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Kingdom of Giants™

Palladium RPG® Book 10:

By Bill Coffin

A Sourcebook for the Palladium Fantasy RPG®, Second Edition

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Dedication:

As usual, there were a crew of folks without whom writing this book would have been impossible.

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And to the rest of the staff at Palladium Books, who I have finally had the pleasure to meet. These guys deserve no small share of praise and recognition.

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And most importantly, I dedicate this book to my incredible wife Alli. She is the reason why I get anything done. Thanks, princess. You are my everything.

Bill Coffin
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— Kevin Siembieda, 1999

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From the Journals of Rystrom Khejas

From a hundred leagues out, you can see dark plumes of smoke and ash belching forth from Mount Nimro, a forbidding landmark in what has become a dark and inhospitable region, this land of the Giants. The sky, a swirled, uneven gray, is made even more so by ***Nimrod's*** *most recent upheaval, coating the downwind plains with another thin snowfall of ash.*

Even from this far out, it is easy to see why this forboding land has remained shunned for so many years. The lava, smoke and ash have never stopped coming from either volcano, which has left this entire region little more than a wasteland. The soil, covered by so much volcanic debris, has become infertile. The air, thick with dust and ash, mixed with the humidity and heat of the nearby jungle winds, is oppressive to the point of being unbearable.

Closer in, you can see the lava flowing slowly from Mount Nimro, breaking into numerous thin rivulets that stream down the mountainside, eventually cooling into an ever-growing wall of solidified magma. Nimro has been erupting forever, it seems, and it shows no sign of stopping. Indeed, the mountain feels like a second, stronger warning for those who had failed to heed the message given by smoke-spewing Mount Nimrod:

"Go ***back.****"*

"Turn ***around.****"*

"You are not wanted ***here.****"*

"And even if you were, you certainly would not last very ***long.****"*

This I know, for the words you reading are those of a dead man. I write these as if they are my last, for I truly believe that they will be.

* * * * *

It has been nearly a year since I, Rystrom Khejas, wandering scholar and swordsman, first set foot on the Baalgor Wastelands on behalf of the ***Order of the Scroll,*** *a society of scholar-adventurers I joined long ago (and have learned to regret ever since). Indeed, my many adventures in the Baalgor Wastes led me to meet many new and strange folk, to learn ancient and terrible secrets, and to discover new marvels of every kind. In the months I had traveled through that desolate region, I thought I had braved every kind of danger possible, and had survived innumerable attempts on my life by various monsters, villains and other unspeakable things.*

As I traveled from the Baalgor coast to that ***region's*** *western mountains, I learned of an ongoing conflict between the Giants and the* ***Gromek****. Indeed, a war between two such fascinating and powerful warlike races captured my interest. I had to learn more. So, into the Baalgor Mountains I went to spy on the fighting and to report back to the Order what I had found.*

While the bloodshed in those mountains is fearsome to behold, I learned that it was nothing in comparison to the wholesale slaughter being committed in the Mount Nimro Region, over the mountains and to the west. There, some enterprising ***Eandroth*** *informed me, the Gromek and Giants battle for control of the Land of the Twin Furies, as some have come to call the volcanoes,* ***Mount Nimro*** *and* ***Mount Nimrod.*** *It would seem that both races claim the region as their home, but neither is willing to share it with the other. And so they war endlessly, soaking that ash-tainted soil with their blood.*

My own studies tell me that it was the Giants who initially called Mount Nimro their home, perhaps because nobody else wanted it, and, after all, an attractive dominion is all in the eyes of the beholder. It is said in the ***Tristine Chronicles,*** *and elsewhere, that Mounts Nimro and Nimrod were created by the spiteful Old Ones who, as they were defeated by the coalition of Elves, Titans, dragons and gods who bravely ended the Age of Chaos, wished to raise a blemish on this world so that none would forget them. Thus, they created the Twin Furies, ever-angry mountains projecting their volcanic wrath on the world as a sign of the Old* ***Ones'*** *eternal contempt for the forces that had proven to be their betters. For millennia, all shunned this area, for it bore the mark of a vanquished evil, and none wished to stay long near a spot so closely aligned with the forces of darkness. Indeed, one senses the pulsing energies underneath the soil here as incredible ley lines cross each other* ***and*** *form large nexuses underneath each of the volcanoes.*

So, when the Giants first claimed this place for their own, there was nobody to oppose them. Indeed, who would? The land is tainted with an ancient evil, and the soil itself does not encourage the toil of honest, good folk. To a race such as the Giants, forever branded (and perhaps unfairly so) as villains and monsters, this blighted place was the perfect home. Nobody would mind if they claimed it, nor would anyone wish to take this place from them.

For centuries the Nimro region was the home of the Giants, who largely kept to themselves and remained unknown to most of the outside world. Here, they prospered, as much as Giants can, having not yet made enemies of the smaller folk of this world. All that changed during the ***Age of Light,*** *however, when a dimensional anomaly brought legions of Gromek to this world, marooning them near the Yin-Sloth Jungles. It is said that the gods themselves, who had just finished repairing the damage to the Jungles wrought by the* ***Battle of the Gods,*** *took measures to prevent the Gromek from staking their claim there. And so, these fearsome invaders moved north and west, to the Twin Furies, to the Mountains of Fire. For these folk had never heard of the Old Ones. They did not fear the stigma they had placed on this land. And they certainly did not fear the Giant folk who already lived here. For the Gromek, this place was to be their own.*

At once did the two forces go to war. Over time, control of the land shifted to and fro, much like the Elf-Dwarf conflict that would later devastate the Baalgor rainforest. I knew precious little about this age-old conflict, what part it might have played in the Elf-Dwarf War or in other events of legend and history. All I knew was that the conflict in the Baalgor Mountains was but the periphery of a greater and more ancient battle for the supremacy of a land nobody wanted, fought by warriors nobody else dared face.

I had to know more. I rode back through the wastes as the guest on an Eandroth caravan, finally arriving back in the Free City ***of Troker,*** *a city easily as wicked as any spot in the Western*

Empire. There did I send my notes on the Baalgor Expedition back to my counterparts in the Order of the Scroll in Caer Itom, as well as a note stating my intentions to charter an expedition to Mount Nimro, where I would chronicle the details of this war firsthand.

Recruiting adventurers to my cause was not difficult, especially in a place such as Troker, where everything has its price. After flashing enough gold, with the promise of more to be obtained in the field, I gathered a likely band of heroes who were just as eager to explore the hidden dangers of Mount Nimro as I was.

And that, dear reader, was our downfall.

* * * * *

It matters not what became of us during our trip back through the Baalgor Wastelands, nor of the many dangers we faced traveling though the near face of the mighty Baalgor Mountains. All that matters is the fateful day we slipped past the watchful sentries of Gurthasi Tor, the city of Giants nestled high atop the Baalgor crags.

Past that great stone fortress, the mountains became too hazardous to climb, and we were forced to descend into a large cleft in the rock, a roadway perhaps carved or blasted into being by forces unknown to us. Judging by the Giantese markings carved into the walls of this artificial canyon, it was clear to us that this was a major roadway used by the Giants, presumably to send supplies and personnel from Mount Nimro itself to Gurthasi Tor.

For the better part of a day we traveled uneasily along this deathtrap corridor, its sides too steep to scale, and its walls too high to vault. For as long as we wished to continue forward, this was our only path, and we knew full well that whatever hostile force we might encounter here, there would be no hiding from it.

It was well into our second day in this ravine-road when we saw them, a flight of winged silhouettes circling very high above us, riding the mountain (thermal) updrafts like hawks, endlessly gliding in a patient circling motion. They were Gromek, no doubt spying upon this Giant road, and whoever might be moving along it. At first, we feared that the winged warriors were preparing to attack us, but as we continued and no such event occurred, we began to fear why these winged predators had chosen not to strike.

We found out soon enough. Around the next bend of the roadway stood a wall of armed Giants, perhaps a patrol of soldiers returning to Gurthasi Tor after sweeping the local area for spies or intruders. That meant us, on both counts.

The Giants before us consisted mostly of Nimro and Jotans, going by their skin color and manner of dress. But there were also a healthy number of Orcs, Ogres and Trolls among them as well, most likely serving as a disposable front-line in case the group ran into any serious opposition.

There was a minute of awful silence as both of our groups sized each other up. For we had both bumped into each other while rounding a rather sharp turn, and none of us had even heard the other coming until we ran, quite literally, into each other. At first, there were a few seconds of stunned silence, as we all tried to figure out who in the world we had just encountered. And then after that, there came that dreadful period where I knew exactly what was going to become of us. We were outnumbered at least ten to one, and even in the tight confines of this rocky passageway, where we could probably have held off an attacking force many times our size, we would still have been quickly overwhelmed.

The Giants knew this, too, and a particularly fearsome Nimro stepped forth from the group and crossed his arms, standing tall and proud in the middle of the road, with his small army of Giants and underlings backing him up.

"And where do you five think you are going?" he asked in surprisingly fluent Western. "This is the Nimro King's road, and anyone and everything on it is his property."

The Nimro pursed his lips as he looked us over, making a mocking gesture that perhaps there was something on us that might be of value. Then he shook his head, deciding that there wasn't. "Since you don't look like merchants, and you are all too small for slave work, I guess that makes you food, huh?"

That sounded good to the line of Orcs and Trolls standing at his feet. It sounded considerably less inviting to me.

Sister Adrial, a fighting priest of Rurga who was without a doubt the brashest of my companions stepped forth and drew her rapier.

"If you wish to dine on our flesh, then you'll have to fight us for it," she shouted. As she did, my three other companions drew their steel, as well.

In truth, I was travelling with four of the greatest heroes in these parts, the scourge of every bandit, marauder and evildoer in the Baalgor Wastelands. Sister Adrial, along with her affinity for sword fighting, was a devout priest of light who had used her clerical abilities many times to our band's benefit. Dolzumel was an Elven warrior monk from the famed Warrior Monastery of Shandala in the Western Empire. Gregor the Black was our resident wizard whose focus was what he dubiously termed "shadow magic," a lost arcane art he swore would become a major field of arcanum once again. And finally, there was Captain Rackham, one of the most fearless and invincible pirates of the Sea of Scarlet Waters. Rackham had had a remarkable change of heart some years ago and now trod the heroes' path, doing battle with all manner of tyranny and injustice wherever he found it.

Any one of these heroes would be enough to give the worst villain of Troker a run for his gold, or so I had thought. Until facing a band of true Giants, I had foolishly believed there was very little that we couldn't handle together.

The Nimro didn't look impressed in the least.

"Looks like climbing the mountains did not take all the spunk outta these ones," another Giant said.

The lead Nimro smiled as he pulled the enormous flamberge he had strapped to his back. "Yeah, so I see."

The Nimro held his great sword before him with both hands, pointing it towards us, like he was testing its weight. Perhaps he was warming up for what he considered top entertainment. It mattered not. I knew I had very little time left to think about it.

The Nimro's grin melted away, and his face turned into a mask of hostility and contempt. With unexpected speed and grace, he swung his flamberge about his head and charged to join in arms against us. As the Giant bore down on us, his battle

cry split the air and thundered up and down the narrow confines of the rocky canyon of a road.

"Okay, boys! Let's go to work!"

* * * * *

Thirty seconds later, it was all over. Dolzumel, Gregor the Black, Sister Adrial and Captain **Rackham** all lay dead. Of the four, only **Gregor's** body was still recognizable in any way.

They had been some of the hardiest heroes I had ever traveled with. How could they have been slaughtered so easily? Were Giants indeed as dangerous as all the folklore said? After our terrifying defeat, it would certainly seem so.

The charging **Nimro** was backed up first by an even more enormous Jotan, who wielded a huge stone hammer that looked more like a stonemason's mallet than an actual weapon. The stone head of it was stained red on the front face, from all those unfortunates whom had a run-in with the hammer's business end. Now, it was Dolzumel and **Rackham's** turn. As the Giants charged, our group split up, and these two ran smack into the Jotan, who brought his hammer down in a overhand smash right on poor Dolzumel. The last I saw of him was his slack face as his eyes rolled upwards in their sockets, fixed on the hammer that was speeding down upon him. A second later, the Jotan swung his hammer back over his head again, catching poor Rackham as the pirate was scrambling for cover and smashed him into reddish pulp. Not even his plate armor, of which he was so very proud, could keep from buckling, squashing his body like a sandwich.

Only then did I notice that the Jotan hadn 't even been looking when he smashed the old pirate. He had just known where he 'd be.

At that point, another Nimro came towards me, aiming **a** pike at my chest. I sidestepped the oncoming attack, dashed forward and lanced a nasty cut along the Giant's inner thigh, where I hoped its femoral artery would be. The gout of blood that came from the howling beast answered **that** question, but by then, I had already dashed through the **Giant's** legs and was facing several **Orcs** and an Ogre. Bad odds, these.

Just then, the lead Nimro who had launched the attack reached Sister Adrial. He grinned and held **his flamberge** high, casting a shadow across Adrial, who by reflex had raised her rapier to parry the blow, only realizing too late that she might as well have tried to stop an avalanche. The towering Nimro cut her in half down the middle of her body. **The flamberge** blade was so wide that it took a sizeable bit of Adrial with it when it finished cleaving through her. **In** fact, the sword went through so fast that it buried itself into the stone floor of the canyon, and the Nimro spent several seconds working the sword free.

In a way, Gregor the Black had gotten off lucky. The Jotan with the hammer, after he had killed Rackham, swung at the wizard but narrowly missed, smashing into a large rock nearby. Gregor had perhaps a second to appreciate his artful dodge, for the **Jotan's** hammer hit that stone so hard that shards exploded from the impact, peppering Gregor from behind. One managed to find that narrow gap under the back of his leather coif and punched right through his neck. The young mage never knew what hit him. He just fell to the ground, gurgled up blood, and passed out. He was dead a minute later, but he didn 't **feel** any pain. Neither did any of my other comrades, who had met their deaths so quickly, that I **can't** imagine they had much time to suffer.

At least, **that's** what I want to think.

In the next split-second I realized, most pointedly, that further conflict would only reunite me with my former traveling companions. And as much as I would miss them now that they were gone, I certainly did not want to see them again so soon. And if that couldn **'t** be helped, then I really did not want to go the way they did.

I stepped **back** from the **Orcs** facing me (though I was fairly certain I could have taken at least one or two of them) and thrust my sword into a crack in the stone, leaving it quivering like a steel monument to mark my fallen companions. I raised my hands and turned to the lead Nimro, who was already whirling to face me, his great sword held high, slick with **Adrial's** blood.

Here was my chance to prove that words are mightier than the sword.

"Good **sir,"** I said in Giantese. "My name is **Rystrom Khejas,** and I am your **prisoner."**

Somehow I managed all of that without a shaking voice. I had not known my slain comrades for long, but I knew they were good folk, and their deaths were a loss for the world. Even if they had been evildoers, their deaths, so graphic, were enough to rattle even the most diabolical fiend.

The Nimro stopped his killing stroke midway through and stared at me, stunned. Perhaps he wasn **'t** used to being asked for mercy. Or maybe he just **hadn't** heard a human speak to him in high Giantese. Whatever it was, it worked, for the Nimro wiped his blade clean and sheathed it. Then he turned and spoke with the hammer-weilding Jotan, who had killed the other three of my companions. The host of other Giants, **Orcs,** Ogres, and Trolls looked terribly disappointed, for they wanted to get in on the fight, but it had ended before most of them even drew their steel.

Meanwhile, the Nimro and Jotan kept speaking, presumably about me. From what I could hear, the Nimro wanted to slay (and probably eat) me and then continue on with his patrol. It seemed Gromek were in the area, and this was a war party charged with bringing back Gromek scalps or not returning at all. The Jotan, however, felt that I needed to live, and probably should be brought back to Mount Nimro, where I could be interrogated **(tortured?).**

Their exchange grew more heated, with the Nimro finally ordering the Jotan to stand down and kill me, but the Jotan refused, citing that it was more important to keep me as a potentially important prisoner. Finally, the Nimro went for his sword, and the **Jotan's** hand shot forth with serpentine speed and latched itself around his superior's throat.

"The human and I are returning to Mount **Nimro,"** the Jotan said in a low grumble. **"If** you try to stop me, you **die."**

And with that, he let go of the Nimro, in front of the rest of the patrol, who looked on with a mixture **of** fear and awe. To my surprise, the angry Nimro capitulated and allowed us to leave.

Seeing that I had no other weapons (an oversight I have never let myself live down), the Jotan figured I did not pose

and the surrounding environs

much of a tfireaf to *him, so he simply let me walk unfettered. I suppose he didn't fear me running away, either, since he could easily best me in a foot race.*

"Move," he said gruffly, and nudged me in the back with his shin. Of course, the Giant was so strong, his simple tap sent me sprawling, much to the amusement of the other members of the Giant host.

I cleared the stars from my eyes and got to my feet and began walking behind him. As I traveled down the canyon road, the troop of miscreants before us parted, letting us walk through unmolested.

As we got clear of them, the Jotan said, "You speak good Giantese."

"Thank you. I didn't want to insult you by speaking Gobblely."

"I appreciate that." The Jotan spoke in short sentences, but his voice was not edged with the short gruffness of a thug or a simpleton. This warrior with the stonemason's hammer was more than he appeared. Perhaps an officer, but certainly one who commanded deep respect from his fellows. His prowess in battle was unquestionable, and his strength alone would be enough to cow even most Trolls. But whoever he was, I knew that in some way, we were kindred spirits. He was a thinker.

From behind us, the Nimro I cut in the leg began howling. Probably, one of his fellows was branding him with hot iron to cauterize the wound.

"Oh, I'm ... sorry about that," I said to the Jotan.

The Jotan flicked a glance over his shoulder, back at the patrol. "About cutting Zilidon? Pay it no heed. He is a braggart and a fool. It was good that he got his lesson in humility from one of your kind."

The way the Jotan said "your kind" struck me. He did not have the edge of hatred for me that I would have expected. It was more a tone of frustration, or a lack of understanding. I don't know.

"My name is Rystrom," I said. "Rystrom Khejas, wandering swordsman and scholar."

The Jotan didn't look at me as we spoke, but he did crack a smile at my introduction.

"I've heard of you. You have the knowing of many things."

"Well, I'd like to think so."

"That will make you a most valuable prisoner, indeed. Lord Blackrock may not even kill you. He may just put you to scribing for him for the rest of your life."

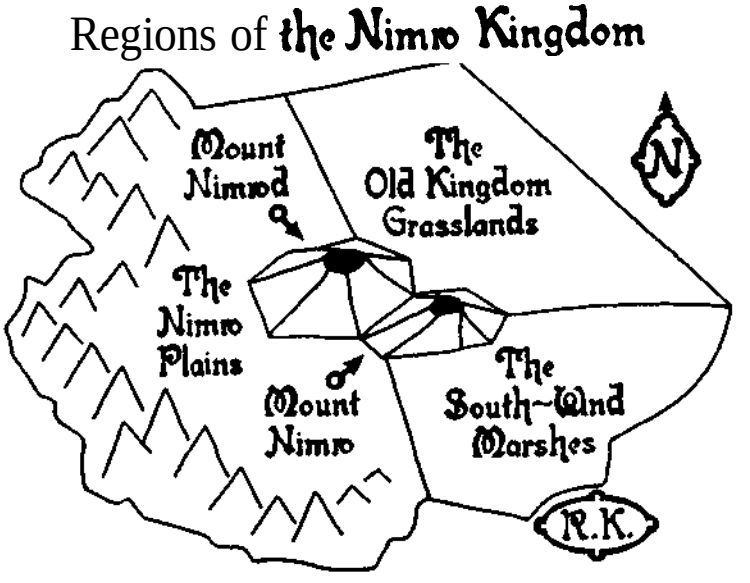
That was almost encouraging, in a grim sort of way.

"I am Jeruush Stonehammer," the Giant added.

"Pleased to meet you, Jeruush."

The Giant laughed. "No, you're not."

Well, he had me there. Certainly this was going to be a most interesting adventure, providing I survived it. If nothing else, I could take solace in that my final days, weeks, or months would be filled with learning all about Giants and this ancient land of fear and mystery.



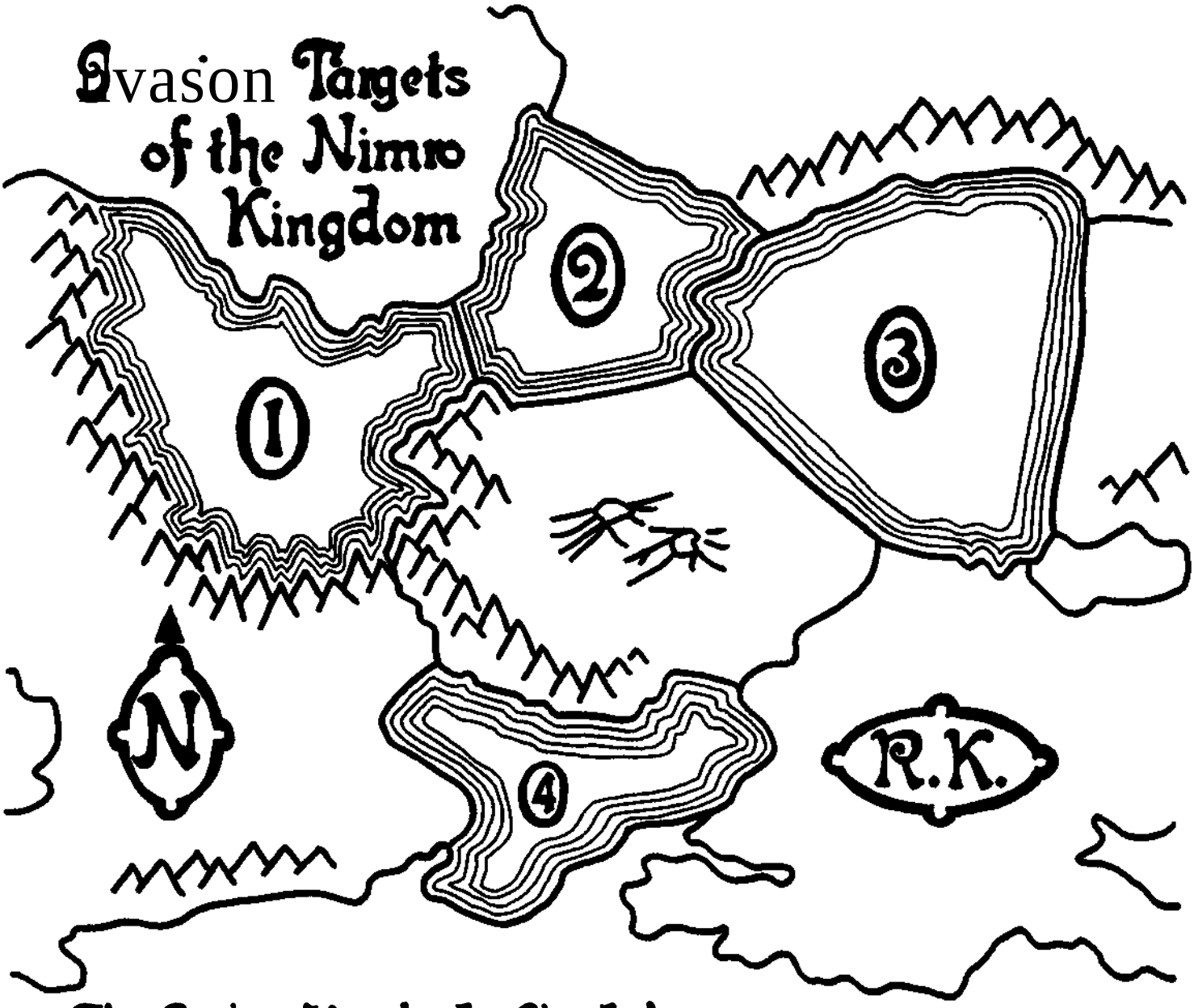
The Land of the Giants

Our journey had barely begun when we first ran into trouble, the winged terrors of the Wastelands, the Gromek, had been sighted nearby, and Jeruush began to make haste, lest we fall under their martial scrutiny. It was of little . . .

There is no further text than this. This is all that was sent to the Order of the Scroll chapterhouse along the Old Kingdom Frontier, conveyed by an anonymous carrier. We do not know who sent the message, or what has become of our esteemed colleague, Rystrom Khejas. But given the uncharacteristically abrupt way in which the narrative ends, and given the generally poor condition of the manuscript itself, we can only assume that some ill fate has befallen Rystrom, and that a rare, good-hearted soul found what was left of his ongoing travelogue and sent it to us, guessing rightly that we would be interested in it.

I take no pleasure in reporting this. Rystrom was an inspiration to us all, and his discoveries shall continue to enlighten and inspire generations to come. A tragedy indeed that such a bright career was cut short so soon. He shall be sorely missed.

— Kalved Mogue-Tuza, Secondary Initiate of the Order of the Scroll, report to the High Council of the Scroll on the Disappearance of Rystrom Khejas. Subtext: A Brief introduction to Mount Nimro.



1: The Baalgor Wastelands: Already home to many Giants, including the allied city of Gurthasi Tor. But, a strong Gromek presence.

2: The Scarlet Coast: Easily taken and provides access to the sea. But, any action here will alert the Western Empire.

3: The Old Kingdom Lowlands: The perfect choice. Many recruits to be found and little organized resistance. Or is there?

4: The Yn-Sloth Jungles: Resource-rich and many Gigante allies. But, a harsh environment to conquer.

Mount Nimro

A Brief History

"Behold a land of ancient evils and timeless dangers. Behold the Land of the Giants and the Mountains of Fire. Behold Mount Nimro!"

—A quote from an unnamed Western Scholar.

Mount Nimro is a historical contradiction, for while Mount Nimrod is itself one of the oldest fixtures in Palladium history, the Mount Nimro area has only become recognized as a region unto itself over the last few thousand years, making it the youngest region in the known world. Before the Elf-Dwarf War, the area was typically considered part of the Yin-Sloth Jungles or the New Kingdom. After the war, it usually got lumped in with the Baalgor Wastelands or the Old Kingdom. Regardless of what this place is called on any map, the point remains that for as long as anyone can remember, virtually nobody has ever wanted to lay claim to this particular area. The land is not very desirable, the climate is hostile to say the least, and the deadly Giants and other monstrous folk who live here discourage the plans of would-be colonizers or conquerors. Thus, the region has sat at the crossroads of several major nations and regions, yet remains isolated and unclaimed. Aside from the *Land of the Damned*, no other place on the Palladium World holds this distinction.

One reason this region has been shunned by the rest of the world is Mount Nimro's long and forbidding history. Since the dawn of recorded history, this land has been associated with unspeakable evils and atrocities of every kind. Even today, those who call this place home are tainted (perhaps unfairly) by its past. Regardless of whether or not the current inhabitants deserve their overall reputation as cruel monsters, one thing remains certain — Mount Nimro has hosted its fair share of them over the centuries.

The Age of Chaos & the Fall of the Old Ones

Mount Nimrod is said to have burned since the beginning of time, and Mount Nimro since recorded history. Although the Tristine Chronicles does not describe the Age of Chaos in detail, and virtually no other historical records exist from this period (the Old Ones were very thorough in preventing do-gooders from recording the evils of this age), stories of Mount Nimrod still persist from this era. Popular folklore claims that Mount Nimrod was created by the Great Old One Xy, as a living testament to the Old Ones' power. It is said, in certain ancient tales passed from word of mouth among the Orc and Ogre shamans of the Old Kingdom, that, "Xy drew forth a mountain of fire to blight the world and show the gods that the Old Ones were the true and invincible lords of this realm."

Other myths warn that Mount Nimrod was created as a permanent gate between this world and the Elemental Plane of Fire, for reasons unknown. Still other stories insist that Mount Nimrod grew naturally, on its own, as a reflection of the Old Ones' power. As the Old Ones grew in strength, so did the Mountain of Fire, and when the Old Ones were put to sleep, so too did the raging flames of Mount Nimrod grow quiet and small in comparison (To this day, Mount Nimrod is active, but it only issues forth small but steady amounts of lava and ash, rather than the earth-shaking eruptions of bygone eras).

Perhaps the most compelling bit of lore about Mount Nimrod comes from the Tristine Chronicles themselves, which state:

". . . and when the swirling maelstrom of magic and chaos came to an end, the dreaded Old Ones did sleep the enchanted slumber deep within the earth, and the world was reborn. The oceans receded and the waters of ancient rivers turned to dust, but the life-giving waters could not be contained and they soon found new courses to run. Mountains sunk to become valleys and where none had stood before new ones rose, as if to mark the resting place of the monsters who sleep. So it was that the Great Old One gave birth to the New Kingdom Mountains whose finger does point to the south, just as the burning mountain before the Scarlet Waters and others came into being to mark the passing of the Chaos Lords."

While scholars debate the finer points of this passage, they do agree that the reference to the "burning mountain" probably refers to Mount Nimrod. Whether the reference to the volcano marking "the passing of the Chaos Lords" can be interpreted as the handiwork of the Old Ones, or that one or more Old Ones slumber underneath it, is a matter of intense debate.

The truth of it shall never be known, since the Old Ones are very much asleep, and nobody has ever found a way to prove or disprove the other tales surrounding the mountain's origins. But one thing remains for sure: As long as there are stories, there will always be a dark and foreboding aura about this region. A land considered by many to be the ancient playground of the Old Ones. A place that still bears the stain of their passing in the form of twin ancient and angry volcanoes.

The Time of a Thousand Magicks

During this incredible era, the Mount Nimro Region was the domain of innumerable kings, warlords, and power-mongers who incorporated parts of this region into countless lands, nations, and fiefdoms. All of these states failed to meet the test of time, ultimately either crumbling at the hands of another external power, or being overthrown by the angry Giants or Gromek who have always lived here. Of these fierce people, the Gromek ruled large parts of Mount Nimro for much of the Time of a Thousand Magicks. In fact, numerous kingdoms and empires crafted and ruled by powerful Gromek Life Force Wizards were common throughout this age. Under such rulers, many of the Giants of Mount Nimro were enslaved, killed or driven away. Those who fled the Gromek oppression traveled either into the Yin-Sloth Jungles or the wilderness where the Western Empire stands today (remember, the Age of Man was centuries away, and at the time, the region was well known as a realm of monsters).

Near the end of the Time of a Thousand Magicks, the last of the great Gromek Empires fell, coinciding with a turbulent period of several decades when incredible surges of powerful magical energy flowed through the ley lines of this world. Dimensional portals appeared all over the planet, and great natural and magical cataclysms occurred, causing enormous loss of life and disruption. It was during this time that **Mount Nimro** is said to have risen from the earth to stand alongside its much older sibling, Mount Nimrod, and joined its twin in spewing a steady torrent of ash and lava at the world. Some speak in hushed tones that during this wild time, the sleeping enchantments on the Old Ones faltered, or grew weak, and that to remind the world of the horrors that lay dormant beneath them, the Old Ones marshaled a fragment of their power to raise another volcano to blight the ground and scar the earth.

Such tales are dismissed by scholars, but no other time-honored explanation exists to explain Mount Nimro. As far as anyone can tell, the volcano just sprung from the earth, growing from nothing to its full size in just under a year. While such geological feats are possible, nobody has ever seen such a thing elsewhere on the Palladium World, lending even some of the most conservative scholars to concede that perhaps it is remotely possible that the Old Ones made their presence felt during the darkest hours of the Time of a Thousand Magicks. Such a thought is too horrible for most to bear, so they ignore it or challenge it. But for lack of a more compelling explanation, this is the one that people go by, further adding to Mount Nimro's evil reputation.

Mount Nimro being the newer and more active of the two volcanoes, constantly belching smoke and fire, would come to dominate the land and the minds of most who saw it. Add to this the number of Nimro Fire Giants drawn to the mountain, and the region would eventually become known as Mount Nimro rather than Mount Nimrod.

The Elf-Dwarf War

As the war between the Elves and Dwarves raged on, Mount Nimro saw a great many battles fought on its soil. The ghosts of tens of thousands of Elven and Dwarven warriors roam this area, as well as the sullen spirits of countless Giants and other folk who were either recruited into the fighting (and met their untimely end that way) or were slaughtered when they got caught in the crossfire. Thus, Mount Nimro became something of a graveyard during the Great War, as entire fields of the fallen became valleys of bones where vultures feasted and demonic entities fed upon pain and memories.

Today, the area is not quite as haunted as it once was, but there still exist a high number of wandering entities and spirits from the days of the Elf-Dwarf War, who now look for some kind of closure to their lives so they can pass peacefully onto a more peaceful realm. The ghosts of Elves and Dwarves are rather quiet, perhaps still ashamed of the heinous role they played in history. Indeed, neither the Elves nor the Dwarves were innocent, as both sides committed incredible atrocities, slaughtered many innocents, and manipulated thousands of easily duped people to their deaths.

The ghosts of the fallen Giants, Gromek, and Gosai here, however, are not quite so docile. Many of these ghosts still re-enact the battles in which they fell, trapped forever in a timeless replay of their final, bloody hours. Most of these spirits still burn with hatred for the Elves or Dwarves (or both!) and will never, under any circumstances, allow themselves to help one of these folk. These malignant spirits will only grudgingly communicate with other Giants, but mostly, they wish to be left alone so they can live out their painful purgatory unbothered by mortals. For the most part, these ghosts do not care about current events or their Giant brethren, they would rather concentrate on the superficial enjoyment they glean from reliving the shreds of their former life. For Jotan, it is enjoying a life of endless battle. For Nimro, it is commanding their troops into battle once more. For Gigantes, it is simply reveling in bloodshed, horror and chaos.

The Millennium of Purification

In the aftermath of the destruction of the Golden City of Baalgor (which devastated the entire Baalgor rainforest and ended the millennia-long Elf-Dwarf War), Mount Nimrod became a symbol of both races' insane lust for power beyond their reckoning. During the Millennium of Purification, Mount Nimrod became a common spot for Elves, Dwarves, and other races to dispose of rune weapons and powerful magic items. Such "indestructible" weapons were thrown into the ever-renewing fires of Mount Nimrod where no mortal could retrieve them and where no Fire Elemental could be commanded to do likewise — Fire Elementals can not be controlled or commanded at Mount Nimrod, and any sent to the location on any mission will automatically break free of any magic compelling them to answer to any master. Furthermore, as a dimensional nexus to the realm of the Fire Elementals, the lava chambers inside the mountain are inhabited by Fire Elementals, great and small, who battle and repel all who dare to invade their home in the bowels of the volcano.

Once the Millennium of Purification ended, the region, which had been just as devastated by the Great War as the New Kingdom (known as the Old Kingdom today), was considered an inhospitable wasteland populated only by monsters and the ghosts of fallen soldiers. As parts of the world tried to rebuild, and as the human nations began to slowly come together, Mount Nimro was just another shunned territory better left forgotten. Like the Baalgor Wastelands (which were similarly shunned, and still are to this day), the Mount Nimro Region was just another unwelcome reminder of a very, very bad time. In order to heal from the war, the survivors of the world tried their best to put such reminders behind them, and so it was that the Mount Nimro Region became a forgotten land, unvisited, unremembered, and unwanted . . . except to the Giants.

The Age of Man

Giants, like Titans, Rahu-Men, Kobolds, Gnomes, Troglodytes, and a host of other races, suffered severe losses during the Elf-Dwarf War. While Giants have always been considered monsters by both Elves and Dwarves, that did not stop either side from pressing any Giants they could find into their service. Rather, the Elves' and Dwarves refusal to treat Gjants as equals made the big humanoids all the more attractive as fighting slaves. After all, the Elves and Dwarves reckoned, a single Giant has the fighting power of ten knights, and since Giants are just "monsters," why not let them take the brunt of the fighting, right?

Such a despicable attitude of their ancestors during the Elf-Dwarf War is just one of many, many things that Elves and Dwarves today are deeply ashamed of. Most of the other races who were similarly manipulated by the Elves or Dwarves, or who just got caught in the crossfire, have come to grips with what happened during the Great War and have moved on, both racially and culturally. But not the Giants.

Perhaps it is because they were one of the few races who were truly *enslaved* and forced to fight in the Elf-Dwarf War. Or perhaps it's because ever since that terrible conflict, Giants have continued to be hounded by smaller folk, especially humans, Elves and Dwarves. For whatever reason, Giants have never forgiven the suffering and indignities they endured during the Elf-Dwarf War. This has created a vicious cycle, since Giants (who tend to be vicious, cruel and aggressive even under the best of circumstances) often delight in murdering and harassing smaller folk. This prompts smaller folk to hound the Giants, who retaliate against the smaller folk, and so on and so on in a sad cycle that has perpetuated itself for millennia and has no end in sight.

Where this cycle made a lasting impact, however, was right after the Elf-Dwarf War, when the few remaining Giants began their war of terror against smaller folk. The remaining Nimro Giants realized that the rest of the world considered both the Mount Nimrod area and the Baalgor Wastelands as forbidden areas populated by monsters and not to be visited. Sensing an opportunity, they seized the entire area for themselves in a brief but horrifyingly bloody campaign to exterminate all Elves, Dwarves, and other fair folk found within eye-shot of the twin volcanoes. Exhausted by the War, the Elves and Dwarves decided not to retaliate against the Giants, and fled the region, giving the Giant warriors a wide berth. The first reign of the Giants had begun.

Meanwhile, the Gromek, who had suffered just as terrible losses during the war, were further decimated by the rampaging Nimro and other Giants to such an extent that they could not challenge their claim to power and scattered to the south and into the mountains.

The Nimro Giants' victory was short-lived, however, for in coming together to purge the area of all non-Giants, the Nimro and their allies gave birth to a lasting rivalry with the Gromek. The winged aliens had adopted the Nimro Region as their home and did not appreciate being driven from it by the Giants. While the Gromek had also been hit hard by the Elf-Dwarf war, they regrouped and recovered quickly. Being naturally more aggressive to begin with, and being better equipped and organized, the remaining Gromek clans united and waged a war against the Giants, defeating them utterly, and claiming Mount Nimro for themselves.

This was a hollow victory, because by this time, The Old Kingdom was a blasted wreck, the Baalgor Wastelands were barren, and there was nobody in the Yin-Sloth Jungles or near Mount Nimro for the Gromek to cheer their triumph to. As the years rolled on, numerous Gromek empires rose and fell in and around Mount Nimro, but most of them were never well known to the rest of the world as they fought against other monster

races in lands shunned by Fair Folk. Thus continued the centuries long blackout that has helped keep Mount Nimro enshrouded in fear and mystery for so long.

The Present Day

In the last century, a new wave of violence against Giants has set in motion events that have changed the face of Mount Nimro, possibly forever. As the Gromek dominated Mount Nimro during the Age of Man, many Giants left their homeland, and spread into the Yin-Sloth Jungles, the Baalgor Wastelands and the Old Kingdom. However, the resurgent Western Empire had become aware of all of these places, and Western war parties routinely hunted, killed and enslaved Giants for fun and for profit. For generations, waves of Western "Giant-slayers" (who are really just nobles and knights looking for an easy way to bolster their reputations by having their large and well-armed entourages kill a few Giants for them) have swept through these hinterlands, greatly reducing the numbers of what few Giants are left in the world.

Sensing their impending doom or searching for a refuge where humans dare not tread, many Giants returned to Mount Nimro. Here they could gather in greater numbers and escape Western persecution. By this time, the Gromek who once dominated the region had fallen to infighting, scattered into scores of small clans, and truly, no one group ruled the area. Many Giant clans also fought each other over petty disputes, contributing to the area's further decline into anarchy, and the Giants utter inability to mount a unified defense against Western Giant-killers and Gromek raiding parties. As the Western Empire moved deeper and deeper into the Old Kingdom, it seemed only a matter of time before Mount Nimro would fall under the Western sword, and Giantkind would be wiped off the face of the world forever.

Then, two things happened. First, several hundred years ago, the West foolishly launched an ill-fated war of global conquest known as "Fimosob's Folly." During this war, the West was utterly defeated and it spiraled downward into a long period of decay and civil war as the other human nations of the world grew stronger. During this time, the West could no longer maintain its advance camps in the Old Kingdom, and the Western Giant-killers became a thing of the past. With this threat lifted, and with Western eyes no longer watching Mount Nimro so closely, the Giants began to gather in larger numbers, their clans growing steadily, forging alliances, and establishing the foundation for what would become the Nimro Kingdom under Warlord Sunder Blackrock.

The bold and charismatic Warlord Blackrock emerged from the Old Kingdom as a warrior of unparalleled ability and prestige. Bringing with him an army of fanatic followers, he stole a page out of the Western Empire's book by invading his own homeland, conquering those clans who opposed him, and assimilating them into his own forces. Eventually, the few holdout clans joined Warlord Blackrock voluntarily, and within a few short years, all Giant infighting in the Mount Nimro Region had ceased. With this obstacle gone, driving the fractious Gromek from the region was a comparatively easy task. Sunder Blackrock never quite pacified the entire region, but he had enough of a foothold in it that he could safely claim dominion over the entire region. With that in mind, the Nimro Kingdom burst onto the scene, and has grown tremendously in power and scope, even beyond Blackrock's imagination.

Of the human nations, only the Western Empire has an inkling of what is transpiring in Mount Nimro. For many centuries, Giant-killing was both a high sport and an easy way to gain glory for Western knights and nobles. With powerful magic weapons and huge entourages (read: "small armies") of supporters, there really was no contest when a Giant got cornered by a Western hunting party. Before long, there were no Giants left on the Western Peninsula, and Western hunters began searching the Old Kingdom and the Baalgor Wastelands for their quarry.

In recent years, however, every hunting party that neared Mount Nimro has failed to return, prompting Western Lords to send their spies to this region and get to the bottom of the mystery. No Western spy has ever returned alive from Mount Nimro either, but several magic pigeons have been received from there, telling of a growing "kingdom" of Giants mobilizing for war.

So far, this is just the stuff of rumors in the Western Empire, but Emperor Itomas knows the Nimro Kingdom is for real. However, he greatly underestimates its size and strength, believing that such "monsters" are incapable of creating and maintaining a real culture or society. For him, the question is whether or not he needs to send his armies marching to Nimro to teach the Giants a lesson. Until Itomas knows if he can definitely win such a war, he will not mobilize his troops, but as long as the Nimro Kingdom remains strong and steady, then it shall remain a troubling specter on the horizon of the Western Empire.

Thinking Big:
Playing an All-Giant Campaign

Giants make great villains, monsters and Non-Player Characters (NPCs). However, they can also be fun *player* characters *if* the Game Master allows it. In the Western Empire, the Eastern Territory, the Timiro Kingdom, or any other "civilized" lands, playing a Giant probably won't work, since they are too frightening and out of the ordinary. A Giant approaching any town of small folk or "shorties" as Giants are prone to calling human-sized beings, is likely to send the militia or other town defenders scurrying to their combat positions. Many humans and other fair folk will shoot first and ask questions later. The few True Giants found in a human town or city are likely to be slaves or gladiators forced to do hard labor or to fight for the amusement of their captors.

