice, ignoring 11s or 12s.
14	Roll thrice, ignoring 11s or 12s.



Forty Years of Judges Guild: A Legacy of Awesome

By Jeff Rients

I. STRANGE GENESIS

In 1976 role-playing games were still in their infancy. *Dungeons & Dragons* was still a series of little brown digest-sized booklets that clung tightly to its miniature wargaming roots. Most referees made most of their own materials (campaign settings, adventures, etc.) from scratch, partly because that's what referees were supposed to do and partly because no one was making and selling such stuff yet. The number of players and active campaigns seemed to be growing exponentially, but hardly anyone had quite caught on to the fact that this growth created an audience for commercial role-playing supplements.

No one but Bob Bledsaw and Bill Owen, that is. That July they had formed Judges Guild in Decatur, Illinois. The name is telling. The most common appellation for game moderators at the time was *referee*. *Dungeon master* was too specialized and *game master* hadn't been invented yet. Bledsaw and Owen chose "judge" as a way of elevating the role. And *guild* emphasized the fellowship between judges, the mutual interest circulating through a network of people in a joint endeavor.

Before we go any further, let me tell you just a little bit about the Guild headquarters: Decatur, Illinois. Like Lake Geneva, Wisconsin—hometown of GenCon and *Dungeons & Dragons*—Decatur is a small Midwestern town of no particular great claim to fame. (Yeah, Lincoln once lived there, but every town in Illinois tries to tie itself to Lincoln.) Thinking back, it's almost hard to remember what an imaginative wasteland even a nice Midwestern town could be in those days. This was before the Internet, before *Game of Thrones* was the biggest thing on television, before Marvel could turn something as weird as the *Guardians of the Galaxy* into a billion dollar motion picture franchise. The original *Star Wars* wasn't even out yet in 1976. If you were the kind of weirdo who thought J.R.R. Tolkien and Robert Howard were groovy reads and who stayed up late to watch grainy

Godzilla flicks on local TV, there wasn't always a good way to scratch that fantasy itch. Decatur might as well be a desert island as far as supplying that strange need goes.

But put a copy of original *Dungeons & Dragons* in the hands of guys like Bob and Bill and they were off to the races, building fantasy worlds out of air and inviting friends to enter them at their peril. Bill ran a game based on the mythology of Wales, while Bob placed his in a strange little City State in the Wilderland, that section of Middle Earth that contained Mirkwood and the Misty Mountains. The first Judges Guild product would be a map based on Bob's campaign.

Called the *City State of the Invincible Overlord*, this poster-sized map (4 parts adding up to nearly 3 feet by 4 feet in size) was the first big third-party supplement in the history of the hobby. It was the big hit of GenCon IX, where you could buy it folded up at the Judges Guild table or follow Bill Owen his car in the alley behind the venue, where he kept the rolled up versions in his trunk. Rumors circulated at the convention that the back alley part was due to the product's illegality, which only enhanced the buzz. Bill and Bob also sold subscriptions to a bimonthly supplement service, which provided a cash influx to jumpstart further products. The Judges Guild subscription was, in fact, the spiritual predecessor to the modern crowdfunding campaign.

After their initial GenCon success, their next big project was a booklet detailing the places on the *City State* map. This came largely in response to questions about the labels on the map, such as who one could encounter at the Seahawk Tavern or what treasures could be plundered from the Temple of Pegana or whether the place on the map labeled Naughty Nannies was a kinky as everyone suspected (it was). The City State was clearly the kind of wicked hive of scum and villainy where one could imagine Conan plundering the Tower of the Elephant or the Gray Mouser and Fafhrd running afoul of the cops. Now the ball was rolling, leading to a golden period of five years in which the Guild released a seemingly endless array of products.

II. A GAMER'S GUIDE TO EVERYTHING COOL

It would be impossible to tell you about all of the great stuff published by Judges Guild in these few pages, but we can at least touch upon the highlights. Please note the title of this section. It's not "A Collector's Guide" for a reason. I own a mammoth amount of Judges Guild stuff, but I'm not a collector and I'm not a completist. You won't find anything on rarities or resale values here. My interest lies solely in whether or not a product is good for play purposes. If you want to get into Judges Guild as a serious collector, I suggest you visit <http://www.acaeum.com/jg/index.html>. The Acaeum is as serious as it gets.

The *City State of the Invincible Overlord* and its lovely map are the flagship product of the Guild and a real testimony to the prolific creativity of Bob Bledsaw. Even better, in my opinion, is the campaign world he built up around it. Collectively known today as the "Wilderlands of High Fantasy" setting, the Wilderlands Campaign Series, or just the Wilderlands, the original four products detailing this campaign world are *The Wilderlands of High Fantasy* (which includes the regions immediately around the City State), *Fantastic Wilderlands Beyond*, *Wilderlands of the Magic Realm*, and *Wilderlands of the Fantastic Reaches*. Each item of the series consists of a 32- or 48-page booklet listing a few hundred adventure locations and several accompanying 17" x 22" maps.

To fit 300 locations in a 32 page booklet requires some sacrifice of detail. Most places get one line of description. To use this scanty info requires either a lot of fleshing out on the part of the individual referee and/or a willingness to improvise during play. For the kind of GM who prefers the latter style, riffing off of a sketchy idea just for the fun of it, the Wilderlands are an ideal product.

The original Wilderlands maps are rightly the stuff of legend. They're laid out on a 34 x 52 hex grid. At a scale of 5 miles per hex, that gives an area of 170 miles by 260 miles. That encompasses roughly the same area as the state of Ohio and little bit smaller than England. Each of the hexes is numbered so that each item in the booklet can correspond to a specific locale. All told, the Wilderlands covers eighteen such maps, or an area of 780 miles east-west and 1020 miles north-south. The design of the maps is fairly simple, but the use of brownish ink on a creamy tan paper gives a nice antiquated feel, as if the maps are relics from a sepia-tone age. And the paper is a tactile delight, heavier than most such products and with a delightful pebbly roughness to the touch.

Judges Guild also released a pile of adventures, most of which slot quite nicely into the Wilderlands setting. Between those licensed for D&D/AD&D and those released after the licensing deal fell through (for more on that, see section III, below), the Guild published nearly 50 adventure modules. The best of them, in my opinion, are *Tegel Manor*, *Verbosh*, and the work of Jennell Jaquays.



Bob Bledsaw's *Tegel Manor* is the best haunted house scenario I've ever seen. The maps are excellent. The haunted shenanigans manage to be both Scooby Doo ridiculous and deadly serious at the same time. Unlike a lot of haunted house scenarios, it accounts for the same family of ghosts living in the place for centuries. And my favorite detail is that the players have to deal with the living owner of the place.

Verbosh by Bill Faust and Paul Nevins is an 80-page mini-campaign setting with multiple cities, multiple dungeons, a sunken ship, a wilderness area, and a silly sense of humor. The first paragraph is one of my favorite openings of any game product:

Nestled along the banks of the river known as "The Great Source", stands the mighty fortress City of Verbosh. Built ages ago by the great "Lord Verbosh I", who founded the great and noble, royal line of Verbosh. A line of great kings that lasted until the birth of Verbosh II, whose first great act was to lead his proud legion into "The Battle of Dead-end Canyon"; where they were overwhelmed by a host of Kobolds fully half their number. From there on, the line of Verbosh went steadily down hill. Verbosh XXI managed to lose the family castle and holdings in a game of dice. This proved to be the high point in Verboshian history.

THE DECATUR REVIEW



Bill Owen has turned his avocation into a vocation.

Avid War Game Players Make It Their Business

Imagine the game Monopoly without a playing board or houses or hotels or even pieces to move past "Go." Then apply those conditions to a game significantly more complex, a game based on mythical medieval characters that pits the players against monsters, sorcerers and each other in the framework of mathematical probabilities and logic.

If you're thoroughly confused, don't worry. Now you know why Bill Owen and Bob Bledsaw are in business.

Owen and Bledsaw, both avid war game players, own and operate the Judge's Guild, a firm that makes and sells accessories for fantasy war games.

Time for some explanation. Most war games — the kind played on a board or map — are re-creations of actual battles or are stereotype battles from a given war.

But for the avid war gamer, the ultimate can be the fantasy games — based on hypothetical situations and varied to the point that one game can be played for weeks or months.

"These games started out for the hard-core war-gamers," says Owen.

However, they were largely "pencil and paper" games, lacking board or maps and relying on the mind and imagination for the playing surface.

"As more and more players got into the games, they got stymied," says Owen. "They didn't have time to draw their own maps."

Off The Beat



With Bob Sampson

Arguments and disputes resulted because one player's perception of a particular location in relation to another might vary from that of his opponent.

Still, the men weren't sure a firm specializing in accessories would be profitable.

Events began to turn in their favor.

Bledsaw, a product designer at the General Electric Co. Decatur plant, found himself out of work when the facility closed.

Owen, deep into playing the games, thought it would be a good way to combine business and fun.

The firm began in the summer of 1976 and was in full operation by December.

The partners say they've been successful, though with a cost.

"It's some kind of fun to start," admits Owen, "but it gets to be work after a while."

Working with games can't get too tedious — especially ones based on fantasy and the opportunity to take on another identity.

the players actually play a character in the game," explains Owen. "They can identify with involvement in the war. You become a fighter or a cleric who can call down divine intervention to perhaps save a situation."

"Occasionally, players get 'killed' and that's the end of the game for them. Then they just take on another character."

Owen adds, the character goes "to the local patriarchy or wizard and gets resurrected."

Fantasy allows for this, but the games also have a touch of reality.

"As the players get more confident and the game progresses," says Bledsaw, "things get political. Players set up baronies and tend to have fewer conflicts with monsters and each other."

Such developments tend to draw players who are not particularly addicted to military history but have interests in science fiction or politics," says Bledsaw.

Whatever the attraction, the players have one thing in common — intensity.

Owen tells what often happens when a player is propelled by the odds and dice into an inescapably fatal confrontation with a dragon.

"You can run away from the dragon in most situations," he says.

But these guys that play these games around here are too heroic to do that."

Better to go off the board in a dragon's belly than scurry over the edge in flight.

You can easily get a romp of a whole campaign out of this one book. The only things that keep it from being the best work the Guild published are the wilderness maps. They aren't very user friendly, lacking the numbered hexgrid of the Wilderlands. And they're kind of ugly, too.

The best published dungeons of the early days of the hobby were written by Jennell Jaquays and anyone who says otherwise is just plain wrong. Her two big releases from Judges Guild are *Dark Tower* and *Caverns of Thracia*. The latter, in particular, serves as a textbook in dungeon design: the environment is beautifully three-dimensional, the monster write-ups discuss the ways they fight among themselves or cooperate against the party, and the room descriptions contain enough detail to light the imagination but not so much the game bogs down. *The Book of Treasure Maps* (volume I) is a collection of Jaquays-penned mini-adventures that are quite good as well. (The later two volumes are by other hands. They're good, but not as good as the original volume.) Jaquays did other work published by the Guild, which I discuss below.

Other adventures of note are less well-written but intriguing nonetheless. These include Rudy Kraft's *Portal* series (*Portals of Torsh*, *Portals of Twilight*, and *Portals of Irontooth*), which provides pocket universes for dimension-hoppy PCs to visit. *Under the Storm Giant's Castle* is arguably not very good, but the premise is amazing: exploring a dungeon made of solid-cloud stuff in search of a giant's lost baby, only to have to confront Satan himself in the climax! And no DM's education is complete without *The First Fantasy Campaign*, a delightful but only semi-coherent collection of notes from Dave Arneson's Blackmoor campaign. The overland map is in the Wilderlands style, and fits just above the northeast corner of the 18 Wilderlands maps.

Miscellaneous D&D products of note from the Guild include *Ready Ref Sheets*, *The Unknown Gods*, and *Frontier Forts of Kelnore*. *Ready Ref Sheets* is the greatest collection of charts and tables ever assembled. Cobbled together from bits and pieces in the first four Judges Guild subscription installments, it provides a wealth of material for any old school DM. The social status charts alone add a huge amount of spice to any campaign. *The Unknown Gods* is a fantastic book of deities. The gods are weird and unpredictable and tend to escape easy categorization. *Frontier Forts of Kelnore* is a mini-adventure, positing that ages ago a Roman-type empire left a series of identical fortresses dotting your campaign world. The random charts included in the product allow you to stock each one by determining which parts of the fort have fallen into ruin and what monsters have moved in since the empire fell. It's a cute way to be able to re-use the same castle floor plans several times.

Judges Guild also published three different periodicals. *Judges Guild Journal* evolved out of the newsletter-type fliers that accompanied the original JG subscriptions, and ran to 21 issues. *Pegasus* started much later, in 1981, and went 14 issues with a fifteenth released via PDF in 2004. The best of the bunch, in my opinion, and certainly the wildest was *The Dungeoneer*. It originated as Jennell Jaquay's fanzine, which was published by the Guild starting with issue #7. *The Dun-*

geoneer and *Judges Guild Journal* merged near the end of their runs; *Dungeoneer* #19 is also *Journal* #22 and thereafter we get *Dungeoneer Journal* issues 23 through 25. The best of the periodicals wing of the Judges Guild is the reprint volume *The Dungeoneer: The Adventurously Compendium of Issues* #1-6. Compiling all the pre-Guild materials in the first six issues of *The Dungeoneer*, it includes some of Jaquay's best work.