Many of the problems a Giant must endure in human society vanish in the Mount Nimro region. Here things are different. Here, it is the small folk who are outsiders, the mistrusted ones, the downtrodden and enslaved. Giant characters in this part of the world can finally enjoy all of the amenities and luxuries that smaller folk enjoy nearly everywhere else. Towns and cities are sized appropriately, weapons, armor, and other goods are giant-sized and do not have to be tailor-made, and best of all, Giants do not stick out as some monstrosity to be pointed at, harassed or hated. Only in Mount Nimro can a Giant live the kind of life that a smaller humanoid can in any of the great cities of the civilized world. Furthermore, there are plenty of opportunities for adventuring in the region, so Giant adventurers can launch expeditions from their bases in the Nimro Kingdom and

return to restock their supplies, to heal, and to cash in on the booty they have acquired. Nowhere else in the Palladium World can Giants of any race live so comfortably and conveniently as the Nimro Kingdom.

As a result, Mount Nimro is an excellent place to run a campaign where one or more of the party members are Giants. Depending on the player's desires, perhaps an entire campaign could play out here, as the Giant heroes or villains experience the many adventures and dangers this region offers.

But, it is foreseeable that the players might grow tired of adventuring in only one spot and, after a while, may wish to move on to the lands beyond Mount Nimro. That is when things will get more complex, because you (the G.M.) will have to figure out how Giants will interface with the rest of the undersized world.

In general, smaller folks such as humans, Elves, Dwarves, Gnomes, and even "monster races" such as Orcs, Kobolds and Goblins are likely to view any Giant as a *bloodthirsty monster* up to no good. In the case of humans, Elves, Dwarves, Gnomes, and other "fair folk," this means that a Giant player character will be viewed with suspicion wherever he goes, even in a best-case scenario. More often than not, most people will run in terror or attack out of fear upon sighting a Giant, without ever giving the Giant a chance to explain himself. While Giants themselves have done a lot to deserve this reputation, many innocent Giants are victims of this prejudice, which explains why so many Giants are angry and bitter toward the smaller folk of the Palladium World. The only exception to this are Titans, and to a lesser extent, Rahu-Men. Titans are seen as champions of light and goodness who often possess great knowledge and wisdom. Likewise, Rahu-Men are often seen as enigmatic and bizarre hermits who might be dangerous, but usually do not mean anybody any harm, and are often heroes.

In the case of Orcs, Kobolds, Goblins and other "monster races," any Giant will be seen either as a rival or as a potential employer. Remember, these dark-hearted people usually respect only one thing — brute strength. And for them, a Giant is a walking embodiment of power and authority. Either they will want to work for such a figure, which may prove troublesome to good Giants being hounded and idolized by (and therefore associated with) villainous smaller folk, or Giants may be attacked by groups of bandits and villains who, naturally, assume that the Giant has come to subjugate them, rob them, or try to compete with them. In any case, even the monster races generally do not trust Giants.

This alone often keeps Giants from venturing into the "outside world." Until the formation of the Nimro Kingdom, Giants had little incentive to interact with other people, because they knew that whatever their intentions, all they would find was trouble. Wherever a Giant travels in the outside world, he or she can expect to be blamed for any crime or disaster that happens in the vicinity, regardless of whether the Giant actually had anything to do with it. Many merchants will refuse to do business with Giants, and most city guardsmen certainly won't allow a Giant past the outer gates. More likely, they will call for reinforcements upon sighting the Giant and attack. Or worse yet, they will notify the local lord, who will assemble a small army to hunt the Giant down and kill it!

Even if a Giant stays away from any towns or cities, rural farmers, peasants, hermits or adventurers are likely to spot the Giant at some point and spread the tale. This, as any player of "Whisper Down the Alley" knows, will only lead to wild rumors and stories, stories which prompt self-styled "giant hunters" to track the character down and slay him or her, usually for fun, profit, or to boost their reputation (Western knights and nobles are notorious for this.)

Given all of these difficulties, Giants have very little incentive to leave the comfort and safety of the **Nimro** Kingdom. Those who do are usually outcasts who have broken the laws of the Nimro Kingdom and have been exiled, are fleeing some responsibility they have to the Nimro Kingdom, are mentally ill, or are black-hearted fiends who wish to wreak havoc upon the world (having found the laws of the Nimro Kingdom too confining). The fact that the majority of Giants outside the Mount Nimro region tend to be violent misfits bent on causing trouble only furthers the bad reputation of all Giants. To other races, this leads to the logical conclusion of, "if these Giants are all monsters and villains, what's to say the Giants of Mount Nimro are any different?" If and when the nature of the Nimro Kingdom becomes common knowledge on the Palladium World, this prevailing attitude will cause a great deal of difficulty for the Giants, who will be seen by the rest of the world as a collection of monsters bent on spreading mayhem and misery.

Still, there are always those individual Giants who travel the world in search of adventure. Some of these are noble-hearted heroes, others are selfish freebooters, and some evil villains, but all are mavericks who have decided to take a spin at Fortune's Wheel and make a life for themselves in the "outside" world. For these people, this is where life *really* gets interesting.

While Giants are feared and hated most everywhere, there are places where they *do* fit in. The Baalgor Wastelands for one. The chaotic Old Kingdom for another. The *Free City* ***of Troker*** in the Baalgor Wastelands is known for being very tolerant of monster races, including Giants, and Giants can count on getting at least a lukewarm welcome in the Orcish Empire of the Yin-Sloth Jungles and Isle of the Cyclops. The arenas of the Western Empire absolutely love to hire (or shanghai) Giants as regular combatants. There are even a few mercenary companies in the Empire of Sin who offer double salary to Giants who enlist.

From a practical point of view, Giants, literally, do not fit in human society. Some of the most obvious problems include the inability to enter most human-sized houses and buildings (forcing the character to sleep outdoors), the massive size makes stealth impossible (a Giant will be noticed from a distance and is usually immediate cause for alarm), the character needs extra large clothing, weapons and equipment (typically 3-6 times larger and 3-6 times more expensive than a human-sized character), and eats 3-6 times more — which means the Giant character must spend 3-6 times more for the most basic of things.

Even in towns where a Giant might be accepted, the massive humanoid is likely to encounter prejudice, pranks and trouble. This may include getting charged prices **2-10** times higher than a fair price, getting rotten fruit thrown at him, being threatened by the authorities **and/or** bullies (the giant and his companions will be the first suspects in any wrongdoing), name calling, snide remarks, brawls, challenges to combat, etc. A Giant can count on being attacked by professional and would-be "Giant-Killers" looking to make a name for themselves, or get blamed for crimes in the area. Certainly at the onset of any confrontation, the Giant, standing tall above all others, will be considered (rightly or wrongly) one of the most dangerous opponents in the group and the first to be attacked, probably en masse.

In places where Giants are feared, but tolerated, the usual problems prevail. Finding a blacksmith to custom-make or repair Giant-sized weapons and armor can run three to six times the normal price. Merchants and craftsmen may charge only two to four times the going rate for other goods, while those who hate **Giantkind** may charge **10-20** times more, or refuse to serve them at all, even under the pain of death. Finding a place to stay other than a pavilion, barn or warehouse will be next to impossible, and one can forget about going to the local tavern — not only would a Giant probably not fit inside, but the place may not be keen on selling entire cases of brandy or kegs of beer to sate the thirst of one so big. Furthermore, a drunken Giant may be considered a danger to all, and refused alcohol entirely. Getting food poses similar difficulties, since a hungry Giant can eat an entire side of beef in a single sitting. In fact, hunger is a leading cause for why so many Giants turn to banditry — it is almost impossible for them to afford to buy their food in "civilized" countries, and since they are considered monsters anyway, why not go ahead and steal what they **want?!**

To those Giant adventurers willing to live with these inconveniences, additional problems remain. Even in places where Giants are not reviled and hunted, lingering prejudices still may trouble the character. Criminals will try to frame the Giant for whatever they do, since folks are inclined to blame Giants for wrongdoings anyway. Healers and priests may refuse to offer Giants healing services. City guardsmen may charge Giants hefty "security fees" as deposits against any damage the Giant may do while in town or charge him as being two, three or four people because of his immense size. Such fees are rarely re**funded,** just another cost Giants must live with when walking among short folk.

Furthermore, such trials and tribulations often keep other adventurers, even friendly, open-minded and heroic figures, from openly associating with a Giant, because it is not worth the hassle and damage to their reputation. After all, the adventuring life is rough enough. Being associated with a "monster," such as a Giant, automatically burdens them with all the stigmas of being a Giant without any of the benefits. As a result, since most Giants are likely to be rejected by other adventurers, they typically travel alone or in very small groups of fellow giants, monster races or outcasts — no more than three or six, since any group larger than that draws a lot of attention and trouble.

Yet, for all of these drawbacks, there are plenty of advantages to playing a Giant character. For one thing, a Giant's strength and endurance are to be envied, as well as his natural fighting prowess. Players who enjoy the thrill of combat will be in hog heaven with a Giant character. Plus, the disposition and the hardships of being a Giant make for some really great role-playing opportunities for more experienced players to pounce upon. So while playing a Giant is no bed of roses, it certainly has its moments.

Game Masters must also make certain that one or more Giant *player characters* (or NPCs) does not upset the balance of power in the game, or the player group. Their inclusion might saddle the other players with too many difficulties, like being hunted as wanted criminals by powerhouse NPCs hired to bring the entire group to justice or to slay them. On the other hand, G.M.s would be wise to remember that magic is the great equalizer to brute strength and that Giants who get out of control will ultimately face powerful adversaries, from Palladins to high level mages or other non-humans. Try to keep all of these things in mind when considering letting a player run a Giant character. A G.M. should think it through carefully before making a decision to allow them. And players, if your G.M. does not allow you to play a true Giant, please understand and accept his or her decision. Even under the best circumstances, many campaigns would be thrown off-kilter by the inclusion of a Giant. If your G.M. does not feel comfortable with Giants or any other *optional* nonhuman O.C.C., don't give him a hard time about it. There are lots of cool characters to play. Move on.

Considerations for True Giant Characters

Special Combat Considerations and Bonuses For "True" Giants

1. Physical Damage by True Giants: The size (2-4 times the size of a man), weight and strength of all "True" Giants generally means they inflict more damage than humans even bare-handed. Unless stated otherwise, the following applies:

A restrained, open-handed slap does 1D4 damage.

A restrained punch does 2D4 damage.

Full-strength punch does 2D6 damage plus P.S. bonus.

Full-strength kick does 3D6 plus P.S. bonus; 4D6 +P.S. bonus for Karate Kicks.

Power punch does 4D6 damage plus P.S. bonus, but it counts as two melee attacks.

Don't forget that any weapon attacks from a Giant gain an additional 1D6 damage, due to the weapon's size and weight, plus the Giant's P.S. damage bonus is applied to all hand weapons (axe, knife, sword, club, etc.). The P.S. bonus does not apply to the bow and arrow, sling or similar weapons.

Optional: If okayed by the G.M., half the P.S. damage bonus can be applied to a weapon that the True Giant *throws* with all his strength. This attack counts as two melee attacks and the player must announce before rolling to strike, that his intention is to throw with all his might. Thrown items include spears, axes, knives, rocks and similar.

2. Supernatural Ability to Lift & Carry Weight: Even though their P.S. and P.E. are not always considered supernatural, their size, mass, leverage, and extraordinary strength give them the ability to lift and carry superhuman amounts of weight. Thus, "True" Giants can lift and carry weight equal to that of a supernatural being: 50 x P.S. (P.S. of 30 means the True Giant can lift and carry 1500 lbs./675 kg).

The True Giant can only throw his maximum carrying weight a half foot (0.15 m) per P.S. point (P.S. 30 = 15 feet/4.6 m). Items weighing half this amount can be thrown 50% farther. Items weighing 30-100 lbs (13.6 to 45 kg) can be thrown 6 feet (1.8 m) per P.S. point (P.S. 30 = 180 feet/55 m). Items weighing 20 lbs (9 kg) or less can be thrown 10 feet (3 m) per P.S. point (P.S. 30 = 300 feet/91 m).

Note: Objects that are not aerodynamic, including swords, pole arms, tree trunks, horse carts, doors, barrels, and similar, can only be thrown half as far and are -3 to strike.

3. Extra Bonuses for True Giants: In addition to their racial, attribute, O.C.C. and skill bonuses, True Giants all have the following bonuses: +1 on initiative, +2 to pull punch, +1 to roll with impact or fall, +3 to save vs Horror Factor, and +1 to save vs poison, drugs and disease.

Mount Nimro Clans

To those G.M.s and players who wish to have True Giant characters from Mount Nimro, consider whether the character comes from one of the large, major clans, or whether he comes from a small independent family, or outside the Nimro Clans. Mount Nimro is run by a loose federation of 18 major clans, most of which are Nimro Fire Giants and Jotan Earth Giants. Each clan has its own personality, culture, and agenda. These are all excellent things to consider for role-playing source material. Anybody can play a warrior, but playing a warrior who comes from a clan that only likes to fight Gromek, or playing a wizard who comes from a Giant clan that does not like casting spells in front of non-giants (for fear that they will learn of their magical arts) might be a nice twist for more advanced role-players. As with all things in role-playing, the final decision on this is up to the player and G.M. All of these suggestions are optional, so feel free to pick and choose what *you* think works best for *your* character or campaign.

Of course, if a G.M. or player wants a character to come from a Giant clan, but doesn't like any of the 18 described later in this book, consider this: More Giants come into the Nimro Kingdom every day, and periodically, new clans are formed to accommodate these newcomers. This would make a plausible premise to build a new Giant Clan and incorporate it as it seems appropriate.

Also consider that there are many *unaffiliated* Giants in the Kingdom, loners who belong to no formal clan or who only acknowledge their own, small family clan. Giants in the Nimro Kingdom do not have to belong to a formal clan, but it certainly helps if they do; "membership has its privileges," as they say. Unaffiliated Giants answer to nobody, but as a result, really are not trusted by anybody, either, and may be considered pawns, cannon fodder or rivals to the established Nimro Clans. However, those without clan obligations have an easy time picking up and adventuring whenever they like.

Little by Little

Playing "shorties" — that is, humanoids who are smaller than giant-sized — also presents its own unique conditions while in the Nimro Kingdom. Remember, these folks will be in a world where every artificial thing will be a good three to four times its normal size. A handball is the size of a beach ball. A spoon is suitable as a two-handed fighting weapon. A shirt is the size of tent. A door knob is 10-12 feet (3 to 3.6 m) high. A single door the size of a 25 foot (7.6 m) double door. And so on. To players of cunning and ingenuity, these blown-up environments are filled with opportunity, tricks and traps that can enliven almost any adventure.

Regional Overview of Mount Nimro

Just beyond the Nimro Mountain chain where the Old Kingdom, Baalgor Wastelands and Yin-Sloth Jungles meet, two volcanoes sit side by side like twin gods of ash and lava, blackening the sky and burning the earth in perpetual eruption. These are **Mount Nimro** and its vastly older brother, **Mount Nimrod**, the greatest and oldest active volcanoes on the Palladium World. Surrounding them is a harsh, hot, and humid savanna where rolling grasslands, thin jungles, shallow marshes and rocky scrublands all share space under an ash-colored sky.

To the south are thin jungles and marshlands, a kind of ecological spill-over from the Yin-Sloth Jungles and the Land of the South Winds. Dividing the Nimro region is the last of the low, winding southeastern Baalgor Mountains, often called the Nimro Mountains. Farther south, beyond these mountains are the steamy Yin-Sloth Jungles.

To the north and northwest are rocky plains of scrub brush where the constant outpouring of smoke and steam from the twin volcanoes seems to have stunted the growth of everything.

To the northeast are rolling grasslands that gradually turn into deciduous forest as they approach the Old Kingdom.

The area encompassing Mounts Nimrod and Nimro, and the roughly 150 mile (240 km) area surrounding them, goes by a variety of names. Scholars call it the "Mount Nimro/Mount Nimrod Region," but most folks simply call this region *Mount Nimro,* in reference both to the twin volcanoes and the Fire Giants who dominate the land. But to those few who are fortunate to have encountered Mount Nimro's denizens and live to tell the tale, this place is known as the "Land of the Giants," the deathtrap domain of innumerable monsters, villains and unspeakable peril.

Very few expeditions have been launched by any of the human nations to explore this desolate and hostile region. Of those that have, very few expedition members have returned to tell of it. Most explorers who venture to Mount Nimro ultimately disappear without a trace. It is not that surprising, really. After all, for explorers to even get to Mount Nimro, they must travel through equally dangerous and savage lands: the Yin-Sloth Jungles, the Old Kingdom or the Baalgor Wastelands. Any one of these places can swallow even the best-prepared expeditions. By the time explorers make it to the Mount Nimro region, they are likely to be suffering from exhaustion, injury, and losses in battles along the way, making them easy pickings for any of the Giants, Gromek or other hostile folk living in the shadow of the twin volcanoes. As a result, virtually no "civilized" people outside of Mount Nimro or the immediately surrounding areas knows anything about the land or those living in it. Furthermore, most human kingdoms have little interest in or concern about this distant and monster-filled land.

This is perfect for the subjects **of Mount Nimro, The Kingdom of Giants,** a self-proclaimed nation founded by the six Nimro tribes who have lived near the volcanoes for centuries. Along with the Orcish Empire of the Yin-Sloth Jungles, the Nimro Kingdom is one of the youngest nations on the Palladium World. Its mission, as it were, is to provide a safe place for all Giantkind, regardless of their race, creed or clan. Nimro, Jotan, Algor, Cyclops, Gigantes, and even Titans and Rahu-Men are welcomed here with open arms. To the leaders of this kingdom, theirs is a nation with the sole responsibility of preventing the extinction of the "tall folk" at the hands of the merciless humans, Elves and Dwarves who have hounded them for countless generations.

The Nimro Kingdom was founded nearly 50 years ago by the wily Nimro Warlord, **Sunder Blackrock.** Since then, the Kingdom has already grown swiftly and steadily as Giants from all over the world join its ranks. Hordes of Trolls, Ogres, Orcs, Kobolds and Goblins from the surrounding areas (especially the Old Kingdom and the Yin-Sloth Jungles) also swarm to the Nimro Kingdom, which has become a gathering spot for so-called "monster races" who feel that they too have suffered enough at the hands of the "civilized" nations of the world. These non-giants, or "shorties," as they are derisively called, have become a part of the Kingdom's underclass and foundation, a permanent pool of cheap and disposable labor that incredibly enough, polices itself. Despite their harsh living conditions, the rough treatment and bullying they receive from their Giant masters, "shorties" generally like it here, and serve the Giants happily, making the Kingdom that much stronger. (Hey, however bad it may be for shorties in the Nimro Kingdom, it is a far better alternative than whatever life awaits them in the Timiro Kingdom, Eastern Territory or Western Empire!)

While the Nimro Kingdom was not founded to become an instrument of vengeance, that is certainly what it's becoming. Over the last half century, the Kingdom's ranks have swelled, and what once was a ragtag collection of Giant Clans has become a large, powerful and diversified society made up of warriors, bandits and killers who all have a major axe to grind with the human nations of this world. This problem is made worse when one considers that with the population boom the Kingdom has experienced (especially over the last 15 or 20 years), it has become terribly overcrowded. Lack of living space and strained resources are forcing the Kingdom to expand into the surrounding Baalgor Mountains, and talk of annexing portions of the (largely unclaimed) lands in the *Old Kingdom* and/or *The Baalgor Wastelands* is a matter of constant discussion. The Yin-Sloth Jungles are too difficult to colonize and the Giants have enough sense to leave their only human neighbor, *The Land of the South Winds,* well alone, lest it provoke a violent response from the Southlanders' allies, the dreaded Western Empire.

For the **Nimro** Kingdom, this is its most critical hour. If it is to survive, it must expand. But if it expands, then surely it will draw the attention if not the immediate wrath of the human nations, particularly the paranoid and war-like Western Empire. For now, Sunder **Blackrock** builds his nation's strength as he ponders his peoples' destiny. Dark and troubling times indeed draw near for the Nimro Kingdom, times that shall either destroy the dream of a Kingdom of Giants, or see this new nation become a lasting and legitimate power of the Palladium World.

Gromek Hostilities

In the meantime, the Nimro Kingdom has a more pressing enemy to face — the armies of angry Gromek who were evicted from Mount Nimro when the Kingdom of Giants was formed. The conflict between Gromek and Giant has stretched back since before the Elf-Dwarf War, an age-old feud the origin of which is forgotten to both sides. A likely cause is a simple case of two aggressive peoples trying to live on the same patch of land. Scholars estimate that the Giants have lived here since the end of the Age of Chaos, but as soon as the Gromek arrived on this world (probably through an interdimensional disturbance that left thousands of them marooned here) sometime during the Age of Light, the fighting began.

The two sides have waged all-out wars on each other every few centuries, after which, hostilities would smolder for years before flaming up again. Every time the fighting rekindled itself, it would erupt into a decade or two of savage bloodletting that always ended with one side beaten but not defeated, left to lick its wounds and strike back years later. Thus, control of Mount Nimro has switched from Gromek to Giant rule and back again for eons. Prior to the Time of a Thousand Magicks, Mount Nimro was mostly the province of various Giant clans (who seemed to fight each other as much as their hated Gromek adversaries, which explains why there has never been a unified Giant nation until now). For most of the Time of a Thousand Magicks, Gromek ruled, but after the Elf-Dwarf War, their empire lay shattered, and Mount Nimro lay unclaimed until the coming of Sunder Blackrock.

For the 50 years that the Nimro Kingdom has existed, the Gromek menace has remained dormant, until now. When the Giants regained control of Mount Nimro, the Gromek were pushed out to the Baalgor Mountains, the Old Kingdom, and, to a lesser degree, the Yin-sloth Jungles. However, as the Mount Nimro Giants looked to expand, and scouts were sent into the Baalgor Wastelands, the Gromek decided to make a stand. The Baalgor Mountains would remain theirs, and, with time and victories, they dream of recapturing Mount Nimro as well. A huge army of the winged warriors grows in the Baalgor Mountains, intent on exterminating Giantkind and reclaiming Mount Nimro. For both races, this conflict promises to be the final chapter in their long and bloody feud. Whoever wins shall control not only Mount Nimro, but perhaps all of the Baalgor Wastelands and a good part of the Old Kingdom, as well.

For now, this ongoing **Gromek/Giant** war has been confined to Mount Nimro and the Baalgor Mountains, so hardly anyone outside the region knows it is going on. Even many of the Gromek in the Old Kingdom and the Yin-Sloth Jungles are not yet involved and do not know about the conflict. Those few people in the world who do know (such as the High Court of the Land of the South Winds) generally don't care (The **Southlanders** are notoriously blase about serious foreign policy crises, and it should not surprise other human nations that they have not seen fit to alert the other Palladium powers of the situation in Mount Nimro). To the Land of the South Winds (and anyone else who has learned about this conflict), the prevailing attitude is that Mount **Nimro's** problems are just that — *Mount Nimro's* problems. What they fail to see, however, is that this war has possible ramifications that go far beyond the borders of the monster-held territory. Like a pebble cast into a great lake, the ripples from this seemingly insignificant conflict may very well grow into tidal waves that could engulf the world in a deluge of strife and suffering.

Even now, the major human nations are poised for war with each other and the Wolfen Empire. The last thing they need is a resurgent Giant Kingdom to add to an already unstable and troubled world. So far, the Great Powers — The Eastern Territory, Timiro, **Bizantium,** the Wolfen Empire and the Western Empire — have managed an uneasy peace, knowing that whoever casts the first stone of war may very well push all civilized lands headlong into Armageddon. As Mount Nimro spirals out of control, what little **tranquility** is left in this world may shatter. Ultimately, either the Giants or the Gromek will prevail and begin to move into one of their neighboring territories. When this happens, one of the human kingdoms, most likely the Western Empire, may feel compelled to act. The problem is that all of the great powers are like keystones in an interlocking wall of stone, remove one stone and the whole thing comes crashing down. Such is the state of peace on the Palladium World. When one of the Great Powers goes to war, it inevitably sets into motion events that may push the others to the brink as well. For example, If the Western Empire goes to war against the Giants, that may incite the Eastern Territory (which is threatened by both the West and the Wolfen) to strike against the Wolfen, as well as instigate actions, especially by pirates, freebooters and disenfranchised Noble Houses, to increase their hostilities against the ruling powers of the Empire. It may also incite acts of retribution **and/or** aggression from forces in the Old Kingdom. Such aggression will besiege camps throughout the Old Kingdom and is likely to spill into Timiro, the Eastern Territory and the Land of the South Winds. And so it goes.

Many sages, including ***Sulyott*** *the All-Knowing of the Yin-Sloth Jungles,* have spoken of this age ending in a thunderous clamor of blood and dust that will encompass all nations, all races, all cultures. This apocalypse has been called the *Days of Doom,* and many scholars have debated furiously over when these Days are supposed to arrive, and if they are a certain destiny, or just one possible fate that the world might avoid. Muddying the waters on this issue is what the **Tristine Chronicles** have to say about it:

Lo, there shall come a time, as the age of Man draws to a close, when a great war shall burst forth upon the world like a virulent pestilence, a sweeping fire that will scourge saint and sinner alike. From the heart of this Destruction shall a war wage over the Treasures of the Burning Mountain that will pit the Tall and the Fierce against the Small and the Fair. This war, born of greed, and fear, and ancient hatred, shall be a final reckoning that will end the follies Man hath wrought during his reign. Mark these words and despair, for it is the Doom of all that befalls the world once this tragedy sets to motion. This time

of pain and despair shall be known as the Days of Doom, and those few who survive its fires shall inherit a shattered and wasted earth, where life's blooms are gone. Where ash stains the sky, and where the waters of the world run red as blood and hot as tears. And so it has been foretold, that the end of the Age of Man may come in a great conflagration unless the valor of heroes and sense of common men prevail and avert its passing.

Like so many passages from the Tristine Chronicles, the meaning and veracity of this passage is questioned by many. But the superficial implications of it can not be ignored. Could it be that Mount Nimro holds the fate of the world in its clawed hands? Will a war break out there that shall transform more of the world into ruin like the Baalgor Wastelands? Perhaps, or perhaps not. The "Days of Doom" have been proclaimed at the start of every war for the last 3000 years, especially those brewing in the south or west. Still, it is a warning best heeded, for it would be an awful risk to simply let events spin their course unwatched.

And so, small bands of hardy adventurers make their way to the Mountains of Fire, spurred on by apocalyptic warnings of world conflict, murky legends of a Giant Kingdom, and ancient tales of a cache of rune weapons submerged deep in the lava of Mount Nimrod. These are just a few of the mysteries waiting in the heart of this ancient and terrible land. A land where mercy is a sign of weakness and constant warfare is a standard of living.

Monsters and Animals

Generally speaking, Mount Nimro is not known for producing lots of exotic monsters and animals that nobody has ever seen before. What's more, a good amount of the local wildlife — supernatural and otherwise — was exterminated during the Elf-Dwarf War, leaving this region under-populated in terms of people, monsters and animals. While there remains a relatively large amount of wildlife, the numbers are more consistent with an urbanized area like the Western Empire or the Timiro Kingdom, rather than the uncharted wilderness that it actually is. Most of the more dangerous wildlife tends to come from neighboring areas such as the Old Kingdom, the Yin-Sloth Jungles, the Baalgor Wastelands, or the Land of the South Winds.

For quick reference, the following lists should give gamers a pretty good idea of what monsters are likely to wander into Mount Nimro from an adjacent area. Those uncommon or rare in the region are indicated as such.

Old Kingdom: **Bearman** (rare), Beast Dragon, Chimera, Devil Digger, Dragondactyl (rare), Dragon Wolf (rare), Eandroth and Eandroth Rogues (both uncommon), Entities (various), Faerie Folk (various; rare), Floaters, Goron, **Gruunor,** Gryphon, Hopper, Kelpie, Kinnie Ger (rare), Land Squid, Lizard Mage (rare), **Maxpary, Maxpary** Shambler, Minotaur, Mummy **Immortalus,** Owl-Thing, Sphinx, Suckers, **Syvan** (rare), Worms of Taut (all), Za (rare), and Zavor (rare).

Timiro Kingdom: **Adram** (rare), Boogie-Men, **Dwarvling,** Faerie Folk (rare), Floaters, Gruunor, Kelpie, Lizard Mage (rare), Loogaroo, Manticore (rare), Maxpary and Maxpary Shambler, Melech, Minotaur, Owl-Thing, Ratling (rare), Rock Crawlers, Sallan (rare), Serpent Rat, Spectre, Sphinx, Suckers, Syvan (rare), Tangle vine, Thorny Sun Devil, Tomb Worm,

Tree Eel, Tusker, Waternix (rare), Worms of Taut (all), Za (rare).

Land of the South Winds: Adram (rare), Dwarvling, Faerie Folk (various; rare), Floaters, Hoppers, Hytril, Krel, Land Squid, Lizard Mage (rare), Maxpary and Maxpary Shamblers, Minotaur (rare), Mummy Immortalus, Ratling (rare), Sallan, Serpent Rat, Tangle Vine, Timrek (rare), Tree Eel, Tusker, Waterbat, Worms of Taut (all).

Yin-Sloth Jungles: Acid Lizard, Adram (rare), Chimera, Dogre (uncommon), Faerie Folk (rare), Fire Worms, Grimbor, Hoppers, Hytril, Lizard Men, Lizard Mage (rare), Maxpary and Maxpary Shambler, Melech, Minotaur, Nippers, Ratlings (rare), Rock Crawlers, Syvan (rare), Tezcat (rare), Timrek (rare), Tomb Worms, Werebeasts, Worms of Taut (all), Zavor (rare).

Baalgor Wastelands: Dogres, Dragondactyl, Drayback, Eandroth and Eandroth Rogues, Entities (various), Gosai (uncommon), Gromek (common), Loogaroo, Manticore, Maxpary (rare), Melech, Minotaur, Mologoth (rare), Owl-Thing, Quorian (rare), Quillback (rare), Rockbuzzers (various; in mountain areas only), Sallan (rare), Sandwyrm (rare), Serpent Rat, Silonars, Sloderi, Spectre, Sun Devil, Thorny Sun Devil, Tusker, Za (rare), Zavor (rare).

For additional monsters, check out the **Yin-Sloth Jungles and Baalgor Wastelands** sourcebooks for monsters unique to those territories. Be sure also to check out the forthcoming **Eastern Territory, Old Kingdom Mountains, Old Kingdom Lowlands, and Land of the South Winds** sourcebooks for further information and inspiration.

Random Encounters

In a typical day's travel, the G.M. should check for random encounters twice — once for daylight hours and once for nighttime. Since at least part of the player characters' party will probably be asleep for any night encounters, G.M.s should determine which player characters are on watch.

For an encounter, roll a D20. A roll of 15-20 means an encounter will take place. For an encounter, consider the most likely animal, monster or humanoids in the area or pick one to a few that seem appropriate. This might include a band of 2-4 Giants, an entity, bandits, or soldiers on patrol, to a mischievous faerie, normal folk going about their daily business or a raccoon rummaging for food and whose antics startle the group. Exotic creatures, such as Eandroth, Minotaur, and Tezcats, are cause for alarm, but might not be hostile. However, the dark reputation of both Minotaurs and Tezcats, for example, may be cause for fear and suspicion among Fair Folk, but would ingratiate them to most Giants. Likewise, the Eandroth's reputation for being rough and tumble badlands traders may encourage Giants to respect and trade with them, while other humanoids may regard them with concern.

Elves, Dwarves, humans and Gnomes are generally seen as intruders and the enemies of Giantkind, of most other "monster races." As such, the best they can expect is to be mistreated and harassed. At worst (and common in the Mount Nimro region), they will be attacked outright, beaten, robbed, and enslaved if not slain. If the group of "shorties" proves to be formidable, they may earn respect among Giants and other nonhumans, and even be recruited as fellow marauders, meres or special operatives, but will always carry the stigma of their race and be considered "outsiders," potential enemies and spies never to be trusted completely.

New O.C.

The following new O.C.C.s and R.C.C.S are more or less exclusive to the Mount Nimro region. Some of these, such as the *Conjurer O.C.C.*, you will recognize from other Palladium sourcebooks, even from other games besides Palladium Fantasy. Some, like the *Life Force Wizard O.C.C.*, have already appeared in a Palladium Fantasy sourcebook, but have been expanded and updated for Palladium Fantasy, 2nd Edition. And others, like the *Gigante Warlord R.C.C.*, are completely new.

I know that not all Palladium Fantasy fans like or even want new O.C.C.s and R.C.C.s in their game. So to that end, please remember that the O.C.C.s and R.C.C.s detailed here are *optional.* If you don't like them or if you do not want to include them in your campaign, then don't. Part of the joy of role-playing, and particularly playing Palladium Fantasy, is making up your own world. G.M.s, if what you find here doesn't work for you, then please don't feel pressured to use it. After all, your campaign world is just that — yours. Do with it what you will. We're just here to add to the fun.

Blade Priest O.C.C.

Shortly after King Sunder Blackrock first founded the Nimro Kingdom, hundreds and thousands of Giants flocked under his banner, seeking strength in numbers and some solace from the harassment of their many enemies. Of this first wave of new subjects, several of them were priests of an obscure and tiny sect known as the **Church of the Blade** which was devoted to an unknown god of war named Tharsis the Reaver, or simply, "The Bladed One."

As the Nimro Kingdom flourished, so did the Church of the Blade, as its priests eagerly sought out converts from every walk of life in the rapidly growing Giant society. Soldiers were particularly easy to convert, since the Church's tenets appealed to their love of combat. Less bellicose Giants (few that there are) also found themselves drawn to the Church of the Blade because Tharsis and the other deities in this pantheon represent strength, courage, and endurance — traits many Giants themselves have had to cling to in order to survive the very unfriendly world surrounding Mount Nimro.

Today, the Church of the Blade is the predominant religion in the Nimro Kingdom, with over 1,000 priests and 5,000 acolytes. Nearly half of the Nimro Kingdom's population are worshippers of this sect (with varying degrees of devoutness), a number which seems to increase daily.

The church is exclusive to Giants, Trolls, Ogres, Orcs, Kobolds, Goblins and Hob-Goblins. While anybody may worship the Pantheon of the Blade, only so-called "monster races" will be welcomed at any gathering of the Church. Only "true" Giants are allowed to become Priests of the Blade, however. Other races may devote their lives to this faith, but they will

C.s & R.C.C.S

never receive any powers from the Pantheon they so loyally serve.

So far, the Church of the Blade is found only in Mount Nimro, but wherever the influence of this Giant Kingdom spreads, so too will the Church. Indeed, if it gets a foothold in either the Old Kingdom or the Baalgor Wastelands, then this religion could become quite powerful, perhaps on par with some of the other, more recognized sects of this world.

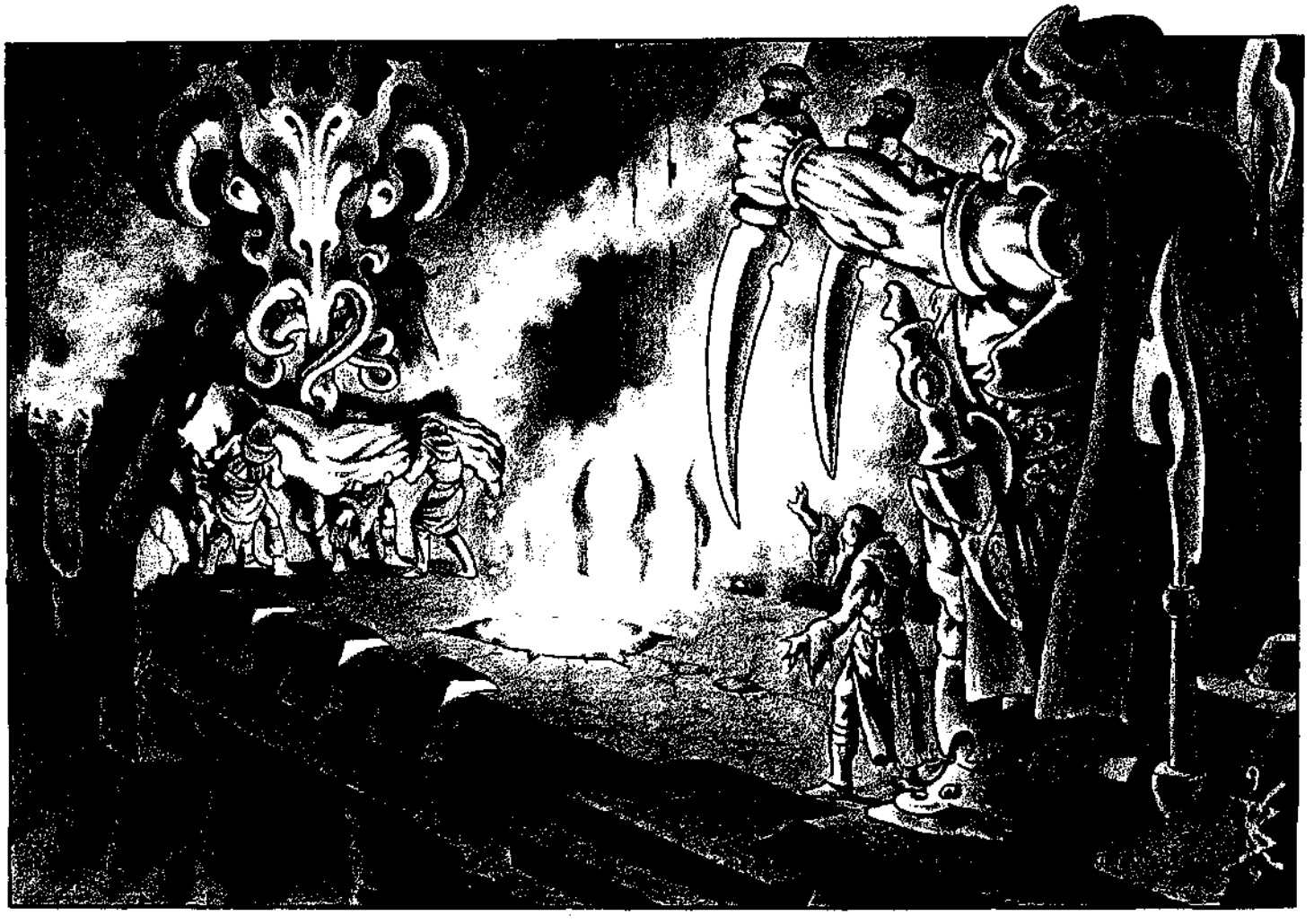
It is to that end that the Priest of the Blade dedicates his or her life. These priests are holy warriors whose powers all revolve around forming the perfect instrument for smiting the enemies of Tharsis. This pretty much means anybody who means harm to a worshiper of the Church of the Blade, but most Blade Priests interpret this as any *human, Elf, Dwarf, Gnome,* any other "fair folk," or anyone associated with them. This places Blade Priests in a permanent state of Jihad, or holy war, as they conduct a never-ending search for enemies of their faith.

Priests, Armor and Combat

Unlike Priests of Light and Priests of Darkness, Blade Priests are trained as men at arms, and are familiar with the ways of both weapons and armor.

The only weapon restriction for these priests is they must fight with something that has a "cutting edge," like a knife, spear, pole arm, scythe, sickle, sword or axe. Blunt weapons, even those with spikes or sharp edges, do not count. Likewise, Blade Priests will not fight with missile weapons, such as bows and crossbows, although they will throw edged weapons (knives, shurikens, etc.).

With regards to armor, Blade Priests may wear any kind of armor, heavy or light. While familiar with heavy armor, Blade Priests still are not full-fledged men at arms, so they still have some encumbrance penalties: -10% to prowl, -15% to climb/scale walls, swim or try to perform acrobatics or gymnastics while in full splint or plate armor; -5% to prowl, swim,



climb, acrobatics or gymnastics in chain or scale mail, and no modifier for wearing studded leather or lighter armor.

Furthermore, wearing metal armor does not hamper a Blade Priest's use of his or her priestly abilities. Blade Priests can not cast spells of any kind, so the channeling penalties for Priests of Light or Darkness do not apply. While Blade Priests have some spell-like powers, they are not spells, per se, and therefore are not affected by the kind of armor the Blade Priest wears.

Special Blessings of the Blade

All prayers of blessing are intended to show the favor of one of the gods from the Pantheon of the Blade. They are bestowed only through a Blade Priest, and only upon those who believe in the Blade Pantheon. Even those who respect and acknowledge the Pantheon, but do not worship it, cannot benefit from (will not receive the power of) a Blade Priest's blessing. Only under the rarest of circumstances will the gods of the Blade Pantheon make an exception to this rule.

Enemies of the Pantheon will not receive the benefits of a Blade Priest's blessing under any circumstances. Any Blade Priest who tries to bless an enemy of the faith will receive a severe punishment from his or her patron deity! Usually in the form of having his powers stripped until a penance is done, although an increasingly common punishment is striking one of the priest's arms lame until a penance is completed.

These short prayers of blessing take only one melee round (15 seconds), but can be performed only on one person at a time. Only a Blade Priest of 8th level or higher can bless multiple believers or objects at one time. For these high priests, two people or objects per level of experience may be blessed by a single prayer of blessing.

Duration of Blessings: Unless otherwise indicated, each prayer of blessing lasts 2D4 weeks. There is no limit to how many blessings a Blade Priest invokes during a day, although there are strict penalties for trying to bestow more than one blessing on a single individual or the same blessing more than once on the same person or item at the same time.

Blessing of a Warrior: A blessed warrior receives a +1 bonus to strike or a +1 to parry or dodge, depending on the worshiper's request, or the Blade Priest's whim. Only one such bonus may be bestowed upon a given warrior at any time. Receiving multiple blessings of this sort in order to receive additional bonuses will result in all of the blessings canceling out (i.e. no bonuses whatsoever). Moreover, any worshipper or Blade Priest who knowingly tries to abuse this blessing is punished by the Blade Pantheon.

Blessing of a Weapon: A blessed edged weapon (dagger, sword, axe, spear, pole arm) will receive either a +2 bonus to damage or a +1 bonus to strike and parry, depending on what benefit the Blade Priest decides to confer. Like the Blessing of a Warrior, above, the same restrictions apply to blessing the same weapon twice.

Blessing of Armor: Blessed armor will either increase in A.R. by +1 or it will receive +20 S.D.C. for the duration of the blessing. This blessing can not repair damaged armor, nor will it reform armor that has been destroyed. Any damage done to blessed armor (that receives additional S.D.C.) will come from the bestowed S.D.C. first. Like the Blessing of a Weapon or the Blessing of a Warrior, the same suit of armor may not be blessed more than once. **Blessing of a Battleground:** This blessing will affect one square mile for 24 hours. During this time, all devout worshipers of the Church of the Blade will receive a +1 bonus to save vs magic and +2 to save vs Horror Factor, and +1 to strike, parry, and dodge due to increased morale while in this area.

Special Prayers of the Blade

Prayer of Strength: This ritual endows the *priest* with additional spiritual strength: +6 to save vs Horror Factor, +1 on all other saving throws, +10% to turn dead, +1 spell strength, +1 to parry and dodge. This prayer can only be attempted twice per 24 hour period.

Duration: Two minutes (8 melee rounds) per level of experience.

Success Ratio: 20% at first level, +7% per additional level, starting at level two.

Prayer of Communion: This prayer enables the priest to contact his or her patron deity, or any other god in his or her patron's pantheon. The god responds by creating an inspirational vision or dream which will motivate and encourage the priest. There is a 60% chance of divination, or an omen which warns of an impending danger or treachery. In the alternative, it may alert the priest of impending good fortune (in which case the cleric will automatically interpret the omen correctly). Visions and dreams are typically symbolic and cryptic, and always concerning people and matters close to the priest, his/her deities, or church. This prayer can be attempted only once per 24 hours.

Success Ratio: 21% at level one, +7% per additional level, starting at level two.

Prayer of Intervention: This powerful prayer grants any one of the following special powers to the priest:

- Enables the priest to cast any one spell, of any spell level, that his or her patron deity knows. The priest is able to cast the spell with the effects, spell strength, and duration three levels higher than his current experience level. The priest will not be able to cast any such spell at a higher level than the deity granting this power. Likewise, deities who do not have any spell knowledge cannot grant this ability, period. Thus, a third level priest would be able to cast a spell as if he or she were a sixth level priest. There is no P.P.E. cost for casting the spell provided by this prayer.

  Success Ratio: 21% at level one, +5% per additional level, starting at level two.

- Temporary knowledge to create a magic scroll. This ability is limited to priests of sixth level or higher and can only be attempted once per 24 hour period. The type of spell is limited to the knowledge of his or her patron deity and typically is equal in spell strength to the level of the priest. The exact spell level potency can be regulated by the priest who is conjuring the scroll (equal to or below his own level of experience), but is never greater than 7th level. Note that Blade Priests almost always use this power to create offensive scrolls as a hold-out weapon. Success Ratio: 9% per level of experience.
- Super Healing. The priest's normal healing touch now instantly restores 2D4x10 hit points/S.D.C.

Limitations: The prayer enables the priest to perform two healing touches. Only one person can be affected per each touch.

Success Ratio: 21% at level one, +7% per additional level, starting at level two.

Knowledge and Abilities of the Blade Priest

1. The Healing Touch: The healing touch restores 2D4 hit points or S.D.C. Blade Priests can perform this ability once every other melee round, but it will only work on puncture, incision or laceration/cut wounds.

Selling the Healing Touch: Blade Priests may offer their ability to heal others for free, or they may charge for it. They typically heal fellow worshipers for free (especially those who defend and serve the church), and charge everybody else. Fees run from as low as five gold to as high as 1D6x100 gold per laying of hands. Much of the cost depends on the priest's relation with the afflicted. The average fee for the healing touch is 25 to 30 gold per touch.

2. The Cleaving Touch: At second level, the Blade Priest can channel the destructive power of his or her patron deity through any edged weapon. This power will not work through blunt weapons, slings, arrows or bolts, or natural weapons such as fists, feet, claws or teeth. The Blade Priest may invoke this power once every other melee round. When this power is activated, the edged weapon the priest uses for his next (one) melee attack will receive +2D6 to damage if it hits! This damage bonus is applicable to any "blade" weapon regardless of size; from dagger to claymore.

If the Blade Priest invokes this power and misses with his enchanted attack, the power is used anyway, and he must wait until the end of the next melee round to use it again. However, any strike empowered by this ability goes directly though armor (regardless of A.R.) unless parried — but all defenders suffer a penalty of -5 to parry against this attack. The only sure-fire ways to avoid being hurt by this special strike are if the Blade Priest misses or the opponent successfully dodges (without penalty). In general, though, most targets won't know to parry this attack the first time they're hit by it, and it's impossible to tell when the priest's weapon is enchanted with the Cleaving Touch.

3. Remove Curse: If successful, this power will remove the effects of a magic or deific curse. Unfortunately, while the priest may remove a curse from a person, animal or object, he or she cannot remove a curse placed on/in a rune weapon, magic item, or a sacred/supernatural place. The ritual to remove a curse takes 1D4X10 minutes.

Success Ratio: 7% per level of experience, with a single +10% bonus for removing curses from any edged weapons (aside from rune weapons or magic weapons). Blade Priests can perform the Remove Curse ritual only once for any particular curse. However, he or she can perform this ritual on innumerable different people, and other priests can try to remove a curse on those that a different priest has tried unsuccessfully to help.

4. Limited Restoration: This is perhaps the most awesome of the Blade Priest's supernatural abilities. Although these clergy are not able to breathe life into the deceased, as Priests of Light can, they can repair the crippling damage done by edged weapons of all kinds. By using this power, a Blade Priest can reattach a recently severed limb to the person or animal who lost it. The limb cannot have been severed for more than two weeks, the limb must be present in order for this power to work, and the body/person that lost the limb must still be alive, even if hanging on by a thread or in a coma. **Note:** This power does not work for severed heads. You lose your head, and you die, which places you outside the scope of this power's healing ability.

Success Ratio: This ability can be performed by any Blade Priest, but the success ratio is only 10% per level. Furthermore, such a restoration can only be attempted once on the same character by a particular Blade Priest for a particular injury. A failed roll means that the injured character's severed limb is *not* reattached. However, Blade Priests can use this ability on the same character to heal different injuries, even if it includes reattaching an appendage previously treated by the same Blade Priest. "Lost your left arm again, huh? You know, maybe you should consider wearing a shield on that arm or something."

5. Turn Dead: This ability can be enacted only after 30 seconds (two melee rounds) of unbroken, undisturbed concentration. If successful, it enables the Blade Priest to turn/repel animated skeletons, corpses, mummies and ghouls by commanding them in the name of his or her patron deity to leave. Vampires, ghosts, wraiths, and other greater undead may be held at bay by this power, causing them to hesitate for one or two melee rounds, but after that, this power will have no effect on them, and they will be able to attack the Blade Priest unhindered. Demons, Deevils, deities, and most other supernatural beings are not affected by this ability.

Success Ratio: 20% at first level, +5% per additional level, starting at level two.

6. Penance and Self-Sacrifice: The techniques used for self-denial and the exploration of one's self and environment include meditation, fasting, and vows of abstinence and silence. As a result, priests can resist thirst for two days per level of experience, and resist hunger for three days per level of experience. Although the priest is able to ignore the pain and discomfort, and function at close to a normal level, the physical body does suffer damage from dehydration, starvation, etc. Blade Priests, however, seem to get a thrill from putting their bodies through the wringer, since it proves just how tough they can be.

Note: The Church of the Blade requires its priests to maintain lifelong celibacy once they take their vows. Breaking this vow, interestingly enough, is the foremost cause for excommunications and defrocking in the Church of the Blade (and results in the loss of all priestly abilities).

Blade Priest O.C.C.

Attribute Requirements: None. The Priest need only his or her faith and devotion. However, a high P.S., P.P., and P.E. are helpful since the character is training for a career of hand to hand combat.

Alignment Limitations: Generally, Blade Priests are of selfish or evil alignments, like most Giants themselves. Furthermore, none of the gods of the Pantheon of the Blade are of a good alignment. In particular, Blade Priests are expected never to show mercy to defeated enemies of the faith.

O.C.C. Skills:

Languages: Native tongue at 98% and two languages of choice (+20%).

Literacy: One of choice (+20%).

Basic Math (+20%)
Lore: Religion (+20%)
History (+15%; specializing in the history of Giants)
W.P.: Two of choice; typically blade weapons.
Hand to Hand: Expert
Hand to Hand: Expert may be changed to Martial Arts at a cost of one O.C.C. Related Skill, or Assassin (if evil) at a cost of two skills.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select a total of six other skills. Plus two additional skills at levels four, eight and twelve. All new skills start at level one proficiency.
Communications: Any (+5%)
Domestic: Any
Espionage: None
Horsemanship: General or Exotic only.
Medical: First Aid only.
Military: Any (+5%)
Physical: Any, except Acrobatics and Gymnastics (Blade Priests often stock up on physical skills).
Rogue: Any
Science: Any (+5%)
Scholar/Technical: Any (+5%)
Weapon Proficiencies: W.P. Axe, Forked Weapons/Trident, Knife, Paired Weapons, Pole Arm, Spear, Sword, and Targeting only.
Wilderness: Any (+5%)

Secondary Skills: The character also may select three Secondary Skills from the previous list at level one, and two additional skills at levels 2, 5, 7, 10 and 13. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the bonuses listed in the R.C.C. Related Skills section. All Secondary Skills start at the base skill level, and choices are limited to the restrictions outlined on the R.C.C. Related Skills table.

Starting Equipment: A set of traveling clothes, a traveling robe or cloak with a hood, a ceremonial robe (which usually resembles military dress or combat gear), boots, belt, bedroll, backpack, a medium- to large-sized purse or satchel, four small sacks, a water skin, one or two holy symbols of the character's chosen pantheon, a silver holy symbol of the character's patron deity, four wooden spikes, a small mallet, 30 feet (9 m) of rope or chain, 1D6 vials of holy water, a silver chalice, a small mirror, a tinder box, and 2D4 weeks worth of food rations.

Armor: Starts with a suit of studded leather (A.R. 13, S.D.C. 36) or chain mail (A.R. 14, S.D.C. 44).

Weapons: Starts with two edged weapons of choice. Almost all Blade Priests carry a large sword as one of their weapons. Axes and pole arms also are favorites. In general, Blade Priests tend to favor two-handed weapons.

Money: The character starts with 150 gold. Additional money will come from services rendered or booty. Most Blade Priests are not concerned with accumulating vast treasures, as they are preoccupied with killing as many enemies of the faith as possible. Sometimes, gathering treasure is a means to that end, but usually, getting rich does not rank highly on a Blade Priest's list of priorities.

Experience Point Table for the Blade Priest

1: 0,000-1,970
2: 1,971-3,840
3: 3,841-7,640
4: 7,641-15,840
5: 15,841-25,400
6: 25,401-35,800
7: 35,801-51,200
8: 51,201-72,400
9: 72,401-96,600
10: 96,601-132,200
11: 132,201-184,600
12: 184,601-234,800
13: 234,801-284,200
14: 284,201-346,400
15: 346,401-406,600

Notes on the Pantheon of the Blade

This is a new group of deities, recently revived by their new crop of converts and true believers. Very few of these believers, however, know much about their gods, except for their names, their motifs, and perhaps a few of their powers. By and large, only Blade Priests know the details of the gods they worship, and they aren't eager to spill their secrets for some reason.

Tharsis the Reaver is the primary god of this pantheon. He is a Jotan warrior of unequaled strength and speed who flies into berserker frenzies at the drop of a hat. He is the sign of brute strength and fearlessness in the pantheon. His signature weapon is a runic flamberge carved from black stone. Aberrant alignment.

Goridge is Tharsis' chief rival and the patron deity of assassins. Tharsis considers him a coward because he fights dirty and uses stealth. Goridge, in return, writes Tharsis off as a brash fool too eager to rush headlong into danger. Goridge is a Nimro who fights with a pair of runic daggers that can change into any other kind of knife or sword. Diabolic alignment.

Serea is the high priestess of the pantheon, a symbol of beauty and passion, and also of vengeance. She is considered the most dangerous figure of the pantheon because she is extremely intelligent and will wait for years before taking her revenge on whoever wronged her. She fights with a runic spear that enables her to cast any wizard spell from levels 1-15 (excluding Spells of Legend). Serea is a Jotan of Miscreant alignment.

Ungros is a Gigante who appears to have been carved from solid stone. He is the lord of the Earth, and there is no greater warlock in the entire pantheon. Ungros doesn't like to be bothered by the other deities, and spends most of his time underground. If disturbed, however, he will stop at nothing to destroy whoever dared to invoke his wrath. He fights with no weapons, but he has total mastery over all forms of Earth Elemental magic at 15th level proficiency. He is Anarchist alignment.

Coruxa is the outcast of the pantheon, a Cyclops trickster and backstabber who has turned his fellow deities over to their enemies (whoever that may be) time and again. He lives in hiding most of the time, surfacing only when times look bleak in order to make them bleaker for his own gain or to extract revenge. His powers are something of a mystery, but he is report-

edly a master wizard and a shapechanger (knows all metamorphosis and transportation magic, and wizard spells from levels 1-8). He is also said to possess an arsenal of rune weapons he has made himself, as well as weapons he has pilfered from gods he has betrayed and murdered since the beginning of time. Miscreant alignment.

Other Deities: As the Church of the Blade grows, new deities continue to emerge. There are supposedly at least a dozen other figures in this pantheon, all of whom play a role in the increasingly complicated relationships between all of the Gods of the Blade. Despite their differences, they are all (with the exception of Coruxa) devoted to protecting their Giant worshippers, and will gladly intervene on their behalf if it looks like their worshippers are truly in need of help.

Conjurer O.C.C.

Heavily based on the original work by Doug Coughler & Kevin Siembieda

This ancient form of spell casting was practiced by the Elves during the Time of a Thousand Magicks, and became one of the few arcane arts passed along to Giantkind. By the time the Elf-Dwarf War had run its insane course, nearly all of the Conjuring Masters had been killed or left the Palladium World altogether, leaving only the very few Giants who had learned the craft to pass its secrets on to future generations. It remains a carefully guarded secret among Giantkind to this day.

With the formation of the Nimro Kingdom, the last of the Giant Conjurers have gathered together and actively seek new students. Now, a new wave of Giant arcanists are seeking paths to higher powers, and for the Nimro Kingdom, conjuring promises to play an increasing role in the day to day affairs of the kingdom, as well as an important part in its defense. But for now, the Nimro Kingdom has very, very few Conjurers. There is only one "Master" Conjurer (10th level or above is considered a Master), fewer than a dozen "Expert" Conjurers (5th to 9th level) and a scattering of "Beginner" Conjurers (1st to 4th level). All told, there are well under 50 active Conjurers in the entire Nimro Kingdom, although there are nearly 200 young Giants currently studying this art, with new students beginning every week. Provided that this new wave of understudies actually become full-fledged Conjurers, this magical art will have a major revival in the Nimro Kingdom, with 200 first level initiates within a year and as many as 1000-1200 1st to 4th level Beginners within ten!

While there are other Conjurers still alive in the Palladium World, they are very rare (believed to be fewer than 100), reclusive, and unwilling to share their secrets with anyone. One wishing to learn the art of Conjuring must first find a teacher, and then must convince that teacher that he or she is genuinely interested in devoting their life to this lost art. Like Diabolists, conjuring apprentices spend years learning the secrets of their art, bit by tiny bit. Only after a decade or so of intense tutelage does a student finally have the knowledge to consider him- or herself a full-fledged Conjurer worthy of the title (1st or 2nd level).

The same holds for Giant Conjurers, only more so. Sunder Blackrock and his Council of Twelve consider conjuring to be one of their kingdom's secret weapons. As such, the Nimro Kingdom has strictly forbidden the teaching of conjuring to any who are not "True" Giants. This means Trolls, Ogres, Orcs, and other monstrous folk are denied its secrets. Only True Giants may be privy to the secrets to this very specialized form of magic. Anyone found teaching a non-Giant the secrets of conjuring has their hands and tongue removed (to prevent them from conjuring ever again), and then they are tortured to death very, very slowly. So far, the Nimro Kingdom has only had to do this once — the grim spectacle of what became of that traitorous Conjurer has dissuaded any others from teaching their art to *anybody* before receiving prior clearance from multiple sources (Hey, it doesn't hurt to be careful).

Beginning Conjurers themselves tend to be cocky and mischievous because they consider themselves to be part of a new, cutting-edge magical practice that few other spell casters understand. As a result, Conjurers often like getting into trouble so they have an excuse to use their powers to save their hides. More learned Conjurers tend to be less mischievous, but they retain a reserved arrogance not unlike the contempt Mind Mages hold for all other psychics and spell casters. Nearly all Conjurers are unprincipled, anarchist or miscreant.

The new and unique nature of Conjuring prompts more traditional spell casters to write the art off as too unproven or limited in scope. At best a shadow of its original mystic power. Spell casters often argue that conjuring is vulnerable to long-range attacks, is too narrowly focused, and quite frankly, is a waste of P.P.E. Conjurers brush off such comments and enjoy being underestimated by their spell casting rivals. If other men of magic will write Conjurers off as worthless, then so be it. To Conjurers, this only fuels their drive to prove themselves and to exercise their resourcefulness. Conjurers rather like their status as underdogs, and they relish every opportunity they can get to prove their equality.

Player character Conjurers are most likely to come from one of two backgrounds. Either they are an up and coming Giant Conjurer in league with the Nimro Kingdom (or about to betray it, for some reason) or they are an Elven enigma from the Baalgor Wastelands, Yin-Sloth Jungles or Old Kingdom (it is rumored that Conjurers and masters of other lost arts inhabit the Land of the Damned). In this second case, how and where this person learned conjuring is likely to be a mystery that the Conjurer is unwilling to share.

The Art of Conjuring

Conjuring is, in itself, a specialized form of arcanum that enables its practitioner to create objects and animals out of thin air. When the Conjurer wishes to create something, he simply pictures that object or animal in his mind, summons the magical energies to make that image real, and "POOF," the object or animal appears in the Conjurer's hand or by his/her side (Conjurer's choice).

Conjuring Objects

Objects include any item or handful of small, simple items typically weighing less than 60 lbs. (27.2 kg) total. These objects must be simple items, such as a chair, table, cloak, pair of shoes, rope, flute, small bag with 11 marbles, 1-12 balls, nails, etc. He can also make items with only a few moving parts like scissors, pliers, a fishing pole and string, mandolin, trumpet, wagon, wheelbarrow, quill pen, etc.

Simple objects can also include simple weapons and armor or parts of armor. Simple weapons include knives, swords, axes, spears, clubs and basically any kind of hand-held melee weapon. Simple weapons also include a bow and arrow or a strung crossbow, however, arrows or bolts would require a second conjuring. Up to 12 such projectiles may be conjured at a time. Armor to be conjured could be a helmet, a pair of gauntlets, chest plate, pair of shoulder plates, a shield, etc.

Note that suits of armor consist of many different parts, each of which must be conjured separately. In general, a half-suit of armor consists of six simple parts: chest protection, neck protection, a pair of knee guards, a pair of elbow guards, a pair of wrist guards, and a helmet.

Full suits of armor generally consist of ten simple parts: leggings or leg plates, a pair of knee guards, a pair of elbow guards, a pair of shoulder guards, a helmet, a coif (to protect the neck), a hauberk (protects the chest and thighs), a pair of arm guards, a pair of gloves or gauntlets, and a surcoat or padding.

Conjuring only a few items of a full or half suit of armor will naturally result in that armor being less efficient than normal. As a general rule of thumb, any suit of conjured armor loses an appropriate percentage of A.R. and S.D.C. for each missing component. Furthermore, even a complete suit of *conjured* armor will be one A.R. point below normal, handcrafted armor and have 10% less S.D.C.

Note: Conjurers cannot make fully mechanized items like a 20th Century wristwatch or a firearm. There are two reasons for this.

First, Conjurers may only create things they have seen or touched before, and are limited by the technology they know of firsthand. Palladium Conjurers are most likely to have never left this world, so until they do, they will be unable to imagine and create technological items of which they have no concept.

Second, even if a Conjurer was familiar with a modern firearm or other complicated technological device, he would be unable to create one himself unless he had intimate knowledge of that device. That means having firsthand knowledge of the device's inner workings and a schematic laying out the device's design. Even then, a Beginner Conjurer cannot create a complex object with more than three moving parts. The maximum number of moving parts in a conjured item increases by +1 at levels 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 and 14.

Limitations of Conjuring Objects

- First and foremost, the character may only conjure what he or she knows. Thus, the Conjurer must be intimately familiar with the object he/she is trying to create. Imaginary devices, modem machines and monsters may not be created.
- The Conjurer may only create simple objects with no more than three moving parts. The maximum number of moving parts (e.g., wheels, gears, triggers, etc.) that can be conjured goes up as the conjurer increases in experience, as described above.
- Conjured objects may weigh no more than 40 pounds (18 kg). This maximum weight of conjured objects goes up by 2 pounds (roughly one kilogram) per experience level of the

Conjurer. In the case of True Giants, this weight limitation is 80 pounds (36 kg) +4 pounds (3.6 kg) per level of experience. The reason for this is believed to have to do with mind over magic due to perceptions of proportional size and perspective.

- The maximum number of simple small items, like arrows, sling bullets, handballs, marbles, caltrops, toothpicks, nails, dinner forks, and other such items is 12 per conjuring. A conjured sack of marbles, then, would consist of a very small bag and 11 marbles in it, since the bag itself would count as a single item.

  Only very small and very simple weapons, like arrows, crossbow bolts, sling bullets, nails, small needles, and similar items can be conjured by the dozen. Throwing darts, stars/shurikens, and spikes are heavier, and may only be conjured six at a time.
- Larger items and paired items like shoes, boots, gauntlets, gloves, socks, and the like, come in pairs.
- All weapons, even small ones like daggers and blackjacks, count as one conjuring. Likewise, large weapons, such as a pole arm, flamberge or long bows still only count as one conjured weapon. This means that to create a crossbow or bow and string would count as one conjuring, and 12 arrows for the bow requires a second, separate conjuring effort.
- High-technology items like batteries, rockets, radios, computers, explosives, energy weapons or any energy dependent or driven device can *not* be conjured. Period.
- Precious metals such as gold, silver, bronze and gemstones can *not* be conjured. On the other hand, iron, nickel, copper, lead, cut glass or crystal that might resemble a gem can be conjured, but must always be in the form of a particular item and not a lump or brick of ore.
- Most conjurings are temporary, see *The Cost of Conjuring.*

Conjuring Animals

The Conjurer can magically create any animal or insect bigger than a housefly and smaller than a rhino; 1,000 lbs (450 kg) weight limit. Likewise, the Conjurer must be familiar with whatever animal he or she wishes to conjure. The weight and size limits for conjuring animals are the same for all Conjurers, True Giant and otherwise.

Conjured animals will have average statistics, hit points, and S.D.C. They will obey whatever command their Conjurer gives them, even sacrificing themselves to save their master. These are living creatures, however, and good Conjurers would rarely create an animal just to destroy it. Although a conjured animal will not voluntarily attack its creator, and will obey its Conjurer's every command, a Conjurer and his conjured animal are not linked in any way. That means that such an animal does not act as a familiar; the Conjurer can not see through the eyes of animals he creates. Likewise, the Conjurer will not lose any hit points or S.D.C. if a conjured animal is hurt or killed.

Limitations of Animal Conjuring

- Only one animal may be conjured at a time, regardless of its weight or size.
- The maximum weight limit for an animal is 1,000 lbs. (450 kg), so whales, elephants or other extremely large or heavy animals can not be conjured.
- The animal must be real. Imaginary animals and dyed-in-the-wool monsters can *not* be created. However, "monstrous" but non-magical animals (such as Tuskers, Suckers, and Timreks, to name a few) can be conjured.
- The Conjurer must know his subject. Familiarity includes animals seen and studied via diagrams, pictures, viewing through a crystal ball, physical examination, and firsthand experience.
- Microscopic insects, germs, viruses and molds may not be conjured, nor can any kind of plant life be conjured.
- Conjurers may not call forth sentient beings or a specific pet animal such as somebody's familiar or pet dog, or horse.
- Animals can not be conjured into an environment where they cannot survive (i.e., a fish out of water), nor can they be created in mid-air, above the ground. That means that the Conjurer can not call forth a walrus or a moose to drop onto a villain's head. Nor can he/she create an electric eel to appear in a villain's underwear. As humorous and inventive as these ideas are, they simply do *not* work. Conjured animals always appear in the Conjurer's arms or at his/her feet.
- For an excellent listing of animals, complete with their weights and attributes, consult the **Monsters & Animals Sourcebook.**

The Cost of Conjuring

The P.P.E. cost per each conjuring by type:

Weapons:

- Small and Simple, like a short sword, knives, blackjack, or six darts or throwing stars: 10 P.P.E.
- Medium and Simple, like a broadsword, spear, morning star, mace, or 12 arrows: 15 P.P.E
- Large and Simple, like a Claymore, pole arm, lance, or giant sized weapon: 25 P.P.E.

Objects:

- Small and simple objects with no moving parts and under 10 lbs (4.5 kg), like a ball, bowl, pot, sack, pair of gloves, a pair of socks, a dozen sewing needles, six spoons, a stool, 20 feet (6 m) of rope, etc.: 5 P.P.E.
- Small and simple objects with 1-2 moving parts, like scissors, pliers, yo-yo, manacles, etc.: 10 P.P.E.
- Medium objects under 25 lbs (11.3 kg), like a chair, light table, trunk, saddle, pool stick, large pot, pan, kettle, a pair of pants, a jacket, 8 foot (2.4 m) length of chain, 30-40 feet (9-12 m) of rope, etc.: 12 P.P.E.
- Medium objects with 1-2 moving parts, such as a fishing pole, vice or clamp, a pair of small to medium-sized manacles, small to medium-sized metal trap, hedge cutters, etc.: 22 P.P.E.
- Large and simple objects weighing 30+ lbs (13+ kg), such as a plow, banquet table, couch, large trunk, robe or cloak, a 4 foot (1.2 m) long steel pole, a large sheet or plank of wood, etc.: 35 P.P.E.
- Large objects with 1-2 moving parts, such as a pulley, a winch, a wheelbarrow, a large metal trap, Giant-sized manacles, a spinning wheel: 50 P.P.E. At higher levels this can include wagons, and other items with more than two moving parts.

Note: Add 5 P.P.E. for each extra moving part above two or specialized component for all complex objects. G.M.s, do not be afraid to prohibit players from conjuring excessively complicated devices, high-tech devices, or devices the Conjurer is not sufficiently familiar with. The limits must be enforced.

Animals:

- Animals with 10 hit points or less: 15 P.P.E.
- Animals with 11-30 hit points: 25 P.P.E.
- Animals with 31-50 hit points: 40 P.P.E.
- Animals with over 50 hit points: 75 P.P.E.

Duration of Conjured Things

Temporary: Any object or animal that is conjured will remain for one hour per level of the Conjurer, or until the object or animal is destroyed or dispelled. Conjurers may make anything they have created disappear at will. Of course, bringing something back requires a separate conjuring effort. Conjured objects and animals will also dispel if the Conjurer is knocked unconscious, falls asleep or is slain.

Permanent: At 6th level, the Conjurer may make his/her creation permanent by expending 70 P.P.E for an object or 100 P.P.E for an animal. Making a permanent creation also requires the Conjurer to permanently expend 1D6 P.P.E. If a permanently conjured item or animal is lost or destroyed, the mage does not regain the 1D6 permanent P.P.E. expended; it is gone forever. Aside from that, however, the Conjurer suffers no injury from the destruction of a permanently conjured item or animal.

Other Special Conjuring Abilities

1. See and use ley lines. This ability is identical to that of the Wizard O.C.C. See page 107 of the **Palladium Fantasy** main book for more details.

2. Limited Spell Knowledge. In addition to his/her conjuring powers, Conjurers can cast the following spells: Lantern Light, Globe of Daylight, Fool's Gold, Ignite Fire, Water to Wine, Purification (Food & Water), and Spoil (Food & Water).

In addition, Conjurers gain one "creation" spell per level of experience, starting at level two. "Creation" spells include Armor of Ithan, Carpet of Adhesion, Create Golem, Create Zombie, Create Bread & Milk, Create Mummy, Familiar Link, Magic Net, Magic Pigeon, Mend Cloth, Phantom Horse, Summon & Control Rodents, Summon & Control Shadow Beast, Summon & Control Animals, Summon Greater Familiar, Summon & Control Entity, Summon & Control Canines, Talisman, and Water to Wine.

3. Magic Bonuses. +1 to save versus magic at levels 3, 6, 9 and 12. +1 to save vs Horror Factor at levels 3, 6, 9, 11, 13 and 14. +2 to save vs possession, +1 to save vs mind control, and has very good powers of concentrations and focusing. Recovers 5 P.P.E. per hour of sleep or rest; 10 P.P.E. per hour of meditation.

4. Other O.C.C. Related Bonuses. +3 on initiative; +5 on initiative to conjure something quickly before an opponent attacks/strikes, +1 to strike, +1 to pull punch, +1 to roll with impact/fall.

5. P.P.E. The Conjurer is a living magical battery that can be drawn on to cast spells and conjure with. Permanent Base P.P.E.: 2D4xlO plus the character's P.E. number. Add 2D6 P.P.E. per level, starting at level one. Conjurers may draw on the power of ley lines the same as Wizards do, but they may not draw P.P.E. from people or rituals.

The Conjurer O.C.C.

Alignment: Any, but leans toward selfish alignments, such as unprincipled, anarchist and miscreant. This is particularly true of Giants.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q.: 12, M.E.: 12, P.E.: 10. A high P.P. is helpful, but not a requirement.

Race Restrictions: None, although on the Palladium world, most (85%) are true Giants or Elves. There are roughly equal numbers of male and female Conjurers.

Player Character Note: Conjurers are often freewheeling, risk-taking, cunning and resourceful characters who feel they have something to prove. Thus, many (but not all) love adventure and seek fame and glory, rather than fortune (why buy something when you can conjure it?). They love to pit their magic and conjuring against other practitioners of magic and supernatural beings.

O.C.C. Skills:

Speaks native tongue (98%) plus two of choice (+15%).
Literacy (+10%) in two languages of choice.
Lore, Magic (+20%)
Lore, one of choice (+15%)
Mathematics: Basic: (+20%)
Land Navigation (+10%)
Wilderness Survival (+10%)
W.P.: two of choice
Hand to Hand: Basic, but may be upgraded to Expert at the cost of one O.C.C. Related Skill, or to Martial Arts or Assassin (if evil) at the cost of two skills.

O.C.C. Related Skills: At first level, the Conjurer may pick six other skills, plus one additional skill at levels 3, 6, 9, 12 and 15.

Communications: Any (+15%)
Domestic: Any (+5%)
Espionage: Intelligence, Forgery and Disguise only.
Horsemanship Skills: General or Exotic only.
Medical: Any
Military: Field Armorer and Recognize Weapon Quality only (+5%)
Physical: Any, except Wrestling and Acrobatics.
Rogue/Thief: Any
Science: Any (+5%)
Scholar, Noble & Technical Skills: Any (+10%)
Weapon Proficiencies: Any
Wilderness: Any

Secondary Skills: The character gets three Secondary Skills from the list above, plus an additional skill at levels 3, 6, 9 and 12. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantage of the bonuses listed in parentheses. All Secondary Skills start at the base skill level.

Standard Equipment: Two sets of clothing, a robe or cloak with hood, boots, a pair of soft leather gloves, belt, bedroll, backpack, a medium-sized purse/satchel, two small sacks, a water/wine skin, tinder box, plus whatever other equipment the character desires to conjure. Conjurers tend to travel light forjust this reason.

Armor: Starts with soft leather armor (A.R.: 10, S.D.C.: 20).

Weapons: Starts with two of choice. Both are basic S.D.C. weapons of good quality. Magic weapons and additional weapons must be acquired later, and of course, the character may conjure additional weapons and items as he or she needs them. Favorite weapons among Conjurers include knives, throwing weapons, swords, staves, slings, and crossbows.

Money: The character starts with 140 gold. Additional money will come from payment for services rendered, or from the plunder of adventures. Unscrupulous Conjurers may use their Fool's Gold spell to help cover expenses, but unless practiced on the foolish or careless, this is likely to get the character into trouble.

Experience Points for the Conjurer O.C.C.

1: 0,000-2,200
2: 2,201-4,400
3: 4,401-8,800
4: 8,801-17,600
5: 17,601-27,800
6: 27,801-37,900
7: 37,901-55,100
8: 55,101-75,200
9: 75,201-100,300
10: 100,301-145,500
11: 145,501-190,600
12: 190,601-245,700
13: 245,701-295,800
14: 295,801-345,900
15: 345,901-415,100

Gigante Warlord R.C.C.

Gigantes have been cursed (or blessed, depending on your perspective) with a wildly unstable genetic structure, giving rise to a variety of strange mutations, making every individual radically different from the rest. While all Gigantes are like this, one out of every five thousand or so possesses an especially freakish and continually changing genetic makeup. The only thing keeping it from killing these individuals is that they are also much stronger and hardier than average Gigantes. So, while this extreme tendency to mutate would normally produce a hideously twisted, deformed wretch doomed to an early death, it instead spawned a sub-race of particularly powerful Gigantes who use their powers and strength to subjugate their fellow mutants and just about anybody else weaker than they. These are the Gigante Warlords.

Unlike the average Gigantes, which grow up with a particular set of mutations, Gigante Warlords keep mutating all their life, resulting in more and more powers as they grow older. There are two things keeping this in check. The first is that for every power a Gigante Warlord develops, a negative mutation also surfaces. Secondly, Gigante Warlords tend to be extremely aggressive to all other beings, which gives them a fairly short life span. (Hey, sooner or later, there is *always* somebody tougher than you.) As a result, very old Gigantes with a huge amount of powers are very, very uncommon.

Mutations

When rolling up a Gigante Warlord character, consult the following tables to determine the individual's appearance and specific mutations. To keep with the flavor of this character, you should probably roll on each of these tables randomly. The point here isn't necessarily to create the most powerful mutant. The point is to come up with something freakish and horrifying. Since these characters are generally meant as non-player characters and villains, Game Masters may select mutations and powers rather than roll randomly, especially if you have a really good idea for a specific purpose or setting.

Note: If the G.M. allows it, any or all of the tables listed under *Step One: Appearance* can also be used to create any Gigante, not just Warlords. However, all subsequent Steps and Tables are exclusive to the Gigante Warlord.

Step One: Appearance

Roll once on all of the following Gigante Appearance Tables. Do not roll again unless instructed otherwise.

General Body Shape

01-12%: Normal Gigante physique, 15-20 feet tall (4.6 to 6.1 m); no bonuses or penalties.

13-23%: Broad and muscular: +2 to P.S., -2 P.P.

24-34%: Tall (26+1D4 feet; 8.2 to 9.1 m) and thin: +1D4 to Spd, -2 to P.E.

35-45%: Short and squat: 16 feet (4.9 m) -1D4 feet (0.3 to 1.8 m) from height, -10% to weight, -2 to P.S., +2 to P.E.

46-56%: Positively Gigantic: 20 feet (6.1 m) +1D6 feet (0.3 to 1.8 m) to height; +1D4 to P.S., -2 P.P. and -1D4 in speed.

57-67%: Diminutive. Effectively a midget for a "True" Giant: 12 feet (3.6 m) -1D6 feet (0.3 to 1.8 m); -1D6 to P.S. and P.E., and weighs no more than 1000 lbs (450 kg).

68-78%: Hunchback: 15 feet/4.6 m tall, +15 S.D.C., -2 P.P. and P.B.

79-89%: Grossly obese: Weighs 1D6x100 lbs (45 to 270 kg) over 2000 lbs (900 kg); +30 S.D.C., -2 P.P., and -1D6 Spd.

90-00%: Rail-thin: +1 on initiative, +1D4 to Spd, but -1D4 to P.S. and -1D6 to P.E.

Head Shape

01-17%: Same as normal Gigantes— ugly humanoid! No bonuses.

18-35%: Devolved: Human-like, but with a larger, thicker skull, thick eyebrow ridges, a low forehead, and a square chin; +1 to Horror Factor.

36-52%: Extra-Ugly: The Gigante's face is deformed in some weird way for the G.M. or player to decide; -2 to P.B., +2 to Horror Factor.

53-68%: Skeletal: The Gigante has a gaunt face, with sunken eyes and cheeks; -2 to P.B., +3 to Horror Factor.

69-84%: Rotting Skeleton: Same as above, only the Gigante's flesh looks as if it's rotting away, covered in scabs and blemishes or with open ulcerations; -4 to P.B., +4 to Horror Factor.

85-100%: Animal-like: Roll on the following sub-table to see what kind of animal the Gigante's face resembles. The degree to which the face resembles an animal's is up to the G.M. and the player. There are three basic degrees: Totally animal-like, partially animal-like (a mix of humanoid and an-

imal qualities) and mostly humanoid (with only enough animal qualities to make one's visage suggestive of animal features).

01-08%: Bat-like; +3 to Horror Factor.
09-16%: Bird-like; +2 to Horror Factor.
17-24%: Crocodilian; +3 to Horror Factor.
25-32%: Horse-like; +2 to Horror Factor.
33-40%: Monkey or Ape-like; +1 to Horror Factor.
41-49%: Snake or lizard-like; +3 to Horror Factor.
50-57%: Weasel-like; +2 to Horror Factor.
58-66%: Wild boar; +2 to Horror Factor.
67-75%: Lion or other great cat; +2 to Horror Factor.
76-83%: Fish or shark; +2 to Horror Factor.
84-92%: Canine-like (50% chance the Gigante might be mistaken for some monstrous form of Wolfen); +2 to Horror Factor.
93-00%: Rat-like; +2 to Horror Factor.

Head Adornment (50% chance)

01-09%: Small antlers; +2D6 to head butt/gore attacks, +3D6 to charging attacks (the latter counts as three melee actions).
10-18%: Large antlers: +3D6 to head butt/gore attacks, +4D6 to charging attacks (the latter counts as three melee actions).
19-27%: Bony crest or peak.
28-36%: A single, large horn: +1D6 to head butt/gore attacks, +2D6 to charging attacks (the latter counts as three melee actions).
37-45%: Small horns: +2D4 to head butt/gore attacks, +3D4 to charging attacks (the latter counts as three melee actions).
46-55%: Large horns: +2D6+2 to head butt/gore attacks, +3D6+4 to charging attacks (the latter counts as three melee actions).
56-64%: Knobs: The top of the head is covered in bony protrusions that look like small knobs or bumps; +1D6 to head butt/gore attacks.
65-73%: A serrated line of ridges; +1D4 to head butts.
74-82%: Ruff of hair, any color, and any length.
83-90%: Spines: +2D6 to head butt/gore and charging attacks.
91-95%: Sunken: The top of the head seems to recess or collapse into the skull, reminiscent of a volcano's crater.
96-00%: Either one large, lizard-like, webbed fin, or a crest of small fins.

Number of Eyes

01-25%: A single cyclopean eye in the middle of the forehead.
26-75%: Two eyes, normally placed.
76-85%: Three eyes, placed evenly in the forehead (+1 to initiative).
86-90%: Three eyes, two placed normally, one placed elsewhere on the body (back of the head, neck, chest, hand, etc.); +1 to H.F.
91-95%: Four eyes, distributed evenly on the Gigante's head; +2 to initiative and +1 to Horror Factor (H.F.).
96-00%: Five to Eight eyes, distributed evenly on the Gigante's head; +3 to initiative.

Eye Appearance

01-14%: Normal, human-like.
15-26%: Multi-faceted, like an insect or 20 or 100-sided die. Freaky! +1 to Horror Factor.
27-38%: **Slitted,** like a cat or snake's; +10 feet (3 m) to nightvision and has perfect, sharp, hawk-like vision.
39-50%: Swivel-socketed, like a Jackson's chameleon. The Gigante has big, bulbous, side-mounted eyes that protrude a bit from the head and can move independently of each other. +1 to initiative and +1 to dodge.
51-62%: Stalked eyes, like a crab or lobster. +1 to initiative.
63-74%: Huge, but otherwise normal-looking. +30 feet (9 m) to nightvision.
75-84%: White, seemingly pupilless eyes. Can see the invisible.
85-92%: Large round, flat-looking dark eyes, like those of a fish or shark. Can see clearly underwater even in murky waters.
93-00%: Large, almond-shaped eyes. Odd, but no bonuses.

Eye Color

01-20%: Normal eye color (blue, brown, hazel, etc.)
21-30%: Yellow
31-40%: Crimson red
41-50%: Amber/gold
51-60%: Black
61-70%: Metallic
71-80%: Bright green or deep jade.
81-90%: Grey
91-00%: Glowing, like the Glowing Eyes curse, with all the associated drawbacks, too. But, since the Gigante is already clearly a monster, this won't change things too much.

Nose

01-30%: Normal, human-looking.
31-40%: Flat and misshapen.
41-50%: Large, beak-like nose.
51-60%: Animal-like snout, from pig to canine.
61-70%: Huge and bulbous.
71-80%: Small, barely noticeable.
81-90%: Slits or Pinholes only.
91-00%: No nose whatsoever. The Gigante also has no sense of smell.

Mouth

01-10%: Normal mouth and teeth.
11-15%: Large (but otherwise normal) mouth and teeth.
16-20%: Normal mouth, with nasty, crooked teeth; bite does 1D4 damage.
21-25%: Large mouth with nasty, crooked teeth; bite does 2D4.
26-30%: Normal mouth, but all teeth are small and pointed; bite for 2D6 damage.
31-35%: Normal mouth with sharp teeth and fangs; bite does 2D6+4 damage.
36-40%: Large; mouth with small sharp, pointed teeth; bite does 2D6 damage.
41-45%: Large, shark-like mouth with rows of razor-sharp teeth; bite does 3D6+2 damage.
46-50%: Huge, T-Rex jaws with massive teeth that bite for 4D6. On a critical strike, the Gigante can either inflict double damage outright, or it can swallow Gnome or Goblin-sized opponents, who will then take no bite damage outright from being swallowed, but will take 3D6 damage per melee round until dead or freed.

51-55%: Same as above, but with the snake-like ability of unhinging the jaw, so up to human-sized opponents can be swallowed whole on a critical strike.

56-60%: Large ape-like or monkey-like mouth with teeth and fangs; bite does 3D6 damage.

61-65%: Canine-like mouth with sharp teeth and big canine fangs; bite for 2D6+2.

66-70%: Large mouth with flat, crushing teeth; bite does 2D6.

71-75%: Large mouth with protruding tusks; gore/slash for 3D6.

76-80%: Large mouth with sharp, serrated teeth; bite does 2D6 damage with a 50% chance of a serious, gangrenous infection setting in (cure within 48 hours, or lose whatever part of the body was bitten).

81-85%: Normal or large mouth with sharp teeth that does 2D6 damage, but can lock jaw like a pitbull or crocodile, automatically doing 2D6 each melee until either the biter or victim is killed, or the Gigante's maw is forced open and held (requires a P.S. of 30 or greater).

86-90%: Large mouth with flabby, quivering lips and no teeth. Bite for two points of damage.

91-95%: Tiny slit for a mouth, with no lips, tiny teeth, and a long, thin tongue; bite does 1D4 damage.

96-00%: Normal looking mouth with a second mouth inside the first or a mouth on the end of a tentacle; bite does 1D6 and adds one attack per melee round when an opponent is within range.

Arms & Hands

Note: 10% of Gigante Warlords have asymmetrical arms; those who do roll twice on the following table, once for each arm/hand. Any strength bonuses given here would then apply only to that particular hand/arm.

01-09%: Normal humanoid arms.

10-18%: Huge, over-muscled arms; +1D6 to P.S.

19-27%: Beefy, thick arms; +3 to P.S.

28-35%: Skinny arms; no bonus.

36-43%: Rail-thin, bony arms and hands; -4 to P.S.

44-51%: Long, ape or monkey-like arms; +2 to P.S.

52-60%: Normal arms with clawed hands; +1D6 damage to open-hand attacks.

61-69%: Normal arms with taloned hands; +2D6 to open-hand attacks.

70-78%: Thin and gnarled arms with clawed fingers; +1D6 to open-hand attacks.