In addition to stuff designed for D&D, the Guild provided support for a handful of other game systems, most of them quite obscure today. These include a GM screen for *Chivalry & Sorcery*, two adventures (*Magebird Quest* and *Starsilver Trek*) and an NPC book (*Heroes and Villains*) for *Dragonquest*, a *Villains & Vigilantes* adventure called *Break in at Three Kilometer Island*, and six products for *RuneQuest* (a screen, four adventures, and a pretty neat city book called *City of Lei Tabor*). Two of the *RuneQuest* adventures, *Hellpits of Nightfang* and *Legendary Duck Tower*, are by Jennell Jaquays, so I assume they're excellent.

The Guild also released three *Tunnels & Trolls* adventures, *Jungle of Lost Souls*, the so-called *Toughest Dungeon in the World*, and *Rat on a Stick*. That last one is one of my all time favorite dungeon adventures. I've run *Rat on a Stick* by George R. Paczolt more times than any other Judges Guild adventure, though I use it for D&D shenanigans rather than *Tunnels & Trolls*. It features a rat-based fast food franchise, evil hobbits, and an all-monster dance party.

Two of my least favorite *Judges Guild* are non-D&D items. *The Nightmare Maze of Jigrésh* is a potentially excellent *Empire of the Petal Throne* adventure ruined by a bad gimmick: the dungeon map looks like an elaborate maze of the kind you solve with a pencil in a rainy day fun book (if you remember those). The referee is encouraged to let the PCs get lost and die of starvation/dehydration. *Hazard* is a supplement for the early supers game *Superhero 2044*. It consists of a poster-sized hex map of a big chunk Pacific Ocean, showing Japan, Australia, Baja California, and a new island continent. I have never been able to figure out why a supers game needs a strategic map like that.

The biggest non-D&D game support offered by the guild was for *Traveller*. This makes sense, as the salad days of the Guild and original *Traveller* are practically the same. Judges Guild released 20 officially licensed *Traveller* products, almost all of them set in the Gateway Quadrant, a four-sector area of space on the edge of the Imperium opposite that of the famous Spinward Marches setting. The JG Trav line consisted of 4 sector guides with poster-sized maps (*Ley Sector*, *Crucis Margin*, *Maranantha-Alkahest Sector*, and *Glimmerdrift Reaches*), five general purpose supplements (deckplans, a screen, etc.) and eleven adventures.

I've seen a lot of people turn up their noses at the Trav stuff from Judges Guild, especially in comparison to other 3rd party Trav publishers from the era, such as FASA and Gamelords. I think that's largely a reaction to Guild production values. The gaudier colors and sometimes more amateurish art conceals a lot of quality gaming stuff. In my opinion the stuff written by Dave Sering, the lion's share of the JG *Traveller* line, measures up to anything from the period.



III. THE LIGHT MAY DIM BUT IT WILL NEVER BE EXTINGUISHED

So if Judges Guild produced so much great stuff, why did the pipeline shut off in the mid-eighties? There are two main culprits here, I think. The first is licensing woes. Soon after its founding, the Guild negotiated a license with TSR, then owners of *Dungeons & Dragons*, allowing them to advertise that their products were approved for use with D&D. That official imprimatur allowed them stand a tier above the explosion of D&D-compatible stuff that followed on the heels of their success. When TSR pulled out of the licensing agreement in 1982, sales began to wane.

A contributor here was the switchover in statblocks that followed. The so-called “Universal Fantasy Game System” the Guild adopted actually made Judges Guild products harder to use than most of the competition. For example, the “universal” *The Book of Treasure Maps III* has a lovely little mini-setting that would make a great place to begin a campaign but I’ve never used it because the stats are so dang annoying.

The other issue is production values. When Judges Guild started, referees were eager for any material they could get their grubby little hands on. By the mid-eighties the RPG audience had grown larger and more demanding. The same gaudy colors and cheap paper covers that discouraged *Traveller* fans had a similar effect on the increasingly picky D&D crowd.

By 1985, it seems like the whole hobby had passed the Guild by and they closed

their doors. But you can’t just erase the impact of such great stuff on the earliest days of the hobby. *Tegel Manor* was licensed to Lou Zocchi’s Gamescience in 1989, who released a very credible version of the classic adventure. And Mayfair Games (the other big third-party D&D outfit of the era) licensed the *City State of the Invincible Overlord* in 1987. By all accounts, the Mayfair *City State* wasn’t that good but some of the supplements were decent.

The revival in the hobby following the release of D&D 3.0 led to a second beginning for Judges Guild. New versions of *Dark Tower* and *City State of the Invincible Overlord* appeared. A d20 *Wilderlands of High Fantasy* boxed set from Necromancer Games combined the four original *Wilderlands* releases with new trade dress and expanded hex entries. A *Player’s Guide to the Wilderlands*, a *City State* hardbound, and d20 versions of classic modules also appeared under the Necromancer imprint. Spinoff products from other outfits include *City-State of the Sea Kings* from Bernhart Publishing, *The Majestic Wilderlands* by Rob Conley, and the large *Castle & Crusades*-compatible *Wilderlands of High Adventures* line from Adventure Games Publishing.

Goodman Games published three d20 editions of classic Judges Guild modules: *Thieves of Fortress Badabaskor*, *Dark Tower*, and *Citadel of Fire*.

Sadly, Bob Bledsaw passed away in 2008. Issue #3 of *Fight On!* magazine was dedicated to Bob’s memory, and featured Rob Conley’s nineteenth *Wilderlands* map, north of the known *Wilderlands* and west of Blackmoor. Today the Judges Guild spirit continues with Bob Bledsaw, Jr. at the helm. A new partnership with powerhouse Goodman Games, publisher of *Dungeon Crawl Classics*, promises nothing but greatness in the future.



Unknown Gods:

Revised and Expanded

By Bob Bledsaw, Sr. and Bob Bledsaw, Jr.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1979, Bob Bledsaw wrote an outline for a product he titled “Unknown Gods,” which was to become a pantheon of unusual and lesser gods which would interact with players within the *Wilderlands* setting. Bob had been influenced by ancient Greek and Egyptian mythologies wherein characters interacted and conversed with powerful deities. Bob wanted players to experience the same kind of adventure that Jason had with his Argonauts; that their characters might weave their own epic tales of quests, monsters, and treasures. A completely separate “Gods Game” was planned by Bob, but never made it past the draft stage. It had players assuming the roles of the lesser gods, eventually commanding spiritual hosts of minions in galactic wars for control over vast sectors of the universe; possibly tying it in with the popular sci-fi line we were also publishing modules for at the time.

Working with his cousin Mike Petrowsky, and JG Staff writer Mark Holmer, Bob created several Gods for different occasional settings, leaving out his plan to list “how they may be summoned,” but instead outlining their dispositions and suggesting how a judge may call them into play. Once they had several in writing, it was handed to JG’s first staff artist Sheryl England to draw the characters, but there the product floundered. Paul Jaquays had finished working on another project, and Bob sent him the manuscript requesting he “flesh it out” and add appropriate art. He was not satisfied with the England images, and thought Jaquays should have a shot at it. More Gods were added, and Jaquays tied the work together for the JG layout staff. The delay caused it to be released in 1980, a full year later than planned, but Bob was well pleased.

In 2014, JG began to overhaul the Unknown Gods, expanding on the personalities, skills, items, habits, and quirks of each god. Conferring with those in Bob’s original gaming group, Bob II and his son Samuel, have been expanding and editing the text to explain new things like the blessings, curses, items, or battle tactics each god would likely use. Some additional gods have been added, and although a god may be a very rare event in the life of any *Wilderlands*

character, emphasis was put on creating a god for every situation, locale, or environment, so that the judge might feel free to “release the Kraken” whenever he wishes.

Here, then, is the expanded roster of Unknown Gods!

THE UNKNOWN GODS

It should be remembered that these are not mere NPC’s, but somewhat grandiose deities; usually little-concerned with the wants or doings of mortals in the *Wilderlands*. The time they spend with the party may be short or curtailed and abruptly ended without notice. Judges might well avoid too much interplay to keep some unfamiliarity, and although one may send the group off on a quest, they are just as likely to appear as a bolt of lightning, determined to lay low the entire party out of sheer boredom. What is it about this party’s actions or recent events that drew the attention or brought about an exchange with an Unknown God? In the lifetime of any character, the chance conversation (or battle) with any of these divine or devious spirits might happen rarely, if at all. Yet, here we provide you a plethora to choose from, rich with characteristics, quirks, and items to spark your creativity in a thousand ways. Jason and the Argo may not have sailed the merchant routes between Tarantis and Rallu, but with these Unknown Gods, your *Wilderlands* campaign can now become as epic as any *Odyssey*.

Some instructions on how to apply the Gods with our Universal Tri-stat system: The Moral Alignment of each Unknown God is listed in brackets just after the Name and Title. L = Lawful, C = Chaotic, G = Good, N = Neutral, and E = Evil, while X = Random. Level indicators equal Fighter/Magic-User abilities, unless otherwise noted. A plus (+) next to a stat indicates a variable factor that will be detailed in the description. The Universal Tri-stat uses the first 2 digits as indicators, while the third shows the number of times per day the stat applies (holds up) without degradation or reduction.

Here are six of our new additions... selected especially for a variety of encounter environments:



GRUNCHAK – MARKAB GOD OF TECHNOLOGY (LNE)

Symbol - A Bone.

LVL 19.6 HTK 18.5 SPD 16.3 STR 19.9 INT 20.9 WIS 20.7 CON 20.8 DEX 16.5
CHA 11.6 AGL 15.4 WIL 19.8 LCK 14.9 PSY 04.6 ACL 13.4 WPN Vorpall Scepter

Disposition - 1. Curious, 2. Grim, 3. Cold, 4. Passive, 5. Distracted, 6. Fascinated.

Likely Encountered – in or near Markab Ruins, Underground Chambers, Badlands, Open Areas, Undersea Ruins.

The Markab races, being cold-blooded by nature, were always nearly devoid of emotion, so once they had progressed to the stage of god and deity worship, the blood flowed more rapidly and for ages longer than what was common in the galaxy. The sacrifice of innocents, burnings and drownings, the beheadings and heart-cuttings, and defilement of their young lasted many millennia without remorse, which resulted in gods with extreme powers. These gods were all of varying degrees of Evil, of course, but regardless of their regional power in the universe, nothing could stop them from disputing amongst themselves. This fighting amongst the various Markab gods culminated in what the Markabs called the War of the Gods. In their anger with each other, these gods actually manifested together on the Markab home planet and waged a cataclysmic 900-year war in which the damage to the planet was so great that continental maps all needed redrawn, oceans poured away, and the plant-life (on which the Markab relied for sustenance) burned away. Over 90% of the Markab population perished, and those who survived lived underground for ages, which weakened their health in several ways.

When the Markab emerged, all their gods too were in a much-weakened state, and vows were made that the Markab would never again worship, or otherwise give power to the gods. Grunchak, being a god of technology, was always a weaker god, and a newcomer to the Markab when the great War of the Gods broke out, so little blame was placed on him for the cataclysm which followed. In time, and in secret, the wealthier and more-powerful of the Markab began to worship Grunchak. In time, the technological advancements being shared freely amongst the rebuilding Markab population, Grunchak grew in power, but always within their secret and unmentioned societies. The powerful wealthy and intellectuals held to this god, because he unfailingly steered them in the direction of beneficial discoveries.

So, when the pioneering space-expedition to Gaia was launched from Markab for the purpose of setting up colonization and terra-forming facilities on the newly-discovered planet, a few of their scientists were secretly Grunchak worshippers. The only reason Grunchak knows of Gaia is because of the prayers to him received from the Markabs while on the assignment. He sometimes roams the abandoned Markab ruins of Gaia, puzzling over what happened to his followers, and when they may return. He is therefore wary of the other races he encounters, and doubtless has supplied the Markabs with the technology required to subdue their enemies here. He appears as a black-skinned



humanoid, nearly 7 feet tall, wearing a silver metallic suit, which acclimatizes the elements about him to mimic the Markab atmospheric temperature, pressure, and chemical-composition. He does not require this, being a god, but simply finds it pleasing. The Markabs themselves wear similar suits when exploring other worlds, so they are likely of Grunchak's own design.

He carries a Vorpall Scepter, somewhat like a field marshal's baton, which has several buttons on it. Grunchak is in fact surrounded by protective Mechs of his own design, which are cloaked just beyond this dimension, and therefore imperceptible. These Mechs (there are 5 of them) resemble 6-legged mechanized insects, that can Emit jets of Flame, Frost, intense Sonic Waves, or bouncing blue Balls of Electricity. By pressing certain buttons on the baton, Grunchak can uncloak and engage these Mechs for a desired purpose. The Scepter can also Emit a Holding-field which can be directed at a single target or a group of beings (Holding Beings Immobile for up to 1 day). More disturbing than these capabilities is that this Scepter can open a Vorpall Hole into which objects can be quickly sucked before it closes, presumably into another dimensional plane. These holes can range in size from 1 foot in diameter to 20 foot in diameter, drawing in anything within an equal distance from it.

Being of an alien mind-set has its disadvantages: the differences between the physical brains of Gaian beings and his own consciousness results in Grunchak's PSY abilities being somewhat retarded in the translation. He can be perceptive of intent, and is a Master of All Physical Weapons, but when it comes to understanding the various magical spells (especially of Elvish or Druidic origin) he can become confused.

YOJO, GOD OF THE RANDOM CHANCE (CNG)

Symbol - Voodoo Doll.

LVL 141/061 HTK 067 SPD 152 STR 066 INT 206 WIS 189 CON 106 DEX 163
CHA 123 AGL 155 WIL 194 LCK 774 PSY 202 ACL 064 WPN Maniacal Squee.

Disposition - 1. Lazy, 2. Curious, 3. Distracted, 4. Agitated, 5. Rambunctious, 6. Quiet.

Likely Encountered - Cities, Villages, Seer's Shops, Shipyards, Port Towns, Merchant Shops, Inns, and Trade Routes.

Yoyo appears as a 1-foot tall doll of cloth and straw, with misleadingly lifeless eyes and blank expression. He can shrink himself up to 13 times smaller, which allows him to creep under doors or between floorboards like a spider, or (as when attacked) can grow to 13 times his size (or less, as best suits the environment). He will allow Flame or Fire Spells to Hit himself; this only Ignites him in an engulfing Flame which adds a Burn Bonus to his Melee Attacks (Fire does No Damage to Yojo). Once set ablaze, only Yojo can will himself Extinguished. He is incapable of human emotions, so you may set him ablaze in combat, only to have him hug you like a bear and love you to death! He can Hit (doing 1d12 pips of Damage, +3 if on Fire) or Kick (doing 1d20 pips, +2 if on Fire), but forgives easily.

Yojo controls all Random Chance; everything from the shuffle of tarot cards, to tea leaves, to rolling the bones. He acts as the conduit through which readers and seers have interpreted information from other planes throughout the ages. It is from this plasma of concentrated will, the ongoing play of discerning the outcome of random chance events, that Yojo came into being. His power draws from customs and worship worldwide; regarded and respected even by the most primitive of cultures. He also permits the function of voodoo dolls, witches knots, and similar curses. If you were to sit before a reader of a crystal ball, it is Yojo who permits what is seen in it. There is always a random

element at play.

Unfortunately (or fortunately) for the Player, because he controls the bones; Yojo Determines the outcome of All Dice Rolls in play. Because of this ability, Yojo interacts with Players "Outside the Box." "You rolled a 16 on a DEX? No, that is an Illusion cast by Yojo. He gave you a 3!" All Dice Rolls being in Yojo's complete control (including Crits). The best combat against Yojo is done without requiring a roll, or it is better to cease hostilities altogether. In the event that a fight is halted, and weapons are sheathed, Yojo's random and chaotic nature will cause him to also assume a non-violent stance. He only rarely kills.

On a positive note: If you please him, he has the ability to grant any single Player 3 Crits, which he can call to be used in Play at Any Future Time (these can be individually gifted to a needy Party-Member during Play, or used against a foe as a Critical Miss, but can never be used against Yojo). For dice to Hit Yojo, they must be crafted by hand by the Individual Player to use for that sole purpose. If in dire need, Yojo can let out a Maniacal Squee which does 3D20 pips of Sonic Vibration Damage to all beings within a 200-foot radius (Right-Handed Players take an additional 6 pips, Left-Handed take an additional 4 pips, any claiming "Ambidextrous" take an additional 8). He can also emit a Wave of Permeating Fear, which can cause All to Flee in Panic (60% PROB per turn, duration 6 turns, Palladins and Wizards with CON > 17 having only a 20% PROB).

SCHLEPRECHAUN - BRINGER OF BAD LUCK (NNX)

Symbol - none.

LVL 044/023 HTK 055 SPD 077 STR 125 INT 205 WIS 183 CON 186 DEX 116
CHA 086 AGL 126 WIL 174 LCK 031 PSY 146 ACL 124 WPN +1 Flail.

Disposition - 1. Mocking, 2. Grim, 3. Hateful, 4. Solemn, 5. Dismal, 6. Interested.

Likely Encountered - Tombs, Catacombs, Dungeons, Caves, Burial Mounds, Underground Cities, Secret Chambers.

The Schleppechaun appears to be a weary Halfling standing 3 feet 5 inches tall. He will never give his true name; in fact, he is Cursed against revealing it. Originally a Halfling god of some distinction, the Schleppechaun found himself losing a quarrel against two more-powerful gods, Limtram and Teth Tufa. The result was that he lost what powers he had over Nature, and was Cursed with a surrounding (but Imperceptible) cloud of Bad Luck, both for himself, and any who travel with him. He is therefore mostly discovered, rather than encountered; locked in vaults, cells in dungeons, behind hidden doors, in

bags or chests under lock and key,... but always oh-so-happy to be freed! He will promise anything to help or join the party that saves him from his confines (where the last unfortunate party managed to be free of him). He must avoid saying his own name, and in fact will never give it, and this deception may be perceived, although all else will seem very whole-hearted. Having been Cursed by gods, his funk is undetectable, but will eventually become evident.

While with a party, all rolls will be reduced by 4, and when Hitting in Combat, for each blow given there is an

Increased Chance of Critical Miss (PROB 30%) and Chance of Weapon Breakage (PROB 20%), while Directional Weapons and Magic will Miss more often (PROB 50%). When Not in Combat, there is an increased chance of Losing Items (PROB 20% per being per hour, item random, judge's discretion) and a greater chance that any Spells Cast may Fail (PROB 50%). Although the Schleppechaun will Fight as a 4th LVL Fighter, he is quite cowardly, and will tend to keep

a defensive position in the rear. This is because he is not sure of how physical harm might now affect him. He will willingly be searched, and discovered to have no stolen items on his person. If asked why he was discovered locked away, he will offer that orcs, goblins, bandits, or thieves left him there to die only a few days prior. He will not reveal himself to be a god, but will claim to be a very important Halfling with ties to the pipe-weed trade.

GARRICUS, THE DRAGON INTERCEDER (CNX)

Symbol - none.

LVL 201 HTK 244 SPD 165 STR 209 INT 209 WIS 199 CON 168 DEX 154
CHA 104 AGL 176 WIL 168 LCK 115 PSY 196 ACL 199 WPN Breath, Bite, Claw, Tail.

Disposition - 1. Inquisitive, 2. Destructive, 3. Demanding, 4. Suspicious, 5. Amused, 6. Pensive.

Likely Encountered - near Recently Slain Dragons, Mountainous or Volcanic Regions, Plains, and Grasslands.

 Garricus, a Dragon-God, takes the form of a giant Three-Headed Dragon, 50 feet tall and 200 feet long; each head visibly different from the others. Whenever a Dragon feels their death was untimely, or that they were unjustly slain in battle, they may appeal to Garricus to intercede on their behalf. Garricus will investigate, sometimes confronting witnesses or the Dragon's slayers themselves, to discern if the Dragon's death was fairly won. If there was any foul-play or deception found in the interviews, Garricus may restore the spirit to the corpse of the Dragon; or, in cases where the Dragon's body was burned or scattered, render up a new body full of vigor and vitality. Resurrected Dragons are not always in the best of moods, prior to their first hogshead of coffee.

Each of Garricus' heads are of a different Alignment to suit his primary task; Good, Neutral, and Evil, with the ability to Speak all known languages (both current or dead), and Discern Lies or deception. These abilities are great aids when interviewing beings of all cultures and breeds. Anyone who lies or attempts to deceive him during questioning will be attacked immediately; there being a chance (PROB 20%) that a single liar will cause Garricus to attack the entire party in a rage. His Good Head can Breathe Frost

(3D10+8 pips of Cold Damage, taking 50% less each turn, Cold duration 3 turns), his Neutral Head can Breathe Lightning (3D20+10 pips of Shock Damage); and his Evil Head can Breathe Fire (3D12+8 pips of Burn Damage, taking %50 less each turn or until extinguished, duration 3 turns). The Good Head will only attack Evil, the Evil will only attack Good, but the Neutral will attack All, whenever in combat; each Head may Breathe Once every 3 Turns. He can also inflict damage by Bite (1D20 pips) or Claw (1D10 pips) or Tail Whipping (1D20 pips) every turn. If his defeat appears imminent (HTK < 040), he will Regenerate Health (2D6+6 pips per round). His scales may only be pierced by Magical Weapons or Magical Arrows.

Because of his task, Garricus will sometimes appear where a Dragon has recently fallen, or suddenly appear before those who have been party to a Dragon-slaying. His questioning can be intense, and he holds no regard for anyone who might cause him to err in his just duties. Upon restoring a Dragon, or terminating his interviews; he will generally consider his task done and depart; leaving the living to their astonishment. There is no account of Garricus aiding a restored Dragon in a rekindled battle, or any other Dragon in battle.

MOBEUS, GOD OF THE DEEP (CNE)

Symbol - Finned Fish.

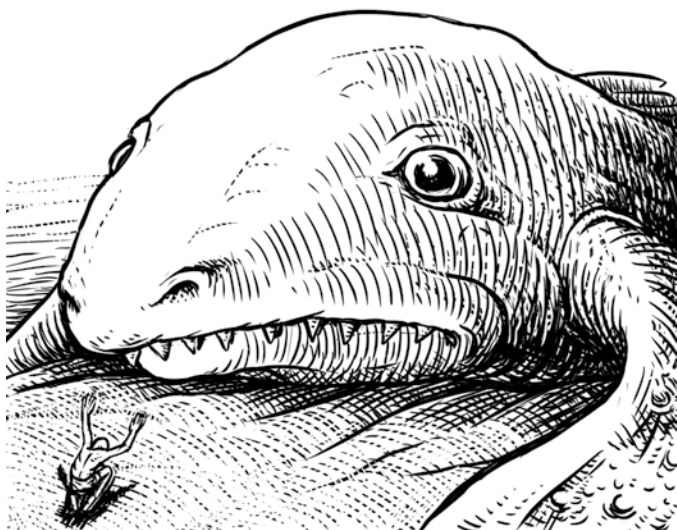
LVL 201 HTK 388 SPD 183 STR 209 INT 165 WIS 207 CON 204 DEX 104
CHA 047 AGL 115 WIL 194 LCK 119 PSY 169 ACL 159 WPN Bite, Barb.

Disposition - 1. Amused, 2. Vengeful, 3. Irritated, 4. Playful, 5. Bleeding, 6. Unconcerned.

Likely Encountered - Open Sea, Deep Waters, Valon, Coastal Areas, Beaches, Bays, near Merfolk Villages and Towns.

 Great god of the deep, Mobeus appears to be a massive Coelacanth. His true size is hard to fathom, as his body has only ever been seen in part. His head is estimated at 80-feet wide, and he can use his powerful fore-fins to Heave his broad head and neck up onto Land to Attack or Converse with whomever he wishes. He has

a wide mouth, like that of a Catfish, with great Stinging Barbs 34-feet long. He does have two rows of jagged teeth, and below his chin (resembling a beard) are 12 Tentacle-like Mandibles that assist his eating. He has both gills and lungs to breathe water or air; though his Eyesight is somewhat Hindered by Wind when out of water. While in water, his



the Sea Mages, the Sea Witches (chaotic powerful sorceresses), Merfolk, and even some races that walk upon the land. Unlike Poseidon, who was always a god, Mobeus began his life as a mortal Fish; the First Fish, the oldest of his kind. His longevity, wisdom, and deeds found the favor of other gods, and it is from them and the worship of other mortals that he outgrew mortality. This feat was never accomplished by any Land Creature, and so Mobeus has grown to become the wisest, largest, oldest living thing in all of Gaia. He remembers all things, converses in all languages (with the exception of races that live far inland). Even the Markabs learned to converse with him; having once captured him for the purpose of better understanding the world's history. Of all the gods, he is the only one to have never left the Sea.

He can easily batter great ships to flotsam, cause 40-foot tall waves to hit the shore, or shallow things as large as a whale whole. Modeus is strangely watchful of large vessels traversing the Uther Pentwegern Sea (*Campaign Map V*) and will sometimes follow, stop, or question crews as to their intentions, business, or reasons for being there. Some hold that Mobeus guards something of great power below the waves there; gates to an abandoned Markab Complex or a secret Merfolk Treasure Palace.

Hearing is quite sharp, so much so that nothing moving in the water within a 5-mile radius of him (1 Hex) can elude Detection. Submerged, he easily can converse with whales and other perceptive creatures thousands of miles away.

He is worshipped by Poseidon, the Lesser Gods of the Sea,

OLMANDOR, GOD OF LIZARDMEN (NNE)

Symbol - Crossed Red Axes on a Wooden Shield.

LVL 178/136 HTK 068 SPD 184* STR 127 INT 208 WIS 196 CON 195 DEX 165
CHA 065 AGL 154 WIL 086 LCK 074 PSY 102 ACL 138 WPN +2 Axe.