79-86%: Long, insectoid arms with hooked claws; +1D6 to open-hand attacks, +10% to climb/scale walls.

87-94%: Muscular arms with three-fingered hands; -10% on all skills requiring fine finger-work, such as pick pockets; +2 to P.S.

95-00%: Octopus-like tentacles instead of arms, can extend out to reach twice as long as normal arm's length. Can perform only crude manipulation of objects (-40% on skills requiring manual dexterity and fingers), and cannot wield weapons well so combat bonuses are reduced by half. Whipping attack does +2D6 damage plus normal P.S. damage and bonuses; +4 to entangle/hold.

Legs and Feet

01-10%: Normal, strong legs and feet; +1D6 to Speed.

11-20%: Horse or goat-like legs and hoofed feet; +1D4x10 to Speed.

21-30%: Insectoid legs and feet; +1D6 to Speed, double leaping distance.

31-40%: Normal legs, with clawed/taloned feet; +2D6 damage to kicking attacks, +5% to climb/scale walls.

41-50%: Normal legs, with webbed feet; +10% to swimming (at G.M./player's discretion, the Gigante's hands may be webbed too, although it confers no additional benefit).

51-60%: Powerfully muscled feet and legs; +4D6 to Speed.

61-70%: Monkey-like legs with prehensile feet; +1D6 to Speed, +10% to climb/scale walls; can perform crude manipulation with feet.

71-80%: Spindly, skeletal legs with two-toed clawed feet; +2D6 to speed.

81-90%: Instead of legs, the Gigante balances and slithers on a snake-like trunk; +1D6 to Speed, +1 to dodge, +4 to maintain balance, automatically roll on Tail table, below.

91-00%: Three normal legs and feet! +10% to balance, +3D6 to speed, but -2 to roll with punch, fall or impact.

Tail

There is a 01-50% chance of having a tail, unless otherwise noted. All tails from 37-00 provide one extra attack per melee round.

01-08%: Long, thin, naked tail; +1 to maintain balance.

09-15%: Long, thick, naked tail; +4 to maintain balance; slap for 2D6.

16-22%: Short, thin tail; no bonuses.

23-29%: Short, thick tail; no bonuses.

30-36%: Animal-like tail, short or long; +2 to maintain balance; G.M./Player's choice: dog, goat, horse, tiger, rat, lizard, or pig.

37-43%: Prehensile monkey-like tail; can perform crude manipulations and even use simple weapons without benefit of combat bonuses.

44-50%: Stinger; strike for 1D6, +2D6 poison if target fails saving throw.

51-57%: Stinger; strike for 1D6, +4D6 poison if target fails saving throw.

58-64%: Stinger; strike for 1D6 damage plus paralysis for 1D4 melees if target fails saving throw.

65-71%: Thick, clubbed tail that can be used like a bludgeon to inflict 3D6 damage +P.S. damage bonus.

72-78%: Thick, spiked tail like that of a Stegosaurus; slashes and impales to inflict 3D6 damage +P.S. damage bonus.

79-85%: Thin, prehensile tail that ends in a bladed or sharp arrowhead-like tip; slash or stab to inflict 3D6 damage. No P.S. bonus, but can be used to parry (+1).

86-93%: Strong, fast and used like a whip. Each lash of this tail inflicts 2D6 damage (no P.S. bonus) or can be used to entangle or disarm (+2).

94-00%: Heavy, saw-toothed tail that does 4D6 damage +P.S. damage bonuses, but is -2 to strike.

Back

01-20%: Normal; human-looking.

21-30%: Humped, hunched; +10 S.D.C., -2 P.P.

31-40%: A mane of hair runs down the spine; any color.

41-50%: Fin or fins, like the back of a dragon or a sailback dinosaur; +10 S.D.C.

51-60%: Spikes run down the spine; +10 S.D.C.

61-70%: Ridged; +15 S.D.C.

71-80%: Plated with large thick fins like a Stegosaurus; +25 S.D.C.

81-90%: Covered in hair or fur.

91-95%: Winged; 01-50% chance the wings are usable and can fly at a speed of 3D6xlO; wings can be leathery, feathered, or insect-like.

96-00%: Spots, speckles or stripes; +1 to P.B.

Skin

01-08%: Normal, human-like skin; no bonuses.

09-15%: Extremely loose, wrinkled or folded skin; +1 to Horror Factor.

16-22%: Scabby or boil-covered skin; +2 to Horror Factor.

23-29%: Covered in slime; +3 to Horror Factor.

30-36%: Leprous, rotting skin; +3 to Horror Factor.

37-44%: Covered in thick fur; +10 S.D.C.

45-52%: Covered in thick, hairy bristles; +15 S.D.C.

53-60%: Thick, lumpy or warty skin; +20 S.D.C.

61-68%: Tough, leathery hide; A.R. 10, +20 S.D.C.

69-76%: Skin covered in small scales; A.R. 11, +20 S.D.C.

77-84%: Big, thick scales or insect-like exoskeleton (G.M. or player's choice); A.R. 13, +1D4x10+10 S.D.C.

85-92%: Tough, leathery plates, like a rhino; A.R. 12, +1D4x10 S.D.C.

93-00%: Skin appears to be made up of broken pieces of rock and stone; A.R. 14, +1D6x10 S.D.C.

Predominant Skin Color

01-05%: Light or dark red.

06-10%: Scarlet or flame red.

11-15%: Light or dark orange.

16-20%: Deep sunset or dull orange.

21-25%: Light or dark yellow.

26-30%: Mustard, tan-yellow or ocher.

31-35%: Light or dark green.

36-40%: Jade or forest green.

41-45%: Light or dark blue.

46-50%: Light or dark grey.

51-55%: Indigo or cobalt blue (strikingly bright & vibrant).

56-60%: Light or dark violet.

61-65%: Striking or deep, dark purple.

66-70%: Jet black.

71-75%: Light or dark brown, or chocolate or mahogany brown.

76-80%: Caucasian.

81-85%: Stark white (an albino) or ivory.

86-90%: Roll twice, ignoring rolls of 86-100. The second roll is for a secondary body marking, such as spots or stripes.

91-95%: Roll three times, ignoring rolls of 86-100. The first and second rolls are the predominant colors of the individual, the third is of a secondary marking such as spots or stripes, or, all three colors can mix together, like a calico cat or to make an intricate pattern.

96-00%: Iridescent with two or three different colors showing depending on how light hits the skin.

Step Two: Mutant Powers

When initially creating the character, roll four times on the Gigante Mutant Powers Table. Gigante Warlords gain an additional random power from this table at levels 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 and 14.

Gigante Mutant Powers Table

01-03%: Super-Nightvision (3D6x100 yards/meters).
04-06%: See the invisible. Works constantly. If this ability is already possessed, add 2D6 to Speed.
07-09%: Turn invisible at will.
10-12%: Impervious to fire, including magic; +20 points to S.D.C.
13-15%: Impervious to acid; +20 to S.D.C.
16-18%: Impervious to cold, including magic; +20 S.D.C.
19-21%: Impervious to electricity, including magic; +20 S.D.C.
22-24%: Impervious to poison; +10 S.D.C.
25-26%: +3 to save versus magic.
27-29%: Can breathe underwater, but this makes the Gigante at-2 to save versus the effects of any gas.
30-31%: Fast reflexes; +2 to initiative and +1 attack per melee round.
32-34%: Fires magical energy bolts from the eyes or hands; 40 foot (12.2 m) range, does 3D6 damage. Each blast counts as one melee attack.
35-37%: Breathe fire; 20 foot (6 m) range, does 4D6 damage. Each breath attack counts as one melee attack.
38-40%: Spit acid; 20 foot (6 m) range, does 4D6 damage.
41-42%: Antennae; +1 to initiative, strike, parry an dodge, plus penalties for being blind are reduced by half.
43-44%: Sticky pads on fingers and toes; +15% to climb/scale walls, +5% to pick pockets.
45-47%: Supernatural Strength and +1D4 to P.S.
48-50%: Unusually agile; +1D4+1 to P.P.
51-53%: Unusually hardy; +1D4 to P.E. and fatigues at half normal rate.
54-55%: One extra arm! This full-sized limb looks just like the other arms and has the same P.S. Bonuses: +1 to initiative, +1 to strike and parry, and +5% to climb skill.
56-57%: Two extra arms! They are either full-sized limbs that look just like the other arms or may be thin or slightly smaller, but have the same P.S. Bonuses: +1 attack per melee round, +1 to initiative, +1 to strike, +2 to parry, and +10% to climb skill.
58-59%: Gigante can use the See Aura psi-ability and one sensitive of choice at will. Considered a Minor psionic with 3D6+10I.S.P.
60-61%: Telekinetic leap.
62-63%: Bio-regenerates 2D6 H.P. or S.D.C. per melee round.
64-65%: Healing touch; heals 3D6 H.P./S.D.C., three times daily.
66-67%: Flight, as per the Fly as the Eagle spell, at will. The giant can fly for two hours at a time before needing to rest for 5-10 minutes.
68-69%: Teleport, as per the Teleport: Lesser spell, three times daily.
70-72%: Teleport: Superior spell, three times daily.
73-74%: Metamorphosis — basically the same as the dragon.
75-76%: Animate and Control Dead; as many as 20.
77-78%: Telekinesis, same as the Physical Psionic power.
79-80%: Can control up to six animals (must be non-intelligent), 80% each.
81-82%: Turn 3D6+12 Undead, 01-60% chance.
83-85%: Additional pair of arms; +1 attack per melee.
86-88%: Chameleon ability, as per the Earth Warlock spell, at will (25% chance it works constantly, whether the Gigante Warlord wishes it or not).
89-91%: Prowl at 78%.
92-94%: Track Humanoids by smell at 76%; -20% when tracking by smell alone; penalties for being in darkness or blind are reduced by 25%. The Gigante can track folks by smell, much like a bloodhound. This ability is fouled by water, so quarry crossing a river have a 01-50% chance of throwing the Gigante off the scent.
95-96%: Armored skin that looks like a hide made of tree bark, stone or steel. The Gigante Warlord has a natural A.R. of 10 and 4D6+30 S.D.C. If the character has already rolled this ability, either ignore and roll again, or add 5 points to the A.R. and +20 to S.D.C. If the character already had a natural armor from the *Skin Table,* then add +2 to the character's A.R. and +15 S.D.C.
97-98%: Can dig like a Dwarf or a Kobold; roll 3D6 for digging speed.
99-00%: Acute hearing; only a 01-10% chance of the character being surprised.

Step Three: Genetic Defects

Roll once on the Gigante Defect Table. Roll again at levels 3, 6, 9, 11, 13 and 15.

Gigante Defects Table

01-10%: Additional insanity; roll on the Gigante Insanity Table below.
11-20%: Susceptibility; character takes double damage from one of the forces listed below. If the character rolls a Susceptibility to something he has already rolled an Immunity for on the Gigante Powers Table, then the Susceptibility and Immunity cancel each other out.
01-10%: Fire
11-20%: Cold
21-30%: Electricity
31-40%: Poison
41-50%: Acid
51-60%: Holy Weapons
61-70%: Magic energy including spells and enchanted weapons.
71-80%: Possession & Mind Control: -5 to save vs possession, -3 to save vs illusions, charm magic, hypnosis and other forms of magical or psionic mind control.
81-90%: Silver
91-00%: Iron weapons
21-30%: Presence causes unease (often to the point of attacking or fleeing) in all animals within 20 feet (6 m).
31-40%: Reduced attribute. Lower by 2D4 one attribute at random. Roll 1D8 to determine. 1 = I.Q., 2 = M.E., 3 = M.A., 4 = P.S., 5 = P.P., 6 = P.E., 7 = P.B., 8 = Spd.

41-50%: Narcolepsy. The character has a 15% chance of falling dead asleep for 1D6 minutes. While asleep, he will not hear a thing and can not be awakened without one full melee round of being jostled and shouted at. This occurs when the character is bored (like guard duty) and when focusing on a particular activity for more than 20 minutes. It does not happen in the middle of physical activity or fighting.

51-60%: High food requirement; character must consume half his or her body weight in digestible material each day.

61-70%: Requires special food; character can only digest a certain kind of food or limited types of food; may be something exotic.

71-80%: Body Odor; character exudes a vile, rotten, fishy, gangrenous, moldy, sweaty, mildew or smoky odor that announces his presence from about 50 feet (15 m) away. Reduce M.A. or P.B. by half.

81-90%: Character suffers from a random curse that cannot be removed by any means or suffers the equivalent of having eaten a random faerie food. Permanent effects.

91-00%: Slow to respond and react; no initiative bonuses whatsoever and is -3 on initiative rolls.

Step Four:

Wacko, Crazy, Bananas, Out to Lunch

Roll once on the Gigante Warlord Insanity Table when initially creating the character. Roll on this again when instructed to by a roll on the Gigante Defect Table, or if the character undergoes any kind of severe mental trauma. Gigantes in general are very unstable mentally; Gigante Warlords are even worse.

Gigante Warlord Insanity Table

01-10%: No insanity

11-26%: Psychosis

27-42%: Obsession

43-58%: Phobia

59-74%: Neurosis

75-90%: Affective Disorder

91-00%: Roll on Optional Personality Disorders table, below.

Optional Personality Disorders

01-05%: Inserts a word or three of gibberish before, after, or during nearly every sentence the Gigante speaks.

06-10%: Deathly frightened of little girls (or any other relatively harmless-looking person or baby animals), to the point where the sight of one makes the Gigante tremble, and when approached or threatened by one, he wets his pants and either begins crying for his mommy or run away.

11-15%: No short-term memory. Will forget just about anything heard or read until it has been repeated at least three times.

16-20%: Inability to say the word "no."

21-25%: Compulsion to lick own palms when confronted by an attractive member of the opposite sex any race, but that individual must have a P.B. of 15 or higher.

26-30%: Falls asleep upon hearing a particular word or phrase (which is up to the G.M., or the player with G.M.'s approval).

31-35:% Upon seeing a spider or insect, the Gigante's body itches uncontrollably for 1D4 hours. During this time, the individual is-2 to strike, parry, and dodge, and is at-10% on all skills.

36-40%: Extremely suspicious of anyone wearing a specific color (the color to be determined by the G.M.).

41-45%: The Gigante cannot tell the difference between dreams and reality.

46-50%: Individual is unable to remember the name of other people though the rest of his/her memory is completely clear. The only names he can remember are those he makes up himself and are usually descriptive: "You know, Mister ... um ... Bug Eyes!" or "Big Nose," "Hero Bob," or "Sissy Elf," and so on.

51-55%: Under high-pressure situations, the Gigante develops double or even triple-vision. Effectively, the Warlord is under the effects of a Multiple Image spell for every person he/she sees for the next 1D6 minutes.

56-60%: Has an "imaginary friend" who, among other things, must be consulted before making any serious decision. **Note:** If two Gigante Warlords with imaginary friends encounter each other, each of their friends will likely goad them to challenge the other.

61-65%: Thinks the sun is really a big hoard of gold; obsesses constantly about it and will do anything if he/she thinks it will help him/her to get it.

66-70%: Will always address himself in the third person, "Mongo is hungry. Mongo wants food!"

71-75%: Sings or whistles loudly when nervous.

76-80%: Must turn around three times before engaging an opponent in battle — translation: When squaring off with a new opponent, the Gigante wastes his first two melee actions/attacks spinning around, and is at-5 to parry or dodge while spinning.

81-85%: Has a low to average I.Q. (9 or less) and a child-like disposition, but wants to make friends with members of one of the following races.

01-10 Eandroth
11-20 Gnome
21-30 Dwarf
31-60 Human
61-70 Elf
71-80 Wolfen (sees all canines as Wolfen).
81-90 Changeling
91-00 Exotic Race of choice (Bearman, Ratling, Gosai, Rahu-Man, Dragon, etc.).

This isn't as funny or cute as it may sound, because the Giant will follow a particular person or group around like a puppy or little brother who is always underfoot, getting into trouble and defending his "friend's" good name and reputation ("Oh, yeah, my friend Karl is ten times tougher than you"; or "Karl wouldn't steal, he told me he found that money"; or, "Take that back or I'll kill you!" and so on).

86-90%: Hates being interrupted. If it happens more than once, he will attack and pummel the individual responsible until he apologizes and stops interrupting. If the individual will not apologize or interrupts again, the Gigante will attack with murderous intent.

91-95%: Roll twice on this table, ignoring rolls of 91-00.

96-00%: Gigante has a bizarre kind of "rotating" mental illness in which he/she suffers from a random "standard" form of insanity (psychosis, obsession, phobia, neurosis, affective disorder) for 1D6 months, after which that illness goes away but is replaced by a different random insanity. Usually, Gigante Warlords of this type do not suffer from the same insanity twice.

Gigante Warlord NPC Villain

Optional Player Character: This character is best suited as an NPC villain or monster and not as a player character.

G.M. and Player's Note: Anybody who has played around with the Gigante Warlord Appearance and Mutation tables will notice that these tend to create some extremely powerful and horrific creatures. In general, I find Gigante Warlords to be too monstrous and, more importantly, too powerful to include as a player character in any standard campaign. Perhaps in a campaign where every player runs a Giant character a Gigante Warlord might fit in, but otherwise, these guys are best left as *NPC villains.* Players, please do not give your G.M. a hard time about this.

G.M.s, if you are really gun-ho to include Gigante Warlords in your campaign as player character options, then understand that these guys will probably be a serious burden for their companions. The mental illnesses, genetic defects, and inherent savagery of a Gigante Warlord make it extremely difficult for them to work within a group. Furthermore, most have no regard for laws or regulations and their very appearance tends to cause a panic in the communities of "fair folk." Even Orcs, Goblins, Ogres and other members of the monster races will regard the character as dangerous and an unpredictable, potential threat. Human farmers, women and children are likely to run away screaming at first sight a half mile away, and heroes, soldiers and the paranoid are likely to shoot first and ask questions later.

No Attribute Requirements: Gigante Warlords are born into this R.C.C. As such, there are no minimum attribute requirements, per se. When rolling up a Gigante Warlord character, they will all have a minimum P.S. and P.E. of 15, which then may be modified by skills and mutations. So, regardless of what is initially rolled for the character, the minimum starting P.S. and P.E., before modification by skills or mutations, will be at least 15. Keep in mind though, that these are rock-bottom attributes for Gigante Warlords. Individuals with low P.S. or P.E. are likely to be bullied and tormented endlessly until they are killed, exiled, or are driven to suicide. Such individuals usually are particularly desperate, angry and bitter folk who hate their own kind and/or take out their frustration and anger on people weaker and smaller than they.

Alignment Limitation (NPC): Gigante Warlords are diabolic, miscreant or anarchist ONLY. These monsters are usually too power-hungry, vicious and insane to be anything else. If there's one thing these wretches understand, it's power and intimidation. The only exception is a possible player character, if allowed.

Most Gigante Warlords (75%) are diabolic. These evildoers delight in senseless destruction and making all other people miserable. Diabolic Gigante Warlords generally have no redeeming qualities as people, and are about the foulest kind of villain one

will find roaming the Palladium world. The extremely repugnant attitudes of these individuals make it almost impossible for them to work voluntarily within a group. They usually will do so only if forced into it by circumstance, somebody more powerful than they, or if it is in their immediate advantage to do so.

The remaining 25% are miscreant or anarchist. Of these, most are evil miscreants who have only a marginally smaller appetite for destruction than their diabolic cousins. These guys go through life interested only in satisfying their most primal urges, usually at the expense of somebody else. They are just as unlikely to join any group or work for a worthy cause as diabolic Gigantes.

Anarchist Gigante Warlords are seen as goody two-shoes who lack the nerve to be thoroughly wicked. Despised by other Gigante Warlords and other Gigantes in general, these outcasts must rule through cruelty and displays of brute strength and ruthlessness, or live outside the Giant society at large (yet are unable to fit in anywhere else). They generally do not become adventurers. Instead, some become angry hermits who stake out some barren patch of rock or hillside and try to live as quietly as they can, knowing that someday, somebody will come looking for their scalp. Others will lord over lesser beings such as Orcs, Goblins, Ogres and bands or tribes of other members of the monster races; occasionally humans.

R.C.C. Skills:

Climb/Scale Walls (+10%)
Athletics (General)
Languages: Native Tongue (98%) plus two of choice (+10% each)
Wilderness Survival (+10%)
W.P. Sword
W.P. Axe
W.P. Two of choice
Hand to Hand: Expert, but can be changed to Martial Arts or Assassin (if anarchist or evil) for the cost of one O.C.C. skill.

R.C.C. Related Skills: Select five other skills at level one, plus another two skills at levels three, six, nine and twelve. All new skills begin at level one proficiency. The relatively low number of skills reflects how heavily Gigante Warlords rely on their natural abilities and don't spend a lot of time learning new things.

Communications: None
Domestic: Any (but rarely taken, since these skills usually are ridiculed and seen as the work of "sissies").
Espionage: Any (+5%)
Horsemanship: General or Exotic only. (Most Gigante Warlords don't take either of these skills because they are simply too big to ride most animals).
Medical: First Aid only.
Physical: Any, except for Acrobatics and Gymnastics.
Rogue: Any (+4% for Streetwise only).
Science: Mathematics: Basic only (+5%; usually taken to keep track of one's henchmen, loot and victories).
Scholar, Technical: Any except Literacy (+10% on Language and Lore only).
Weapon Proficiencies: Any
Wilderness Survival: Any

Secondary Skills: The character also gets to pick two Secondary Skills from the previous list at level one, and one additional skill at levels 5, 10 and 15. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantages of the bonuses in the parentheses above. All secondary skills start at the base skill level. Also, skills are limited as previously listed under R.C.C. Related Skills.

Starting Equipment: Same as Mercenary O.C.C.

Armor: Most Gigante Warlords do not wear armor, usually because they have a high enough natural A.R. and/or S.D.C. to shrug off attacks, or because they can not find anyone to customize a giant suit of armor that can accommodate monstrous proportions and mutations. As a result, the Gigante Warlord does not start off with a suit of armor.

Weapons: Same as the Mercenary O.C.C. Gigante Warlords tend to favor big, two-handed weapons, such as flamberges, goupillon flails and battle axes. They generally don't go for concealable or missile weapons (e.g., bows, slings). Thrown weapons are alright, though.

Money: Starts with 200 gold that he/she robbed from some poor soul. Additional money is gained through payment for services, or more commonly, by plundering somebody else.

Experience Points for the Gigante Warlord

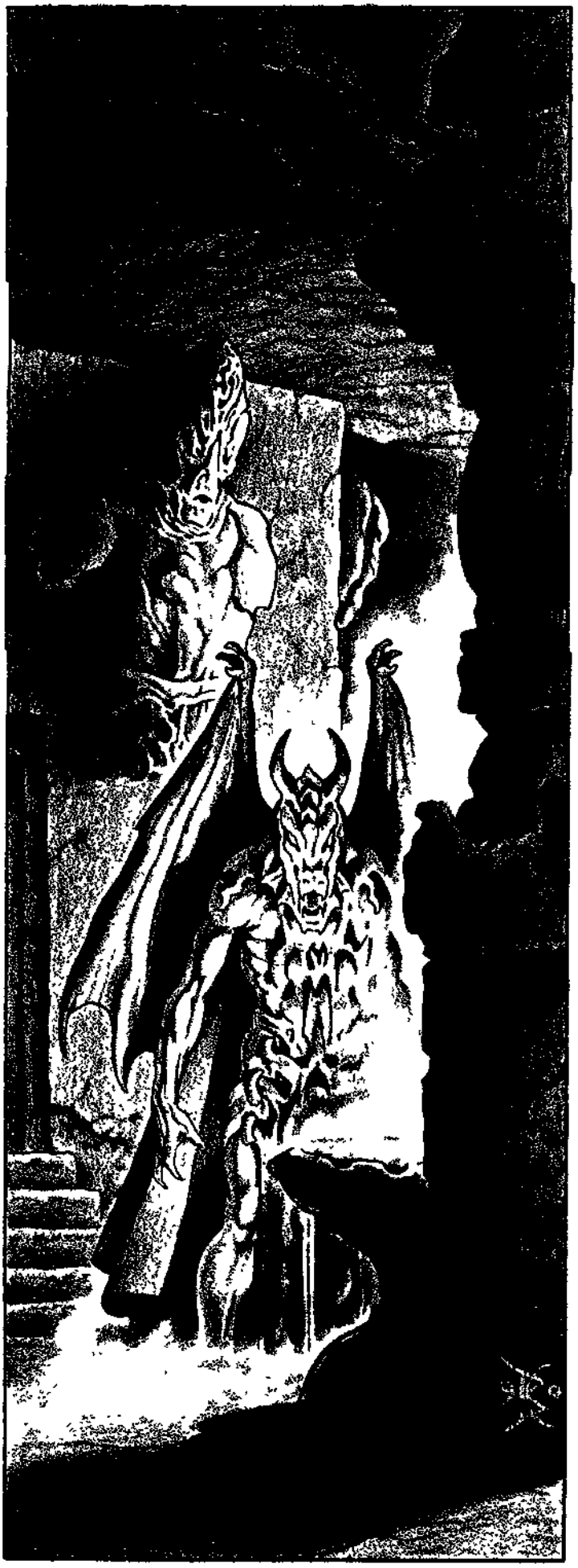
1: 0,000-2,200
2: 2,201-4,400
3: 4,401-8,800
4: 8,801-16,500
5: 16,501-25,000
6: 25,001-35,000
7: 35,001-50,000
8: 50,001-71,000
9: 71,001-96,500
10: 96,501-135,500
11: 135,501-180,500
12: 180,501-230,500
13: 230,501-280,500
14: 280,501-335,500
15: 335,501-400,500

Life Force Wizard O.C.C.

Based on original text & concepts by Thom fiartold

This sinister and bizarre O.C.C. is a dark reminder of bygone ages when wilder and more perverse forms of magic were practiced. The art of Life Force Magic dates back to the Age of Light, when a vast surplus of magical energy surged through the Palladium World, and inter-dimensional gateways allowed creatures and intelligent folk from across the Megaverse to travel to it. Among these first travelers were explorers from the Gromek homeworld who came here sensing a fresh, new frontier to conquer. These were the first Life Force Wizards.

Practicing a strange form of magic largely unknown even to their own kind, these alien mages desired to seize control of the entire Palladium World. A world which had just barely begun to recover from the terrible battle that vanquished the dreaded Old Ones. Mercilessly, they subjugated large territories and proclaimed themselves wizard-kings (and even as gods, in some cases), dispensing life and death as they saw fit. Thankfully for the Palladium World, the reign of these Gromek rulers did not last very long, for as soon as they had established domains for



themselves, they turned on each other. In the internecine warfare that followed, the Gromek Life Force Wizards destroyed each other, and those few who remained were overthrown by their rebellious subjects. Defeated, these villains either left the planet for greener pastures (ultimately conquering at least four other worlds in the Megaverse) or they went into hibernation in the hope that when they awoke, all of their enemies would be dead. Burial sites in the Yin-Sloth Jungles, Old Kingdom Mountains, what is now the Baalgor Wastelands, and the Land of the Damned all contain slumbering Life Force Wizards who are waiting for the day when some external force awakens them to a new world, fresh with untold opportunities.

The second age of Life Force Wizards took place during the Time of a Thousand Magicks, when another surge of interdimensional gateways opened on this world, letting interdimensional travelers through. Among those who came to this "world were a fresh batch of Life Force Wizards who had heard about the failures of the first Wizards, and plotted to come here and rule, never to make the mistakes of their predecessors.

Again, these mages, or "Biomancers," carved out great empires for themselves and became some of the most feared rulers and tyrants of their day. But their greed, arrogance and cruelty were their undoing, and before even a thousand years had passed, the realms of these Life Force Wizards had crumbled as well, either from conflict with other despots (often other Biomancers) or crusading hero-kings and other practitioners of magic who sought to free the Life Force Wizards' subjects from oppression. Most often, however, the Life Force Wizards were defeated by rebellions of their own subjects. Whatever the cause, the day of the Gromek Biomancer had ended once more, with little to show for its passing except a body of legends, rumors, and fragments of history to tempt future generations.

However, during this second age of Gromek Life Force Wizards, many other Gromek came to this world, either through naturally occurring Rifts in the Megaverse, or through dimensional portals crafted by the Biomancers themselves. Most of these Gromek were lured here by Wizards who promised them lands to conquer and battles to fight. For many, such enticement was too much to resist, and over the years, a sizeable population of Gromek came to this world under the command of Gromek Biomancers and the promise of conquest.

As the Gromek Life Force Wizards built and lost their empires, their Gromek subjects forgot about their old homeworld, having adopted this one as their own. When the Gromek realms fell, many of the Life Force Wizards who built them were either killed or fled to other dimensions and worlds. Those few who chose to stay, hiding themselves in hibernation like the vanquished life forces of eons past, made sure that their subjects would not forget them. Many delivered stirring speeches before they left, and in doing so, became figures of legend who have become more and more revered over the centuries since their departure. Even today, the names of such noteworthy Life Force Wizards as *Firesstignne, Silesstissessn* and ***Yunnegithhedd*** are as revered by Gromek as they were millennia ago.

Since then, life has changed for the Palladium Gromek. Most of those who served these ancient mages had died by the time a third wave of Gromek were brought to this world as recruits in the Elf-Dwarf War. Caught in the crossfire of that deadly conflict, many of the horned giants brought here were slaughtered.

After the war ended, the remaining Gromek stayed in the Baalgor Mountains and the immediate vicinity, calling it their home. There did the legends of the old Life Force Masters trickle down, tantalizing the Gromek with spotty stories of vast empires and untold power, but nothing more. Indeed, the Gromek considered Life Force Wizards as just a legend — at least until now.

Something has awakened many (all?) of the Life Force Wizards who had gone to sleep in bygone ages, but nobody knows exactly what it is that stirs them. To the beleaguered Gromek in the Mount Nimro region, the appearance of these dark and frightening figures lifts their morale and offers a fragment of hope that all is not yet lost for their people. Thus, while Life Force Wizards are themselves agents of death and destruction, they may represent their best (and only?) hope in regaining their ancient homeland in the Baalgor Mountains and in and around Mount Nimro, from the clutches of the Kingdom of Giants who now control it.

The Special Magic Powers of the Life Force Wizard O.C.C.

Life Force Magic is a lost art known only to a precious few Gromek who generally will not share their secrets with anyone. Whoever does learn it, however, is transformed into an energy vampire who must live off the life energy of others. While Life Force Wizards may still enjoy the taste of food and drink, they can only receive true sustenance by absorbing the life force (hit points) of other living creatures. Life Force Wizards must feed on 20 Hit Points stolen from others each day. This comes to about a life a day, if the dark mage is feeding off normal folks. Failure to feed properly results in starvation; starvation causes the Life Force Wizard to weaken (reduce all bonuses and hit points by half) and eventually die.

In addition, Life Force Wizards do not regenerate P.P.E. like normal men of magic. When one learns the ways of Biomancy, he undergoes a permanent, irreversible change that robs him of the ability to regenerate P.P.E. This person no longer is a battery of life energy, but a "black hole" that consumes it, with an endless appetite for more. As such, these Wizards must steal P.P.E. from other beings to use their special magical abilities and to cast spells. This happens automatically when a Life Force Wizard absorbs more life energy than he needs to feed himself for the day. Thus, once a Life Force Wizard has stolen 20 Hit Points from others, all subsequent Hit Points stolen automatically convert to P.P.E. A Life Force Wizard's P.P.E. stays with him until spent on special abilities. If the energy vampire does not feed on at least 20 stolen Hit Points for any given day, then the balance will come off whatever P.P.E. the he or she has stored up. If the Life Force Wizard has no P.P.E., then he begins to starve.

A final note: Unlike conventional Wizards, Life Force Wizards can NOT absorb ley line energy or P.P.E. from magic items or talismans to replenish their own P.P.E. stores. They can, however, draw P.P.E. from other living beings, as described on page 181 of The **Palladium Fantasy Role-Playing Game, Second Edition** rule book. This P.P.E. drains away at the rate of one point per minute. While the Life Force Wizard holds on to this temporary power, any spells or abilities requiring P.P.E. come from this stolen energy reserve. Life Force Wizards can not feed on P.P.E drawn from other living things, they can only feed on *lifeforce energy* (Hit Points, which can be converted to P.P.E.).

Absorbing Life Force Energy From Others

Range: 10 feet (3m) per level of experience; area effect or aimed at a specific opponent.

Duration: Works instantly. Absorbed "life force" is used first to feed the Life Force Wizard. Any extra goes into the Wizard's P.P.E. pool.

Saving Throw: Standard save vs magic. Those who save lose only one quarter of their remaining Hit Points if specifically targeted, while folks in a group who save lose only five Hit Points rather than 10.

P.P.E.: None, an automatic power that can be used once per melee. The Life Force Wizard can drain any one opponent of half his Hit Points in an instant! Or he can drain 10 Hit Points from as many as ten different people or animals within the range/radius of this power. After the monster's hunger has been satisfied (20 H.P.), all additional Hit Points absorbed by him are turned into P.P.E. on a one to one basis (i.e. 10 H.P. = 10 P.P.E.). The total amount of energy a Life Force Wizard may absorb is limited to their own base P.P.E. level: 3D4xlO+20 plus 3D6 per level of experience. Once maxed out, no additional Hit Points can be absorbed or held in reserve by the mage. Any additional killing is done for pleasure or out of cruelty.

Victims of this power will suddenly feel very tired and, for the next hour, will be at -1 to strike, parry and dodge. In addition, their Speed attribute will be reduced by 25%. Once a person or animal has been drained of any amount of Hit Points, the Wizard cannot affect him again until the character has returned to full Hit Point strength.

The Life Force Wizard is powerless to absorb life energy (H.P.) from supernatural or immortal creatures, such as, but not limited to, dragons, Faerie Folk, Deevils, demons, vampires, Elementals, and gods.

Pseudo-Immortality

When Life Force Wizards reach ninth level, they attain a kind of pseudo-immortality. The mage can be hurt and killed, but he will cease to age, becomes immune to all diseases, and gains incredible recuperative abilities. To kill a Life Force Wizard this advanced, one must deplete all of his S.D.C. and Hit Points and bring him to at least 60 Hit Points below zero. Then, the mage must be decapitated, and the head and body must be burned in separate fires.

If this process is not carried out entirely, the mage will regenerate similar to a vampire, and will reform entirely within 24+2D6 hours. However, he will be extremely weak, capable of only siphoning life energy from others (no spell casting) for the next 24 hours. Once the mage has gotten back up to his original Hit Points, he will regain full strength and probably seek retribution on those responsible for putting him so close to death.

Hibernation

The Life Force Wizard who is 3rd level or higher, can place himself in a hibernative slumber or stasis that can endure for two hundred years per level of experience. Those who are 9th level or higher, and effectively immortal, can remain in stasis sleep indefinitely. This stasis sleep can be performed at will for an estimated period of time (will wake up after a particular amount of time has passed, give or take 1D6x10 decades), or made so that the mage awakens as the result of some extraordi-

nary event or occurrence (i.e. the level of magic rises, a particular dimensional portal is opened, the Old Ones awaken, the planets align, etc.).

In all cases, the Life Force Wizard automatically awakens whenever his resting place is disturbed by the living, and when a lot of people congregate within 1000 feet (305 m) of his resting place for more than 1D4+2 weeks (their life energy calling to the half-starved mage).

Indeed, an unknown number of these Gromek Wizards have spent thousands of years asleep deep underground, in ruined temples and other solitary places. They are a sleeping menace preparing to be cut loose upon an unsuspecting world. Why so many have suddenly awakened now is unknown (perhaps even by them), but can only be a portent of disaster.

Other Magic Powers

In addition to Life Force Magic and related O.C.C. abilities, the Life Force Wizards can learn *Wizard spells* as they advance in their careers. However, they do NOT automatically get any spell knowledge at first level, nor when they advance to a new experience level. All spell knowledge must be taught, purchased, or picked up from scroll conversion. Given that men of magic generally look down on Life Force Wizards as perverted, evil and immoral, they usually have a tough time finding anybody willing to teach them any magic secrets. What magic they do learn is usually of the nature that it can be used to debilitate, torture and enslave. This makes spells such as Calling, Domination, Paralysis, Blind, Mute, Sickness, and similar the most attractive.

Life Force Wizards are limited to Wizard spell magic only. They cannot learn Wards, Summoning Circles, Necro-Magic, or any other form of arcana as a Life Force Wizard. They can cast Wizard spells just as a Wizard can, except the P.P.E cost of any spell cast must be paid for in an equal amount of stolen life force points (H.P.). This prevents many of these mages from using Spells of Legend and other powerful magicks. Otherwise, any Wizard spell cast by a Life Force Wizard will have the normal range, power and duration as if cast by a regular Wizard.

Life Force Wizard O.C.C.

Note: Not recommended as a player character, but is ideal as an NPC villain.

Special O.C.C. Note: Once one becomes a Life Force Wizard, he can not switch O.C.C.s. Becoming a Life Force Wizard is a corrupting, one-way process from which there is no return. If a character was some other O.C.C. before becoming a Life Force Wizard, then they can still use their old skills and abilities. All spells and abilities that require P.P.E. are subject to the special rules of a Life Force Wizard's means of obtaining, storing, and replenishing P.P.E.

Racial Restrictions: Almost all (95%) Life Force Wizards are Gromek, since they were the ancient masters (and perhaps originators) of this mystic art, and have always been extremely unwilling to share its secrets with anyone. Still, a few non-Gromek Life Force Wizards have been spotted, leading one to think that over the centuries, this magical art will slowly grow. Some Gromek Life Force Wizards have been known to hunt down and destroy non-Gromek practitioners of this art, but not before forcing them to say where they learned their secrets from.

Alignment: Selfish or evil only. Even selfish mages are likely to slip quickly into the ways of evil. One cannot live off the life energy of other beings for long and maintain a good, noble outlook. Life Force Magic is a deeply corrupting practice that taints all who practice it. G.M.s, if you allow your players to choose this O.C.C., bear this in mind, and feel free to warn your players of the dark path their characters will undertake. Ultimately, most Life Force Wizards become forces of pure evil by sixth level. At this point, any character should probably be turned into an NPC, since they are not likely to be able to function as part of a group of wandering "heroes" any more.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 10 or higher. A high P.E. is also recommended but not a requirement.

O.C.C. Skills:

Languages: Native Tongue (98%) plus two of choice (+20%) each.

Literacy: Two of choice (+15%).

Lore: Magic (+20%) plus one of choice (+15%).

Mathematics: Basic (+20%)

W.P. One of choice.

Hand to Hand: Basic can be selected at the cost of one O.C.C. Related Skill, or Expert can be selected at the cost of two. Martial Arts or Assassin are not available to this O.C.C.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select eight other skills of choice at level one, plus select one additional skill at levels three, six,

nine and twelve. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any (+5%)

Domestic: Any (+5%)

Espionage: Forgery, Escape Artist and Intelligence only (+5% for each).

Horsemanship: General or Exotic only (although many Gromek don't take this, since they can fly).

Medical: Any

Military: Military Etiquette only.

Physical: Any, except Acrobatics, Gymnastics, Boxing, and Wrestling.

Rogue: Any

Science: Any (+10%)

Weapon Proficiencies: Any, except Axes, Pole Arms and Lance.

Wilderness: Dowsing, Identify Plants and Fruits, Preserve Food and Wilderness Survival only.

Secondary Skills: The character also gets to select four Secondary Skills from the previous list at level one, and two additional skills at levels 2, 5, 8 and 13. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantage of the bonus listed in the parentheses. All Secondary Skills start at the base skill level. Also, skills are limited as previously indicated in the O.C.C. Related Skills list.

Starting Equipment: Two sets of clothing, a robe or cloak with a hood, boots, a pair of soft leather gloves, belt, bedroll, backpack, a medium to large-sized purse/satchel, two small sacks, a water skin, 3D4 sheets of parchment paper, a 100 page notebook, three crow quill pens, two bottles of ink, (each may be a different color), 1D4 sticks of graphite, 1D4 sticks of chalk, 1D4 candles, a wooden holy symbol, a small mirror, and a tinder box.

Since many Life Force Wizards reenter the world of the living after having undergone a long period of stasis, or by coming to this world from some other dimension, it might make sense that a starting or reborn Life Force Wizard has virtually no possessions. Of course, this is an optional consideration, and G.M.s should equip the character as they see fit.

Armor: Starts with soft leather (A.R. 10, S.D.C. 20). Life Force Wizards do not like heavy, confining armor, and try to avoid the added P.P.E. costs of casting spells in metal armor. Life Force Wizards in metal armor suffer from the same P.P.E. penalties as the conventional Wizard, only the added cost of the spells require additional life force points for the spell's invocation.

Moreover, most Life Force Wizards are Gromek, which have a tough natural armor anyway. Most mages of this sort feel that their tough hide, powers and combat skills should be enough to protect them.

Weapons: A knife and one additional weapon of choice. All are basic S.D.C. weapons of good quality. Magic weapons and additional items must be acquired later. Favorite weapons include knives, short swords, staves, blunt weapons, slings, and crossbows.

Money: Life Force Wizards start with 240 gold, but they often can amass large fortunes relatively quickly either in the service of a powerful lord, or by using their powers to plunder and terrorize.

Experience Points for Life Force Wizards

1: 0,000-2,100
2: 2,101-4,200
3: 4,201-8,400
4: 8,401-15,400
5: 15,401-23,400
6: 23,401-33,400
7: 33,401-48,400
8: 48,401-68,400
9: 68,401-93,400
10: 93,401-133,400
11: 133,401-173,400
12: 173,401-223,400
13: 223,401-273,400
14: 273,401-323,400
15: 323,401-373,400

Known Life Force Magic

Note: Only Life Force Wizards can cast these spells. It is believed that such spell casting abilities become powerful only after the individual undergoes some sort of physical and moral transformation as the result of a secret ceremony of initiation. Most characters of good alignment will never consider using this magic under any circumstance, anyway. Additional unknown Life Force spells may also exist, but if they do, they are few.

Control Over the Life Force of Others

Range: By touch or 10 feet (3 m) per level of experience.
Duration: 2D6 melees.
Saving Throw: Standard.
P.P.E.: 15

The Life Force Wizard can make the victim of this magic depressed, frightened, sick, sad, and so on, the same as the psionic power of Evil Eye *(bio-manipulation).* The mage can inflict any of the Bio-Manipulation attacks. Each type of affliction counts as one spell attack.

Death Mask Metamorphosis

Range: Touch
Duration: Two hours per level of experience.
Saving Throw: None.
P.P.E.: 20

The Life Force Wizard can assume the appearance of any humanoid he has recently slain (in the last 24 hours) with his own hands. This magical metamorphosis enables him to transform his entire physical body to mimic the deceased in every way; height, weight, scars, skin tone, etc. **Note:** This spell *is* also available to the Necromancer O.C.C. but at a P.P.E. cost of 70 points.