Disposition - 1. Crafty, 2. Wary, 3. Agressive, 4. Lazy, 5. Helpful, 6. Cold-blooded.

Likely Encountered - Near Viridistan, Jungles, near Towns or Villages of Lizardmen, Shallow Waterways, and Deserts.

Olmandor, God of Lizardmen (or Viridians), appears as an 8-foot tall Lizard-like humanoid with scaly greenish skin. He wears a Purple Cloak of Warmth, which Negates Any Magical Cold Spells. This permits him to travel into Frozen regions without pain. Twice per day, he may Summon to his Aid, up to 10 Undead Lizardmen (HTK 033 each). The Viridians were the first humanoids to evolve to the point of leaving the seas to inhabit the lands of Gaia, thus making Olmandor one of first gods to be ever be worshipped. The first temples to be erected were great rings of stone, sometimes walled, wherein Olmandor would appear to give guiding laws and instruction to the early Viridians. He will answer the Call or Summons of Lizardmen in dire need, or at times of their great want. He may also Appear to other races who evoke his name within his Temples, but most often Olmandor appears in long travels, crossing the paths of other wayfarers.

Olmandor Wields a +2 Axe which delivers 1D20+2 pips of Damage, and a Shield loaded with 12 Poisonous Steel Bolts that can be Fired by Fours, or All at Once (each delivering 1D6 and Poison, Health-Drain Saps 1D4 pips of STR per melee round, effective range 10 feet). These Bolts will Rematerialize and be Reloaded for use within the Shield

6 turns after Use. He may also Clash his Axe Against his Shield; in doing so, he takes advantage of his Immunity to Flame and produces a 10 foot tall Ring of Flame about himself at a radius of 4 feet (duration 8 turns). Olmandor can Breathe Water or Natural Gasses, and has Regenerative Powers (can regrow a lost eye in 1 hour, or an entire lost limb in 3 days, including his head). He can Heal himself at a Rate of 6 pips per melee round. Although his hearing is not so good, he can See in Infrared and in total Darkness.

He tends to not be so active at Night, as his movement is 50% slower in non-Daylight hours. Even though he may be underground and far away from sunlight, his movement is Slowed only at Night. For deeds performed in Olmandor's service, he may Bestow upon those he finds deserving either a Claw or a Tooth, or both. Olmandor Claws, worn as a Charm or Talisman, Grant a Regenerative Power to Heal, even in Combat, 3 pips per turn. Olmandor Teeth, worn in the same fashion, Grant the Power of +3 to SPD and DEX during Daylight hours. These can be worn together, the Powers being thus Combined, however they are Bound to the Being on which they were Given, and will never function for others.

... and here are Four examples of the Elder Gods you know and love, expanded...

BUKERA - GOD OF DESERT MOUNTAINS, THE SILENT SCORPION (LNG)

Symbol - Glass Scorpion.

LVL 172/041 (Thief 121) HTK 120 SPD 126 STR 176 INT 209 WIS 159 CON 163 DEX 143
CHA 108 AGL 108 WIL 154 LCK 114 PSY 106 ACL 136 WPN +3 Whip, +1 Hammer.

Disposition - 1. Peaceful, 2. Grim, 3. Mirthful, 4. Suspicious, 5. Pensive, 6. Helpful.

Likely Encountered - Deserts, Arid Regions, Badlands, Temples, and Ruins.

Bukera appears as a stout, 6-foot tall, bearish man with long unkempt beard. He can Move Silently and Hide in the shadows as a LVL 12 Thief. He has the ability to Shapechange, often roaming in the form of a Scorpion or, if in a hurry, a great Jackrabbit. He can call up great Windstorms twice as powerful as those conjured by Wizards (once per day), and while in mountainous areas, can throw great Fireballs capable of 1D20x10 pips of Damage (once per hour or up to ten per day). He carries a +1 Obsidian Hammer on his Belt, which if Struck or Dropped upon the ground will cause an Earthquake of stunning magnitude in a 500 yard radius (duration 6 turns). This Hammer also has the magical power to Absorb All Spells, and the leather Belt he wears allows him to Fly. When the Belt is removed it is transformed, revealing itself to be a

Magical +3 Hippocamp Whip, which delivers 1D20+3 pips of Damage. Glass or Obsidian is sacred to his followers, and he sometimes melts and shapes sand into glass oddments for them. Shifty merchants in desert regions often claim to be selling rare "Bukera Glass" pieces. Like his Windstorms, Bukera can also call up a Dust Storm or create a Mirage, Once each Day.

Burkera was the only God of Neutral alignment to defend the races of Gaia (the world) against the alien Markabs in the Uttermost War. He unleashed waves of Earthquakes, doing irreparable damage to the underground Markab cities and strategic bases. For this participation, other Gods of Good (Cilborith, Bachontoi, and Dorak) hold an allegiance to Burkera, and will likely come to his aid (PROB 60% each) if he is ever severely wounded (HTK < 020).

HERCON - GODDESS OF DIRECTIONAL MAGIC (LNN)

Symbol - Wand.

LVL 051/222 HTK 076 SPD 146 STR 123 INT 207 WIS 185 CON 175 DEX 183
CHA 185 AGL 123 WIL 175 LCK 161 PSY 185 ACL 113 WPN +2 Dagger.

Disposition - 1. Inquisitive, 2. Generous, 3. Deadly, 4. Wicked, 5. Grateful, 6. Helpful.

Likely Encountered - Open Areas, Ruins, the Isle of the Blest, Valon, Deep Caverns, and Grymloch Strongholds.

Appearing as a beautiful woman, 5 foot 7 inches tall, Hercon carries a Wand of Coldness, a Ring of Magical Protection. She can Cast 2 Spells per melee round in Daylight, but Only 1 per round in Darkness. She can Ignite any combustible material by merely Breathing on it. Her Wand of Coldness permits her to Create a Blizzard in a 400-yard radius (delivering 2D10+4 pips of Cold and Wind Damage, causing Blindness) lasting 6 - 12 rounds. Her Ring of Magical Protection Turns all Magical Spells directed at her, and Negates all Present Magical Spells or Effects of Users < Level 10 (including Protections, range 100 yards), the exceptions being used potions or scrolls.

If in a Generous mood, Hercon may bestow her Blessing upon any Magic User. The Blessing of Hercon adds a 1D4 + Bonus Factor to all Directional Magic Spells currently known. She has a keen interest in Large Crystals, Lenses, and Prisms. These objects are often found at Hercon shrines, and sometimes these too will carry with them the Blessing of Hercon. Her earliest worshippers were the Grymlochs. Having unbridled use of Directional Magic was what eventually drove their numbers deep underground (something



Hercon deeply regrets). This knowledge was lost from them in the long ages that followed, and living underground has greatly diminished their numbers. She seeks a way of helping restore the Grymlochs to their former selves, or at least encourage their return to the surface, and the grassy fields that were once their home.



TANGADORN - GOD OF THE SKY DWELLERS, THE BLUE THUNDERER (NNE)

Symbol - Clouds.

LVL 202/021 HTK 084 SPD 168 STR 206 INT 209 WIS 159 CON 169 DEX 145
CHA 118 AGL 148 WIL 165 LCK 128 PSY 179 ACL 126 WPN Plasma Missiles.

Disposition - 1. Playful, 2. Agitated, 3. Angry, 4. Lazy, 5. Mischievous, 6. Elated.

Likely Encountered - Open Areas, Hilltops, Mountains, Overlooks, Glacial Wastes, and the Cloud Cities.

Although Tangadorn has no certain or specific form, but appears to his worshippers on the Material Plane most often as a 25 foot tall blue man with abnormally large ears, 4 eyes in his head, and one eye in the palm of each of his hands. During the Daylight hours he Sees and Hears Everything in a 20 mile radius, or within sight of the ground-plane; horizon to horizon. At Night he keeps to the Ethereal Plane, finding refuge in his palace within the Star Polaris, and only appears on Gaia in Daylight hours. Tangadorn hates darkness, and views any nocturnal creature with bitter contempt. Every place he goes must have light equal to daylight, or Tangadorn will cast a Spell for Continual Light to suit himself. When in an Angry mood, he will demand the most powerful or most prized Magical Item from Any or All within a 1 mile radius, with small chance of it being returned after examination (PROB 20%). However, if on the other hand, he is in a Playful or Mischievous mood, he may announce that it is time for a favorite game: "Musical Might," wherein he takes the STR of Every Character and redistributes it amongst the Players

(Oldest gets Highest, Youngest Gets Lowest, Permanently Swapped). He will not reverse a game of "Musical Might," and any who voice open complaint, will have their SPD and DEX Reduced by %50+1 (duration 1 day). Any who openly praises the game receives a Bag of Gold (200 GP).

Tangadorn cannot be hit by any Physical Weapon, but can be affected by Magical Spells. He can Shapechange into any object that has ever been bathed in daylight. The Eyes in his Palms can act as Beacons of Brightness, and can throw a Spectral Beam doing 1D12 pips of Radiated Heat Damage (range 300 yards). His main weapon is his ability to form Plasma Missiles. These are emitted from his chest, formed into packed balls in his hands, and thrown once every two rounds. These Plasma Missiles have an accurate range of 100 yards and can deliver 2D20+8 pips of Damage (Dwarves and Halflings taking 50% Less). Tangadorn also has the power to Stop or Control any Mechanized or Automaton Device, so long as it is not in darkness.

MARGONNE - GOD OF EVIL PLANS, THE DEVIOUS ONE (LEE)

Symbol - Black Circle.

LVL 221/181 HTK 203 SPD 184 STR 195 INT 208 WIS 198 CON 175 DEX 164

CHA 103 AGL 145 WIL 195 LCK 135 PSY 177 ACL 129 WPN +4 Two-Handed Sword.

Disposition - 1. Unsympathetic, 2. Bored, 3. Terrifying, 4. Mischievous, 5. Crafty, 6. Solemn.

Likely Encountered - Outposts, Lonely Inns or Taverns, Dark Alleyways, near Cities, Ruins, Dungeons, Castles, near Forts.

Although he has never been seen by a living being (or at least by any survivors), Margonne is depicted as a mutated 10-foot tall Humanoid, somewhat Elvish in appearance, wearing a long black cloak. For Defense, he has an Anti-Magic Shell (Negates All Magic in a 20-foot radius) that he can call at will. He can Strike 4 times per melee round with his deadly +4 Two-Handed Sword, named Thanatos. It has an identical twin, a sister-sword, named Lupeos, which lies at the bottom of Doomall Lake (*Campaign Map XVIII*, Hex 4527). Both Swords are Evil. If ever clashed together in battle, they both will disintegrate. His six-pointed Crown of gold will Strike any living Being that Touches it with an Electrical Arc (4D20+12 pips of Shock Damage). This Arc has a chance (PROB 50%) of Jumping (once) to any other living Being within a 10-foot radius (Shock Damage reduced by 50%).

If by chance (PROB 10% per round) a person should glance or look at his face, that person will fall under Margonne's Complete Control for 1 Game-Year (without any chance of avoidance). Margonne is always accompanied by a personal bodyguard of two great Undead Warriors, Sogg (HTK 058) and Berk (HTK 060), both equipped with +2 Swords of Flame. These Swords deliver 2D6+2 per Hit, while those Hit receive 6 pips of Burn Damage, and 3 pips of Burn Damage per subsequent turn (duration 4 turns unless ex-

tinguished). Born identical twins and to a life of slavery in the ore-mines of the World Emperor's Hoary Mountains (*Campaign Map VI*), Sogg and Berk were also born without eyes, but each with an uncanny ability to Perceive their surroundings psychically. This allows them to "See" clearly in total Darkness, giving them a distinct advantage over others, and making deep mining a natural appointment. Because of their size (both 7 feet tall), the slave-master of Caelam had them castrated as eunuchs in their teens, but after an uprising in the mines wherein Sogg and Berk killed 32 men including 6 of the Emperor's Elite Guard, they were given a gladiator's life in the Emperor's Arena Games. After long and illustrious careers, in which Margonne no-doubt took notice of the hundreds slayed, they eventually met their own mortal ends, whereupon they found themselves recruited to their present (and eternal) positions. For special purposes, Margonne may loan out or send Sogg or Berk to assist, but for a price (neither can be trusted). Blind Undead Eunuchs aside; Margonne can also summon to his aid 4 - 40 Ghouls or Ghosts (3 times per Day).

Margonne tends to be fascinated by elaborate and complex plans to achieve Evil gains. A plot being hatched with more than a few lives at risk (especially young innocent lives) is enough to draw Margonne's direct attention to those involved.

We hope you have enjoyed this exclusive preview of our upcoming Unknown Gods, and look forward to serving your campaigns with future Wilderlands material! - Bob Bledsaw II.

THE GARY CON TRIVIA CONTEST

Compiled by Joseph Goodman • Questions submitted by Bob Bledsaw Jr., Steve Crompton, Joseph Goodman, Allan Grohe, Ernie Gygax, Jon Hersherberger, Rick Loomis, Erol Otus, Paul O'Connor, Paul Stormberg, and James M. Ward



At Gary Con 2016, Goodman Games held its first annual trivia contest. These 30 trivia questions were published in the Gary Con program guide. Customers who answered at least 10 could stop by the booth to win a prize. Now we present them here for the first time. Answers can be found upside-down on the following page. Test your grognard IQ and see how many you answer correctly!