Death Touch

Range: Touch
Duration: 10 minutes per level of experience.
Saving Throw: None, but the Life Force Wizard must actually touch the victim's skin for this power to work. Thus, the power can be parried, dodged, or blocked by armor or a shield.
P.P.E: 40

When this power is activated, the Life Force Wizard gains the ability to inflict damage directly to an opponent's Hit Points

with just a mere touch. This power is active for the entire duration of the spell. While active, the power can be selectively turned on and off so the mage does not accidentally harm friends or allies.

Victims of the Death Touch lose half their current Hit Point amount per each touch and feel sick and fatigued afterwards, and are-1 to strike, parry, and dodge, all skills will be at-10%, and speed will be reduced by 25% for one hour. This power can also be used to sicken animals (reduce speed, attacks per melee round and bonuses by half) and wither plants.

Drink Life Energy

Range: The Life Force Wizard must strike the killing blow.
Duration: Eight hours.
Saving Throw: Standard for the victim.
Cost: 120 P.P.E. and a life. The slain creature must be an intelligent being; animals will not work for this magic.

This frightening magic is reminiscent of the soul drinking power of some rune weapons. The Life Force Wizard can completely absorb the life essence of the person he has just slain! The victim of such a devastating attack cannot be resurrected and his entire body turns to mist and seems to be absorbed by the mage who killed him. Like Transfer Energy to Resurrect, all unwilling victims sacrificed for this power get a final saving throw. If the victim makes the save, his life force resists being used for this ceremony, he lives, and the ceremony itself does not work. The 120 P.P.E. are spent, however, regardless if the ceremony works or not.

The Life Force Wizard gets an additional 50 Hit Points and the following bonuses, all of which last for eight hours: +4 to P.S., +10 to Spd, +4 to save vs poison, drugs, and disease, +2 to save vs psionic attacks, and +1 attack per melee.

Transfer Energy to Heal & Resurrect

Also known as: "Kill to Heal."
Range: Touch.
Duration: The results of the magic are permanent. The character resurrected by this means will feel weak (all bonuses, skills and speed are half) until Hit Points are restored to full.
Saving Throw: The sacrificial victim gets a standard saving throw.
P.P.E.: 10 and a life.

The Life Force Wizard can breathe life into a dead companion by touching the fallen character with one hand and killing another person, or large animal, with the other. He then absorbs the life energy of the slain victim, using his body like an energy conduit, to send it into the deceased to jump-start the dead person. This only works on bodies that have not been dead for more than 24 hours. Furthermore, the person sacrificed for this power gets a final saving throw vs magic; if the victim saves, then his life force resists the power of this ability, and the entire ceremony does not work. (No, victims used to power this ceremony may *not* be brought back to life so that they may be killed for this power again.) Regardless if this power works, each attempt drains the Life Force Wizard of 10 P.P.E. This strange resurrection power can only be tried three times on the same person. Failure means the person stays dead.

Success means the character's or animal's wounds are healed and he/she/it is restored to 1D4 Hit Points above zero. The restored person will feel weak and woozy (half speed and combat bonuses) for 2D6 hours, regardless of other healing magicks which may be applied to him. The usual insanity rules are also applicable. Remember, dying *is* a traumatic experience.

Note: Only anarchist and evil characters will kill one person to save another, especially if the victim is an unwilling participant. Likewise, any good or anarchist character who requests or approves of salvation at the cost of another intelligent being's life (even if the victim is evil and may deserve to die), will take one step "down" in alignment, becoming closer to diabolic. There is no saving throw against this.

Super Bio-Regeneration

Range: Touch; self or others.
Duration: Instant.
Saving Throw: None.
P.P.E.: 80

This power instantly restores 3D6x10 Hit Points.

Super Healing Touch

Range: Touch; others.
Duration: Instant.
Saving Throw: None.
P.P.E.: 20

4D6 Hit Points are instantly restored! This touch will give those in a coma a bonus of +10% to save vs coma.

Were-Shaman O.C.C.

Inspired by original ideas and text by Kevin Siembieda

Were-Shamans and their abilities are very different from most other priestly O.C.C.s. While Were-Shamans are indeed clergy, they are more priests of the land and nature, akin to druids. However, these holy folk specifically serve the animal realm, attending to the spiritual needs of beasts of all kinds. More broadly, Were-Shamans believe that all things, humanoids, dirt, trees, flowers, clouds, wind, water, and even the gods themselves are part of a larger universal structure. Every piece of this structure is interconnected, and you cannot affect one without the ripples of your action spreading out and affecting other parts of the universe as well. Such is the way of unintended consequences. Such is the way of nature.

Consequently, Were-Shamans accept all people, races, religions, and gods that do not directly oppose (or more importantly, endanger) the ways of nature. Yet, even the few people and organizations that seek to harm or destroy nature have their rightful place as predators and scavengers, as far as Were-Shamans are concerned.

While entire communities of Were-Shamans can be found in the Yin-Sloth Jungles, the Mount Nimro region, the Old Kingdom Mountains and the Great Northern Wilderness, they have no hard and fast set of religious laws or doctrine. The closest thing to "official" bylaws are the **Five Laws** held dear by all druids: The Law of Rebound, the Law of Equals, the Law of Appearances, the Law of Summoning, and the Law of Cause and Effect. Note, however, that while most Were-Shamans live by these ideals, not all do. Those who do not, tend to be selfish gluttons or destructive villains held in contempt by their fellow Were-Shamans.

More importantly, Were-Shaman communities tend to have no formal governmental structure or hierarchy, since they themselves see all creatures as both the servants of themselves (one's inner nature) and the natural world (the realm of outer nature). This usually makes it difficult for Were-Shamans to follow the laws of mankind, good or bad. That, and their general distaste for urban life encourages Were-Shamans to live in the wild or in isolation. It also encourages them to live in small groups or alone, which makes large Were-Shaman communities the exception rather than the rule. Ultimately, much of what determines how sociable a Were-Shaman is depends on his or her chosen animal totem, which shall be described below.

In general, however, Were-Shamans are seen as enigmatic holy men, bound to laws that few understand and even fewer hope to master. For these folk, it is enough simply to know their place in the natural world, fulfilling their own destinies, whatever they may be, and being true to their inner nature. As a result, Were-Shamans are concerned first and foremost with their own spiritual and personal development. While they may wish to find treasure or perform great deeds of heroism or villainy, such things can only ever be secondary goals.

O.C.C. Considerations

Alignments: As an extension of their drive toward self-development, Were-Shamans are usually (70%) of selfish alignment: unprincipled or anarchist. Of the remaining 30%, they tend to be evenly divided between good (principled and scrupulous) and evil (miscreant, aberrant and diabolic).

Spell Casting and Magic Combat: These disciplines are alien to Were-Shamans, so they can not learn or research spells, nor can they convert scrolls. Furthermore, Were-Shamans worship no god (nature is all), so they do not receive spells or spell-like powers by way of divine boon.

The Forces of Nature: Were-Shamans draw their strength from nature and the elements. They do not, however, believe the four elements are the four components of life, nor do they worship these elements, as Warlocks do. They can not speak to Elementals nor can they draw power directly from them.

Were-Shamans worship, study, and draw their powers directly from life and nature. They worship established gods, nymphs, plants, animals, and the "aura" of particular land masses, regions, or even landmarks with particular spiritual significance. Make no mistake: Were-Shamans worship all of these things equally as parts of a larger universal structure. Although they recognize the holy power of gods and goddesses, they do not worship them directly, as they feel that doing so would over-dedicate oneself to a particular fragment of the natural world rather than the whole. Doing that inevitably leads one to ignore other parts of the world, and introduces imbalance and confusion (which are to be avoided).

The Were-Shamans' unique outlook on life tends to make them friends of Faerie Folk, and most know a great deal about them. As a result, Faeries and Were-Shamans who recognize or know each other will rarely harass, molest, or bother one another. Nor will either do anything to provoke or endanger the other. This special relationship only begins, however, after a

Were-Shaman has lived in one place for several years and has gotten to know the local denizens of Faerie. Building their special relationship requires a lot of mutual goodwill, trust, and genuine friendship. Such kinship and acceptance is not earned quickly or taken lightly, so a Were-Shaman will never do anything to betray his friendship with a particular group of these magical beings. Likewise, Faerie Folk often become very protective of Were-Shamans that they have befriended, and will take terrible vengeance upon whoever harms "their" brother! This is especially true of Nymphs, Will-o-the-Wisps, Faeries, Pixies, Bogies, Grogach and Spriggans.

Finally, Were-Shamans believe in the sanctity and the power of the living earth. They will never recklessly use or abuse the land or its "children" (animals). They know how to live off the land, much like animals, grazing, foraging or hunting only what they need to live comfortably. They never hunt for sheer pleasure, and will often plant seeds and replace what they have used if it does not easily replenish itself. For example, a Were-Shaman may replant trees he or she cuts down, but if that same Were-Shaman has hunted in an area rich with game, so long as the local ecosystem isn't too badly disturbed, he or she will most likely let nature replenish herself in due time. After all, the Were-Shaman's possible role as a predator is part of the cycle of life.

Special Were-Shaman O.C.C. Abilities

1. Animal Totem: A Were-Shaman must choose an animal totem as his or her personal symbol and link to the forces of nature. The totem is a reflection of the Were-Shaman's inner nature, and is not simply a belief system to adhere to and reflect on. This is a manifestation of the Were-Shaman's very nature, a strong, driving motivation and compulsion greater than emotion or alignment.

New Were-Shaman characters pick a totem at first level. This is their primary totem and will be the main symbol by which the character will always be known. Although these nature priests may pick additional, secondary totems later in life, their primary totem remains the most important and powerful. Player characters should choose their primary totem carefully, for it will always affect how their character thinks and acts, and it can never be changed or given up. It simply *is*.

There are seven primary animal totems: Rodent, Fowl, Hoofed, Feline, Canine, Reptile, and Fish. Each totem confers special abilities and bonuses to the Were-Shaman. These abilities never change and are in addition to all other racial, O.C.C., attribute, and skill bonuses. If the Were-Shaman takes skills that mirror his totem abilities, the higher of the two success ratios applies. Thus, a character with the Rodent totem can, at first level, prowl at 57%, but if he also took the Prowl skill, then by sixth level, his learned skill will surpass his natural totem ability.

Note: Were-Shamans may pick a secondary totem at fifth, tenth and fifteenth levels. However, none of these additional totems will ever take the place of the primary one. They are simply new *aspects* of the Were-Shaman's personality that have emerged as he has grown more powerful and aware of his surroundings and the part he plays in the grand structure of the natural world.

Rodent (rats, mice, squirrels, rabbits, bats, etc.):
Scale/Climb Walls: 70%
Prowl: 57%
Nightvision 60 feet (18.3 m).
+4 to dodge
+1 on initiative; very alert.

Fowl (birds: hawks, owls, pigeons, sparrows, doves, etc.):
Peripheral vision 180 degree arc (+1 to initiative)
Nightvision 120 feet (36.6 m).
Sense of Direction 78% (+10% to Land Navigation skill).
+1 to parry
+2 to dodge.

Hoofed (horse, goat, deer, bison, bull, pig, boar, etc.):
Speed attribute (after all other bonuses are accounted for) is doubled.
Recognize breed, health and quality of hoofed animal 68%.
+6 to damage
+1 to dodge

Feline (cat: lion, tiger, panther, lynx, ocelot, etc.):
Prowl 80%
Scale/Climb Walls 76%
+2 to strike
+1 to parry and dodge
+2 to roll with punch, fall or impact
+5% skill bonus to gymnastic and/or acrobatic skills

Canine (dog, wolf, coyote, etc. Note: although bears technically are not canines, they are included in this totem for game purposes):
Identify tracks 83%
Track 79%
+4 to damage
+2 to parry and dodge
+2 to pull punch

Reptile (snakes, lizards, etc. Note: NOT dinosaurs!):
+4 to Speed attribute
+3 to dodge
Can leap 10 feet (3 m) high and 12 feet (3.6 m) across
Climb/Scale Walls 70%
Track 55%

Fish (Sailfish, sharks, etc. Note: although dolphins, porpoises and whales are not fish, for game purposes, they are included in this totem):
Swim 86%
+2 to dodge
+4 to Speed attribute
Can hold breath for one minute per each P.E. point!

2. Empathic Rapport with Animals. Were-Shamans are so attuned with the "children of nature," as they call animals, that they have developed an empathic rapport with all animals, regardless of species or contrary to the priest's own animal totems. This power has four specific applications: Empathy, Befriend, Calm, and Control.

Empathy: The character can sense the general emotions or anxiety of an individual animal or the general disposition of an animal pack, flock or herd. This means he can tell if the animal is afraid, tense, worried, angry/hostile, in physical pain, feeling sick, happy, is in love/heat and similar simple feelings. This allows the Were-Shaman to respond and react in the most appropriate manner.

Befriend enables the Were-Shaman to broadcast positive, friendly feelings to the animal(s) so that it/they will accept him as one of their own. Social animals, particularly (but not limited to) canines and herd animals, will follow the actions and desires of the pack leader. When a Were-Shaman befriends a group of such animals, he automatically becomes the herd or pack leader. This has some nice benefits. For example, by befriending a pride of lions, the Were-Shaman could enter their den without fear of attack and get the other lions to hunt for him or defend the pride.

Calm enables the character to soothe and calm animals empathically, preventing them from running, attacking, sounding alarms, whimpering or panicking. Again, social animals, such as wolves or deer, will usually regard him as the group leader.

Control enables the Were-Shaman to actually command wild animals much as one might control a pet or trained animal. Controlled animals will obey only simple commands, such as "Quiet," "Stay," "Come," "Attack," "Fetch," etc. Keep in mind that animals under this kind of control are not 100% submissive or mind controlled puppets, so they will not attack a mate or offspring, do things contrary to their nature, or commit blatantly suicidal acts.

Duration: Two minutes (8 melees) per level of experience.

Limitations: Affects only 2D4 animals per level of experience. "Befriended" animals are friendly only to the Were-Shaman. They may remain hostile to the Were-Shaman's friends or travelling companions.

Success Ratio: 30% at first level plus 5% per each additional level.

3. Summon Totem Animals: This power enables a Were-Shaman to mentally summon animals of his or her animal totem within a three mile (4.8 km) radius. There are two types of summonings: general and specific.

A general summoning reaches out to all animals that belong to the Were-Shaman's animal totem within the radius of effect.

A specific summoning will bring only one or two types of animal within the Were-Shaman's animal totem.

In either case, animals closest to the Were-Shaman will be the first to respond, so the character should consider his location before using this power, especially when issuing a general summons. For example, a Were-Shaman with the Rodent totem who uses the general power in or near a city is likely to produce a few dozen rats and mice, some bats, and perhaps a few squirrels. If the same Were-Shaman performs a general summons out in the country, it is likely to produce chipmunks, rabbits, squirrels, and maybe some muskrats, or groundhogs as well as mice and the occasional rat.

Animals summoned by this power are automatically under the Were-Shaman's control as if the *Control* form of *Empathic Rapport* has been used. They will follow simple commands, as described under the *Control* power. Likewise, they will not perform suicidal actions nor will they attack fellow totem animals.

Duration: Two minutes (8 melees) per level of experience.

Limitations: This power will call 4D6 animals from the Rodent and Fish totems, and 2D6 animals from all other totems. Summoning totem animals requires two full melee rounds of unbroken concentration and the process temporarily drains one point of physical endurance (P.E.) from the Were-Shaman whether the attempt is successful or not. This is only a temporary condition, and lost P.E. comes back 24 hours later, but if the character's P.E. is reduced in this fashion to 4 or less, the Were-Shaman runs a 01-89% chance of lapsing into a coma.

Success Ratio: 28% at first level and +4% per each additional level, for general summoning only. A specific summoning has a -10% modifier.

4. Animal Metamorphosis: One of the Were-Shaman's most awesome abilities is the power to transform into any animal of his or her totem categories. This is a complete transformation from man to animal, with all the animal's abilities (unlike the metamorphosis spells). Only the Were-Shaman's hit points, S.D.C. and I.Q. remain unchanged. All other attributes and natural abilities are those of the animal — unless the Were-Shaman is transforming into a *monstrous* version of a particular animal, which is described below. For specific game stats of dozens of various animals, refer to the **Monsters and Animals, 2nd Edition** sourcebook.

Duration: One hour per level of experience.

Success Ratio: 30% at first level and +5% per each subsequent level.

Limitations & Penalties: Were-Shamans can only attempt animal metamorphosis once every five minutes. The act of transformation itself takes only one melee round, if successful.

More importantly, the metamorphosis process is complex and dangerous, especially at lower levels. Transforming into a normal animal is dangerous enough, but transforming into a monstrous animal entails special risks. **Monstrous animals include:** Acid Lizards (reptile), Catoblepa (hoofed), Devil Diggers (reptile), Dragondactyls (fowl), Drayback (reptile), Floaters (rodent), Goron (reptile), Gruunor (insect), Gryphons (fowl), Hoppers (rodent), Land Squid (fish), Pegasus (hoofed), Rock Crawlers (reptile), Scorpion Devils (reptile), Serpent Rats (rodent), Silonars (fowl/reptile), Suckers (rodent/bat), Thorny Sun Devils (reptile), Timrek (reptile), Tree Eels (reptile) and Tuskers (hoofed).

However, a Were-Shaman's animal totem restrictions still apply. He or she can transform only into monstrous animals that fall within a chosen totem. Transforming into monstrous animals entails the risks of Temporary Reversion to Animal I.Q., Temporarily Frozen in Animal Form, and Permanently Frozen in Animal Form. The Were-Shaman must make three hazard rolls or succumbs to his animal nature.

Temporary Reversion to Animal I.Q.: When the Were-Shaman's I.Q. temporarily reverts to animal intelligence, the character forgets his true origins and becomes entirely animalistic. In this state he reverts to instinctive behavior and is likely to run away, attack friends, etc., with only *animal* instincts and intelligence for guidance. This disorientation lasts 3D6 melee rounds until the Were-Shaman's true identity resurfaces and takes command. However, the Were-Shaman will have no recall of what he did while under the spell of his animal-side. Unless the Were-Shaman finds himself in unfamiliar surroundings, he probably won't even know that he underwent intelligence reversion in the first place. Base Chance: 70%, -4% per each additional level of experience starting with 2.

Temporarily Frozen in Animal Form: When the Were-Shaman wishes to assume his true form, the character must roll to see if he has been temporarily locked in animal form. If frozen, the character will remain this way for 1D6 weeks, during which time nothing, not even a Remove Curse spell, will reverse the condition. Base Chance: 56% -4% per each additional level of experience.

Permanently Frozen in Animal Form: At the end of a Were-Shaman's 1D6 weeks of being temporarily frozen in animal form, the character must roll to see if he can revert to his true form, or if he is permanently frozen in animal form. If the character rolls successfully, he finally reverts to his true form. If the character does not roll successfully, he will slowly lose his humanoid intelligence and self-awareness in an inexorable downward spiral into animal intelligence. In this condition, the character loses one point of I.Q. per week. When the I.Q. reaches 4, the character has hit rock bottom and becomes a full animal, losing all knowledge of skills, friendships, memories of past deeds, etc. The character effectively becomes dead and is removed from game play.

The only possible salvation for such a character is for another Were-Shaman to reach the character's lost humanoid memory through a special kind of telepathic rapport unique to Were-Shamans and reserved only for this purpose. If successful, (28% chance +2% per each additional level of experience), the intervening Were-Shaman can force the frozen character to revert back into his true humanoid form. Only three such attempts may be made upon such feral characters before they are forever locked in animal form and lose all contact with their previous, humanoid selves. Mind Mages, through telepathic mind probing and manipulation, can effect the same kind of rescue attempt, but they have only a 01-15% base chance with an additional +1% per each additional level of experience.

When characters are unfrozen, they regain their lost intelligence, skills and memories, but they lose any memories they gained while in animal form.

5. Familiar Link: Like the fourth level Wizard spell, Were-Shamans automatically gain a familiar link at first level, with a normal animal of their chosen totem. This animal is their closest companion, and really is an extension of themselves. Were-Shamans will not needlessly endanger their familiars for any reason, just as any person wouldn't needlessly sacrifice part of their body or mind. If the Were-Shaman's familiar dies for any reason, he will not suffer any Hit Point or S.D.C. loss, but the character will have to wait a full year (game time) before a new familiar may be obtained. In the meantime, the Were-Shaman will be very distraught over the animal's death, and those with low M.E. (under 10) run a high risk of becoming an alcoholic or developing some kind of mental illness (depression, phobia, or obsession).

6. Were-Shamans and Weapons: Were-Shamans are not very well versed in the ways of arms, but they do tend of have some innate fighting ability, much like their animal kindred. Indeed, in some parts of the world, Were-Shamans are seen as particularly fierce warriors who use their shape-shifting abilities to assume the form of great and powerful beasts capable of driving away many enemies single-handedly. However, this is the exception rather than the rule, and most Were-Shamans are peaceable folk who do not seek out combat, but fight only in self-defense or to protect others. To do otherwise would run counter to their philosophy of balance, harmony, and the disdain for wanton destruction. When forced into combat, many Were-Shamans prefer to assume an animal form and fight using natural weapons. Otherwise, they tend to use only simple daggers or spears, with blades of stone, or staves. They typically dislike using wrought metal tools of any kind.

7. Were-Shamans and Armor: Most Were-Shamans will only wear armor made from natural materials, including padding and all types of leather armor, and even armor made from wood or bark. They will not wear armor made of processed metal. Furthermore, covering oneself in metal is confining, removes one from nature and interferes with their shapechanging abilities. Metal armor may only be worn as a disguise, with the usual encumbrance penalties: -15% to prowl, and -20% to climb/scale walls or swim in full splint or plate armor; -10% to prowl, swim, or climb in chain or scale mail, and -5% in studded leather. Most prefer to wear soft or hard leather, or magic armor made of cloth or leather.

Were-Shaman O.C.C.

Also known as the Animal or Totem Druid.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 9 and P.E. 12. A high M.E. desirable, but not mandatory.

Alignment Limitations: About 50% of all Were-Shamans fall into one of the selfish alignments — unprincipled or anarchist. Of the remaining 50%, about half fall into good alignments (principled and scrupulous) and the other half fall into evil alignments (miscreant, aberrant, and diabolic). In general, though, Were-Shamans are more concerned with their personal development than committing selfless acts of good or evil.

O.C.C. Skills:

Animal Husbandry (+20%)
Anthropology (+15%)
Astronomy and Navigation (+15%)
Botany (+20%)
History (+20%)
Land Navigation (+15%)
Languages: Native Tongue at 98% plus two of choice (+20% each)
Lore: Faerie Folk (+20%) plus one of choice (+10%)
Wilderness Survival (+20%)
W.P. Staff
Hand to Hand: Basic. This may be upgraded to Hand to Hand: Expert at the cost of two O.C.C. Related skills or to Martial Arts at the cost of three skills. Hand to Hand: Assassin is not available to this O.C.C., regardless of alignment.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select a total of six other skills at level one. Select two additional skills at levels three, six, nine, and twelve. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: None
Domestic: Any (+10%)
Espionage: Detect Ambush, Detect Concealment, and Intelligence only.
Horsemanship: General or Exotic only, unless the Hoofed totem is chosen, in which case Horsemanship: Knight is available at the cost of one skill selection, and Horsemanship: Paladin is available at the cost of two skill selections.
Medical: Any (+15%)
Military: Camouflage and Falconry only (+15% each).

Physical: Any except Acrobatics and Boxing.
Rogue: Recognize and Use Poison only (+10%).
Science: Any (+10%)
Scholar/Technical: Any (+10%)
Weapon Proficiencies: Any, except W.P. Siege Weapons, Targeting, Axes, Pole Arms, and Lance.
Wilderness: Any (+15%)

Secondary Skills: The character also may select four Secondary Skills from the previous list at level one, and two additional skills at levels two, five, seven, ten and thirteen. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the bonuses listed in the O.C.C. Related Skills section. All Secondary Skills start at the base skill level, and choices are limited to the restrictions outlined in the O.C.C. Related Skills table.

Starting Equipment: A set of traveling clothes, a traveling robe with hood, boots or moccasins, a pair of soft leather gloves, belt, backpack, a medium to large-sized purse or satchel, four small sacks, a water skin, eight wooden stakes, a small mallet, 30 feet (9 m) of rope, a small mirror, and a tinder box.

Armor: Starts with soft leather (A.R. 10, S.D.C. 20). When the Were-Shaman transforms into an animal form, this armor has been specially designed to fall away without breaking apart or constraining the Were-Shaman, even if he or she is changing to a large animal, such as a bear or a horse.

Weapons: Were-Shamans dislike weapons made of processed metal compounds and avoid using them unless under the most extreme circumstances. As a rule, they use weapons of wood, bone, or stone, if they use them at all (many prefer to fight in animal form). Staves, spears, clubs, hammers, cudgels, slings, and bow weapons are among the preferred armaments of Were-Shamans. Even knives and short swords may be used, if they have blades of chipped or chiseled stone, animal teeth or sharpened wood or bone.

Were-Shamans start with a stone dagger (1D6) and one additional weapon of choice. All are basic S.D.C. weapons of good quality. Magic weapons and items must be acquired later. Despite their aversion to metal, most Were-Shamans will use holy or rune weapons made of iron or steel, although a wooden, stone, or flaming magic weapon would be much preferred.

Money: Starts with 120 gold. Additional money will come from payment for services rendered and/or the acquisition of booty. However, most Were-Shamans prefer to live off the land and have little need or desire for vast wealth or property such as a house or land. To Were-Shamans, the notion of owning land is fairly silly, since nature observes no such boundaries. When Were-Shamans do manage to obtain a little coinage, they tend to spend it on things that ultimately help nurture and care for the natural world. Establishing conservatories and living gardens are some of the more common displays of wealth by well-to-do Were-Shamans. However, some Were-Shamans do like to collect gems, jewelry, gold, and silver in order to appreciate their beauty as natural objects. Those ignorant of the Were-Shamans' ways might think that these folk like to hoard wealth, but that is not true. Some just like to collect precious things with no intention of spending them, nor even much appreciation of their worth in terms of commerce and "civilized" notions of wealth.

Experience Points for Were-Shamans

1: 0,000-1,860
2: 1,861-3,720
3: 3,721-7,440
4: 7,441-14,880
5: 14,881-23,880
6: 23,881-34,880
7: 34,881-48,880
8: 48,881-68,880
9: 68,881-92,880
10: 92,881-124,880
11: 124,881-166,880
12: 166,881-212,880
13: 212,881-272,800
14: 272,801-324,880
15: 324,881-384,880

The Nimro Kingdom

Like any other part of the world, there are power blocs that control Mount Nimro. Although this region has few major cities or urbanized areas to speak of, that does not mean there aren't power structures and governments in place. This whole region is a bit like the American Wild West — there is a binding authority far away, but for the most part, the laws of the land are left to the leader of each community to enforce. That means while there are overlords and clan leaders, their reach does not extend everywhere, but is limited to small settlements. Thus, it is possible for the courageous and wily to live here without bowing to any one lord or king. To do so, however, requires a mix of brains, brawn, and more than a healthy dose of good fortune.

For those not so lucky or adventurous, there are three basic power blocs in the Mount Nimro Region to contend with: *The Nimro Kingdom,* the *Gromek Army,* and the *Peripheral Folk.* Of these, the Nimro Kingdom is, far and away, the largest and most powerful, laying "claim" to all of Mount Nimro, substantial portions of the Baalgor Wastelands, much of the surrounding mountains, and a thin edge of territory of the Old Kingdom (with plans to expand in the near future). However, they only truly control the 150-200 miles (240-320 km) around the twin volcanoes.

Ruling this nascent country of Giants is Sunder Blackrock, a brilliant military leader and warlord. He is a Nimro Giant, the largest single racial group of True Giants within the Nimro Kingdom. All told, the **Nimro Kingdom** consists of 19 tribes of Giants and their allies: six Nimro tribes, five Jotan tribes, three Gigante tribes, and a single tribe each for Algor, Cyclops, Titans, Rahu-Men, and "Shorties" — the assorted Trolls, Ogres, Orcs, Kobolds and Goblins who have decided to cast their lot with the Kingdom of Giants. The only group in the Mount Nimro Region openly challenging those claims is the **Gromek**

Army, the **region's** second largest and strongest power bloc. As fearsome as these Gromek are, even they cannot match the raw destructive power of the **Nimro** Kingdom (for now, anyway), and barring an extraordinary catastrophe befalling Warlord Sunder **Blackrock** and his chieftains, it remains unlikely that the Gromek will dislodge the Nimro Kingdom from its seat of power any time soon. The Gromek Army has no permanent control anywhere in the Mount Nimro Region and remains a roving mass of outlaws and brigands, waging a never-ending guerilla war against the Kingdom of Giants. The Army strikes towns and villages seemingly at **random,** only to disappear into the surrounding mountains for weeks before attacking again. Their main power base is the northeastern Baalgor **Mountains,** but even that is being challenged by the giants of *Gurthasi Tor* (see **The Baalgor Wastelands sourcebook** for details).

The Peripheral Folk are largely spillovers from the surrounding regions of the Baalgor Wastelands, the Yin-Sloth Jungles, the Old Kingdom, and the Land of the South Winds. The Peripheral Folk also includes those loners, rebels and outsiders who for some reason, distance themselves from the Nimro Kingdom. A good deal of these are Giant malcontents who dislike Sunder **Blackrock's** confining laws and duties, so to escape them, they have left the inner kingdom for the hinterlands of this region, where they hope **Blackrock's** soldiers and scouts will not bother them. Independent humans and other hated races identified as the "Fair Folk," are also counted among these peoples, mostly small bands of nomads, farmers, mercenaries, outlaws and adventurers. Unallied **Orcs,** Goblins, **Eandroth** and other members of the Monster Races comprise the rest of these people. The Peripheral Folk have no unifying structure between them, and they are grouped together only by a common status, nothing more. They do not really control any part of the region permanently, they just live where Sunder **Blackrock's** authority is at its weakest, and they pose no serious threat to the Nimro Kingdom.

Outside of Mount Nimro, the only nation that in any way acknowledges the existence of the Nimro Kingdom is the **Orcish Empire of the Yin-Sloth Jungles.** Beyond that, no human nation even knows about the Nimro Kingdom (the Western Empire and Land of the South Winds suspect it exists, but neither has confirmed it, nor has any desire to do so), much less acknowledges its sovereign claims. That is fine by the Giants. All they are really interested in, for now, is establishing an independent territory where they can live free without hordes of humans harassing them. To that end, the Nimro Kingdom has already accomplished that, so gaining the recognition of the human world is a very low priority to the Giants. If anything, gaining human attention will only encourage them to attack Mount Nimro, rather than try to establish formal relations with it, so most Giants hope that the Nimro Kingdom stays anonymous forever. However, with the Kingdom's phenomenal growth, war with the Gromek, and pending expansion into the Baalgor Wastelands and the Old Kingdom, such hopes are the dreams of fools.

Population Breakdown of the Nimro Kingdom

Total Population (Approximately): 223,150
Nimro: 53,000
Jotan: 35,000
Gigantes: 20,000
Cyclops: 1,500
Algor: 300
Rahu-Men: 130
Titans: 120
Trolls: 10,000
Ogres: 20,000
Orcs: 40,000
Kobolds: 15,000
Goblins and Hob-Goblins: 27,000
Humans (mostly slaves or food stock): 500
Others (Eandroth, Gosai, Dragonmen, D'ogres, etc.): 600

Note: Over the last decade, the population of the Nimro Kingdom has been growing by about 5% each year. That means that within the next 20 years, the Nimro Kingdom of Giants will more than double its current population! The majority (70%) of these new people will be non-Giants, both from those born within Mount Nimro and from the ever-increasing numbers of immigrant monster races turning to the Giants for leadership and entering the Kingdom each year.

Quite simply, the Nimro Kingdom is a nation by Giants, for Giants. It is the largest collection of True Giants (Nimro, Jotan, Cyclops, Algor, Gigantes, Titans, and Rahu-Men) in the world, and is the only place where they are welcome and encouraged to visit or stay. The only place in the world similar to this is the infamous Isle **of the Cyclops** (see *Adventures on the High Seas* sourcebook), but the number of True Giants living in the Nimro Kingdom dwarfs the number living in the Isle of the Cyclops.

Nimro Giants

The legendary Fire Giants of the south, the Nimro have lived, warred, and ruled in this region for as long as anyone can remember. Indeed, Mount Nimrod and Mount Nimro are both named after these Giants because the volcanoes are their ancestral homes, and because they are like geological testaments to the Giants after which they are named. Modern-day Nimro take this allegory very seriously — "Like a slumbering volcano waiting to burst forth with an earth-shaking eruption, so too will the Nimro Kingdom (and all Giantkind) explode from its long slumber, making the world tremble with its might."

Like so many other Giants, the Nimro detest humans, Elves and Dwarves, largely because Nimro themselves tend to be evil and angry creatures who hate any folk fairer than they. However, the Nimro have a legitimate grievance as well. As did the Algor and Titans, the Nimro suffered terribly during the Elf-Dwarf War, only to be hounded afterwards by humans from the Western Empire, the Timiro **Kingdom,** and even from the Eastern Territory. True, in most cases, the Nimro deserved what was coming to them since they have a long and well-documented legacy of murder, pillaging, and other mayhem. But such details are lost on the Nimro, who prefer to see themselves as the unjustly oppressed victims of the cruel and heartless small folk who now rule the world.

For centuries, the Nimro yearned to create their own kingdom, where they could marshal the strength of their fellow Gi-

ants and rule as they saw fit. A kingdom powerful enough to dictate terms of diplomacy to the other nations of the world. Indeed, many Nimro saw themselves capable of building a powerful nation like the Isle of the Cyclops, which is a respected and mysterious power in its own right. With the arrival of the Gromek and the numerous wars since then, those dreams had been dashed as the Giants of Mount Nimro either slaved under a Gromek yoke, warred amongst themselves, or wandered the world as a scattered, broken people in search of their destiny.

Such is the case no longer! With the rise of Sunder Blackrock, who unified the warring Nimro tribes in the volcanic region, then unified the rest of the region, and then kicked the Gromek out of Mount Nimro altogether, the Nimro have seen themselves catapulted back into power. Being clever schemers, good strategists, and perceptive organizers, they have crafted a working Kingdom that has grown in power and scope ever since its inception. The Nimro have quelled the clan disputes and tribal wars that have kept the Giants fractured for so long, and they have even begun preliminary diplomatic relations with the Orcish Empire in the South.

For the Nimro, ruling others comes naturally, more out of their desire to control and manipulate people than any innate leadership ability. The Fire Giants like to play favorites and enjoy pitting their rivals and enemies against each other, much as Western nobles do. But, Sunder Blackrock has clamped down on this kind of activity. To him, that sort of behavior only sows the seeds of discord in all too fertile ground.

In the place of toying with the other people of the Nimro Kingdom, then, the Fire Giants have simply taken to outright snobbery and have practically elevated it to both a sport and an art form. The Nimro consider themselves to be higher than any other group of people in the Kingdom of Giants, largely on the basis that it was they who founded the kingdom, they who orchestrated the alliance that defeated the Gromek, and they who have kept the Kingdom growing to this day. Never mind that most Nimro alive today were not even alive when the Nimro Kingdom was founded, or even in the war that banished the Gromek. To them, simply being a Nimro is to inherit their bragging rights, something they constantly remind their fellow Giants and non-Giants of.

Other Giants, especially Titans, Jotan and Cyclops, find such snobbery infuriating. The Jotan fought just as hard, probably harder, than the Nimro when the Gromek were driven into the mountains. And every Jotan knows that in a one-on-one brawl with a Nimro, the Jotan will usually win. The Cyclops find the Nimro's haughtiness laughable, for to their refined and cultured tastes, the Nimro are merely a bunch of brutal, country bumpkins who have bludgeoned their way into power, but have shown absolutely no "style" in managing that power. The Titans see them as just another bunch of despots as eager to abuse their power as the Gromek were.

Making matters worse, Nimro hold all high-ranking command and administrative positions in the Kingdom, which gives them even more leeway to lord their authority over other people in the Kingdom. Most Nimro don't carry out the backbreaking manual labor that keeps the Kingdom going, and many are automatically given officer status in the military, despite how much more experience and skill some of their non-Nimro underlings might have over them.

What keeps this from becoming a situation of potential rebellion is that the Nimro really are excellent administrators and organizers, so the other Giants recognize that the Fire Giants are, in most cases, the best qualified people for the positions they hold. More importantly, aside from their obnoxious snobbery, Nimro really do not treat their fellow Giants badly. In fact, True Giants and even capable Shorties enjoy more freedom, position and respect than they could find most anywhere else in the world. It's just that the Nimro are not very graceful about their privileged status, being the epitome of the "sore winner." Meaning, as long as the Nimro hold the reins of power in this Kingdom, the other Giants must suffer under their arrogant, self-congratulatory behavior. Perhaps one day, if the Kingdom becomes a truly fruitful and secure nation, the Nimro will drift into becoming a detached, elite class of nobles. If this were to happen, then a definite schism might appear between them and all the Giants who helped them into their seat of power. For now, though, no such divide threatens the Nimro Kingdom. Still, depending on who one talks to, a rift between the Giants seems inevitable, thanks to the Fire Giants' arrogant pride.

Jotan

Also known as the Earth Giants, Jotan are the largest and most powerful True Giants of the Palladium World. Like Dwarves, these fierce warriors have an aptitude for mechanical engineering and working with metal and stone. In the Nimro Kingdom, they are most often employed to mine metal, quarry rock, create weapons and armor, or help build houses and other stone buildings, such as towers, fortresses and strongholds.

In particular, Jotan are revered weaponsmiths and armorers, second only in quality to the Dwarves and easily the equal of Kobolds. This makes Jotan smiths extremely useful to the Nimro Kingdom, which always needs more weapons, armor and housing thanks to the constant stream of immigrants and the ongoing Gromek war.

The fine weapons the Jotan produce have gone an especially long way in serving the Nimro Kingdom, not just because they help Giant soldiers win battles, but because there is something about a really well made weapon that resonates with the Giant psyche. As any Giant will tell you, there is just something about holding a superior Jotan weapon that raises morale and gives one the strength to continue fighting even when things look bleak. Indeed, numerous Gromek prisoners have noted that it seems the Giants' love for their Jotan weapons gives them a confidence in battle that they otherwise would not have. Most likely, this love of fine weapons goes hand in hand with the rise of the *Church of the Blade,* which has become incredibly popular in the last few years.

Jotan stonesmiths have also won everyone's respect in the Kingdom for their ability to build, from scratch, large stone houses and barracks in a matter of days. Their work also graces *the many defensive* walls *and freshly laid roads crisscrossing the* kingdom. The ancient *Gondajar Road* leading from mount Nimrod to the Baalgor Wastelands is considered to be the work of ancient Jotan stonesmiths.

Jotan are not the brightest of Giants, and they actually prefer to lead lives of hard manual labor and dangerous hand to hand combat. When not building things, they are at the front-lines of military units, patrolling the borders of the region and actively looking for any enemies to cross swords with. Jotans work hard and play even harder, and the more banged up and bruised they (and whoever else) gets in doing so, the better! In fact, it's really hard to say which is work and which is play to a Jotan. To some people, a lifetime of splitting stones would be torture, but to a Jotan, it's a fulfilling and happy life.

To write off these Giants as angry folk who have been wrongly downtrodden by smaller humanoids is to whitewash who and what these villains really are. In truth, although Jotan have been somewhat unfairly persecuted by smaller folk, they also are savage, vicious monsters who constantly lash out at most non-Giant races, including Trolls, Ogres, Orcs and Goblins. The Jotan are extremely aggressive and war-like. They are bitter towrad affronts against ttveii people fey humans, Elves, Dwarves, and other Fair Folk (as well-deserved as those affronts may have been, given the Jotans' cruel and vicious nature). As a result, the Jotan focus most of their ire on these people in a perpetual and self-fulfilling quest for vengeance (In other lands, Jotan bandits commit some crime that causes smaller humanoids to hunt them down, so the Giants get even with them by committing more atrocities against the small folk which prompts further Giant hunts, etc., etc.).

Outside of the Nimro Kingdom, Earth Giants are found leading bands of brigands and thieves, or even small armies of Orcs and Goblins. When working for the Nimro Kingdom, Jotan who are not put to work in the mines, rock quarries, stone masonries

or "smithies" or "forges" typically serve as the taskmasters and foremen for work crews of smaller humanoids such as Trolls, Ogres, Orcs and Goblins, as well as drill Sergeants and Squad Leaders. The cruel and angry nature of the Jotan makes them especially well suited at those tasks, since they have no problem whipping their workers into line or beating them savagely to make them work harder. As cruel and vicious as these methods may be, they have worked very well for the Nimro kingdom, to whom small folk are expendable. That, and giving Jotan such a means of venting their spleens in a *constructive* way, makes sure that they don't pick fights with their fellows and disrupt life any more than they have to.

Given the Jotan's violent record of behavior, it is easy to see why they have so many enemies around the world. While Jotan are among friends in the Nimro Kingdom, their violent behavior also makes them somewhat unpopular. After all, these Giants are prone to begin fistfights and hurl rocks at anybody who annoys them in the slightest, a behavior that is hard to appreciate even under the best of circumstances.

Despite their generally rowdy and disruptive demeanor, though, Jotan are some of the most appreciated people in the Nimro Kingdom. Everybody knows that were it not for the hard work of the Earth Giants on the battlefields and in the metal shops, rock quarries and mines, it is doubtful that the Kingdom would exist today. As a result, the Nimro ruling this land often go easy on their Jotan cousins when they start trouble (That, and any crackdown on the Jotan would certainly lead to a very ugly rebellion, since their disdain for authority is as infamous as their short fuses). Likewise, anyone victimized by a bullying Jotan will usually let it slide, at least the first few times, although this might be due to the smaller humanoids' reluctance to challenge any Jotan to a duel more than any sense of forgiveness or tolerance.

The bottom line is that for the Nimro Kingdom's subjects, dealing with the dark nature of the Jotan is just the price one must pay to live in a society that also benefits from them so much. True, many Shorties (and even some Giants) resent the Jotan, but their contribution to the Nimro Kingdom is unquestionable, and as long as that remains the case, the Jotan will have their run of the realm.

Gigantes

Perhaps the most feared and bizarre of all Palladium Giants are the Gigantes. They are mutants plagued by an unstable and ever-changing genetic structure that is responsible for them having both a host of wild powers and abilities and a legion of crippling deformities and insanities.

The Gigantes are ignorant, aggressive misanthropes with a legendary lust for bloodletting. Although a Gigantes' diet consists of anything it can catch, kill and eat (including most humanoids and even weaker Giants and other Gigantes), these monsters also love to kill for the sake of killing. So, while humans and Elves are their primary victims, pretty much anybody is fair game.

Most Gigantes are wild, daring, and merciless fighters bound to an innate drive towards hostility, aggressiveness and cruelty. They often fly into berserker rages that result in the wholesale slaughter of any enemy they face, regardless if they have surrendered or not. For this reason, Gigante fighters are the only members of the Nimro Kingdom that the Gromek seriously fear. It is said that any Gromek would rather face three Jotan than any one Gigante. Indeed, while Gigantes normally have a Horror Factor of 13, their H.F. bumps up two points towards any Gromek who lays eyes upon them.

Gigantes' barbarism has made them the archenemies of Titans and Rahu-Men, even to the point that the evil, renegade Titans and Rahu-Men who live in the Nimro Kingdom will have nothing to do with these mutants. Other Giants and non-Giants also fear the Gigantes, and typically give them a wide berth. These monsters work best with other True Giants: Nimro because they can intimidate Gigantes into behaving, Jotan because most can beat a Gigante into behaving, and Cyclops because they can always find somebody else to beat the Gigantes into *behaving or zap them with bolts of lightning.*

Like the Jotan, however, Gigantes possess certain abilities and can perform certain tasks which make them a valuable addition to the Nimro Kingdom. Their utter fearlessness and fighting ability make them excellent shocktroopers, especially when fighting against Gromek, dragons and monsters. A favorite tactic is to send small groups of Gigantes into the surrounding mountains and telling them not to return until they have each collected five Gromek skulls. Not only does this keep the more troublesome Gigantes out of everybody's way, but it invariably takes care of a number of Gromek, too. The famed *Raid of Barzarog* is one such example, where a group of twenty Gigantes were sent to scout a Gromek war camp in the Baalgor Wastelands and ended up destroying it, collecting over 250 Gromek scalps!

Gigantes are also favorite contestants in the numerous arenas and fighting pits of the Nimro Kingdom. Gigante gladiators are the equivalent of professional athlete-celebrities among the Giants. Seeing Gigantes tear each other apart under the somewhat controlled circumstances of professional bloodsports helps keep the mutants in line and boosts the morale of everybody in the Nimro Kingdom.

And finally, Gigantes also work well as the enforcers of the Kingdom of Giants. Whenever a law has been broken or there is a rebellion to be quelled, the Gigantes (led by Jotan) are called in to take care of it. Likewise, to commit a crime against the realm means, chances are, one will eventually face Gigante enforcers to receive punishment. Not surprisingly, the use of Gigantes as a brutal but effective form of law enforcement has led to very low incidences of serious crime and rebellion in the Nimro Kingdom.

The key to managing these monsters is keeping them split up. Alone, a Gigante is troublesome and dangerous, but when they gather together in groups larger than four, they become a walking hurricane of mayhem. Technically, the Nimro Kingdom has outlawed Gigantes from gathering in groups of more than three, an offense punishable by death. A more efficient means of control, however, is for Gigantes to be held to extremely strict codes of behavior. Gigantes who step out of line are typically taken into custody by a large and heavily armed group of Jotan enforcers, taken out of sight and executed like rabid dogs. This is one of the best known secrets of the Kingdom of Giants — when a Gigante disappears, it is because he got himself into trouble. The permanent kind.

The other means of controlling Gigantes is not letting them outside of any town or city in the Nimro Kingdom unless accompanied by a few soldiers or a strong leader. It's well known that as soon as a Gigante gets out into the open, he is tempted to give in to his murderous urges and begin starting a ruckus. As a result, any agitated Gigantes without an escort or squad leader who are found more than a mile (1.6 km) outside of any town or village are considered rebels or bandits, and are killed on the spot. This policy is pretty hard to enforce, however, since it doesn't differentiate between rogue Gigantes and those entering the realm for the first time to join the Kingdom. Most soldiers give a Gigante the benefit of the doubt unless he is a repeat offender or obviously insane with bloodlust. Gigantes are freakish looking and easy to recognize and remember, so the mutant isn't likely to pull the "But it's my first time here!" trick more than once or twice (especially if he's been rampaging across the countryside).

Most of the Gigantes of the Nimro Kingdom were living in the Mount Nimro region when the nation was formed and joined the Kingdom voluntarily. Those who did not were pressed into service or enslaved after they attacked a subject of the Giant crown. Despite the large number of these mutant Giants here, there are many more just over the mountains, in the Yin-Sloth Jungles. A quarter million are estimated to live in the jungles. Many of these individuals live almost animal-like existences, adhering to no laws or culture, just living in the wild, eating to survive, and killing for pleasure. Those jungle Gigantes who do band together form very small tribes that generally don't last for very long because these monsters are simply too vicious, unorganized and insane to establish any lasting social structure of their own. They prefer lawlessness and anarchy, and for that reason, very few of them have the urge to join the Nimro Kingdom, where very severe and limiting laws will be placed on them from Day One. This also means desertion among Gigantes is high at 20%, although they are just as likely to simply forget to come home and wander off to hunt the enemy.

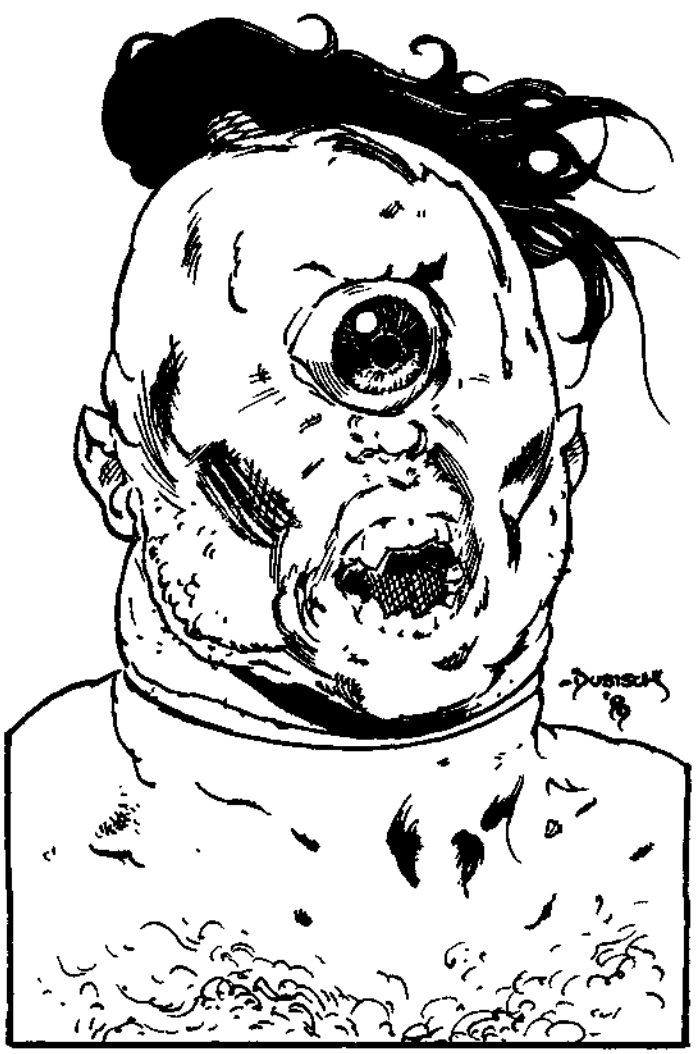
Still, Gigantes are not known for their brainpower or their sanity, so every once in a while, Mount Nimro border patrols see droves of Gigantes coming down off the mountains, wanting to join the Nimro Kingdom. Most come to join the fight against the Gromek or because they believe they will get the chance to fight Fair Folk, or just because the whim struck them. These freaks are never turned away, of course, but they are watched very closely, for as any other Giant will tell you, Gigantes are best when they are in front of you and pointed toward the enemy. Otherwise, they are likely to try to bite your leg off, bum your house down, or pour a gallon of poison into the local water reservoir.

Cyclops

Also known as the "Lords of Lightning," the Cyclops are said to have walked the earth since the time of the Old Ones, when the Palladium World was very young, and wild, uncontrollable magicks surged throughout the planet. If this is true, then these one-eyed Giants are one of the very few surviving races from that dark and turbulent time (the others being dragons, Elves, Changelings and Titans).

In addition to their great strength and intelligence, Cyclops are the sole possessors of the mystic knowledge to create javelins and arrows of pure lightning, a magical art said to have been created during the Time of a Thousand Magicks. Although other races *may* have known the secrets of lightning magic long ago, today, only the Cyclops know this art, and they will not teach it to anybody for any reason. All that is known of lightning magic is that these powerful weapons are the product of ground dragon bone, demon blood, and numerous bizarre magical rituals. Many scholars believe that the process of creating these weapons draws directly on the power of the Old Ones themselves, but such claims, plausible as they may be, have never been proven. One of the reasons why this process has been kept so secret, it is whispered, is because any non-Cyclops who somehow learns the details of this process and uses it to create lightning weapons, is visited by 2D6 greater demons within 24 hours who will seize the weapons, torture their creator (usually removing his tongue and hands), and will either kill the creator or leave him or her alive as a reminder to all other would-be lightning makers that this is the province of the Cyclops only. All trespassers into this realm of magic will suffer like consequences!

How the Cyclops came by this knowledge is unknown, as is the pact they have with the infernal forces who enforce the Cyclops' monopoly on lightning magic. All that really matters is that the Cyclops indeed are the lords of lightning, a position they routinely use to earn great power and fortune for themselves. This legacy of privilege has made the Cyclops surprisingly civilized and cultured, despite their tendency to be cruel and vicious to smaller and weaker beings.



When entering battle, Cyclops prefer to use their own lightning weapons, although they love rune weapons, magic armor, and enchanted items of all kinds. Most tend to be self-serving and greedy, coveting vast power and prestige, if not outright power.

Indeed, greed and selfishness are what have brought some 90% of the Cyclops to Mount Nimro. Eons ago, the Cyclops founded an island kingdom for themselves off the western coast of the Western Empire. This kingdom, known as the Isle of the Cyclops, has enjoyed very lucrative trading agreements with the Western Empire for millennia. It has also made incredible amounts of money selling lightning weaponry to anyone who comes to their island's trade port, where the price for a single lightning weapon typically depends on what one is willing to pay for it. For all of its history, the Isle of the Cyclops has known incredible wealth, power, and luxury, having never been seriously invaded or attacked by any outside power.

However, such power always breeds greedy and ambitious individuals who will crave all of that power for themselves. And so, nearly 40 years ago, the inevitable occurred. A group of Cyclops nobles, along with a contingent of soldiers, mercenaries, wizards, and lightning-makers, led a short-lived coup on the Isle, seizing control for themselves for a month or two before the ruling family regrouped and ousted these usurpers from the throne. Most of the rebels were captured and slaughtered, but a small number of them managed to teleport themselves to Mount Nimro, where they sought refuge from the fledgling Nimro Kingdom. The Nimro Kingdom took them in on the sole condition that the Cyclops produce lightning weaponry on demand for them alone. The renegade Cyclops agreed, and now, most of these renegades from the Isle of the Cyclops produce large quantities of lightning weaponry for the Nimro Kingdom's military.

Otherwise, the Cyclops of the Nimro Kingdom have no formal responsibilities, so they tend to live an easier life than most others. The Isle of the Cyclops has unsuccessfully demanded the return of these renegades, but they know that will never happen. The Nimro Kingdom needs these lightning makers too much, and the Isle of the Cyclops does not want them back so badly that they are willing to make trouble with the Nimro Kingdom over it.(Unfortunately for Sunder Blackrock, though, this has iced over relations between his country and the Isle of the Cyclops, which won't help the Nimro Kingdom much if ever the Western Empire comes looking to pick a fight.)

So, these renegade Cyclops live in exile under the flames and smoke of the twin volcanoes, cranking out lightning weapons day after day, living out their lives as refugees — prisoners in a gilded cage. While these Mount Nimro Cyclops are given a lot of leeway by Sunder Blackrock, they also know that the moment they stop making lightning weapons for the Nimro Kingdom, they will find themselves shipped off to the Isle of the Cyclops to meet their fate.

This does not seriously trouble the Mount Nimro Cyclops, who realize that they all could be facing far worse fates. And, aside from the hard work of producing lightning weapons, these Giants live a life of comparative luxury and safety, since Kingdom law prohibits them from active military service unless the country is in serious trouble. Likewise, Kingdom laws make it very clear that any crime committed against a Cyclops will be dealt with most severely, which offers security not even the Giants on the Isle of the Cyclops can brag about.

In addition to the Isle refugees there are a few dozen unrelated and independent rogue Cyclops; mainly adventurers and outlaws looking for opportunities. Some of these enjoy the luxury and prestige that come with making lightning weapons, but others serve as military advisors, company leaders and special operatives.

Algor

Also known as "Frost Giants" or the "Northern Giants," the Algor are a fading race found almost exclusively in the Northern Wilderness, mostly in the Algor Mountains bearing their name.

The Frost Giants are extremely hostile towards Elves and Dwarves because it was their involvement in the Elf-Dwarf War that led to the obliteration of three-quarters of the Algor race. The Algors had sided with the Elves, and so felt the full weight of the Dwarven Empire's wrath during the fiercest fighting of the war. But, when the Algor came to the Elves for help, their haughty allies left them to fend for themselves. The Algor see themselves as just another race of pawns tricked into service in this terrible conflict. In truth, the Elves valued the Algor second only to the Titans, but the Elven Empire had collapsed to the point that they could not help themselves let alone their giant allies, even if they wanted to. And they did "want" to help. Thus, it is another grim irony of the Great War that the Algor hate their once stout allies and Elves can only hang their heads in failure and shame.

In the 7,000 years since the end of the Elf-Dwarf War, the Algor have worked tirelessly to undermine and destroy Elves and Dwarves everywhere. This vendetta has extended to humans because of mankind's strong alliance with both Elves and Dwarves. So goes the Algor saying: "Whoever shares their table with my enemy shall share their fate, too." This view was bolstered as the horrified Algor watched young human nations such as the Western Empire hunt down other Giants and slaughter them without mercy, much as the Dwarves had done to them during the Elf-Dwarf War.

As a result, the Algor will support almost any power that opposes humanity and its allies. In the Northern Wilderness, this means the Algor have become friends and allies to the Wolfen Empire. This comes as no surprise, since the Wolfen used to worship the Algor in eons past. Even though those days of worship are long gone, Wolfen still hold Algor in high regard, and a few Frost Giants hold positions of power in Wolfen cities. That the Wolfen also seek the counsel of Elves rankles the Algor to no end, but somehow, they are able to look past it. The Algor are just as supportive of the Nimro Kingdom, which they see as a fine example of the downtrodden Big Folk of this world banding together to resist the cruelty of humans, Elves and Dwarves.

Be that as it may, the majority of Northern Algor have politely refused the Nimro Kingdom's open invitation to join them, for a variety of reasons. First and foremost, the Algor have no easy way of getting from the Northern Wilderness to Mount Nimro. They fear, and quite justly so, that if they attempt

such a long migration, many of them will perish, what with all the humans, Elves and Dwarves they would encounter along the way. True, there are masters of magic among the Algor who could -open a mystic portal to transport the Frost Giants to Mount Nimro, but many of these elder mages have no interest in doing so, for reasons they care not to discuss. Presumably, they don't want to abandon their homeland and forfeit one of the last places where Algor roam free and independent. They may not rule a "kingdom" but the many Algor clans and villages of the north are free and autonomous.

Secondly, Mount Nimro is far too hot and humid for the Frost Giants' tastes. Any Algor living under the conditions of Mount Nimro would not be comfortable. There are a few snow-capped mountains along the border of the Yin-Sloth Jungles and Baalgor Wastelands where Algor could live comfortably, but they prefer the openness of the frozen northlands. Furthermore, if Mount Nimro ever fell into enemy hands, it would be all too easy to find where the Algor were living and slaughter them.

To the Nimro Kingdom of Giants, these reasons are good enough, so they are unaware that the Algor have a third reason for not joining the Nimro Kingdom: they do not trust it. The Algor got burned once before when they joined with the Elves, so long ago. Now, the Algor see the Nimro Kingdom on an inevitable crash course with the human nations, and they fear if they join with Sunder Blackrock, they will only be sent out to fight in another lost cause that will finish the extermination of the Algor begun in the Elf-Dwarf War.

Still, Sunder Blackrock has always felt that at least a token presence of Algor in his kingdom would help it immeasurably, for the Algor are well known to be skilled warriors, cunning strategists, and adept in the ways of magic. Indeed, a small number of Algor have carried on the ways of *Conjuring*, an ancient, lost form of magic pioneered by the Elves during the Time of a Thousand Magicks, which has since been all but lost to modern practitioners of the arcane arts. Twenty-five years ago, King Blackrock sent the message to the Algor of the Northern Wilderness that he would be opening up a magic portal that would whisk them instantly from the Algor Mountains to a snowy peak in the southern tail of the Baalgor Mountains, overlooking both Mount Nimro and the Yin-Sloth Jungles. A handful of Algor responded, and came to the Nimro Kingdom. Here they have stayed, living mostly isolated lives, but offering King Blackrock their insight and expertise when he asks for it.

The Mount Nimro Algor have slowly grown in number since that day, populating their mountaintop refuge and keeping a sharp eye for any intruders who would invade their adopted homeland. But for the most part, these Algor remain true to their nature, living quiet, unassuming lives very much in harmony with nature. They are not especially warlike, and so they do not clamor to join in the battles against the Gromek as the Jotan, Gigantes, and others do. Most of them live and work as simple hunters and craftsmen, although there are a number of noteworthy warriors and men of magic among them. Still, just their presence is appreciated by the Nimro leadership of this nation, who can rightly claim that all the Giants of this world have found a home at Mount Nimro.

Titans

The most famous and glamorous of the Palladium Giants are the noble warriors known as the Titans. These renowned champions of justice wander the world as knights-errant, seeking adventure and combating evil wherever they find it. They often travel alone or in pairs, regularly joining groups of adventurers for brief periods. When a Titan finds a group he or she really connects with, the warrior may stay on for years. Such groups often reach legendary status, for any force with a Titan fighting alongside it can accomplish many incredible deeds of heroism. Indeed, Titans have become such symbols of strength, honor and courage that many people consider these mighty individuals to be demigods.

Along with the Elves, Titans were one of the archaic races that survived the battle with the dreaded Old Ones. Titans and Elves remained close allies for thousands of years, fighting side by side against innumerable enemies. That is, until the Elf-Dwarf War. When this dark conflict began, the Titans saw a sad change overcome their Elven allies. Where the Elves were once kind and just, they had now grown arrogant and cruel, guilty of many crimes and atrocities against Dwarves, Gnomes and other races. Unable to act against their beloved allies, the Titans stayed out of the Elf-Dwarf War, but the fallout from that holocaust still destroyed nearly 20% of the total Titan population as they tried to rescue Gnomes, Troglodytes and other peoples caught in the crossfire. Since then, few Titans have called an Elf friend.

Most Titans have managed to put the past behind them and regard Elf and Dwarf with cool civility. They are glad to see that many Elves and Dwarves today show a humility that their ancestors lacked, a sure sign that the Fair Folk have learned the lesson their bloodthirsty forefathers taught them.

Or have they? While Elves and Dwarves no longer threaten to destroy the world with their insane rivalries, the nations of mankind certainly do, perhaps because they have yet to learn the lessons the Elves and Dwarves learned the hard way. Regardless of the reasons why, many humans show the same kind of selfishness and cruelty that the ancient Elves and Dwarves did. And, as war grows likely among the Wolfen Empire, the Eastern Territory, the Western Empire, and other human powers, so will the world suffer again in an age of wanton bloodletting and destruction. At least, this is what certain Titans believe, especially those who have aligned themselves with the Nimro Kingdom.

At first glance, it would appear strange that Titans, of all people, would take up with a nation of cruel evildoers like the Kingdom of Giants. After all, evil Titans are exceedingly rare, and are reported to be such egomaniacs that they would never willingly serve any lord but themselves.

All true. But the Titans of the Nimro Kingdom are not generally evil. They are selfish freebooters, or they are essentially good individuals who have a somewhat skewed perception of things. For these characters, the world of man is headed for self-destruction and seems hell-bent on taking all of Giantkind with it. To certain Titans, this simply will not do. And to prevent it, they have taken up arms alongside the Nimro Kingdom.

These Titans have three reasons for doing this. The first is to oppose the mad human kingdoms who are pushing the world to what they believe is Armageddon. Anyone opposing these powers is working in the best interests of the entire world, right? So

what if there are evildoers in the Nimro Kingdom? So what if the Nimro Kingdom has committed atrocities of its own? So what if King Sunder Blackrock himself is an evil dictator bent on subjugating others to his own will? To these rogue Titans, these are merely unfortunate details. The reality is that the Nimro Kingdom is the only nation that stands opposed to the human realms and their brand of lunacy, and if opposing these mad powers means casting one's lot with monsters and evildoers, then so be it. For these Titans, the end justifies the means.

The second reason is a spin-off of the first. The rogue Titans of Mount Nimro also believe that the only way for Giantkind to prevent its own extinction is if it bands together as Sunder Blackrock has engineered. Certainly, one day the human kingdoms will learn of this place, and they will invent a reason to invade. When they do, the Mount Nimro Titans swear, they will be there to help push the humans back. No race has the right to arbitrarily exterminate another, no matter what it is they have done, or so these Titans reckon. But this lesson appears to be lost on mankind. As the cruel Western Empire has abundantly displayed, the human kingdoms have little regard for Giants of any kind, and if they are to survive, they will need all the help they can get. After all, once these humans begin their final push to crush this nation, the Titans assume, they probably won't stop until every Giant is dead. And like it or not, that means Titans, too. So for now, it is better to side with your fellows, even if they are evil.

Lastly, the most well intentioned of these Giant warriors hope to change the "system" from within — i.e. influence their Giant brethren, leading them from their evil ways, and, with any luck, help to bring peace and culture to the fledgling kingdom.

All Titans are intelligent, compassionate people with their own agenda. To the rest of the Titan community, the Titans allied to the Nimro Kingdom are sad and perhaps delusional extremists who are letting their passion blind their common sense. Most Titans tend to view the Nimro Kingdom with fear and suspicion, if not outright oppose it because it is a haven for monsters and villains of every sort. Yes, the Nimro Kingdom is a good idea in that it creates a safe home for Giants and other races of miscreants. However, no matter what good this nation might accomplish, it is an instrument of evil designed to ultimately vent its wrath on the world, and it must be stopped.

To that end, numerous Titans live and wander through the Nimro Kingdom acting as spies, double-agents and protectors of non-Giants in the outskirts of the region. These are actually good, crusading knights who are using their ability to slip in and out of the Nimro Kingdom unthwarted to perform missions of subversion and sabotage. These Titans realize that the bigger and stronger the Nimro Kingdom grows, the more likely it will gain the support of the barbarian tribes of the Old Kingdom and the attention of the human nations. Should this happen, it will almost certainly instigate war from the Western Empire. To prevent this, the good Titans adventuring here help the Gromek destabilize Mount Nimro, apprehend or slay the worst evildoers, and try to keep an eye on things to prevent them from getting out of hand. Meanwhile, Another tiny handful of Titans are quietly positioning themselves among the human powers in the

Eastern Territory, Lopan and the Kingdom of Timiro in hope of preventing them from overreacting and joining any crusade against the Kingdom of Giants when they learn of its existence. Although they fear it is a only a dream, they hope and pray that the Nimro Kingdom will someday forsake its plans of conquest and revenge and be satisfied with creating a peaceful nation of Giants.

The total number of Titans worldwide is unknown, even to Titans, but most estimates put the number at fewer than 10,000. The handful of "Dark Titans" who have gathered in Mount Nimro represent a tiny fraction of the worldwide Titan populace, but it remains one of the largest gatherings of evil and selfish Titans in the world. That they have wrongly sided with so obviously an evil and aggressive power as Mount Nimro has sent a Shockwave of horror and surprise throughout Titans everywhere.

Rahu-Men

The Rahu-Men are an ancient race of Giants who have forsaken the ways of the world and are said to live in the highest peaks of the Old Kingdom Mountains. They are a gentle, unassuming people with great understanding and tolerance for other races. Some human scholars believe the Rahu-Men have become extinct, since the last documented sighting of one was over 200 years ago. Rahu-Men have been encountered since then, of course, but nobody can say for sure how many of these extraordinary individuals are left in the world. Most informed scholars estimate that there are no more than 1,000 worldwide, with their numbers slowly dwindling away. Indeed, unless the Rahu-Men abandon their lives of isolation and form communities of some sort, they are doomed to the slow downward spiral of extinction.

In ancient times, Rahu-Men ranked among the world's most powerful warriors, Wizards, Mind Mages and scholars. It is said that even the Titans respected the Rahu-Men, but as the world changed, the four-armed Giants found themselves unable to adapt. Feared by both humans and non-humans alike, the Rahu-Men were the targets of many unfair assaults that left their numbers decimated. After a great number of them were slain during an unsuccessful invasion of the Old Kingdom by the Western Empire, the surviving Rahu-Men became reclusive and eventually fled to the Old Kingdom Mountains.

Even there, however, they were hounded by warriors, kings, mages and scholars looking for worldly advice, training in combat, arcane knowledge, philosophical insights, and kernels of time-worn wisdom. The Rahu-Men have since climbed even higher to the most remote cliffs and mountaintops in the Old Kingdom and, some say, mountains throughout the world. Some have established or joined monasteries or small villages, while others live alone or in small family clans.

Protected by their mountain retreats, most Rahu-Men pursue a quiet life as scholars, artists, mystics and sheepherders. However, not all have forsaken the outside world. Some, typically at monasteries, continue to teach and advise humans, Elves, and others in the ways of combat and magic. In fact, Rahu-Men were involved in establishing the secret monasteries where the *UndeadHunters* and *Witch Hunters* of the Yin-Sloth Jungles are trained (For more information on these obscure and powerful professions, refer to the **Yin-Sloth Jungles** sourcebook). Some Rahu-Men have become legendary monks willing to help anyone who comes looking for knowledge, peace and harmony. Still others remain warriors and sorcerers supreme and secretly serve as defenders of mountain towns and villages or engage in special quests to rout evil from the land.

Many of the Rahu-Men of the Nimro Kingdom have joined it for somewhat similar reasons as the "Dark Titans." These Rahu-Men see the Nimro Kingdom as something of a paradox. It is a necessary thing for the Giants, for if they do not band together, they are doomed to die at the hands of others. Yet, by forming a large and growing nation, they will almost certainly invoke the fear or wrath of one or more human nations, such as the mighty Western Empire. This may spark a war that the Giant nation will most likely lose, unless all Giants stand together.

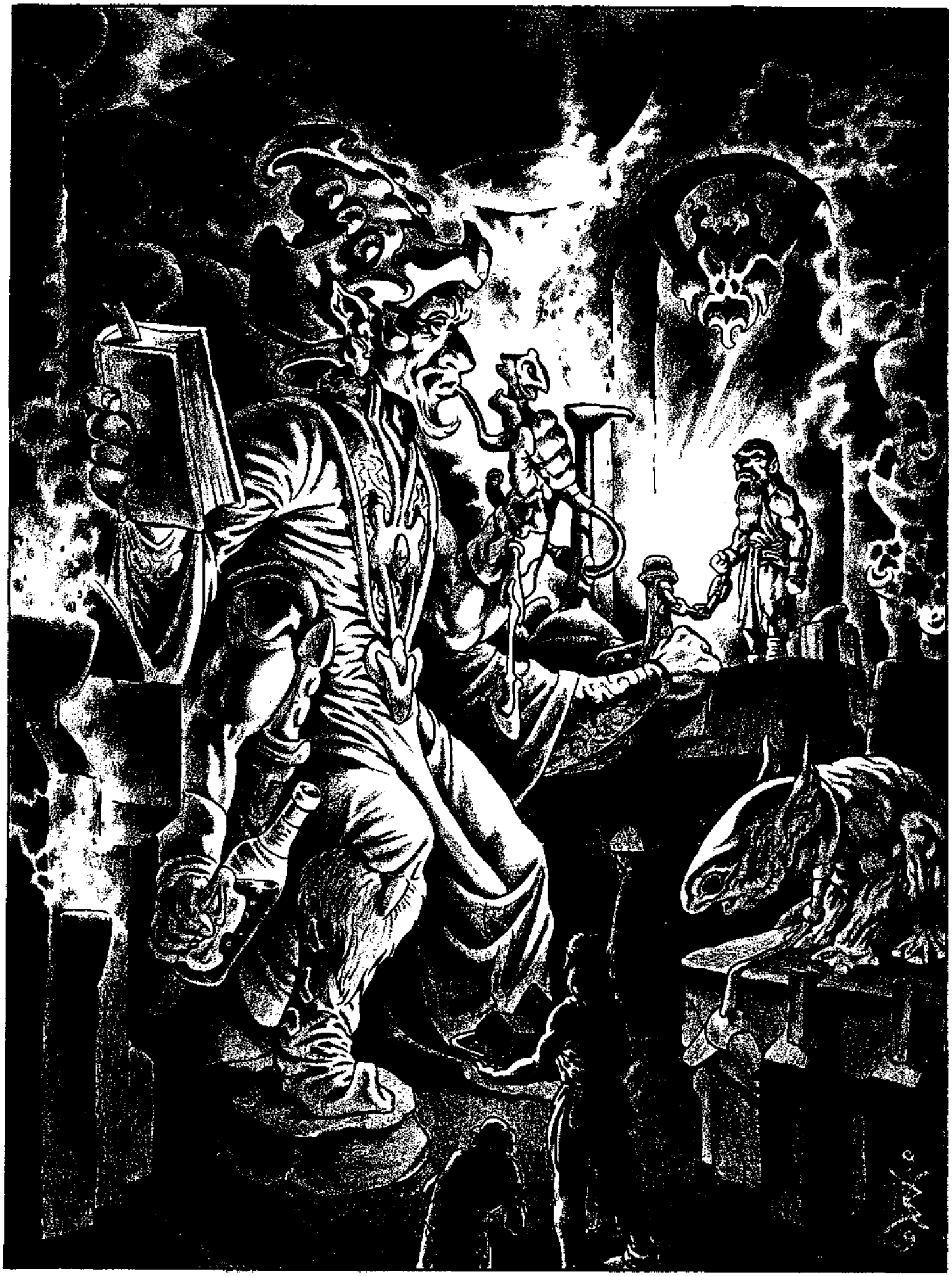
Another paradox: The Nimro Kingdom was founded to protect Giantkind from the unfair persecution it has received from humans who mistakenly think that all Giants are evil monsters. Yet, when you examine the Nimro kingdom closely, it is largely populated by evil monsters, which only justifies the human urge to wipe Giantkind off the face of the map! Moreover, when one studies the treatment the so-called "Shorties" of the Nimro Kingdom receive at the hands of their Giant masters, it is clear that the Giants themselves are just as willing to commit the same acts of persecution they have received from Elves, Dwarves and humans.

Such contradictions are the mark of a society that has great potential to succeed and even greater potential to fail. This would indeed be a sorrowful event, for if the Nimro Kingdom could strike some kind of internal balance, to temper its evil harshness with the calm reserve of law and order, if not pervasive goodness, then this nation might very well become one of the major powers of the world, establishing a permanent place for Giants and their ilks to live in relative peace and harmony, away from those who would do them harm. Yet, none of the leaders or subjects of this nascent kingdom seem to have the wisdom needed to strike such a balance, and to lead the nation out of its moral infancy. Left to its own devices, the Nimro Kingdom will surely destroy itself and take a great many other lives with it, perhaps touching off a chain of events and warfare that might eventually drown the entire world in a deluge of blood.

Many of the Rahu-Men have joined the Nimro Kingdom to help King Sunder Blackrock and his fellow Giant chieftains to fashion the wisdom to rule responsibly, temper their passions and their hatred for the smaller folk of this world, and recognize that the Nimro Kingdom's place need not be carved away from the lands of others. That indeed it is possible and even preferable for the Land of the Giants to live in peace with other nations; even nations that fear them and wish them harm.

Of the Rahu-Men in the Nimro Kingdom, few are actual "subjects" of Sunder Blackrock. Most play the role of the reclusive hermit or hopeful advisor, answering questions and training those Giants who have the intelligence and wisdom to seek the teachings of one smarter and wiser than they. This is part of a greater Rahu-Man strategy: To teach the next generation of Nimro Kingdom leaders, so that they will not repeat the mistakes of their forefathers.

The biggest contributions the Rahu-Men have made to the Nimro Kingdom so far, however are the several warrior monas-



teries they have founded. Make no mistake, although Mount Nimro's Rahu-Men are peaceful and introspective, they also recognize that Giants must know how to fight if they are to survive. And if they are going to do battle with anyone, then better that they know how to do so with honor and mercy, recognizing when it is proper to fight, when to run, and when to surrender. To that end, these Rahu-Men are very willing to teach the Giants a true sense of military knowledge and tactics to defend themselves, their families, and their homeland. Many of the Rahu-Men here will even take up arms themselves if they feel the Nimro Kingdom truly needs their help, such as if the Western Empire or the Gromek launched an all-out invasion. If that were to happen, whoever crosses swords with the Nimro Kingdom will learn firsthand the incredible fighting prowess and magical ability of the Rahu-Men who share dreams of building a peaceful realm of Giants. These mysterious four-armed Giants not only have placed their personal stake here, but they also feel that they are, in some strange way, the moral stewards of the Nimro Kingdom's people. The Rahu-Men truly believe that these Giants and their allies can be molded into a thoughtful and essentially good people, and while they are guiding the Mount Nimro Giants through their first decades as a unified nation, they will let no outside force interfere.

A tiny handful of the Nimro Kingdom Rahu-Men are evil (typically aberrant) or selfish adventurers. While they may crave power, wealth and/or glory, even they see the bigger picture and hope to help build the Kingdom of Giants into a power that can survive the ages. Of course, some of these Rahu-Men envision themselves as the future leaders of such a nation.

Trolls

In sharp contrast to the enlightened and passionate Rahu-Men and Titans, the Trolls of the Nimro Kingdom are mostly a collection of thieves, brigands, murderers and villains. Hailing from the Old Kingdom, the Baalgor Wastelands, and the Yin-Sloth Jungles, the Trolls living here have come to Mount Nimro for a variety of reasons. Most of the Mount Nimro Trolls were already living here when King Sunder Blackrock and his Nimro tribes laid claim to the area. Those Trolls that resisted were rounded up and killed. Those remaining stayed alive because they had the good sense either to leave Mount Nimro or to swear loyalty to their new, self-proclaimed king. About half stayed. Those who left were generally the rowdier, more vicious Trolls who would not have been able to live under any kind of authority, much less the strict laws and governance of the Nimro Kingdom. Those who stayed tended to be the more intelligent and even-tempered Trolls (as even-tempered as a Troll can be, anyway) who realized that life under King Blackrock had its benefits.

And they were right, too. The Nimro Kingdom has had great need for soldiers and enforcers of every kind to patrol the borders, to war with the Gromek, to put down insurrections, and to police the hordes of nonhuman immigrants flooding into the kingdom each month. Just as the Gigantes are the enforcers for the whole Kingdom, the Trolls are the enforcers specifically of the Ogres, Orcs, Kobolds, Goblins, and other non-Giants of the Nimro kingdom. Trolls are the perfect choice for this job because most non-Giants fear and respect them, and it lets the

Trolls "legitimately" bully and harass the smaller subjects of the kingdom, which they would have done anyway. (Incidentally, the Trolls of the Nimro Kingdom make excellent tax collectors, too, sinpe they routinely shake everybody down for spare cash on a regular basis; all the Giants then have to do is impose a tax on the Trolls, who must fork over a portion of whatever money they have, which everybody knows has been stolen from the rest of the subjects to begin with.)

That takes care of the Trolls who were already living here. But what of those who have immigrated to the Land of the Giants? Trolls are not known to automatically bow down to any Giant. In fact, some Trolls consider themselves to be "True" Giants! So why would any self-respecting Troll come to the Nimro Kingdom and give up whatever freedom and power he once had? The answer, in a nutshell, comes down to two things: survival and power.

The Old Kingdom is crawling with hordes of nonhumans looking for trouble. Many of these are small armies of Ogres, Orcs and Kobolds led by a few Troll Warlords who have carved a small bit of territory out for themselves where they waylay anyone nearby. A large concentration of these groups is in the Old Kingdom, near the Western Empire border.

Now, smart Troll Warlords who have been studying the way things have been developing in this part of the world recognize two things. One, that the Western Empire is slowly but surely spreading eastward, into the Old Kingdom. Two, that the Nimro Kingdom is slowly but surely spreading north into the Old Kingdom. This means that sooner or later, they are going to tangle with either the Western Empire or the Nimro Kingdom. Furthermore, eventually, the Western Empire and the Nimro Kingdom are going to come to blows. When they do, it would be far better to be on somebody's side in the fight than getting caught in the middle and have one's brains splattered by both sides. When looking at the situation like this, the choice becomes clear for any Troll Warlord with a sense of self-preservation: Go to the Nimro Kingdom. There they can perhaps retain control of their crews and even earn a bit of salary from King Blackrock himself! Any other way will eventually result in slavery, death, or both.

Not all Trolls who come to the Nimro Kingdom from the Old Kingdom are happy about it, however. Many are angry and frustrated that they have been pushed by circumstance into joining King Blackrock, but they really can't do anything about it. Every once in a while, some Trolls try to lead some kind of insurrection within the Nimro Kingdom, or cheat and rob what they can without getting noticed. The most disenchanted may desert, while the most belligerent simply stop taking orders, but whenever this happens a brief and bloody crackdown puts and end to it. So, the Trolls here have learned to be as obedient and loyal as Trolls can be.

For the Giants, the Trolls of the kingdom have been a pretty valuable addition. Sure, they cause some trouble sometimes, but they have done an incredible job of keeping all of the other non-Giant immigrants in line, and they have distinguished themselves in battle more times than they can count. That, and many Trolls are familiar with the ways of the Western Empire and the Timiro Kingdom, so if push comes to shove, and the Nimro Kingdom must one day deal with either of these human nations, the expertise of the Trolls will be priceless.

Ogres

Ogres get something of a raw deal in the Nimro Kingdom, as far as they are concerned. They are bigger and stronger than any Orc, and they tend to be more even-tempered and farsighted than most Trolls, so they should receive some kind of authority in the Nimro Kingdom, right? Wrong.

As far as non-Giants go, authority depends on your size, and Trolls get top billing. So, when it comes to managing the Shorties of the realm, Ogres have no special niche to fill. This is complicated by the fact that many True Giants consider Ogres to be just bigger, smarter (but just as expendable) versions of Orcs, or worse, a bigger, meaner version of humans.

In effect, they leave a life of having been a big fish in a small pond, to a small fish in a big pond. This is really hard for the average Ogre to swallow, which explains why Ogres tend to be the most sullen and unhappy group within Mount Nimro, Kingdom of "True Giants." Like the Trolls, many of the Ogres living here were once warrior chieftains or led gangs of bandits, but who decided to come to Mount Nimro and benefit from the safety and power the unity of the Giants provides. Most of these warlords brought their minions with them with the expectation of garnering some measure of respect and importance, or an easy life of warring and revenge. Instead, after the first few days, assimilation into Giant society meant being put to work or placed as a lowly grunt, where they were treated like any other peon.

In the past five years, there have been a few insurrections and mass desertions of Ogres in the Nimro Kingdom, but each time, the Ogre forces have been savagely repressed by Gigantes led enforcer crews who made mincemeat out of the ringleaders (and the unfortunates who happened to be standing next to them). Since then, Ogre dissatisfaction has quieted down a bit, but it

has certainly not gone away. As more and more hordes of non-Giants come in from the Old Kingdom and beyond, the number of unhappy Ogre subjects continues to rise. Someday, perhaps soon, there will be another Ogre uprising. The only question is, how bloody will it be to put down?

This unhappiness encourages many Ores to cheat the system whenever they can. This results in sloppy and slow work, anonymous acts of sabotage and vandalism, the stealing of food, booze and valuables (from money to tools), back-talk, and occasional acts of dissension. Furthermore, while the Ogres may fear the Giants and their Troll henchmen, they do not respect them. Combine this with varying degrees of anger, resentment and hatred, and one has a large, dangerous population waiting for an opportunity to strike back any way they can. Their dissatisfaction also leads to frequent acts of lawbreaking despite firm and brutal punishment, and desertion (some get their fill and leave, going back to a world where they can make a place for themselves as a force to be feared). Moreover, the angry and frustrated hulks often take their frustrations out on the Orcs, Goblins and Kobolds around them, which further helps keep those troublesome folk in line. So for the Nimro King, keeping his Ogres unhappy and violent is actually a good thing.

There is another problem regarding the Mount Nimro Ogres. On the border of the Timiro Kingdom (and scattered throughout the Old Kingdom) live many strong Ogre tribes who have, for years, harried the Timiro Kingdom from the relative safety of the Old Kingdom Mountains. These Ogres have kept the Timiro humans from migrating northward and discovering the Nimro Kingdom, but now that the Land of the Giants is beginning to grow, King Blackrock worries that those Ogres might all come to him. That could give the Timiro humans reason to venture west or north. As long as King Blackrock keeps his own Ogres unhappy, though, perhaps word of it will spread and prevent some of those tribes from considering an alliance and keep their focus on Timiro. To this end, he allows a few Ogre dissidents to escape every few months or so, so word can trickle back to the Timiro Ogres that the Nimro Kingdom is not the nicest place for Ogres to live. Sure, the King could use the extra manpower the Timiro Ogres would provide, but what he needs more is for Timiro not to look his way. Furthermore, a mass arrival of Ogres could tip the balance of power and make some serious trouble for him. That is the real reason why the Ogres are so mistreated here. In truth, King Blackrock would much rather they manage the affairs of the non-Giants of the realm. Ogres are far better planners and leaders than Trolls. But as long as the Timiro Kingdom remains a threat, Blackrock will gladly sacrifice the well-being of some of his subjects so his entire kingdom can be safe.

Note that not all Ogres hate their life in the Kingdom of Giants. Those assigned to military duty, in particular, enjoy the challenges of battling Gromek, human interlopers and other "enemies" of the realm. They'd just like to get a bit more respect.

Others see their sacrifice as important to build a Kingdom of Giants, and that their day will come sometime in the future. Others just like the idea of building an Empire that will one day crush the kingdoms of man and enslave the humans they don't butcher.

Orcs

Over the last few years, Orcs have become the hidden foundation of the Nimro Kingdom. While much of the realm's success depends on the brilliant leadership of Sunder Blackrock, and the hard-won military victories of the Giant warriors for whom this realm was created, the maintenance and further expansion of the Nimro Kingdom owes a great deal of thanks to the legion of Orcs who toil endlessly for the betterment of their Giant masters.

For the last ten years or so, as word of the Kingdom has spread to the Old Kingdom, Orcs by the hundreds and thousands have come looking to live and work under mighty King Blackrock. At first, these Orcs were turned away, but as they kept coming, the Giants began letting them in and putting them to work as cheap labor and expendable soldiers. After all, Orcs live to fight, and they don't seem to mind getting their heads kicked in so long as they have some kind of compensation to show for it.

Since then, the Nimro Kingdom has opened its doors to Orc immigrants, perhaps to its detriment. Orcs are now the single largest non-Giant segment of the population, and their steadily increasing numbers show no signs of slowing down. For the Giants, the situation is something of a dilemma. On one hand, having lots of Orcs around is a good thing. They can be whipped into line easily (thanks to their natural reverence for Giants, and the work of Troll and Ogre taskmasters), they tend to work hard, and they distinguish themselves in battle. On the other hand, with so many, it's hard to find enough work for them all, and Orcs with nothing to do brawl and cause trouble for everybody.