(1) In the winter of '79/'80, Erol Otus crashed through the ice of a frozen lake, almost drowning and freezing at the same time. Whose borrowed snowmobile was he driving?

(2) In what TSR AD&D adventure module can players find a small, working model of the Starship Warden from Gary Con VIP Jim Ward's *Metamorphosis Alpha*'s?

(3) On the Starship Warden, how many Captains are there working at any given time?

(4) What does the Temporal Fugue mutation do?

(5) TSR had a special show room in the Toy Fair Building. It was on the same level as the Catwalk. What floor was TSR's Showroom on?

(6) TSR made a computer game license with SSI. What was the title of the first product they produced?

(7) Name at least two of the toy monster figurines that Gary Gygax found at a five-and-dime store with his eldest children in the late 1960's, which he subsequently used as miniatures in Chainmail and then D&D.

(8) In what TSR AD&D module can an image of the Kool-Aid Man be seen sitting on a shelf in the background?

(9) From the AD&D Dungeon Masters Guide, who is the adventuring companion of Dimwall the Magician?

(10) Name all seven old-school TSR fantasy artists, whose work appeared in D&D products from the 1970's and

1980's, who have done artwork for Dungeon Crawl Classics.

(11) In what city was the school supply company that TSR and role-players around the world got their original polyhedral dice?

(12) According to Col. Lou Zocchi, what is the ideal diameter of a 5-sided die?

(13) How many traps were included in the original edition of Grimtooth's Traps?

(14) What mythical animal appears on the cover of the very first edition of Tunnels & Trolls?

(15) What year was the Nuclear War Card Game first published?

(16) The adventure module DCC#68: *People of the Pit* takes its title from a short story by what Appendix N author?

(17) Doug Kovacs' classic DCC RPG demon skull illustration includes a secret message. What is it?

(18) In a cosmic coincidence, Doug Kovacs' first art for a DCC module appeared in Harley Stroh's first published DCC module. Which adventure was this?

(19) What is the name of the warrior on the cover of DCC #69: The Emerald Enchanter?

(20) Throughout all of Appendix N, there is only one character who is referred to by his author as "a fighting man." That character is the archetypal fighter character in Appendix N. Who is he?

(21) During Michael Curtis' brief stint in Hollywood, he famously acted as what carnivorous creature?

(22) What infamous character-killer D&D module debuted at Origins 1 in 1975?

(23) The Judges Guild Journal featured a column by the

character Maed Makistakator. What real-life game designer used this pseudonym?

(24) In the Judges Guild business, the title Makistikator (with two I's) was used for what job function?

(25) "Installment L" was the Judges Guild subscription code for what legendary adventure?

(26) Which of the following Greyhawk setting modules was not published first as a convention tournament adventure?: (a) *C1 Hidden Shrine of Tamoachan*, (b) *C2 Ghost Tower of Inverness*, (c) *S1 Tomb of Horrors*, (d) *S2 White Plume Mountain*, (e) *S3 Expedition to the Barrier Peaks*, (f) *S4 Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth*

(27) Tom Moldvay's 1981 Expert Set features the first publication of the Known World campaign setting. What country was featured in that set's sample wilderness environs?

(28) Erol Otus began his freelance RPG art publishing career with what works? (a) The Remorhaz and The Ankheg in *The Dragon* magazine, (b) Interior illustrations for Dave Hargrave's *The Arduin Grimoire*, (c) *The Necromicon* from his own company Fantasy Arts Enterprises, (d) none of the above

(29) Which artists' artwork was removed for the 1979 Revised Edition of the *Dungeon Masters Guide*? (a) Erol Otus and David S. LaForce, (b) Greg Fleming and Tom Wham, (c) Todd Oleck and David C. Sutherland III, (d) Darlene Pekul and Will McLean, (e) none of the above

(30) Which of the AD&D hardbound books was published first?

Do you have submissions for next year's trivia contest? Email them to us at info@goodman-games.com!

THE LANKHMAR TRIVIA CONTEST

It is said that Srith of the Scrolls penned ten questions upon a piece of pristine behemoth parchment in the long ago days of Nehwon. These ten queries were devised to challenge those who sought entry into the secret Curtis Conventicle to be held at the time when the star Akul bedizens the Spire of Rhan in that strange metropolis known as Indianapolis, the City of Seven-score Thousand Colts. A half-dozen heroes who correctly answer these interrogations shall be admitted to a secret conclave to test a special adventure set in Nehwon, one that will appear within the pages of the forthcoming DCC RPG Lankhmar boxed set. The survival of these heroes is not guaranteed; scarelings should step aside and let only those with legend-breaking minds take this test!

At Gary Con 2015, Goodman Games launched a trivia contest centered around our recently-announced license to publish the works of Fritz Leiber. Trivia questions were to be e-mailed in, and six winners were chosen at random from those entries answering the most questions correctly. Those lucky six received a special invitation to playtest a DCC RPG Lankhmar adventure especially written for Gen Con 2015. (See photo on page 139!)

Here are the questions as they originally appeared. Test your knowledge, and look for the answers on the following page!

Question #1: Who are Fafhrd's and the Gray Mouser's enigmatic mentors/wizards?

Question #2: What is the name of the tavern most commonly frequented by Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser?

Question #3: Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser found themselves pitted against one another in a duel in what subterranean city?

Question #4: What are the names of Gray Mouser's weapons?

Question #5: What was the first hardbound RPG supplement to include game stats for Fafhrd, the Gray Mouser, and other inhabitants of Nehwon?

Question #6: Who was Overlord of Lankhmar during the Rat Plague?

Question #7: What year was the first story featuring Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser published?

Question #8: Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser owe their literary origins to the real life friendship between Fritz Leiber and what other person?

Question #9: In what city does Duke Lithquill, otherwise known as "the Mad Duke," reside?

Question #10: Some claim that the Gray Mouser resembles two different gods. Who are these two deities?

TRIVIA CONTEST ANSWERS

- (1) Mike Carr
- (2) C1 Hidden Shrine of Tamoachan
- (3) 3
- (4) It makes a perfect copy of the mutant using the power
- (5) The seventh floor
- (6) Pool of Radiance
- (7) Two of these: balrog, earth elemental, water elemental, giant tick, ogre, red dragon
- (8) Steading of the Hill Giant Chieftan (in the kitchen battle scene)
- (9) Drudge the fighter
- (10) Erol Otus, Jim Roslof, Jeff Dee, Jeff Easley, Clyde Caldwell, Russ Nicholson, Diesel LaForce
- (11) Palo Alto, CA
- (12) 13.85mm
- (13) 101
- (14) Unicorn
- (15) 1965
- (16) Abraham Merritt
- (17) ROSLOF (last name of TSR artist and first art director)
- (18) *DCC #17: Legacy of the Savage Kings*
- (19) Gronan
- (20) John Carter of Mars
- (21) Three Castles Award
- (22) Tomb of Horrors
- (23) Bob Bledsaw, Sr.
- (24) Whoever was running the company at the time (i.e. CEO or President)
- (25) Tegel Manor
- (26) Choice D, S2 White Plume Mountain
- (27) The Grand Duchy of Karameikos
- (28) Choice A (appearing in *The Dragon* #2, August 1976 and *The Dragon* #5, March 1977)
- (29) Choice C (Todd Oleck and David C. Sutherland III)
- (30) Monster Manual

LANKHMAR ANSWERS

- (1) Ningauble of the Seven Eyes and Sheelba of the Eyeless Face.
- (2) The Silver Eel.
- (3) Quarmall
- (4) Scalpel and Cat's Claw.
- (5) TSR's AD&D supplement Deities & Demigods
- (6) Overlord Glipkerio Kistomercus
- (7) 1939 ("Two Sought Adventure" or "The Jewels in the Forest")
- (8) Harry Otto Fischer
- (9) Ool Hrusp
- (10) Mog and Loki.

Jan 3 - JRR Tolkien
 Jan 17 - John Bellairs
 Jan 20 - Abraham Merritt
 Jan 22 - Robert E. Howard
 Jan 26 - Phillip Jose Farmer
 Feb 17 - Andre Norton, Margaret St. Clair
 Feb 24 - August Derleth
 April 4 - Stanley Weinbaum
 April 25 - Fletcher Pratt
 April 29 - Jack Williamson
 May 13 - Roger Zelazny
 May 18 - Fred Saberhagen
 May 20 - Gardner Fox
 May 21 - Manly Wade Wellman
 June 9 - Lin Carter
 July 24 - Edward PUNKETT (Lord Dunsany)
 Aug 16 - Andrew Offutt
 Aug 20 - HP Lovecraft
 Aug 28 - Jack Vance
 Sept 1 - Edgar Rice Burroughs
 Oct 29 - Frederic Brown
 Nov 25 - Poul Anderson
 Nov 27 - L. Sprague de Camp
 Dec 7 - Leigh Brackett
 Dec 18 - Sterling Lanier, Michael Moorcock
 Dec 24 - Fritz Leiber

APPENDIX N BIRTHDAYS

GEN CON 2015 RECAP



Above: Booth setup. Boxes everywhere!

Right: Assembly line putting together the swag bags.

Below: Joseph is interviewed by a local TV station.





We are Goodman Games! The completed booth, moments before the hordes enter on Thursday morning. Left to right: Terry Olson, Jon Hershberger, Roy Snyder, Eric Daum, Michael Curtis, Rev. Dak Ultimak, Steve Bean, Jim Wampler, Joseph Goodman, Brendan LaSalle, Doug Kovacs, Marc Bruner, Harley Strohm, Dieter Zimmerman.

TEARDOWN



Above: And all that's left are some boxes. Moving a gigantic pallet of RPG books after the show. Left to right: Harley, Brendan, Joseph, Michael, Terry.

Right: The Victory Dinner. Steak dinner at a football-themed restaurant, which makes Doug angry every year.

Below: Rolling out some boxes during teardown, and Jon "Hot Legs" Hershberger decides to strut his stuff. Left to right: Harley, Michael, Dieter, Brendan, Jon (on the boxes), Rev. Dak Ultimak, Steve, Roy, Terry, Joseph



JUDGES IN ACTION



Brendan LaSalle takes to the next level.



Dieter Zimmerman runs a table of 8 players. Ain't no biggie.



Jobe Bittman (and his daughter), Brendan, and Roy all in the same game.



Jim Wampler lays down some MCC smack.



Roy Snyder's *Metamorphosis Alpha* game.



Steve Bean reels them in. Just a little closer...just a little closer...

JUDGES IN ACTION



Terry Olson demonstrates his dice-rolling technique.



Harley, Harley, and more Harley running the *Enter the Dragon* spell duel tournament.



Michael Curtis running a DCC Lankhmar game for the winners of the Lankhmar Trivia Contest (see page 133).



CREATORS



Above: Booth signing with artists Brad McDevitt, Stefan Poag, and Steve Crompton. We really should have a photo of Doug Kovacs, too, but it's hard to pin him down.

Below: Booth signing with writers Michael Curtis, Steve Bean, Dieter Zimmerman, Tim Callahan, Brendan LaSalle, Joseph Goodman, and Jobe Bittman.



Above: These guys wrote *The Monster Alphabet!* Terry Olson, Steve Bean, Jobe Bittman, and Michael Curtis. (Not pictured: Daniel J. Bishop.)

Below: Joseph with the Flying Buffalo crew celebrating the advance copies of *Grimtooth's Ultimate Traps Collection*. Rick Loomis, Steve Crompton, Joseph Goodman, and Bear Peters.

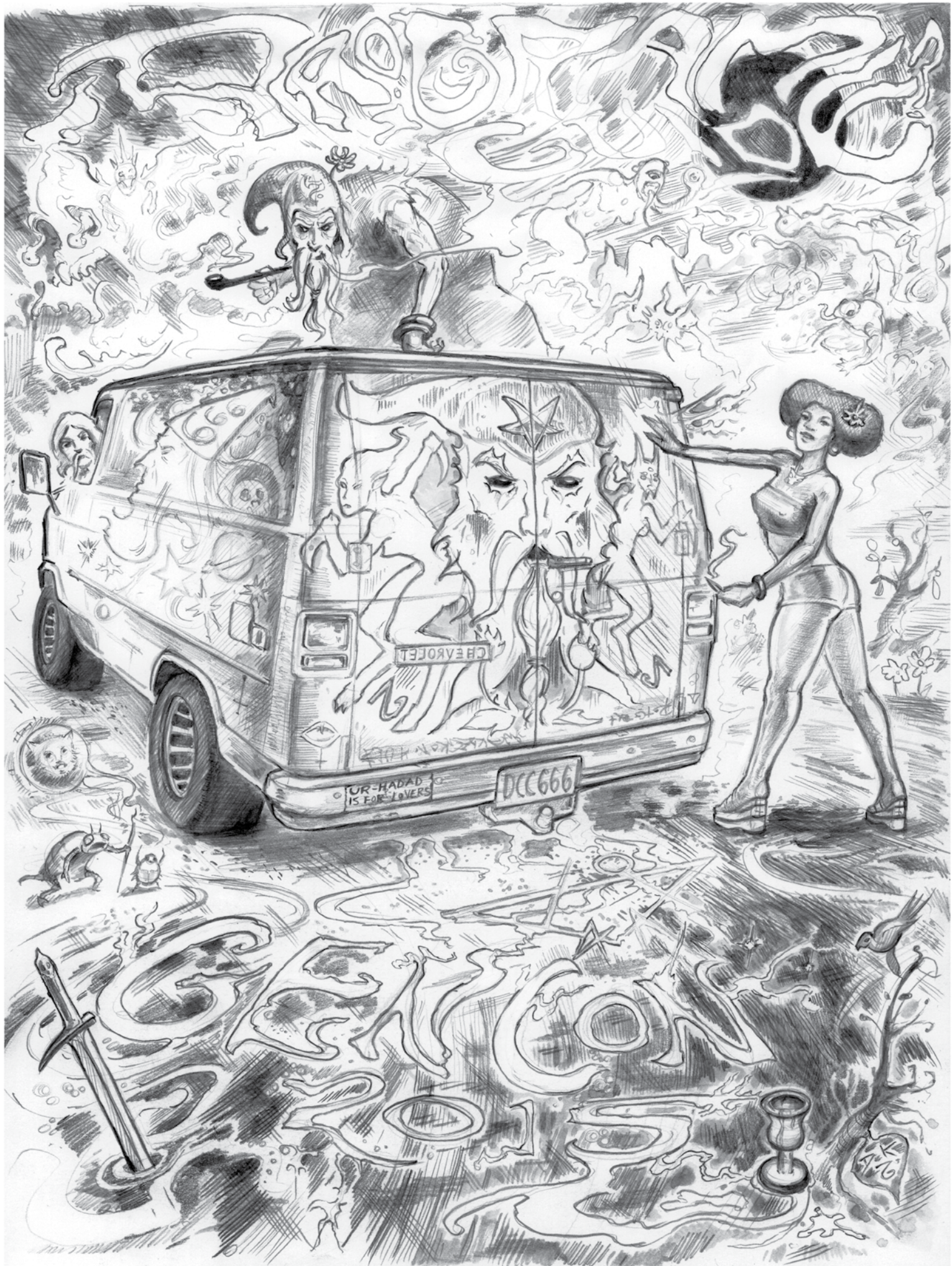


Left: Stefan Poag drew this portrait of Jobe Bittman during some downtime at the booth. It's quite accurate, don't you agree?

"WHAT'S NEW WITH GOODMAN GAMES" SEMINAR

You never know who will show up at the seminar. Top: Steve "Grimtooth" Crompton (in the cowboy hat) joins Michael, Joseph, Harley and Brendan to discuss *Grimtooth's Ultimate Traps Collection*. Bottom: Doug Kovacs comes to the front to discuss his anti-cover to the 2015 Gen Con Program Guide. It's a funny story: Doug created a DCC sticker to put on top of the Wizard Van cover to the program guide. The sticker was available in limited quantities from his booth in 2015, but you can see the image on the following page of this book. Bottom: Colonel Lou Zocchi drops in to talk dice probabilities.





"HOW TO WRITE ADVENTURE MODULES THAT DON'T SUCK" SEMINAR

The crew gives some advice to aspiring game designers. Left to right: Jobe Bittman, Chris Doyle, Michael Curtis, Joseph Goodman, Harley Stroth, Brendan LaSalle.



TOURNAMENT WINNERS

At Gen Con 2015 we ran three tournaments: *Enter the Dagon* was a DCC spell duel tourney; *Death by Nexus* was a DCC funnel tourney; and *Anaheim Crawl* was an Xcrawl tournament. Here are the winners!



Enter the Dagon spell duel finalists, led by Mike Markey showing off his championship belt!
From left to right: Nita Bittman, Connor Skach, Aaron Koelman, Mike Markey, Harley Stroth.



Death by Nexus funnel champion Jason Stierle (awarded the championship belt, below). Above, from left to right: first place Jason Stierle, second place Haley Skach, judge and designer Jim Wampler. Below right: third place winner Brian Martin.



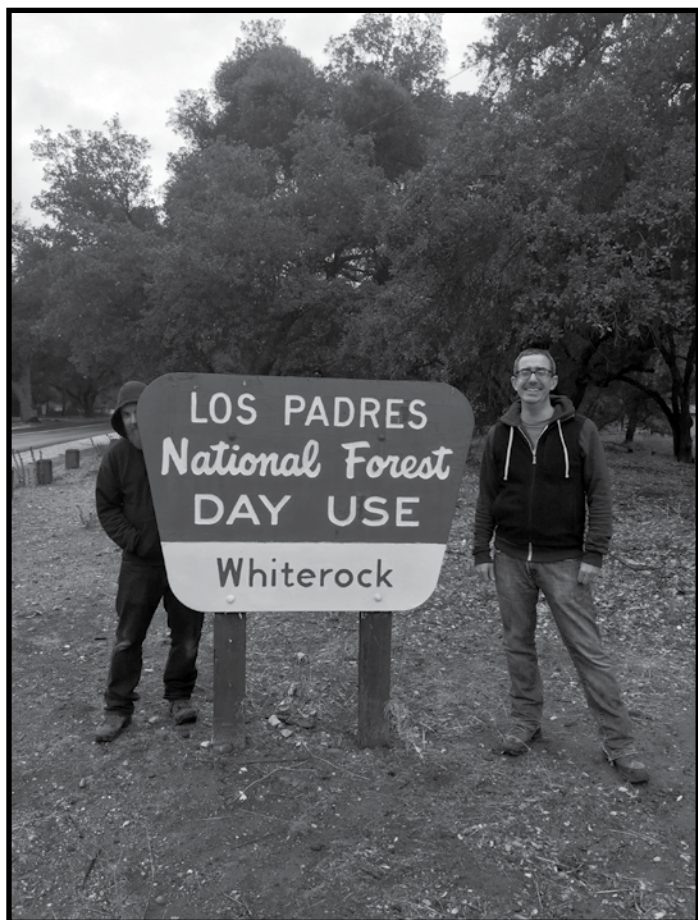


Anaheim Crawl championship team. (Top row, L to R) Alex Kanous, Christian Vaneck, Francois Labrecque. (Bottom row, L to R) Brendan "DJ LaBoss" LaSalle, Don Comfort, Steven Yap, Marcelle Henby

DCC lead artist Doug Kovacs is constantly in motion at Gen Con and other events, so it's not easy to pin him down for the usual photos. Anyone who has spent time around Doug knows he takes inspiration from all sources, including (but certainly not limited to) nature. Here's a glimpse of "Doug in the wild" on a recent camping trip. Left to right: early-morning coffee as the morning sun breaks on the hills ringing the valley campsite; playing TSR's original *Dungeon!* by lantern light; discovering the *real* Castle Whiterock (turns out it's in SoCal!).



And apropos of nothing, here's a random photo of Harley wandering around the Gen Con hotel with the *Enter the Dragon* championship belt over his shoulder. Because it's a badass belt and who wouldn't want to wander around holding it?



GARY CON 2016

This year's Gary Con was eventful. James M. Ward won the first-ever E. Gary Gyga Lifetime Achievement Award (see page 8), and we launched the Judges Guild Collector's Edition Kickstarter at the show. Plus lots of great games were played!



The crew at Gary Con 2016! Left to right: Jobe Bittman, Michael Curtis, Brendan LaSalle, Chuck Plimpton, Joseph Goodman, Jim Wampler.



At the end of the con we raffled off paraphernalia from our seminar. These fans walked with some goodies!



The annual steak dinner: Tom Tullis of Fat Dragon Games, Joseph Goodman, Tim and Steve from Troll Lord Games, and James M. Ward, creator of *Metamorphosis Alpha*.



Three Bledsaws in one place! Bob Bledsaw Jr., Bob Bledsaw III, and Aaron Bledsaw.

ROADWORTHY

Interviews by Brendan LaSalle



he few. The proud. The *roadworthy*. Every year Goodman Games runs a World Tour, where we run games at conventions and gaming stores nationwide, and we depend on the Road Crew to run even more games at local events. The Road Crew are just like you – gamers who love the Dungeon Crawl Classics RPG and want to have fun running local games. Goodman Games provides free swag to the Road Crew. The more games they run, the more swag they get. Those who run the most games garner recognition, reputation, even notoriety. And perhaps they become: *roadworthy*. In this feature, we spotlight four of the Road Crew judges who have made a name for themselves on the 2016 World Tour circuit.

ROADWORTHY: ASIA PICKLE

7 games run as of this interview.

Tell us about how you first got into tabletop RPGs.

My entire life I had been curious about the nature of TTRPGs but had not ever played one until only 2 or 3 years ago. In 2013 I finally took the plunge at a local game store, had a decent enough time and stuck with it.

How did you first discover Dungeon Crawl Classics?

A good friend of mine discovered DCC and had us all over for a run-through of *Sailors on the Starless Sea*. It was more fun than anything I had done in the past year of any other TTRPG. At that moment I was hooked.

What adventures are you running for your Road Crew games?

We've hit *Well of the Worm*, *The Emerald Enchanter*, *The Imperishable Sorceress*, *They Served Brandolyn Red*, and *The Old God's Return* in the last few months. I have a thing for killing wizards, so I enjoy having my players do that. After this has run its course I feel strongly about a Purple

Planet campaign so that I can pepper in *Metamorphosis Alpha* and *Mutant Crawl Classics* content!

Will you share some stories from your Road Crew games?

Running a game for Free RPG Day 2015 was a blast, and I was able to add 3 new regular players to my bi-monthly games. All the games I run are a great time, but I remember one in particular where a warrior achieved a *Mighty Deed* and used the flat edge of his sword to bat the skull off of one foe into the chest of another skeleton, destroying them both in the process. He was henceforth known by the nickname: T-Ball.

What is your favorite DCC adventure?

The first adventure I ever ran still has a soft spot with me. *The Arwich Grinder* written by Daniel J. Bishop, featured in *Crawl! #9*; published by the Rev. Dak J. Ultimak. It immediately struck me as eerie, atmospheric, and creepy as hell. I love it. It still tickles me that I misread a monster description and indecently ended up with something more horrifying than the author intended. The players were sufficiently bewildered and terrified.

Do you have any tips for your fellow Road Crew judges?

Just do it. I had never judged a game in my entire life, and less than 6 months of DCC made me jump at the chance. Don't sweat the rules, just have fun. Delegate to your players: Let them be subject matter experts too! For example; let someone else be in charge of crit/fumble tables for you. I never cancel games anymore due to lack of attendance. Having just 1 or 2 players can be a blast (*Indiana Jones* never had 5 people following him around). Treat it like an action or buddy-cop movie, give them health potions and only throw half the number of monsters at them to scale the challenge. Relax and don't assume making sure everyone is having fun is 100% your responsibility – the players have just as much a duty to be creative and lively as you do!

ROADWORTHY: TOM EVANS

5 games run as of this interview.

Tell us about how you first got into tabletop RPGs.

I've mostly been a wargamer and TCG player for a good chunk of my life. D&D and tabletop games have been an erratic touch-and-go for parts of my teenage years. I remember reading about D&D in *Inquest* magazine, but barely being able to play. I really only dove into the hobby as a whole in 2012 after a divorce gave me some free time. If I were really able to pin down one incident where it stuck to me would be in '99 when my cousin babysat me and had a game in the same night. They were playing I6: Castle Ravenloft. I wasn't allowed to play, but watching it made me want to play from then on.

How did you first discover Dungeon Crawl Classics?

I'd blame Jim Wampler from the Save or Die Podcast. I'd seen it when I was running Basic Fantasy, but the SOD podcast pressured me to actually look into it. Jim's enthusiasm is contagious. I'm glad I took his advice and decided to read it.

What adventures are you running for your Road Crew games?

Mostly homebrew stuff, but I'm also running:

T1: The village of Hommlet

X1: Isle of dread

DCC #82.5 Dragora's Dungeon

The Portal Under the Stars

And hopefully more in the future!

Will you share some stories from your Road Crew games?

Sure! I'll say what's the most fresh in my mind. We just wrapped up *The Portal Under the Stars*. My players saw the



Above: Asia Pickle in his denim vest with Hugh patch and (not pictured) custom Stefan Poag art on the back.

Left: Tom Evans' judge pin.

Below: Tom Evans runs a session with his amazing custom castle judge's screen.



statue in room 3 which I had changed to a marilith statue that breathed fire through its mouth. My players tried to block the fire using rocks and dirt. Well that set the floor on fire. Oil spewing through the cracks and set aflame, killing two players after two had already died in the room prior. The rogue had to make a mad dash in order to attempt to clear the dungeon, I've never seen that much panic in a player!

What is your favorite DCC adventure?

DCC #82.5. Clyde Caldwell is my favorite classic artist and I love how large the adventure is! Although DCC #26: The Scaly God holds a fair bit of nostalgia.

Do you have any tips for your fellow Road Crew Judges?