Worse, the huge number of Orcs is straining the kingdom's resources. It is hard enough to feed, clothe and house all of the Giants here, let alone a large horde of ravenous Orcs, as well as all of the other non-Giants. If the number of Orcs doubles from where the numbers are now (which should only take another year or two, at the current rate), the kingdom will begin to starve and run into other critical resource depletion problems.

And it's just not a matter of simply turning new Orcish immigrants away or expelling some of the ones already living here. As troublesome as hosting all of these Orcs can be, King Blackrock sees it as a critical component in establishing good diplomatic ties with the Orcish Empire, the only other nation that will do business with the Kingdom of Giants. If word got out that Mount Nimro was expelling its Orcs or refusing others to enter, it would pretty much scuttle any chance for trade or continuing alliances. Moreover, the Orcs would become very unhappy if they started getting booted from Mount Nimro, regardless of the reason. The Giants do not want to repeat the mistake of the Timiro Kingdom by growing too dependent on Orcish laborers and then mistreating them. The last thing King Blackrock needs is an Orcish rebellion in his midst. No, for better or worse, the Orcs of the Nimro Kingdom are here to stay, and it is up to the Giants to figure out how to make it so the Kingdom can accommodate them all.

Needless to say, this frustrates a lot of Giants. From their point of view, they have risked everything to establish "their" kingdom, and they have worked extremely hard to bring it where it is today. To see all of this effort threatened because there are too many Orc immigrants around is a little too much to

bear. So, despite their many contributions to the Nimro Kingdom, Orcs have become scapegoats for just about any problem the land faces, and more than one innocent Orc has encountered the headsman's axe on groundless charges meant more to placate grumbling Giants than anything else. Where Orcs are most abused is in the military where thousands will be sent to their doom in assaults against the Gromek. Whether the Orcs win or lose the battle, the Nimro Kingdom reduces its population problem and sees more of its enemy slain.

Recent tax hikes have reduced all Orcs to virtual indentured servitude. And the Giant system of law gives Orcs virtually no say-so in governance, nor does it do much to protect Orcs from the abuses of their Giant masters, or their fellow Trolls, Ogres, or even other Orcs.

So why, then, do so many Orcs choose to live here? And why do so many more wish to join the Nimro Kingdom? In a word; strength. Giants have it in abundance, and it is the only thing Orcs really respect. Consider this: To a warrior race used to a nasty, brutish and short-life of constant combat and physical challenge, living with Giants is the ultimate gravy train. Sure, the pay stinks, and the conditions are lousy, but to Orcs, that's part of the charm! Regardless of how other races would react to similar conditions, Orcs generally enjoy fighting, physical adversity and hard work. They are not the most cerebral or introspective folk, and the kind of (mis)treatment they receive at the hands of most Giants generally fits what your average Orc expects to get out of life.

Also consider that the Orcs of the Nimro Kingdom generally come from the Old Kingdom, where the living conditions are really, *really* terrible. Not only is the entire land a blasted ruin, but the gradual encroachment of the Western Empire, the likelihood of being attacked by some gang of bandits, rivals, or monsters, and the utter lack of a large, organized society makes the Nimro Kingdom look good despite its shortcomings. Furthermore, as bad as things are at Mount Nimro, they are a heck of a lot worse over in the Timiro Kingdom or the Western Empire. As long as that's the case, the Orcs of the Nimro Kingdom are likely to remain largely complacent and hard-working, if also abused and unappreciated.

Kobolds

Of all the non-Giants living in Mount Nimro, Kobolds gain the most respect and admiration from True Giants. Scrappy, resourceful, industrious, and downright vicious when they need to be, Kobolds have a way of getting what they want and motivating others to get out of their way. Giants like that. They like it a lot.

Many of the Tall Folk see something of themselves in their diminutive companions, which is probably the reason why Kobolds remain the only non-Giant race the Nimro Kingdom still actively recruits. From the Giants' point of view, Kobolds are the perfect addition to the Kingdom — they are tough, self-sufficient, and they can handle the weapon and armor-making needs for many. Jotans especially appreciate this, both out of a genuine respect for the natural metalworkers, and for not having to crank out weapons for non-Giants. With Kobold metalworkers taking care of the weapons and armor needs of the non-Giant population, Jotans can focus on making Giant-sized goods.

Kobolds have also endeared themselves to the Giants by starting the Mount Nimro **Blastworks**, a bizarre combination of a foundry, mine, and alchemist's shop that has pioneered the production of a strange mineral material with explosive properties. At great expense to life and limb, Kobold engineers have figured out a way to extract this material from the magma of Mount Nimrod, where they then add other materials to it and let it cool into a hard, crystalline growth. When hit with sufficient force, this crystal explodes, inflicting terrible damage to whoever is hit by the flying crystalline shrapnel. While production of this stuff is very limited, the Blastworks is likely to begin making it in earnest, just as soon as more workers learn the dangerous art of compiling this material. Once that is done, the Giants expect the Kobold workers to begin producing hundreds of arrows (doing 2D6 damage on impact), hand thrown balls (i.e. crude grenades doing 4D6 damage), and they hope to develop catapult projectiles (not yet feasable) using the explosive mystery mineral. Such a secret weapon will give the Giants a great advantage if and when they must battle the human nations, and every Giant military leader, from King Blackrock on down, greatly appreciates the gift given to them by their dutiful Kobold servants. Note: The explosive weapons have never been used in combat and only trusted Giants and Kobolds know about this *secret weapon.*

Thanks to their engineering and metalworking expertise, Kobolds fall into the same elevated social category as the Cyclops, which is as members of a respected industry rather than a

true segment of Giant society. While Kobolds do not enjoy the privileged, protected status that Cyclops have, they are seen as an important, productive part of the Nimro Kingdom, and woe to anyone who harasses, robs, beats or murders a Kobold citizen, especially a metalworker. Kobolds are all too aware of this, and frequently use their slightly elevated status to boss around Orcs and Goblins, and to protect themselves from the bullying of Ogres, Trolls and Gigantes.

Many of the Kobolds hail from the Old Kingdom Mountains, one of the last great bastions of Kobold society. As far as anybody knows, the Old Kingdom mountains remain a wild, untamed place, where Kobolds live in relative comfort. There are few humans or other enemy folk there, and there is more than enough mountain for all of the Kobolds in that area to live without overcrowding. Why, then, have so many come here? Certainly, some word of the Nimro Kingdom has reached there, but not so much to encourage droves of Kobolds to pick up and move. So what is the reason?

That is the great mystery many Giants find themselves asking, but none of the Kobolds are giving up answers. Meanwhile, rumors abound as to the reasons. One is that a great plague is sweeping the Old Kingdom Mountains, something akin to the terrible pandemic of Goblin Fever that once ravaged the Western Empire. Only this disease is affecting Kobolds specifically. Another rumor is that a civil war has broken out among the great Kobold tribes of the mountains, and those who are fleeing the fighting, or have been defeated already, have come to Mount Nimro to recuperate, hide or build a new life (and, it is rumored, they will leave once they have strengthened themselves again). Another rumor is that the Kobolds have come not to serve the Nimro Kingdom, but to get a chance at extracting some of the many rune weapons and other fabulous items of magic that were dropped into the fires of Mount Nimrod during the Millennium of Purification. If these tales are to be believed, then Kobolds are not the team players they appear to be, but have their own agenda. One which might involve a deep, dark hatred for all other living things, including Giants.

Nobody knows if such tales are true, and certainly, the Kobolds aren't doing much to confirm or deny them. The truth is these tales probably were cooked up and spread by vengeful Goblins or Orcs who envy the Kobolds' favorable relations with the Giants. Indeed, Kobolds are excavating under Mount Nimrod in search of lost rune weapons, but at King Blackrock's behest, not their own. And while it is true that some Kobolds have decided to leave Mount Nimro for the Old Kingdom or Baalgor Mountains, the number of Kobolds arriving far outweighs those leaving, which shoots down the theory that the Kobolds all yearn to return to the Old Kingdom.

As for the Kobolds themselves, they don't particularly care about the stories circulating about them. As long as the Giants don't believe them (which, by and large, they don't), then the other non-Giants can say whatever they like.

Of course, the most disturbing thing about all of this is the iron law of rumor-mongering. Within every story, every bit of gossip, is usually some kernel of truth, no matter how well hidden. Given the nature of some of the stories floating around about the Kobolds' true intentions in the Nimro Kingdom, one wonders what those kernels might be.

Goblins & Hob-Goblins

There is an old Giant saying, one shared by many cultures around the Palladium world: "Goblins. Can't live with 'em, can't live without 'em."

Such is the case in the Nimro Kingdom, where the Goblin population breeds and grows like rats in a dark and musty cellar. Nobody likes Goblins very much, and these thieving, conniving little creeps do little to endear themselves to anybody, hence "Can't live with 'em." But, like moths drawn to flame and mice to crumbs, so too are Goblins drawn to large "civilized" settlements. You can not have a large town or city without at least some kind of Goblin presence. It is inevitable, hence, "Can't live without 'em"; although most people would like to try to.

Neither King Blackrock nor any of his fellow Giant chieftains ever wanted the Nimro Kingdom to become a haven for Goblins and Hob-Goblins. Giants in general view these two races as unproductive, uncooperative, and untrustworthy (which isn't too far off the mark). But when the Nimro Kingdom opened its doors to non-Giant races such as Trolls, Ogres, Orcs and Kobolds, they knew that Goblins would enter, too. The Giants were right, for just a few years after the first immigrants arrived, Goblins had established themselves as the bottom-feeders of Giant society. Most don't generally contribute to the Kingdom in any way except for living in the nooks and crannies, and off of everybody else's crumbs.

Just like in the Western Empire, the Goblins of the Nimro Kingdom are largely cheap (lazy and untrustworthy) laborers,

beggars and thieves who exploit the charity or weakness of others. For the most part, they are an annoyance to the other folk of Mount Nimro, who are usually too busy to be bothered with the likes of a Goblin looking for a handout or trying to rip somebody off. Goblins are especially the bane of every working Giant, who see these little scamps' laziness as a direct affront to all of the hard work they have put into building and maintaining their new nation. Most Giants feel that even clobbering a Goblin out of anger is a waste of time, since three more will take the place of their fallen comrade. As a result, the Giants generally leave "Goblin Control" to the Trolls, Ogres and Orcs, who are well known for their fondness of picking on anybody smaller than they. This translates into bad news for the Goblins, since it's pretty much open season on them. Wherever a Goblin goes, whatever it does, it can expect to be treated harshly by anybody else in society. There is no punishment for killing a Goblin for any reason, and Orcs are especially rough on Goblins, since they have few other people on which to vent their day to day frustrations and inherent viciousness. Some even capture, kill and eat Goblins for extra meat and nourishment.

This has led to the creation of a subculture where small groups of subservient Goblins ally themselves to one particular Ogre or Troll, occasionally a True Giant, but rarely the dull witted and unimportant Orc. These unofficially allied Goblins effectively become the henchmen, spies, thieves and servants of that particular Big Person. In exchange, the Tall One offers the Goblin(s) his protection and the most meager of accommodations, food and money. Thus, the little runts will warn, "You better leave me be or Max the Troll will make you pay"; or "I serve Greebol the Jotan, now let me pass"; and so on. Depending on the Tall One's station, level of influence or reputation, "belonging to" or "serving" so and so will often save a Goblin from becoming some Ore's dinner or taking a beating. On the other hand, all Goblins know not to make false claims, lest their alleged master send his real henchmen to put an end to their lies, permanently! Goblin henchmen are the lowest of the low and unofficially tolerated or ignored. Officially, henchmen are forbidden, but those who don't cause too much trouble with them are either ignored or given a slap on the hand as punishment. Having Goblin henchmen can give even poor laborers extra resources, (very) limited power, and at least a *feeling* of superiority and power.

Goblin Cobblers often represent the independent criminal underground. They can usually get unallied Goblins and Hob-Goblins to serve them as bandits and minions to steal from the Giants and other smaller citizens of the Kingdom; from raiding livestock from farms and slaughterhouses to stealing food, weapons and valuables. The beauty of this, for the Cobbler, is that they generally don't care if their henchmen get caught and killed for their trouble. As far as the Cobblers are concerned, there are always more flunkies to be found. As a result, there are numerous "Cobbler Kings" controlling various parts of the Goblin population in and around Mount Nimro, running entire neighborhoods like an expansive thieves' guilds. Every Goblin serving under a Cobbler Kingpin is expected to hand over a certain percentage of his "take" (whatever they steal or scrounge) for the week. Those who don't get "turned out," which means they get thrown in the path of a particularly angry Orc, Ogre, Troll or Giant, who subsequently stomps them or beats them to a pulp (resulting in death 90% of the time). Usually, Goblins are expected to kick back anywhere from 50% to 70% of their take to their Cobbler King.

Sometimes Cobbler Kings may succumb to greed and begin exacting tributes of 80% or higher. This never lasts for long, because the dissatisfied Goblins will eventually lose patience and turn out their own king. When this happens, anarchy reigns in the neighborhood for a few weeks until a new leader, usually another Cobbler or forceful master thief, moves in and establishes him or herself as King. Typically, a wily would-be King will wait until a patrol of Gigantes are sent in to "pacify" the rioting Goblins before setting himself up as the new ruler, because by then, the surviving Goblins will be in poor shape to challenge him.

Hob-Goblins lead similar lives to Goblins, except their love for fighting usually leads them to an early grave. Orcs in particular, love to beat up "Flop-Ears" because they put up enough of a struggle to be challenging, but can't usually win in a one-on-one fight. Considered too lazy and insubordinate to be worth the trouble and expense, the Nimro Kingdom has not integrated Hob-Goblins into its military. Certain Hob-Goblins find themselves working as gladiators and pit fighters, and some follow armed forces and join the battle against Gromek and humans, but this work typically leads to a very short and painful career.

Nimro Government, Rules & Regulations

The Nimro Council

Every nation needs a government if it wants to hold itself together, and the Nimro Kingdom is no different. When the Nimro Kingdom was founded, one of Sunder Blackrock's first priorities was to devise some way of settling the many disputes that had kept the various Giant clans and tribes of Mount Nimro at each other's throats for so long. He also needed to come up with some formalized way of passing laws and rules that everybody could live with. Recognizing that it was his personal achievements that were holding his new kingdom together, King Blackrock realized that he needed to establish some kind of transfer of power, a system for his subjects to adhere to once he was gone from this world. The Nimro Council was formed to address all three of these things.

The Nimro Council is the sole governing body of the Nimro Kingdom. It is a parliament of sorts, consisting of one "herald," or representative, from each of the 18 clans of True Giants that comprise the Kingdom. A herald is usually a high-ranking member of his or her respective clan. Most clan chieftains are heralds, but unless attending a critically important Council meeting, they let one of their alternate heralds attend instead, debating, voting and sharing news on the chieftain's behalf.

There is also a single herald for all non-Giants in the realm who is allowed only to debate motions brought up by the lawgivers and to relay news to the council. This herald has no binding authority, cannot make or break laws, and exists only to give the non-Giants of the Nimro Kingdom some token assurance that they have some say-so in national politics.

Each herald present at Council meetings speaks for his or her respective clan. Algor, Cyclops, Titan and Rahu-Man heralds each speak for all of their kind in the Kingdom, since their numbers are so small. The other Giants have a herald for each recognized clan.

Technically, the Nimro Council always is in session, but in reality, meetings where anything gets done are held once a month. Since no laws passed by the Council are binding unless they are voted upon by at least 14 (out of a possible 18) heralds, and the monthly meetings are the only times when a quorum comes together, that keeps the writing and passing of laws on a fairly steady schedule.

At the meetings, the heralds share news from their respective territories, passing along things they have heard, current events that need publicizing, and public announcements. After all the heralds' reports have been made, King Blackrock opens the floor for any new laws to be drafted or for any existing laws to be modified. The King also reserves the right to propose any legislative action on his own authority. Any herald (except for the herald representing non-Giants) may also make a motion, but it must be seconded by another herald before it can be debated by the Council and voted on. All measures pass with a majority vote. That means of the 18 eligible voting parties at the council, a measure needs 10 votes to pass. In the case of a tie, King Blackrock casts the final vote to push the vote one way or the other. Unless it is to break a tie, however, he generally does not vote, but often expresses his opinions and offers suggestions during the debate. Likewise, the herald for non-Giants does not vote on any measures, although he is allowed to debate them (Not like the other heralds take any such arguments seriously, of course).

While a motion is on the floor, all heralds are given a chance to speak in turn. To keep things running smoothly, Sunder determines who speaks in what order, to avoid any arguments. Each herald can speak up to two times on a single motion — usually once to state an opinion and once to rebut any criticism. This is to keep debate from droning on endlessly, but this measure is rarely needed. Many of the Giants on the Council are men of action, not words, and to them, talking an issue to death is a kind of torture. So, they would just as soon debate something briefly and then pass it one way or another, just to keep the meeting rolling.

During all discussions, motions, and other formal activities in a Council meeting, King Blackrock is the first, final, and only authority deciding how things will be run. If the King says you can not speak, for whatever reason, then you *can not* speak. Period. If he says that you have forfeited your right to vote on a particular topic, then you are not voting. Period. And, if he decides that you have been so out of control that you should be relieved of your position, tried for crimes against the Kingdom, or sentenced to an even worse fate, then that is exactly what shall happen! Typically, King Blackrock's presence alone is enough to cow the other Council members into behaving, but if not, an elite guard of Jotan and Gigante enforcers are in the Council Chambers whenever it is in session to take care of uncontrollable members.

Aside from its monthly meetings, the Nimro Council also convenes for emergency sessions to discuss pressing matters, such as imminent invasions or other crises. To this end, each herald keeps a Mystic Portal and a Magic Pigeon scroll on his person at all times, so he can get back to the Council Chamber in times of need, and to send an emergency message. This frees the heralds to attend to their duties across the realm. It also makes it very hard for heralds to ditch out of a Council meeting without an excellent reason. Attending Council meetings is mandatory, but life being what it is in the Palladium World, the King realizes that there will be times when Council Members cannot make it to meetings. This is acceptable to a certain degree. Slackers and habitually absent Council Members ultimately are arrested and tried for dereliction of duty, a capital offense. Since the King determines when an absence is acceptable and when it is not, attendance for Council meetings tends to run very high. To avoid any legal unpleasantness, most clans have two or three heralds — a primary one who usually attends the Council, and one or two alternates to take the primary's place if he or she can't make it for some reason.

On the surface, the Nimro Council may appear to be a relatively evenhanded and orderly means of government, even if the King does run it with an iron fist and have an unfair amount of authority. Still, the degree to which the Council Members have a say-so in their laws is fairly unprecedented in the Palladium World. In fact, looking at this under a certain light, the process even seems civilized. At least, in theory, anyway. How it works in reality is another matter.

Giants, especially Jotans and Gigantes, have delicate egos and quick tempers, which makes debating over anything a potentially violent situation. Making matters worse, mix in arrogant Cyclops, conniving Nimro, aloof Algor, self-righteous Titans and obtuse Rahu-Men, and very quickly the idea of the Nimro Council seems less like an enlightened political solution and more like a recipe for mayhem. More often than not, it is more of the second result than the first, as the various heralds decide that perhaps certain arguments ought to be settled in a dueling yard, rather than over a Council table. To that end, the King has had to enforce a few very strict rules. The first is no fighting during Council sessions. This often gets disregarded by hotheaded heralds, but at least then the King has full justification to punish them to the fullest extent of his law (death).

King Blackrock knows that if left unchecked, bloodshed is inevitable at Council meetings, so the best thing he can do is prevent it altogether. To that end, the Council table at which all heralds sit and discuss policy is big enough around that any member sits at least three sword-lengths from his adjacent members. This keeps them from taking quick swings at each other. Another measure is using specially built chairs to seat the heralds when sessions begin. Council chairs have long, thick pegs on the bottoms of their feet. When the chairs are moved into place, they fit into holes bored into the stone floor, so getting out of one's chair is a difficult and fairly time-consuming process unless you have somebody else to help you. This simple measure usually keeps angry Council Members from leaping out of their seat and thrashing their debating partners. It is also a somewhat humiliating measure for the other Council Members to have to deal with, so it helps keep heads cool even before Council meetings begin.

As a final deterrent, there are two Jotan enforcers standing behind each Council member during all sessions. These enforcers are personally loyal to King Blackrock, and generally cannot

be bought or corrupted. These swordsmen are a very forceful reminder to all Council Members that King Sunder Blackrock's Rules of Order are to be followed at all times.

Even if things don't get violent, that doesn't mean they always run smoothly. Frequently, the various heralds argue bitterly before voting on anything, thanks to their widely varying personalities and cultures. Moreover, personal rivalries between many of the heralds further muddy the political waters, making any kind of action impossible without severe tongue-lashings on all fronts. When the arguing gets really ugly, disgruntled heralds have been known to storm out of Council sessions to protest some vote they think they will lose, or simply to throw a wrench into the voting process (when their leaving reduces the Council to less than a quorum, this prevents any laws from being passed).

Of course, there is a lot for the heralds to get angry about. All of them have a great personal stake in how the Council votes on things, because ultimately, each reports back to his tribe or clan. If he fails to secure what the tribe or clan wants, well, angry Giants have a very messy way of making sure one does not run for office again.

What's more, a great deal of Council politics is controlled by the six Nimro heralds and Sunder Blackrock himself, who represent the largest voting block in the Council. These seven typically meet in secret to discuss voting plans, counting on their mutual support and the divided nature of the other heralds to carry their various plans to fruition. While the Nimro Kingdom is very much a place for all Giants, King Blackrock also makes sure that it serves Nimro interests first and foremost. All other legislative concerns are secondary. The King may be a patriot to Giantkind, but he is even more of a patriot to his own race.

Laws In Effect

The first and most important job of the Nimro Council is upholding those laws already in effect and deciding if they need to be changed, updated, or thrown out altogether. Regardless of what changes may come and go, there still exists a core set of rules and regulations laid down by King Sunder Blackrock that are immutable. All heralds are sworn to uphold them. They are:

1. All subjects of the Nimro Kingdom shall answer directly to its rightful King.

2. All subjects of the Nimro Kingdom shall answer directly to their superiors, who in turn, answer to their superiors, ultimately answering to the Nimro King. **Note:** This law is open to interpretation. Generally speaking, each of the Great Clans answers to King Blackrock. Each of the Clans has loose authority over a certain part of the Kingdom, although these subordinates are not nearly as clearly divided as, say, the Regional Houses of the Western Empire. Basically, each Great Clan maintains its own fortress village where all of the local farms, ranches and homesteads go to learn about new laws, report for military duty, pay their taxes, catch up on official news, and have any disputes settled. Otherwise, the citizens of the realm are pretty much free to do whatever they want, so long as they are True Giants and support the kingdom. Non-Giants live a much more heavily policed existence, and must accept the word of any Giant as law.

3. All subjects shall obey the laws of the land under the penalties doled out by the Nimro King and his agents. The word of these sovereign persons is law, and shall be accepted as such without fail. The penalty for gross disregard for the sovereign authority of the Nimro Kingdom, the Nimro King, and his agents is death by beheading. The heads of all such "traitors" shall be set upon pikes and displayed outside the castle of the King for 30 days, or until scavengers remove them.

4. All subjects shall take arms against enemies of the Kingdom when directed to do so by their King or Clan Leaders. The punishment for aiding the enemies of the Kingdom or neglecting one's duty, is death by disembowelment.

5. Theft of any money, food, or property shall result in the following: a) The thief shall give back whatever was stolen (or its equivalent; b) The thief will also give the victim something of equal worth to what was stolen; and c) The thief shall have one hand cut off for each subsequent offense. After all hands are lost, repeat offenders shall be beheaded.

6. There will be no fighting without due cause. Again, this is open for interpretation, and most of the disputes brought to Clan Leaders involve whether a particular act of violence was justifiable or not. Unwarranted assaults upon fellow subjects of the Kingdom shall be met with 30 lashes of the whip. Second offenses shall be met with 60 lashes. Third offenses result in branding and banishment. A popular brand being placed on such lawbreakers are the words "Poor Impulse Control," placed directly on the forehead. Note that violence against Trolls, Ogres and Orcs is usually overlooked unless blatantly terrible or wasteful.

7. The laws of the Nimro Kingdom are subject to change at any time by the Nimro Council. The Nimro King himself may also change, abolish, or enact any law if circumstances prevent the Council from acting in a timely manner.

Any other rules or laws passed by Sunder Blackrock or the Nimro Council tend to deal with administrative details, such as taxes, food rationing, military conscription, etc. The seven laws quoted above, sometimes referred to as the *Mighty Seven* or the *Iron Seven,* are the legal bedrock on which the Nimro Kingdom rests. Everything else, King Blackrock is rumored to have said, is just details.

For the most part, any activity not covered by the Mighty Seven and which is deemed a crime, is typically handled on an ad hoc basis by the nearest True Giant with some kind of authority (e.g., a military officer, a work foreman, etc.). Trials are unheard of in the Nimro Kingdom. One's guilt or innocence largely depends on how well one defends himself verbally in those thirty seconds after being accused of a crime. The other criterion used in these snap judgements is an overall reading of one's character. If one's judge believes you are the guilty sort, then no argument, no matter how persuasive, is going to make a difference. Those convicted of crimes are typically sentenced to death (carried out immediately, of course), banishment, amputation of one or more extremities, or hard labor (in increments of 10 years).

Serious gripes, disputes or crimes against a Giant Clan are typically brought to the nearest Clan Leader, who hears each side present its case, and then decides what course of action must be taken to reach a resolve. This is not so much a trials as a debate before an arbitrator, and typically lasts less than ten minutes. Petty or vindictive grievances almost always sees the Clan Leader rule against whomever brought the grievance in the first place, since the Leaders really don't like to be bothered with this

kind of "tattletale duty." In fact, 50% of all other grievances go against the person bringing it. The Clan Leaders figure if somebody is too spineless to take the law into their own hands, then the law doesn't really owe them any favors. Yes, this is unfair, but this is the Nimro Kingdom, where unfairness is practically a national pastime.

SunderBlackrock, The Nimro King

Brilliant and brutal. Cold and compassionate. Daring and deranged. These are just a few of the words various folks have used to describe King Sunder Blackrock, the Nimro King. Outside of Mount Nimro, very few people know of him, but to those who do, he is a harsh yet sympathetic figure, shrouded in rumor, legend, and myth.

Some say he is a Giant demigod spending time on this world while the Giant gods rebuild their deific realm, shattered long ago. Some say he is a being of great power, a dragon or demon taking Giant-shape to play with the Tall Folk or to engage in a sick game involving their destiny. Others believe he is the son of a mythic hero who has come to return to his ancient birthright. And still others believe that he is the father of all Giants, an immortal who has walked the earth since the Old Ones' reign, and has finally come home to reclaim his prize and bring his people home.

The reality of it is that he was born into slavery along the Old Kingdom border of the Western Empire some 200 years ago. For much of his early life, he worked in spice grinding mills and fought in gladiatorial pits. When he was one hundred, Sunder engineered an escape. He rallied a group of fellow Giants and slaves, and together they overpowered their masters and slew them. Sunder and his company, now with death marks on their heads, fought their way out of the Western Empire and into the Old Kingdom. For nearly a decade, he and his companions were hounded by Western slavers and bounty hunters. The chase brought Sunder and his friends deep into the Old Kingdom. One by one, each of them fell, either to the hunters or to one of the roving bands of marauders and warlords populating the region.

Finally, with no food left and little elsewhere to turn, Sunder and his last three companions faced their pursuers and, in a titanic battle, managed to destroy them. The grueling experience had formed an unbreakable bond between Sunder and his fellow fugitives — a Nimro named **Skenryg Rath,** a Jotan named **Rajor Kol,** and a Gigante Warlord named **So-Bath the Silent.**

Together, these four endured many hardships and underwent many trials. After several decades of wandering and adventuring in the Old Kingdom and the Baalgor Wastelands, they found themselves in the Yin-Sloth Jungles, where they encountered many other Giants, and even stayed in the Orcish Empire for a while. The last anybody heard of these four is when they left the Orcish Empire in search of some fabulous treasure near the Dragon's Gate. For ten years after that, nobody saw Sunder or his compatriots, leading many to speculate that he had died in the Jungles while seeking his prize. But after that time, he emerged from the region, he and his fellows laden with treasure and magical items, commanding a small army of Nimro, Jotan and Gigante warriors. They swept down from the Yin-Sloth Mountains and began conquering their own homeland, defeating the various Giant Warlords and driving out Gromek encampments wherever they found them.

"Warlord" Sunder's crowning achievement was when his armies met the last of the great Gromek war camps on the Nimro plains, where the famed *Gondajar Road* connected Mount Nimro with the Baalgor Mountains. During an epic, three day battle, the Fire Giant and his three lieutenants led the Giant armies — nearly 10,000 warriors — against a massed force of Gromek at least twice their number. The carnage was incredible, with each side losing at least half its troops. Sunder himself is said to have killed over 100 Gromek with his own hands, leading various charges against the enemy and defending the Giant camps as they rested after each engagement.

Finally, after the second day of fighting, Sunder sent Magic Pigeons to every mage he knew, pleading for their help. The only one to respond was **Zossa Ybaemwen,** a Cyclops wizard/noble on the run from the Isle of the Cyclops, where she had engineered a failed coup to overthrow the government. Zossa made Sunder promise that if she helped him, he would giver her and her fellows permanent sanctuary. Sunder agreed, and Zossa sent him a dozen magic scrolls. The warrior Nimro and his soldiers used them to launch a sneak attack directly against the Gromek generals who had been observing the battle from the air, a safe distance away from Giant slings and arrows.

The astonished Gromek tried to flee when confronted by the flying Giants, but it was to no avail. Sunder and his minions cut the Gromek off and slew every one of them. With their leadership gone, the Gromek army became confused and panic stricken. Although still outnumbered, Warlord Sunder Blackrock pressed his troops on with renewed strength and vitality. They shattered the Gromek ranks, routing them from the fiery volcanoes. From that day forth, there has been no serious Gromek presence in the Mount Nimro Region. Those few Gromek who escaped the massacre fled to the Baalgor Mountains and the Yin-Sloth Jungles. Although the Gromek have rebuilt their numbers since then, and large Gromek presences are known to exist in the Baalgor Wastelands and the jungles to the south, a large, organized army of Gromek has not entered this region since that fateful day, known ever since as the *Battle of Gondajar Road,* or the *Battle ofBroken Wings.*

With his enemies pushed from the Nimro Mounts and his realm (reasonably) secure, Warlord Blackrock crowned himself Nimro King. Soon after, he established the Great Clans of the Nimro Kingdom, incorporating the pre-existing Giant clans of the region into his new organization. Then he established the Nimro Council so there could be a (somewhat) fair and systematized means of passing laws and making sure that no one Great Clan became too powerful.

In the fifty years since, the Nimro Kingdom has grown by leaps and bounds, and King Blackrock has been elevated from merely a triumphant warlord to a quasi-godlike figure in the eyes of his subjects. To them, he has not just given them a home, he has given all Giantkind the dreams of hope, freedom, prosperity and long life. A renewed sense of purpose and destiny, and the knowledge that together, the Tall Folk may yet live to see their grandchildren's grandchildren live and prosper as free men.

This is the legacy he has always wished to leave behind. For now, King Blackrock knows that whatever happens to him and the Nimro Kingdom, there is an entire generation of Giants who have never known a world without a Kingdom of Giants. If some terrible fate befalls his people, at least there will always be those willing to follow in his footsteps, and forge a new nation of Giants from the remnants of the old. Regardless of what the future may hold, no matter what bad thing may become of Sunder Blackrock, he will die a contented man, for he has succeeded at his life's work. Indeed, there are very few people at all in this world who could make such a claim.

King Blackrock's transcendence goes beyond his personal legacy. In recent years, he has become more than just the Nimro King. He is the pivotal figure for all of Giantkind, and is one of the most important figures in the Palladium World. His nation must grow if it is to survive, but growing will almost certainly bring the Nimro Kingdom into conflict with the other human nations, which in turn could set those nations to war and push the entire world to the brink of disaster. King Blackrock does not realize this, and he certainly doesn't care about the welfare of the human nations. But he is concerned with leading his nation through its population crisis and other "growing pains." He knows that if he fails at this task, his nation, and perhaps all of Giantkind, will suffer.

The Nimro King is a fairly distant fellow who does not make friends easily or quickly. Even those who have known him for years find him a bit distant and aloof. He is serious at all times and has no sense of humor. However, to those who have proven themselves trustworthy, he will stop at nothing to protect them and help them during times of need. That having been said, King Blackrock can be as cruel as he can be kind. Anyone who crosses him will invoke a wrath like no other. When Sunder was first founding the Kingdom, he became infamous for not only killing the Clan Leaders who opposed him, but their entire families, just to send the right message to anybody else who might consider opposing him. He is even less merciful to Gromek and other external enemies of his Kingdom. To those who would threaten Mount Nimro, the Kingdom of Giants, nothing short of genocide is considered off-limits.

King Sunder Blackrock is nearly 200 now, and is entering the Nimro equivalent of late middle age. While there is nothing he would not do for the betterment of his Kingdom, he is also growing weary of a life of constant struggle. By the time he was 50, he had fought and worked more than most Giants do during their entire lives. This has taken its toll on the Nimro King, who has begun to look a little haggard and grizzled in appearance. But make no mistake, while Sunder is beginning to show his age, he has not lost any of his edge. He is still the toughest warrior in the Kingdom, and his instincts for combat and survival remain as sharp as ever.

One final note: While Sunder Blackrock is the Nimro King, he does not belong to any of the Great Giant Clans of the realm. As their progenitor, the King felt it would be better if he stayed out of clan politics and acted as a pure monarch. Instead, he has granted himself honorary membership into *all* of the Great Clans. As new ones are created, he is automatically considered one of them. This way, Sunder Blackrock is part of every Great Clan, yet is beholden to none of them.

Quick Stats for Sunder Blackrock, the Nimro King

Alignment: Aberrant
O.C.C.: 11th level Mercenary (and Warrior King).
Attributes: I.Q.: 15, M.E.: 20, M.A.: 22, P.S.: 28, P.P.: 22, P.E.: 27, P.B.: 14, Spd.: 24
Hit Points: 72
S.D.C.: 98; also see armor.
Attacks per melee: 7
Bonuses (including skills and attributes): +1 on initiative, +6 to strike, +7 to parry and dodge, +5 to pull punch, +2 to disarm, +17 to damage, +4 to roll with impact or fall, +4 to save vs Horror Factor, +3 to save vs psionic attack and insanity, +6 to save vs magic and poison, +24% to save vs coma/death and 70% chance to invoke trust/intimidate.
Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts with damage appropriate for a True Giant: Karate kick (3D6), Crescent Kick (4D6), Roundhouse Kick (4D6), Tripping/Leg Hook. All jump kicks. Leap attack (critical strike). Critical strike 18-20. Body flip/throw (2D6 +P.S. damage bonus of 17). KO on a Natural 20 (when punching or kicking), Body Block for 3D6 +P.S. bonus, Pin and Incapacitate on natural 18-20 when wrestling, Crush/Squeeze for 3D6 damage. W.P. Paired Weapons. W.P. Sword (+4 to strike and parry), W.P. Shield (+2 to strike, +4 to parry), W.P. Axe (+4 to strike, +3 to parry, +3 to strike when thrown, +1D6 damage!), W.P. Chain (+3 to strike, +2 to parry), Pole Arm (+4 to strike and parry, +2 to throw). W.P. Archery (+7 to strike, 7 arrow attacks per melee round, and +220 feet/67 m to typical range), W.P. Targeting (5th level; +3 to strike with sling or thrown item).
Weapons: King Blackrock's primary weapon is an ancient, Giant-sized, enchanted (greater rune) Claymore named *Gurthas Gurthasi*, which in Giantese means "Giant of Giants," or the "Mightiest of the Mighty." The weapon is indestructible and is eternally sharp (+3 to damage). It also has a 90 point P.P.E. battery that can be tapped to cast the following spells: Superhuman Speed, Fire Ball, Magic Net, Telekinesis, Eyes of the Wolf, and Negate Magic. The sword regenerates 10 P.P.E per hour. The total damage this sword inflicts is 5D6+3 — also remember to add in Sunder's +17 P.S. damage bonus.

For close missile attacks, Sunder fights with a pair of enchanted dirks (short swords) that are also indestructible, inflict an extra die of damage, and return when thrown (total damage is 3D6+17 P.S. bonus).

For long distance attacks, the Nimro King uses a longbow. Although he does not enjoy the high rate of fire or proficiency of a Long Bowman, he still likes using this weapon to snipe at enemies or take down high-flying opponents. He carries a quiver with 24 Cyclops lightning arrows (each do 6D6 damage), 6 silver tipped arrows and a 12 normal, giant-sized (3D6 damage) arrows.
Armor: Sunder owns a suit of enchanted plate and chain (A.R. 15, S.D.C. 200.) However, he only wears it when he expects to enter battle or when he is travelling in unsafe territory, such as the Baalgor Mountains where Gromek soldiers are ever-present. Otherwise, he wears a fur-trimmed Cloak of Armor (A.R. 15, S.D.C. 125).
Magic Items: The King possesses a variety of noteworthy magic items he has collected during the course of his per-

sonal adventures, and things that he has received as tribute during his reign as the Nimro King. Among them the most notable include the following:

- A Sorcerer's Dragon Helm that can cast all first and second level wizard spells. It has 70 P.P.E., and regenerates 4D6 P.P.E every three hours.
- A Mantle of Dragon Endurance. This item gives Sunder the endurance of a dragon (For details on this item, see the **Dragons and Gods™ sourcebook)**. This and the Sorcerer's Dragon Helm are thought to have been crafted from the bones of the legendary Great Horned Dragon, Gadë Sinisar, who Sunder is rumored to have slain himself in a battle that lasted six days.
- Two magical rings. The first is a Ring of Telepathy. The second is a Ring of Tongues, which enables him to speak and understand any spoken language at 98% proficiency.
- Sunder wears a rig that holds three connected scroll tubes on his belt (he is literate in Elf and Western Human). The first scroll contains the following spells at 4th level proficiency: Armor of Ithan, Fleet Feet, and Invulnerability: Limited.

  The second scroll contains three Magic Pigeon spells, at 5th level proficiency.

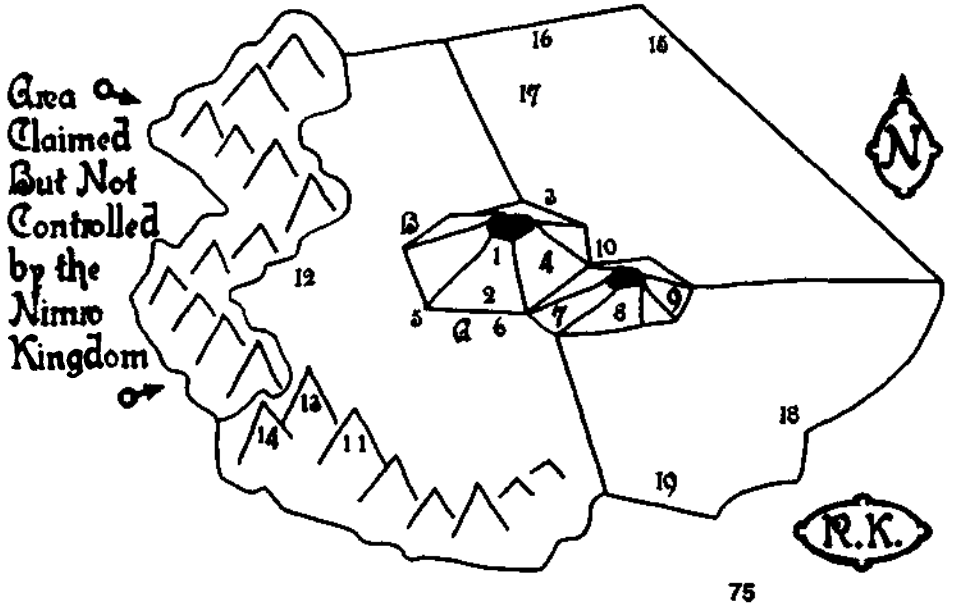
  The third scroll contains a Sanctuary Spell of legend. As much as the Nimro King would like to have copies of this scroll made, he simply does not have any alchemists or wizards who he feels are up to the task, and the scroll is too valuable to risk in an attempt to convert it. He will use this scroll only if he feels Mount Nimrod itself is about to fall, and then use the time of peace to try to broker some kind of deal for his people.
- Sunder's most prized possession is a Crystal Ball, a priceless item that he uses to keep tabs on all the heads of the Great Clans. He keeps this item secret from even his closest friends and advisors. Its use has garnered him the reputation for mysteriously being able to know all sorts of in-depth secrets and knowledge nobody else possesses. This only adds to the already thick atmosphere of mystery and suspense around Sunder and the belief that he is more than a mortal Nimro Giant.
- 100 foot (30.5 m) length of Cherubot Rope.
- A pair of "demon" Guardian Stones.
- A pair of Magic Restraints/Manacles.
- A Container of Much Water.
- A dozen superior healing potions.
- One potion of Superior Metamorphosis (anything but mist).

Money and other equipment: Sunder's personal fortune is well over three million in gold (mostly heavy 100 lb./45 kg "trading bars" the size of a normal-sized loaf of bread, worth 10,000 each). He also owns roughly 500,000 in gold as loose coinage, mostly Old Kingdom and Western Empire currency. And finally, he owns roughly 300,000 gold worth of gems and jewelry.

The King personally collected these valuables during his days as an independent adventurer and used the rest of his personal fortune to bankroll the foundation of the Nimro Kingdom. So, the treasure he has now is just a fraction of what he once owned. Sunder doesn't regret spending so much to build his nation, since the Kingdom is worth much more to him than any monetary riches. One should note that as Nimro King, Sunder has never dipped into the Kingdom's treasury for his personal use. While Sunder can be cold-hearted and vicious, he feels such "petty theft" is far beneath him.

On top of his personal fortune, the Nimro King has access to plenty of non-magical, but high quality, equipment, weapons and armor. Although the Kingdom is doing amazingly well and is reasonably self-sufficient, it rarely has more than 2-4 million gold in its coffers. As King, Sunder used the money shrewdly and only for the benefit of his fledgling nation.

Great Clan Strongholds of the Nimro Kingdom



Great Clan Strongholds of the Nimro Kingdom

I: Fortress Blackrock
2: Clan Asuloth
3: Clan Droseth
4: Clan Kaderon
5: Clan Gluch
6: Clan Sbesean
1: Clan Jeroeloth
8: Clan Grodnel
9: Clan Goramal
10: Clan Saezan
1 1: Clan Terikon
12: Clan Gulthur
13: Clan Kajan
14: Clan Siad
IS: Clan Travolg
16: Clan Quaelin
17: Clan Wrok
18: Clan Olrigan
19: Clan Daumos

A: Arriekor Lagan, Cattle Town

B: Oskin Gol, Trading Center

Note: There may be additional clans or notable places of which 9 know not. ~ R.K.