Just two:

1) Fun goes before anything else. If people are having fun, you're doing it right. DCC RPG allows for experimentation with the rules and it's okay to season it to taste without worrying about breaking the game for the sake of that fun. Bend those rules if it makes it fun for everyone.

2) I added a homebrew rule for crits for casting magic. I allow an additional 1d6 to the result instead of the caster level if the caster is beneath level 6 and 2d6 if the caster is level 6 and above.

ROADWORTHY: CORY "DM COJO" GAHSMAN

25 games run as of this interview.

Tell us about how you first got in to tabletop RPGs.

I started in 1984 with the Mentzer Red Box D&D set. I then found friends who played Advanced D&D and transitioned to that. We also played Gamma World, Star Frontiers, Battletech and Car Wars quite a bit. I played 2nd edition AD&D for a few years before giving the hobby up when I went to college. I got back into gaming about seven years ago, when I started listening to podcasts like Roll for Initiative, Save or Die and Thaco's Hammer.

How did you first discover Dungeon Crawl Classics?

I started listening to the Spellburn podcast because I had enjoyed listening to Jim Wampler on the Save or Die podcast. By episode 2, I had purchased the book and dice...and haven't looked back!

What adventures are you running for your Road Crew games?

My road crew games are mostly for my middle school lunch club kids. I have run several adventures for them this year, including Sailors on the Starless Sea, Frozen in Time and The One Who Watches from Below by Goodman Games. I have also run Purple Duck Games' Bone Hoard of the Dancing Horror and Purple Sorcerer's Perils of the Sunken City. At GaryCon this year, I ran a zero-level funnel of my own creation...Island of the Gonturzap.

Opposite page: DM Cojo's "DCC students" Austin Ellis, Sami Lau, Matthew Alton, Mason Peterson, and Lauren McIntyre

Below top: DM Cojo in the classroom with Mason Peterson and Lauren McIntyre

Below middle: Lauren McIntyre and Mason Peterson sport their Road Crew gear

Below bottom: DCC pals Joe Bryant and Matthew Alton





Will you share some stories from your Road Crew games?

Most of my lunch club kids were new to RPGs, so their first sessions were very interesting. When one group of PCs approached the keep in *Sailors on the Starless Sea*, instead of formulating a single plan, the players split their characters up and tried five different ways of getting in, all at the same time!

We also have some fun corruptions take place during our games...two different characters had second faces grow on their backs, one took on bony skin, and a beast-man PC (a replacement I gave him at the end of *Sailors on the Starless Sea*) pledged himself to Bobugbubilz, and got tentacle arms and around his mouth.

What is your favorite DCC adventure?

It is so hard to pick one...there are so many good ones. But I think I would have to go with Jobe Bittman's *The One Who Watches From Below* because it has multiple paths to the end, giving it a sandbox feel even though there is a single end game. I have run it three times and no party has taken the same path. The face shield is also an awesome prop in that adventure!

Do you have any tips for your fellow Road Crew Judges?

Just keep evangelizing the game! The DCC community is amazing and growing all the time. Keep sharing the DCC goodness with as many gamers as you can!

Where did you get your nickname?

When I started calling into various gaming podcasts, there was already a DM Cory on Thaco's Hammer. To avoid confusion, I went with my old high school/college nickname of Cojo, which is a shortened version of my first and middle names, Cory Jon.

Tell us about your school gaming club.

I started the club last November because several kids heard me sharing about my hobby and asked what it was like. We started with ten kids in two different groups that met during their lunch periods a couple times a week. Eventually, I had enough kids on a waiting list that I split one group in half, and ran three groups. I then had a bunch of kids who love Star Wars and wanted to know if there was an RPG for that. That led me to running the old West End Games d6 version of the Star Wars RPG for two groups. Now I

am running games every day of the week on my lunch and planning periods. I also plan to continue meeting once a week during summer vacation with the club at the public library. I recently ran a gofundme campaign to raise funds for a RPG library for the club, and the response was overwhelming. To date, I have raised over \$1000 and have also received box after box of used and new gaming books from gamers who want to support the creation of the library. I am truly humbled by the support of the gamer community!

ROADWORTHY: SARAH BROWN

4 games run as of this interview.

Tell us about how you first got into tabletop RPGs.

I actually was introduced to D&D in the late 80s via a local BBS. One of my parents' friends was interested in running a game via message boards and I signed up immediately. This was very short-lived unfortunately but the same guy ran an intro game in person for my family shortly after and we were all hooked. I would have been in my late teens at this point and I was playing weekly with my parents and two of my brothers who were both younger than 10 at the time. This would have been right around the time that [AD&D] 2nd edition was introduced so I'm not really sure if I began with 1st or 2nd edition, and weirdly I still have a bit of an affection for THAC0. It was a great way to spend time with family and we still get together and game as a family today whenever we can. The difference now, of course, being that there are grandchildren (including my daughter) in the mix as well.

How did you first discover Dungeon Crawl Classics?

Free RPG Day 2011. I picked up a copy of The Portal Under the Stars and was instantly intrigued. My brother put a pre-order in for the core rulebook for my husband and me for our birthdays. I'm sad to say it sat on a shelf for a couple of years before we ever started playing, Neither of us were confident in our ability to act as a judge, but finally, I gave in and bought Sailors Under the Starless Sea and ran it for my husband and daughter as a Father's Day present. We were instantly hooked and have been playing ever since.

What adventures are you running for your Road Crew games?

At this point I've only ever run funnels (both for Road Crew games and home games). I'm currently working my way through the Sunken City Omnibus by Purple Sorcerer Games. I've just had many of my group level up our last session, but I'm planning on continuing through the series so that I can introduce new players to the system alongside my level ones. I'm hoping to continue through the omnibus and run Lair of the Mist Men as my first Level 1 adventure by the end of the year.

Will you share some stories from your Road Crew games?

Both of my stories are from times I ran The Well of Souls by Carl Bussler.



The first Road Crew game I ran was in 2014 at a game store during a big game day event. One of the PCs attached an iron spike, left by a fallen companion, to his shovel to use as his weapon. I let him roll one higher on the dice chain for damage. This was a big hit with the group and I learned early on that the dice chain is one of my favorite aspects of DCC.

Early this year I ran an intro game for my new friendly local game store and ran The Well of Souls again. My group had a little trouble figuring out the puzzle in the puzzle room and by the end of it there were dead PCs all over the place that we figured had to be a mass of ground bones and muscle. They were eventually shoveling the remains of their dead party members onto the tiles to weigh them down. A bit gross, but it got the job done.

What is your favorite DCC adventure?

Sailors definitely holds a soft spot for me. I've introduced quite a few people to the system through this module and it's always a hit. I'd also like to add that I love The Arwich Grinder by Daniel Bishop. There is a certain amount of joy in watching your players shiver as you introduce them to the next area in the adventure.

Do you have any tips for your fellow Road Crew Judges?

Carry a stack of character sheets with you. Almost every time I run a game, someone ends up hovering over the table watching. When this happens, I'll usually whip out a character sheet and invite them to play. I love that it's so easy to bring a new player in, especially in a funnel, and have the ability for them to join in immediately without having to worry about character creation. Also I love letting my players do whatever they want to try to do. Especially if it's likely to end in failure. They learn early in my games (usually) that death is imminent.

Interested in joining the Road Crew? Visit goodman-games.com for information on how you can get free swag for running DCC RPG games!

GOODMAN GAMES WORLD TOUR 2016



Visit www.goodman-games.com to learn how you
can earn free swag for running games you love!

Goodman Games' Official Gen Con 2016 Event Grid

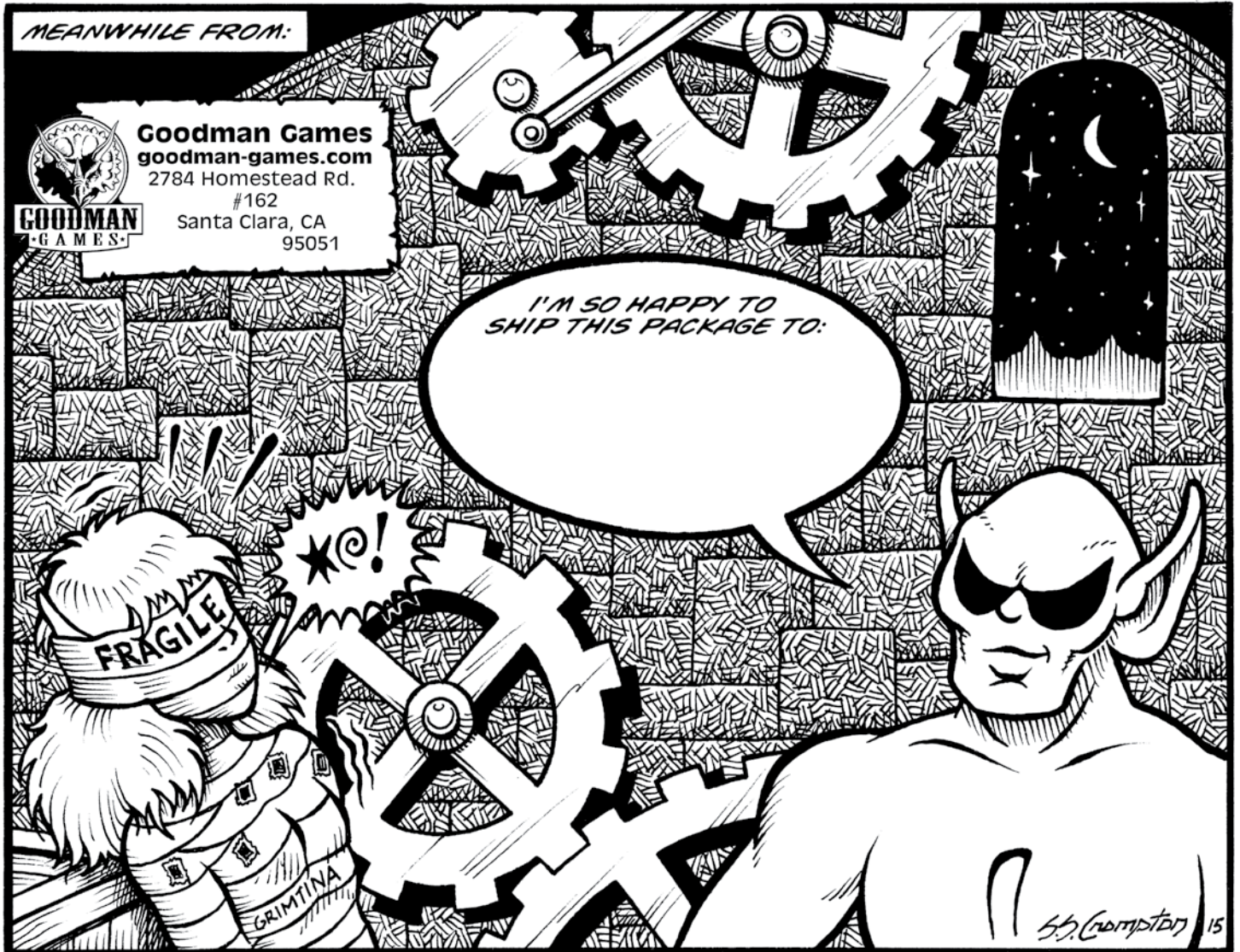
	Thursday (Aug 4)	Friday (Aug 5)	Saturday (Aug 6)	Sunday (Aug 7)
9:00 AM - 1:00 PM	The Ball of Lost Souls - DCC - Diogo Nogueira	Warlord of the Purple Planet - DCC tournament - Harley Stroh (GM)	The Emerald Enchanter - DCC - Marc Bruner	The Last Scion of House Victoria - DCC - James Dovey
9:00 AM - 1:00 PM	Well of the Worm - DCC - Dustin Clark	Fury of the Forlorn North - DCC - Andrew Woodbridge	The Captain's Table - Metamorphosis Alpha - Diogo Nogueira	Tower of the Black Pearl - DCC - Diogo Nogueira
9:00 AM - 1:00 PM	They Served Brandolyn Red - DCC - James Dovey	DragonMech: Into the Gear Forest - DCC - Dieter Zimmerman	Not in Kansas Anymore - DCC - Dieter Zimmerman	Muster of the Endless Battalion - DCC - Dieter Zimmerman
9:00 AM - 1:00 PM		Radiation Road - Metamorphosis Alpha - Michael Curtis	Reliquary of the Ancient Ones - MCC tourney - Jim Wampler - 9:00 start time	The Inn at Five Points - X-Crawl - Brendan LaSalle
9:00 AM - 1:00 PM		Symptom of the Universe - DCC - Brendan LaSalle	Frozen in Time - DCC - Peter (PJ) Foxhoven	Hive of the Overmind - MCC - Jim Wampler
9:00 AM - 1:00 PM		The Old God's Return - DCC - Dustin Clark	World Quest of the Winter Calendar - DCC - Julian Bernick	Warlords of ATOZ - MCC playtest - Julian Bernick
9:00 AM - 1:00 PM			Escape from Castle Mina Zo - DCC - Dustin Clark	
9:00 AM - 1:00 PM			Crawljammer: The Volcano Thieves - DCC - Tim Callahan	Against the Atomic Overlord - DCC - Corey Russell
10:00 AM - 2:00 PM	Super Secret Playtest #1 - DCC - Jobe Bittman - 10:00 start time	Super Secret Playtest #2 - DCC - Jobe Bittman - 10:00 start time	Super Secret Playtest #3 - DCC - Jobe Bittman - 10:00 start time	
10:00 AM - 2:00 PM	Reliquary of the Ancient Ones - MCC tourney - Jim Wampler - 10:00 start time	Reliquary of the Ancient Ones - MCC tourney - Jim Wampler - 10:00 start time		
1:00 PM - 2:00 PM break		Writer Palooza - at the Goodman Games booth - exhibitor booth #413		Awards Ceremony & Raffle Drawing - at the Goodman Games booth - booth #413
2:00 PM - 6:00 PM	Warlord of the Purple Planet - DCC tournament - Harley (GM)	DCC #76 Colossus Arise! - DCC - Marc Bruner	Warlord of the Purple Planet - DCC tournament - Harley (GM)	
2:00 PM - 6:00 PM	Dungeon Crawling for Beginners & Novices - DCC - James Dovey	The One Who Watches From Below - DCC - Tim Dischene	While the Gods Laugh - A Level 10 Funnel - DCC - Mark Bruner	
2:00 PM - 6:00 PM	DragonMech: The Temple of Seroficitacit - DCC - Dieter Zimmerman	Escape from the Purple Planet - DCC - Eric Daum	Escape from the Shrouded Fen - DCC - Terry Olson	
2:00 PM - 6:00 PM	Holler Hollow - DCC - Michael Curtis	The Lost Idol of the Cyclopean Ape - DCC - Diogo Nogueira	Hole in the Sky - DCC - Diogo Nogueira	
2:00 PM - 6:00 PM	The Woeful Caves Under Yander Mountain - DCC - Tim Dischene	They Served Brandolyn Red - DCC - Michael Crane	Lankmar after Dark - DCC Lankmar - Michael Curtis	
2:00 PM - 6:00 PM	Symptom of the Universe - DCC - Brendan LaSalle	Carnival of the Damned - DCC tournament (1-round) - David Baity	Grimtooth's Museum of Death - DCC - Tim Dischene	
2:00 PM - 6:00 PM	Elzemon and the Blood-Drinking Box - DCC - Michael Crane	Survive the Purple Planet - DCC - Tim Callahan	Destroy all Crawlers - X-Crawl - Brendan LaSalle	
2:00 PM - 6:00 PM	Expedition to Docking Bay G - Metamorphosis Alpha - James Floyd Kelly	Children of the Fallen Sun - MCC playtest - Michael Bolam	Against the Atomic Overlord - DCC - Corey Russell	
3:00 PM - 4:00 PM (seminar - Friday only)		How to Run a Successful Kickstarter Campaign - seminar with Joseph Goodman		
6:00 PM - 7:00 PM break				
7:00 PM - 8:00 PM (seminars)	Book Manufacturing 101 - seminar with Joseph Goodman	How to Write Adventure Modules that Don't Suck - seminar - Joseph Goodman	What's New With Goodman Games - seminar - Joseph Goodman	
8:00 PM - 9:00 PM (seminars)		Exploring the Gaming Fiction of Gary Gygax's Appendix N - seminar		
7:00 PM - 11:00 PM	Beastmen Attack! - DCC - Brad Bell (independent GM)			
7:00 PM - 11:00 PM	Escape from the Shrouded Fen - DCC - Terry Olson			
7:00 PM - 11:00 PM	ROCK GOD DEATH-FUGUE - DCC Variant - Steve Bean			
7:00 PM - 11:00 PM	Destroy all Crawlers - X-Crawl - Brendan LaSalle			
7:00 PM - 11:00 PM	Death by D.I.S.C.O - MCC playtest - David Baity			
7:00 PM - 11:00 PM	Nights in Nowhere City - DCC - Julian Bernick			
7:00 PM - 11:00 PM	Enter the Dagon II - DCC tourney - Jim Dovey (GM) & Mike Crane			

GOODMAN GAMES' OFFICIAL GEN CON 2016 EVENT GRID

	Thursday (Aug 4)	Friday (Aug 5)	Saturday (Aug 6)	Sunday (Aug 7)
7:00 PM - 11:00 PM	Beastmen Attack! - DCC - Brad Bell (independent GM)			
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7:00 PM - 11:00 PM	Death by D.I.S.C.O - MCC playtest - David Baity			
7:00 PM - 11:00 PM	Nights in Nowhere City - DCC - Julian Bernick			
7:00 PM - 11:00 PM	Enter the Dagon II - DCC tourney - Jim Dovey (GM) & Mike Crane			
7:00 PM - 11:00 PM	Assault on the Sky Tower - MCC playtest - Mike Bolam			
8:00 PM - 12:00 AM		Destroy all Crawlers - X-Crawl - Brendan LaSalle	Frozen in Time - DCC - Peter (PJ) Foxhoven	
8:00 PM - 12:00 AM		Carnival of the Damned - DCC tournament (1-round) - David Baity	Escape from Yule Mountain - DCC - David Baity	
8:00 PM - 12:00 AM		Azmodeus vs. Cthulhu - DCC - Julian Bernick	Enter the Dagon II - DCC tourney - Scott Kellogg & Karen Kellogg	
8:00 PM - 12:00 AM		Enter the Dagon II - DCC tourney - Andrew Woodbridge (GM) &	The Emerald Enchanter Strikes Back - DCC - Marc Bruner (8:00 - 10:00)	
8:00 PM - 12:00 AM		Dungeon Crawling for Beginners & Novices - DCC - James Dovey	The Falcate Idol - DCC Dustin Clark	
8:00 PM - 12:00 AM		The Woeful Caves Under Yander Mountain - DCC - Tim Dischene	The Last Scion of House Victoria - DCC - James Dovey	
8:00 PM - 12:00 AM		Null Singularity - DCC - Steven Bean	Warlords of ATOZ - MCC playtest - Michael Bolam	
8:00 PM - 12:00 AM		The Sea Queen Escapes - DCC - Jenn Scott		
8:00 PM - 12:00 AM	optional: open gaming (ie, Doug Con)	optional: open gaming (ie, Doug Con)	optional: open gaming (ie, Doug Con)	

2015-2016 MAILING LABEL ART

If you have ever ordered a Goodman Games product online or via Kickstarter, you've had the pleasure of receiving a box with our custom mailing labels. This past year featured several custom labels, and even some custom-printed shipping cartons. Here is some of the art that some lucky customers received!



Above and below: Printed art from the shipping carton for Grimtooth's Ultimate Traps Collection, by Steve Crompton.

Left: Mailing label for our 5E Kickstarter.

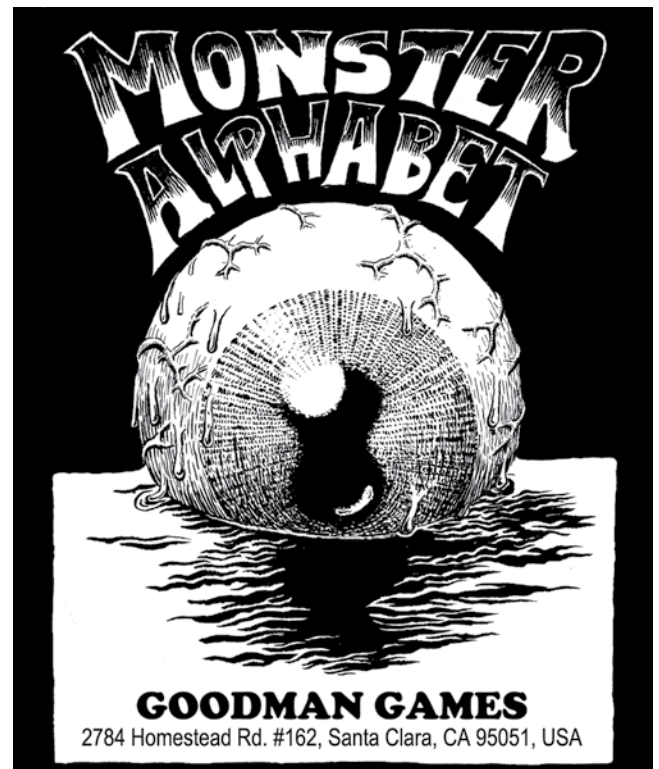
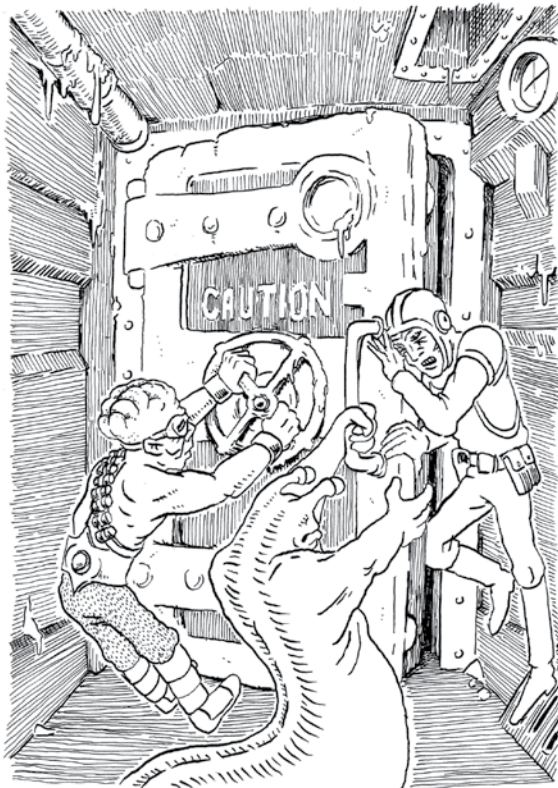




Above and right:
Printed art from the
shipping carton for
Metamorphosis Alpha
Deluxe Collector's
Edition.

Far right: Mailing
label for our *Monster*
Alphabet Kickstarter.

All art on this page by
Stefan Poag.



MONSTER ALPHABET



LEATHER EDITION



Above: The "Dead Captain" illustration for *Metamorphosis Alpha: Epsilon City*.



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

Dear Archmage Abby,

'Sup Crazy Gamer Momma!

Okay, what to you think about rules lawyers? I just played a game at my FLGS for Free RPG day. I played with an entirely new group and one player hammered the GM on the rules the whole time. The GM was good, but this player possessed a photographic memory for the rules of our game, (GAME SYSTEM REDACTED), and used his superior knowledge of loopholes and minutia to thrash every situation that the GM presented us with, mostly by manipulating how his feats and magic spells worked. The couple of times the GM proved this player wrong the guy just sulked, and got nastier the next time a controversy came up – which was at least twice or three times per encounter. The poor GM got flustered and eventually gave every decision away to this new player, and we walked all over the guy's game.

It wasn't fun.

What should I do when this comes up in future?

Sincerely Yours,

(random roll for pen name) Splainin 2 Do

Dear Splainin,

"A rules lawyer is a participant in a rules-based environment who attempts to use the letter of the law without reference to the spirit, usually in order to gain an advantage within that environment."

Rules lawyers will always be a part of the game. Really, this isn't about understanding and knowing the rules. The problem is players who want to undermine the game to make their characters unbeatable, and themselves the center of attention. Most rules lawyers, in my experience, want to be both GM and player in an effort to bend the entire adventure around their own personal experience, to the detriment of the experience for the other players at the table.

For shame. Of course expertise is wonderful. But players should work with the GM so that the rules get out of the way of the story he is trying to tell, and not the other way around. The difference here lies in respect – you can point out rules issues, but when the GM makes a ruling you should consider the

matter settled and move on. Without the final authority over the game the GM has no role, and RPGs just become an unsatisfying contest of memorization and confrontational rhetoric.

If a GM is blatantly wrong (and we all have been, from time to time), you should discuss it with him in between sessions. The GM may have a reason that he house-rules a certain situation, and players should respect that. On the other hand, if a GM has no regard whatsoever for the rules, or changes his interpretation of the rules depending on who it favors in a given situation... well, that's its own problem, and that sort of GM eventually finds himself without players.

So to answer your question: if the situation comes up in future, you should point out to that player that his behavior is detracting from the game, and ask if can let up on the rules arguments during session. No need to make it a huge deal – call for a break, talk to the player privately, and see if you can't come to some kind of accord that lets the story run smoothly, without anyone pushing anyone else around. All that time you spend arguing could be spent walloping the tar out of bad guys, and who can't get behind that?

Play nice! The game should be fun, and the kind of players who think endless arguments are fun might not be ready for RPGs.

Hope that helps!

Be Sweet,

Archmage Abby

Need some gaming advice? Send your questions to Archmage Abby! Email to abby@goodman-games.com. We reserve the right to edit letters for size and content. Letters are posted anonymously, and if you do not provide us with a topical nick name for yourself one will be generated for you by rolling randomly on Table 15-9: Archmage Abby's Pen Names for her Darling Gamers. Sending a letter to the Archmage does not guarantee publications. All content becomes property of Goodman Games. If you wish a confidential reply, please let us know and we will do our best to accommodate you.



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