The Great Clans

The Nimro Council which governs the Kingdom of Giants represents the 18 Great Clans of True Giants that make up the foundation of the Nimro Kingdom. While not all Giants belong to one of the Great Clans, the majority do, and those Giants who come to the Nimro Kingdom from the outside often pledge their allegiance to one of these clans as soon as they feel comfortable.

Unaffiliated True Giants tend to be looked upon with suspicion and concern by their fellows. Not joining one of the Great Clans suggests that one doesn't fully trust the Nimro Kingdom, that he is merely along for the ride, or has his own agenda. Thus, joining a clan is beneficial, earning one an added degree of trust and respect from the Nimro Kingdom. However, with clan membership comes responsibilities.

Each of the Great Clans commands one of the main fortress towns of the Nimro Kingdom, from which they carry out the laws of the Nimro Council. Aside from collecting taxes (and promptly turning them over to Sunder Blackrock, who doles out the money as he sees fit), settling petty disputes and other minor day to day overlord work, the Great Clans largely concern themselves with maintaining the internal security of their stronghold and the Kingdom, in general. That means patrolling the local area for monsters or enemies (such as Gromek or Western humans), investigating any reports of unusual activity, and conducting joint military operations with the other Great Clans. When not preoccupied with a firm military mission, the Great Clans spend much of their time staying in shape with military exercises or various feats of civil engineering, such as building/maintaining defensive walls, roads, and village buildings.

As the Nimro Kingdom's numbers grow, new clans are periodically created, usually when one of the larger clans splits off into two separate groups — one retaining the old clan identity and the other one becoming an entirely new clan. Rarely has an entire clan of True Giants entered the Nimro Kingdom from the outside, although this has happened twice already. The first time involved a large Jotan clan that came down from the Yin-Sloth Mountains some 10 years after Sunder Blackrock had founded his kingdom. The second was when a large number of Gigantes poured over the border, intent on raiding a few villages and then disappearing back into the Old Kingdom. They were defeated and taken into custody, where they ended up happily serving the Nimro Kingdom. The Gigantes were grouped as a separate clan over time, and have become a small social group unto themselves.

There are 18 Great Clans: Six Nimro, five Jotan, three *Gigante, and* one each of Cyclops, Algor, Rahu-Man, and Titan. While these clans, collectively, are supposed to represent all racial and cultural interests in the Kingdom, in reality, the Nimro and Jotan clans control everything. Not only are they the largest and most powerful, but they also are the oldest and have had the most dealings with establishing the Kingdom's current laws and policies. Ownership is nine-tenths of the law, as they say, and these eleven clans definitely "own" the heart and soul of this nation.

Details on each of the Great Clans are included, with the description of each of their Clan strongholds, in the Territorial Overviews section.

The Great Clans of the Nimro Kingdom

Nimro
Clan Asuloth: The first Great Nimro Clan.
Clan Droeseth
Clan Kaderon
Clan Jeroeloth
Clan Grodnel
Clan Travolg

Jotan
Clan Uluch: Heroes from the Battle of Gondajar Road.
Clan Goramal
Clan Terikon
Clan Quaelin
Clan Olrigan

Gigante
Clan Gulthur
Clan Vorok
Clan Saezan

Cyclops
Clan Sbesean: Fugitive lightning-makers from the Isle of the Cyclops. There are also a handful of independent Cyclops not represented by any one clan.

Algor
Clan Yoajan: Masters of Conjuring and other arcane arts.

Rahu-Man
Clan Siad

Titan
Clan Daumos: Distrusted both by other Titans and the other Great Clans.

Territorial Breakdowns of the Nimro Kingdom

Mount Nimro is unlike many other nations in that it has no large concentrations of development anywhere. Just about the entire country is settled evenly but sparsely, with small villages, ranches, farms and homesteads dotting the landscape. Here and there are large fortresses and towers where one of the Great Clans is headquartered, and there are the large military compounds at the bases of Mounts Nimro and Nimrod, but other than that, there are no major cities or towns to speak of.

Why is that?

In a word, resources. True Giants are extremely resource-intensive folk. Just to survive, they need lots of food, water and living space, And to provide that, one needs even more food, water and living space to raise all the animals and plants that end up feeding the Giants and their legions of Shorties. On top of that, Giants need, on average, three times as much cloth, wood, stone (for building) and metal (for tools and weapons) as do humans.

On his own, a True Giant can do a pretty good job of gathering all of these things, even in an area that is not particularly resource-rich like Mount Nimro. As long as a Giant (or even a small group of True Giants) keeps moving, they won't deplete any one area of its food, water, wood, etc., and the local area can keep on supporting the local Giant population.

Still with me? Great. Because this is where things get really weird. The problem with True Giants living together in big towns and cities is that it concentrates all of these resource-intensive people in one place. Very quickly, the resources of the local area begin to run out of all of the things the Giants need to stay alive and comfortable. Magic can curb this to some degree — Algor conjurers can cast Create Bread and Milk over and over, but nobody can live on that alone. Likewise, Summoners can, in theory, summon large livestock for slaughter, but there really aren't any such spell casters in the Nimro Kingdom and there aren't that many loose animals to come running. Consequently, herds of cattle and vast farms are required, especially since the kingdom has no trade partners other than a few merchant caravans in the Baalgor Wastelands and Yin-Sloth Jungles.

Once the local area runs out of supplies, they must be actively cultivated (i.e. farms, cattle ranches, etc.) or imported from elsewhere. For a big city of Giants, that would end up turning most of the countryside for a good 100 to 200 miles into nothing but farm and production centers, as well as import/export lanes, all dedicated to keeping the city operating. In theory, this could work, but with all of the challenges the Giants face (chief among them being the large number of Gromek invaders), such a supply system could be attacked and disrupted rather easily. To resolve part of the problem, the True Giants have established a few large agricultural farms, numerous sheep and pig farms, cattle ranches and other livestock. Each clan typically has one or more of such operations under its management and worked by the "Shorties." This system alone is inadequate, and is supported by raiding enemies (particularly the Gromek and along the borders of the Old Kingdom, Yin-Sloth Jungles and Land of the South Winds), waylaying travelers from the outside world, limited trade, and eating other humanoids. Many Trolls, Orcs, and members of the monster races are cannibals who devour their rivals and feed upon other humanoids. In this case, humans, Elves, Dwarves, and Goblins are the primary humanoid food stock. Less than 20% of the True Giants eat other humanoids.

The problems with Trade. Outside groups consisting of fellow monster races (their nearest and most abundant neighbors), including the Orcish Empire, tend to be nomadic raiders, hunters and gatherers, rather than manufacturers and growers, thus their resources are also limited and trade goods are sparse (except for items acquired by looting).

The Nimro Kingdom is too far inland and located in hostile, monster-filled territory to solicit much trade from pirates in the Sea of Scarlet Waters or along the Yin-Sloth Jungles' southeastern coast. Furthermore, many humans, Elves and Dwarves, even pirates and the nefarious merchants of the Land of the South Winds, refuse to sell to True Giants and other members of the so-called monster races. The few who will, require the Giants to pick up cargo in a safe port or harbor and transport it via caravan themselves. This is both time consuming and dangerous. In addition to the obvious dangers facing any caravan on a long trek inland, a steady caravan stream is likely to draw attention to the Kingdom of Giants. The City of Troker and other pirate coves along the Baalgor Coast *will* consider selling to *nonhumans*, especially if a different Titan, Ogre or Kobold does the negotiations for every few buying expeditions, thus keeping the identity (and existence) of the true purchaser (the Nimro Kingdom) a secret. Giant *escorts and other* protectors *of the caravan* can be rendezvous with the caravan at a safe junction inland, away from prying eyes.

Don't Fence Me In

Then there is a cultural issue to consider. True Giants are essentially freedom-loving people who don't like taking orders. They prefer to be left alone and work things out on their own. After all, they are used to having no place to call home, so most Giants are used to a life of wandering and living off the land. Living with thousands of other True Giants, let alone Trolls, Ogres and other "Shorties," in a cooperative environment is a very new concept for them. Most of the True Giants of the Nimro Kingdom still prefer to have "space" between them and their neighbors, so even the most clustered houses and estates are usually spaced 1-20 acres apart, and those in the outskirts will be miles apart.

A good quarter of the Giants (and Trolls) have only a base camp of 6D6 acres and a hut that they call home, preferring to wander the entire realm in small groups and go into the mountains or neighboring wilderness to live off the land and fight the enemies of Giantkind on their own terms, as they always have. To them, settling down in a stronghold town, city or even a village is not an attractive option.

These attitudes have kept the few strongholds, towns and villages currently in existence from growing into big cities. A lack of trade and visitors from the outside world also hampers growth.

So, if there really are not any cities, and if Giants don't like working together very much, then how does the Nimro Kingdom work? How do laws get enforced, taxes get collected, and all of that other day to day stuff that holds a nation together get done?

The key to this is loyalty to the Great Clan strongholds, which are spread out all over the land. These strongholds act as regional forts and trade centers where anybody can drop by to buy and sell merchandise, trade livestock or grain, catch up on the latest news and legal decrees, gather for festivals, clan meetings and emergencies, and bring up any legal business with one of the Clan heralds.

Technically, Giants are expected to make a visit to their nearest Clan stronghold at least every few weeks, but everybody knows that is an unrealistic expectation. Most Giants are warriors or craftsmen, or supervising farms or ranches, and who can not afford to make a long trip every few weeks (soldiers may be gone for months at a time). Most try to stop by every few months, with the most diligent down so once a month. Those who visit pass along whatever official kingdom news, and unofficial scuttlebutt, to the people living at the stronghold, other travelers they meet, and any neighbors they pass on the way back home.

This is a very informal system of keeping everybody informed and feeling relatively united, but it works. The overall population of the Nimro Kingdom is fairly small, everybody is pretty self-sufficient, and the government respects the individual's right to live by himself with minimal interference. As a result, Mount Nimro has something of a frontier feel to it — everybody lives by themselves in the wild, eking out whatever life they can, banding together only at strongholds, when it's convenient, and when their government leaders needs the entire nation to pull together for something. In many ways, it functions similar to how one might have expected the American frontier colonies to have acted early on, before big cities began to pop up and big government was born.

On the Road Again

The other thing that helps to keep the scattered communities and individual True Giants in touch is the unusually excellent system of roads that have been established. Jotan, when they're not in a fight or looking to start one, busy themselves with big building projects. It's in their blood. They can't help themselves. As the number of Jotan has increased, more and more of them have taken on bigger and bigger work projects to keep themselves busy. The most impressive of these to outside visitors are the grand defensive walls along the Old Kingdom borders and the many bridges spanning gorges and chasms in both the Baalgor and the Yin-Sloth Mountains. But it's the roads that have really made a serious difference in day to day life in the Land of Giants.

Mount Nimro has never had a shortage of suitable rock, and the Jotan have for years used stone to form wide, flat highways. These roads connect each Clan stronghold to each other, as well as create central pathways to the base of Mounts Nimrod and Nimro, and the surrounding mountains. The largest and most famous of these, **Gondajar Road,** is 300 feet (90 m) wide and goes all the way from the Blackrock Stronghold on Mount Nimrod to the *Gondajar Pass* in the Baalgor Mountains, far to the west. On the east side, these roads are raised above the swampy wetlands along the *Dzereson River,* which separates the Mount Nimro Regions from the Land of the South Winds. Without these raised roads, which would look something like the Florida Keys Highway or the highway cutting across the Louisiana bayou to a real-world visitor, Giants would have an extremely hard time slogging through the soft earth of this part of their realm. That would put them at an extreme disadvantage to swifter, flying foes like the Gromek and Avians, aquatic ones like Lizard Men and Krog, or small, fast humanoids like the Tezcat, among others.

These roads make it possible for Giants to cross huge distances on foot in a single day. Keep in mind that Giants can not ride most beasts of burden because they are too big. But, with good roads, their naturally longer stride and incredible endur-

ance can let them move across their entire country on foot in just under one week (two weeks at a more leisurely pace). For a non-technological world such as this one, that's pretty darn good. So, when bad things happen, and King Blackrock needs to put the call out to his people, his messengers can spread the word fast and gather quickly. This has saved the Kingdom more than once, and it helps keep everyone in touch with each other, even though they all live miles apart.

Short People

The Nimro Kingdom's so-called "Shorties" are a different matter. They are generally hangers-on of the Giants. They are closely watched, heavily policed, and controlled from the word go. The only way to do this is to require them to live within a stone's throw of a Great Clan stronghold. Thus, while each Stronghold itself is a relatively simple fort and settlement, around them is a torus of urban sprawl that houses thousands of Trolls, Ogres, Orcs, Kobolds, Goblins, Hob-Goblins and a handful of other races. From a "human" point of view, these "Sprawls" are the closest thing to real towns or cities that one will find in the Nimro Kingdom. They are chaotic, jumbled places with no serious urban planning or civil engineering. They are slapdash communities that grow out along major roadways first, and then in all directions.

A Different Kind of Kingdom

As a result of all of these things, a territorial breakdown of Mount Nimro can not contain the kinds of information one might find when reading about a more urbanized land, such as the Western Empire or the Timiro Kingdom. Rather, what follows are basic overviews of each main region of the Nimro Kingdom, with spots of particular interest described in more detail. Some are large villages, others might just be a single house or farm were a rather interesting or influential person lives. Others might be uninhabited spots that nevertheless hold some kind of importance. That's what makes this land so interesting, for while it is a fairly "settled" land, it certainly does not feel like it.

The Five Sub-Regions

Mount Nimro breaks down into five smaller areas, all of which are claimed by the Nimro Kingdom. These are: Mount Nimrod, Mount Nimro, the Nimro Plains, the Old Kingdom Grasslands, and the South Wind Marshes. Each of these sub-regions has a distinct identity, defined as much by the physical terrain as by the people living in them. The Baalgor Mountains region is more of a buffer zone or even war zone than an official part of the Nimro Kingdom of Giants. However, it is only a matter of time before the giants lay claims to portions of these mountains, particularly the northeastern length. Likewise, expansion farther north and east into the Old Kingdom seems like a certainty over the ensuing generations.

Mount Nimrod

Mount Nimrod is the oldest existing volcano in the known world. Even more incredibly, it has been active during its entire life, spanning tens of thousands of years (perhaps millions). The amount of smoke, ash, and lava unleashed has varied dramatically over the years but it has never stopped seething to some degree or another. The last major eruption was nearly 1,000 years ago, when huge amounts of lava surged from its mouth for nearly a decade, covering the nearby areas with molten rock and turning it into a smoldering volcanic flood plain. Since then, however, the volcano has remained relatively quiet. Thin streams of lava trickle from the top, as does a steady plume of smoke and ash that makes the volcano easy to spot tot miles in any direction.

One should note that steady winds from the Sea of Scarlet Waters, from the northwest, keeps Mount Nimrod's ash blowing to the south, into the South Winds Marshes and the base of the southern Baalgor Mountains (sometimes called the Nimro Mountains). This works out best for both areas, since it makes Mount Nimrod habitable, and it supplies the South Winds Marshes and mountain valleys with lots of mineral-rich ash that sinks into the wetlands, making the area even more fertile than it already is.

Mounts Nimrod and Nimro are basaltic volcanoes. That means the lava that comes out of them is made of basaltic rock and is relatively smooth and liquid in texture, as opposed to granitic lava, which is chunky in texture and does not flow as evenly. This is important, because basaltic volcanoes tend to erupt more often, but with few catastrophic consequences. Mauna Lea on the island of Hawaii is a fine example of a basaltic volcano that keeps erupting but doesn't destroy the surrounding environment with explosive eruptions. An example of a granitic volcano would be Mount St. Helens (in Washington State) or what used to be the island of Krakatoa, in the South Pacific. As is normally the case with a granitic volcano, the chunky lava has a hard time erupting, so pressure builds up within the volcano until it explodes in an earth-shaking, catastrophic eruption (In the real world, when Krakatoa went off over a century ago, the explosion was so great that it literally blew the island into pieces, and the Shockwave was felt as far away as Australia. The tsunamis created by the blast ranged for thousands of miles!). The reason for this little lesson in volcanology is to point out that while Mount Nimrod is very active, it is also very unlikely to suddenly explode and take out all of the settlements built up around it (Even if a high level Earth Warlock were to cast a Cap Volcano spell on either mountain, in the hopes of turning them into a time bomb, it would probably take months, if not years, for sufficient pressure to build and cause an explosive eruption. More likely the lava would find a new ave-

nue of escape below the cap and bubble out). The folks living on this mountain know the risks they are taking, and moving their homes to avoid lava or thick clouds of smoke or ash comes with the territory.

In general, Mount Nimrod is not a very fertile region because of the residual ash, lava flow, and very high heat generated by the volcano. It is not entirely inhospitable, especially to Fire Giants, but it certainly is the most desolate landscape in the Nimro region.

It is with no small amount of irony, then, that this region also is Mount Nimro's most heavily populated one. The seat of the Nimro Kingdom (the Nimro Council Building) is here, as well as King Sunder Blackrock's personal headquarters and the fortresses of several of the larger Great Clans (mainly Nimro Fire Giants).

Traveling Notes for Mount Nimrod

Traveling on foot: The bases of these volcanoes are covered in layers of solidified magma that is somewhat difficult to walk and ride on, especially as the terrain slopes up to the mountains' higher altitudes. Maximum rate of travel is only about two miles (3.2 km) an hour. A more reasonable pace would be about one mile (1.6 km) an hour. Note that this goes only for the base area surrounding both volcanoes. Any higher than the base area and travel is reduced to mountain-climbing only, which proceeds at a snail's pace. Also note that the streams of lava and hot rock may make navigating even the lower base area difficult. At higher elevations, lava streams, hot rocks, steam, ash, and geothermic energy make the temperature over 100 degrees Fahrenheit (38 C; with some ground surface temperatures double that), which will increase the rate of fatigue 50% and cause numerous obstructions to travel. **Note:** "Hot rock" includes superheated stone which will burn to the touch, even though it is not actually molten (it may radiate red or grey in places); a chunk of molten rock, large or small, that has cooled enough to have a hard crust around it, but still has a molten core (often with seams or cracks that still radiate molten red or trickle with lava), or, most often, long lava streams that have cooled enough to have an outer crust but still contain lava underneath (frequently still flowing with lava like an underground stream), and radiate incredible levels of heat that bum hotter than white-hot coals taken from a burning fireplace.

Damage Notes: "Touching" lava, hot rocks and steam with one's hand or foot will inflict serious damage, approximately 3D6, 2D6 and 1D6 respectively. Falling into lava or on top of a large patch of heated rock will inflict 1D6x10 and 6D6 damage respectively (a large steam vent will do 4D6 damage).

Damage from a slip or fall is 2D6 for humanoids, 4D6 for riding animals, unless noted otherwise.

Speed Modifiers: Maximum speed is reduced by 1D4x10+20% for most humanoids, 1D4x10+40% for humanoids under four feet (1.2 m) tall, and 20% for Giants over 15 feet (4.6 m) tall. Remember, lava and other geothermic obstructions are likely to force most humanoids to go around them and make time consuming detours. Even flying (by any means) above the ground around the volcano will see speed reduced 10% and will have obstacles in the form of waves of sizzling heat radiating from flowing lava, venting steam, the pervasive heat, and grit in the air, as well as the periodic (and unpredictable) eruption of ash or spraying lava (especially at the top). This will also affect visibility (-3 on initiative, -3 to strike, parry and dodge) and inflict 4D6 damage per melee round from hot ash and 5D6 damage per melee round from spraying lava and/or molten rock.

Note: The use of magical Impervious to Fire or Resist Fire will help one endure the heat without fatigue penalty and make the speed penalty 10% less.

Traveling on horseback: The fastest speed possible is only 10 miles (16 km) per hour, but traveling at this speed incurs a 01-33% chance of the animal stumbling, injuring itself and/or throwing the rider every 20 minutes. A brisk but much safer pace is 4 to 6 miles (6.4 to 9.6 km) per hour; with only a 01-20% chance of stumbling and falling. A leisurely pace would be only one to two miles (1.6 to 3.2 km) an hour with no danger of falling.

Speed Modifiers: Maximum speed is reduced by 40% at the base of the mountain, but 1D4x10+45% for most horses and riding animals at higher elevations.

Certain areas of Mounts Nimrod will be impassable to horses, pack animals, and other such beasts of burden. Mostly, this is where the slope of the mountain gets really steep, arcing up the side of either volcano, or where the ground is hot to the touch. Lava streams may also represent obstacles requiring travelers to jump over them (if a narrow stream) or go around them. By that point, the magma-covered ground is just too uneven, steep and slippery for riding animals to keep up, or too hot to endure. 01-90% likelihood of slipping and getting injured, animals taking 5D6 damage, humanoids 3D6. Adventurers interested in climbing either of these volcanoes would do well to leave their horses at a base camp and proceed on foot.

Note: Damage and obstacles are fundamentally the same as noted above, but can become worse for animals, because their hooves or feet are sensitive to the heat radiating from the ground and rock, especially in the upper regions, and will suffer one point of damage per five minutes when forced to travel under such conditions. Furthermore, they do not like the smell. If left to their own devices, most riding animals will avoid the active volcanoes.

Clans & Strongholds

The strongholds of Sunder Blackrock and five other Great Clans dominate the local area, as do a number of noteworthy cattle yards, farms, and villages. Although Mount Nimrod is one of the smallest sub-regions here, it is the most densely populated, and as a result, a great deal of the land is dedicated to supporting the unusually high True Giant population. What land isn't used for military structures, farming, raising livestock, or housing is set aside for water storage (in the form of artificial kettle lakes), stone quarries, or various mining operations. Thus, one is more likely to run into a Giant settlement here than anywhere else in the region.

Aside from King Blackrock and his personal contingent of soldiers, which acts as a kind of de facto Great Clan itself, Mount Nimrod is home to five clans: The Nimro Asuloth, Droeseth, and Kaderon; the Jotan Uluch, and the Cyclops Sbesean. Each Great Clan maintains a stronghold here, although not all clan members staff them. As is the case throughout the Nimro Kingdom, most Great Clan Strongholds house no more

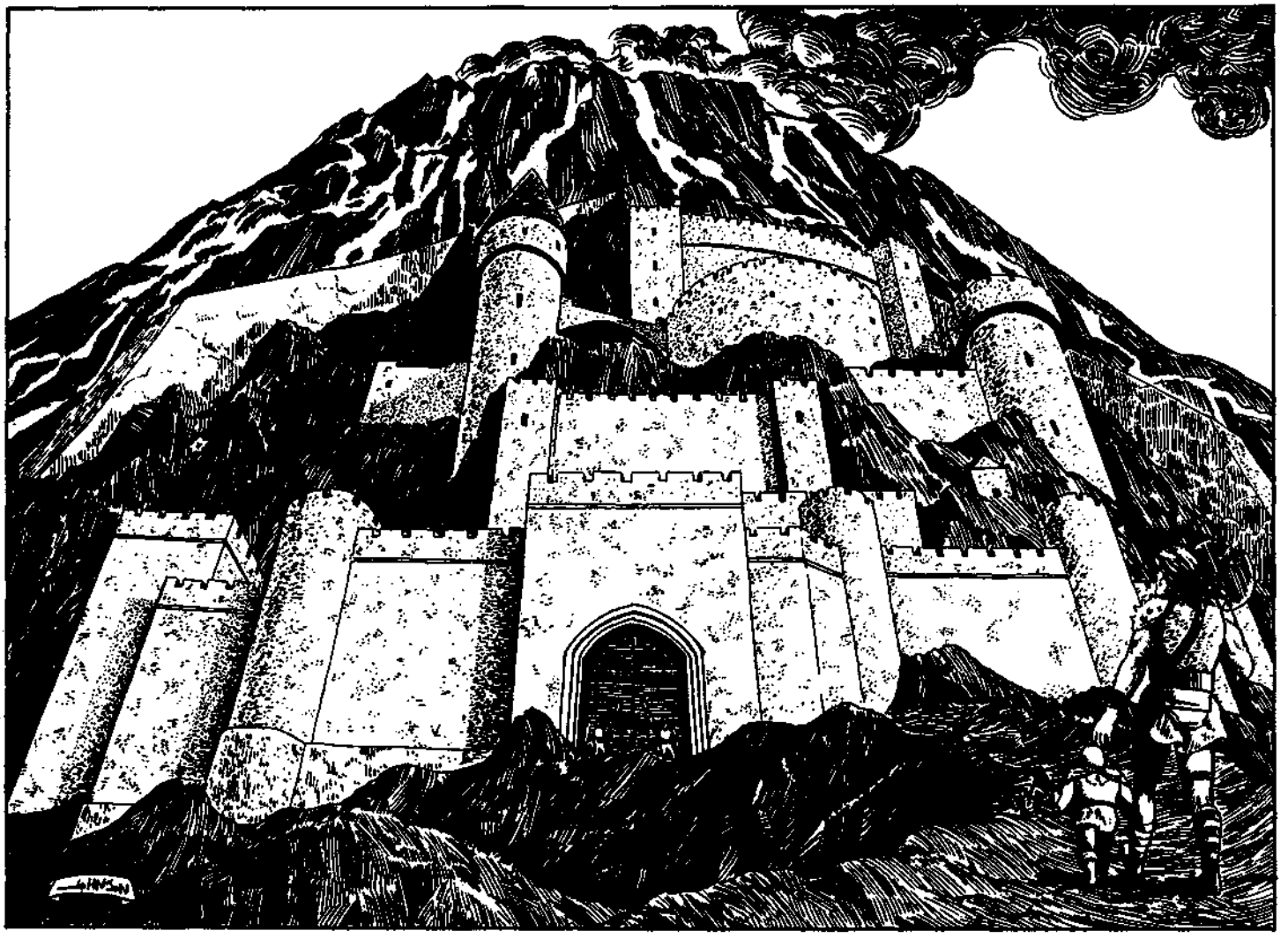
than 10% to 20% of the total clan population. Being part of a Great Clan depends more on who you are and where your loyalties lie rather than where you live. Thus, clan members may live hundreds of miles away from their stronghold. Living so far away is not prohibited, but it's not encouraged either. After all, how are one's clan mates supposed to help in times of need if they are a few hundred miles away? Generally, the majority of a Great Clan's population lives within 50 miles (80 km) of its stronghold, which during times of peace serves as a central meeting place and where most official business is carried out. Strongholds tend not to be mercantile centers, since True Giants usually make or raid whatever they need for themselves, so there isn't much commerce. Workers are often paid in food, housing and goods rather than coinage (which helps reduce thievery), and while strongholds usually have a trading post, it is not the main attraction for visitors.

Those who live in these fortress communities tend to be full-time soldiers and men at arms who spend their days patrolling the local area for renegades, invaders and other signs of trouble. When no such things can be found, troops are encouraged to find something constructive to do, like build a road, forge new weapons, repair the stronghold, engage in border raids, and other such work. Idle soldiers are not approved of, since idleness always leads to trouble-making.

Blackrock Stronghold

A frightening and dramatic structure, this towering fortress has been carved into the face of Mount Nimrod, with massive rock walls shielding its uppermost face from the occasional lava flow. When a burst of lava does come down near the fortress, the shield wall parts the stream so the lava flows harmlessly past the structure on either side of it. When this happens, the stronghold becomes all the more difficult to assault by ground troops (although one can enter and exit if they tread very carefully) until the lava ceases flowing.

The fortress itself houses King Blackrock and his personal legion of 500 crack soldiers (mostly Nimro and Jotan Giants). These troops answer directly to the King and their obligations to him supersede any clan affiliations they may have. Like the Llornian mercenaries of the Eastern Territory or the Imperial Janissaries of the Western Empire, King Blackrock's troops are the Nimro Kingdom's equivalent of the Marine Corps. They are always ready for action, and prepared to deploy to any part of the Kingdom at a moment's notice. The average grunt in this unit is a 4th to 6th level soldier with above-average attributes. Most are armed with high-quality (equivalent to Kobold) weaponry and armor, fashioned by the Jotan themselves. Officers are 7th to 10th level. Furthermore, 10% are spell casters of one kind or another (typically 3rd-5th level Wizards or Warlocks of varying types), with a trio of Conjurers counted among them (8th, 6th and 5th level).



As is typical for most Giant military facilities, the soldiers live in sparse barracks with minimal creature comforts. It is a hard and tough life, just the way they like it. That said, this stronghold is a bit more spartan than most, since it is purely a military operation.

Note: Additional buildings and operations housed within Blackrock Stronghold are noted on the accompanying map of the fortress.

Clan Asuloth (Nimro)

The Asuloth Stronghold is the seat of power for the Great Clan of Asuloth (pop. 10,000), the first Nimro clan of the Nimro Kingdom. It was founded by its current chieftain, Skenryg Rath, a long time friend and companion of Sunder Blackrock. The Asuloth Nimro are the most privileged folk in the Kingdom, handling much of the administrative work, which amounts to making their stronghold the *capital* of the Nimro Kingdom.

Asuloth Nimro don't generally handle much lower-level work in any area. They are almost always foremen, managers, taskmasters, or officers. While other clans resent this about the Asuloth, who make a show of flaunting their elevated status wherever they go, it is also understood that these Nimro got their position the hard way. They were among the original crew of soldiers who conquered the region and founded the Nimro Kingdom. Clan Asuloth also led the most heroic charges at the historic Battle of Gondajar Road. True, many Asuloth Nimro today are relative youngsters who did not take part in that incredible war, but out of respect for the clan elders and the Nimro's ancestors who did, everybody in the Nimro Kingdom gives all Asuloth clansmen tremendous respect. When the last of the hailed Asuloth old-timers die off, the braggarts and blowhards who will be left *may* have problems from the other Great Clans, who may one day have enough of their arrogance. However, while these subsequent generations may not be the heroes of old, most strive to carry on the legacy of their ancestors and are competent to outstanding men at arms (on average, 3rd to 6th level).

The Asuloth Stronghold is located at the foot of Mount Nimrod, near an ancient lava flow, not far from the Blackrock Stronghold. The Asuloth fortress stronghold has a large stone wall guarding its northern face to divert potential lava flows. Aside from this lava wall, the stronghold has a purely defensive wall encircling the facility, as well as tall guard towers and gated barbicans guarding the single entrance on the southern face (a considerably smaller, secret underground tunnel exits 200 yards to the southeast. It is constantly guarded by a 4th level Fire Warlock, a pair of 5th level Nimro soldiers and a quartet of trusted 5th level Ogres).

The Asuloth Nimro have very strong ties with the Nimro King, and generally leap to do his bidding. They also are consummate power brokers, and experts at manipulating other clans into doing their bidding. Nowhere is this more present than in the Nimro Council, where Clan Asuloth has the curious ability to get other heralds to argue and vote for measures originally drafted by Asuloth representatives. Usually, these measures entail something that serves the greater good of the Nimro Kingdom, but also makes life a little better for the Nimro and Jotan. That is the way of Asuloth politics, which gives rise to their saying: "When you give a little, you can usually get more for your clan."

Aside from being powerful politically, Clan Asuloth also is one of the wealthiest clans in the Kingdom, with large farms, cattle ranches, and mining interests in the surrounding area.

Skenryg Rath

Asuloth Clan Chieftain

A long-time friend and travelling companion of Sunder Blackrock, Skenryg serves as the King's top lieutenant in matters of war. Skenryg himself fought at the Battle of Gondajar Road, saving Sunder's life on two occasions, and killing over 75 Gromek single-handedly. Warlord Skenryg is the Second-in-Command of the Nimro Kingdom and is the heir apparent to take over when King Blackrock leaves the throne. Since the King and he are roughly the same age, Skenryg's eldest son, Skenryg the Second, will take Sunder's place if he and Skenryg the Elder die at the same time.

Although it is common knowledge that Warlord Skenryg will inherit the throne from King Blackrock, it's also common knowledge that he will have to earn the respect and honor that Sunder currently enjoys. Not that Warlord Skenryg is not respected; he is. He is a great hero of the Kingdom and is admired by many, but when he replaces King Blackrock, a living legend, he will have some very intimidating footsteps to follow in.

Warlord Skenryg is a deep thinker and planner. He is a cunning strategist who loves to organize and make plans. He is fond of elaborate schemes with false leads, diversion and subplots within plans within plans. Furthermore, he is excellent at seeing the big picture and considering every possible scenario, with contingency plans at the ready. He is frequently suspected of being the mastermind behind some plot or another at the behest of King Blackrock or Clan Asuloth, and can be considered to be comparable to the head of the American CIA. While Skenryg is a master manipulator, he is a fairly honorable and straightforward person, even if he does like to use power to intimidate others into getting his way in everything. The only person Skenryg will defer to is King Blackrock, whom he considers his only true equal — a quality that might not serve him well if he assumes the throne of the Kingdom someday. If the realm needs a firm, unbending leader, he'll do great. If the realm needs somebody with a little more flexibility and compromise, then Skenryg the King will be in for a tough time.

Quick Stats for Skenryg Rath

Race: Nimro

O.C.C.: 9th level Mercenary and military genius.

Alignment: Aberrant.

Attributes: I.Q.: 19, M.E.: 14, M.A.: 11, P.S.: 24, P.P.: 17, P.E.: 18, P.B.: 15, Spd.: 7

Hit Points: 58

S.D.C.: 92; also see armor.

Attacks per melee: 7

Bonuses: +5% to all skills, +6% vs coma and death, +9 to save vs Horror Factor, +1 on initiative, +3 to strike, +6 to parry and dodge, +9 to damage, +7 to pull punch, +5 to roll with impact, +2 to disarm, +3 to save vs poison and possession, +2 to save vs magic, +1 to save vs drugs, disease, and illusions.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts and Boxing — Karate Kick (4D6), Foot Sweep, Backward Sweep, Critical Strike 18-20, W.P. Paired Weapons, W.P. Sword (+4 to

strike, +3 to parry, +2 to throw), W.P. Shield (+4 to parry, +2 to strike), W.P. Knives (+3 to strike, +4 to parry and throw), W.P. Axe (+4 to strike, parry, and throw, +1D6 to damage), W.P. Pole Arms (+4 to strike, parry, and damage, +2 to throw), fire breath (40 foot/12 m range, 4D6).

Weapons: Skenryg fights with an oversized magical Flamberge that is indestructible, +2 to strike and parry, does 4D6+6 to damage and can fire a lightning bolt (4D6 damage, 600 foot/183 m range) three times a day, but he also keeps a pair of Jotan-made long swords (+3 to strike, 3D6+5 to damage) on him as backup weapons.

Armor: Skenryg wears a suit of Jotan-made Plate and Chain (A.R.: 15, S.D.C.: 200).

Magic Items: Skenryg owns three items he holds dear. The first is a magical Ironhide Ring that gives him a natural A.R. of 14. The second is a set of Giant-sized Magic Restraints, and the third is a Gem of Reality, which he wears at all times, like a nobleman's monocle.

Money and other equipment: Roughly 300,000 gold in personal fortune, plus an undisclosed amount of money that is held in conjuncture with a pooled fund maintained by Clan Asuloth. What all this money is supposed to go to is unknown to all but Warlord Skenryg and a few other key people within the clan.

Clan Droeseth (Nimro)

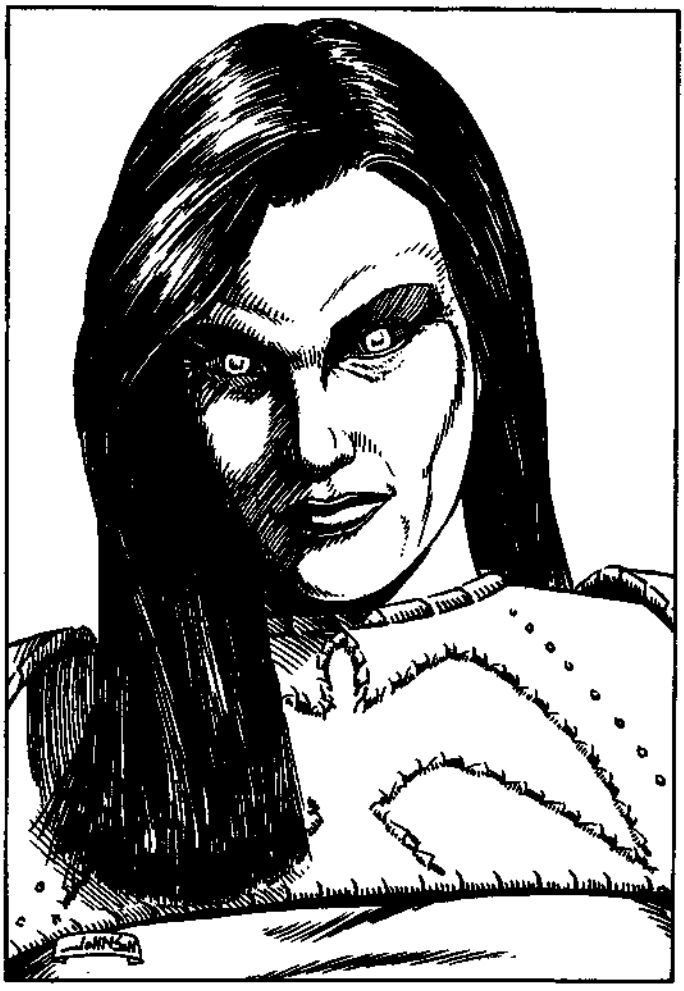
After the Nimro Kingdom was founded, Clan Droeseth (pop. 8,000) was the first "new" Great Clan, a splinter group that formed when Clan Asuloth grew too large. The two clans split amicably, and have retained close ties ever since. Shortly after Clan Droeseth was founded, it built a mighty stronghold at the base of Mount Nimrod directly opposite the strongholds of Sunder Blackrock and Clan Asuloth. The stronghold itself is similar in design and function to that of Clan Asuloth. It is a simple, severe structure designed for efficiency and not comfort. Positioned away from the usual flow of lava activity, the stronghold does not have any of the huge breakwater walls of the two previous strongholds. Rather, the fortress rises up and away from the mountain, like a miniature mountain itself.

While the Droeseth Nimro are master manipulators and power brokers (like most Nimro), they also are not afraid of hard work, and a disproportionately high number of these Giants actively serve as soldiers rather than getting into the businesses of merchanting, cattle raising, or administrative work. As a result, Fortress Droeseth is underpopulated most of the time. Usually, a good 40% to 50% of the clan is out on patrol somewhere, looking for Gromek to beat up on or border troubles to quell. They like to range along the northern borders and into the Old Kingdom.

These Giants encounter many Old Kingdom immigrants and refugees who are looking for the Nimro Kingdom. Droeseth scouts regularly tell these newcomers how to get to Mount Nimro, not thinking about the current overpopulation problems that plague the Kingdom. Other True Giants get angry at these Nimro for exacerbating an already critical population situation by welcoming all the new recruits they can find. Still, if faced with having too much manpower or not enough, the Nimro Kingdom would much rather the former over the latter, so the Droeseth are largely forgiven for their shortsightedness.

Droeseth Nimro highly value personal honor and they share a certain disdain for the sneaky and underhanded way in which other Nimro clans like to conduct the business of power-plays. This position has isolated the clan from of the top-level plans of the realm, since the really big power brokers of the Kingdom leave the Droeseth out of the loop. They figure the clan probably won't go along with their politics because they are all uptight stuffed shirts, so why invite them into a process they'll only derail?

Droeseth Nimro don't mind this too much, but they do resent the implication that they are not as trustworthy as other Giant clans. Thankfully, no one clan espouses this concept (rather, it's a widely held belief across the Nimro Kingdom). For if they were to make such a statement, the Droeseth would demand that their honor be avenged on the field of battle, and King Blackrock would probably have to intervene and set things straight. As it is, Clan Droeseth has some simmering grudges against a few other clans (this also is true the other way around), but nothing serious.



Nissa Vaddyg

Droeseth Clan Chieftain

Nissa is perhaps the single most respected warrior of the Nimro Kingdom after Sunder Blackrock. Her battlefield experience includes extensive guerilla actions against the Western Empire, an impressive showing at the Battle of Gondajar Road, regular skirmishes with the Gromek, several campaigns in the Yin-Sloth Jungles (defeating bands of rogue Gigantes who had attacked the Kingdom and fled to the Jungles for safety), and even a few raids into the Eastern Territory and the Timiro Kingdom.

At 225 years old, Nissa is weary of war, and her life of bloodshed wears on her. All she wants is to live in a land where she and her kind can live freely and safely. To that end, she will got to war against anybody, but she will not initiate it. Behind her back, Nissa's fellows call her "The Dove," for her desire to bargain and reach peaceful settlements rather than fight.

Some of the young, aggressive Giants wrongly believe her unwillingness to fight is because she is female, or because she has grown soft in her old age. The truth of it is that Nissa is as tough as nails. She was born into slavery under the Gromek, but like Sunder Blackrock who escaped his Western captors, Nissa managed to escape. From that day forward, she forged her destiny through guts, blood and raw courage. The result of it is that she is as bold, deadly and merciless as a Tusker and as brave as the greatest Titans. It is simply that she is not a warmonger and has learned from experience to know when and where to pick her fights, and to avoid combat unless the matter is really worth fighting for. Warlord Nissa knows that more than a few Giants scoff at her willingness to bargain and make concessions with her rivals and enemies before fighting them (Gromek being the one exception — there is no negotiating with these savages). But, she knows that King Blackrock, himself, highly approves of her methods, as do many of the other Great Chieftains. This gives her deep satisfaction and pride, for acceptance by her fellow chieftains means the world to her. And to earn the respect, trust and approval of the demigod — King Blackrock — is a dream that many hold but few ever realize. In fact, the Nimro King's public approval of Warlord Nissa is enough to quiet most dissenters and give her a level of respect (even awe) that few heroes of the realm find in a lifetime.

Quick Stats for Nissa Vaddyg

Race: Nimro

O.C.C.: 10th level soldier.

Alignment: Aberrant.

Attributes: I.Q.: 20, M.E.: 15, M.A.: 13, P.S.: 19, P.P.: 12, P.E.: 23, P.B.: 13, Spd.: 3 (she has a bad leg from an old wound and now walks with a cudgel that doubles as a walking stick/cane).

Hit Points: 79

S.D.C.: 87; also see armor.

Attacks per melee: 7

Bonuses: +6% on all skills, +2 on initiative, +2 to strike and disarm, +5 to parry and dodge, +8 to roll with impact/fall, +5 to pull punch, +5 to save versus Horror Factor, +1 to save vs Illusions, +5 to save vs poison, +4 to save vs magic, +3 to save vs possession.

Other combat info: Martial Arts, Boxing and Gymnastics (although because of her bad leg, the latter skill is performed at -40% and bonuses are half). All Kicks at +1D6 damage, All Jump Kicks, at +1D6 damage, Leap Attack (Critical Strike), Critical Strike 18-20, KO on a Natural 20, Body Flip/Throw, W.P. Paired Weapons, W.P. Sword (+4 to strike, +3 to parry, +2 to throw), W.P. Shield (+4 to parry, +2 to strike), W.P. Spear (+4 to strike and parry, +2 to throw), W.P. Blunt (+4 to strike and parry, +3 to throw), W.P. Chain (+3 to strike, +2 to parry), Fire breath (4D6, 40 foot/12 m range).

Weapons: Nissa carries her old war sword, a magical Claymore (3D6+6) which is enchanted to be eternally sharp, indestructible, and inflicts double damage upon any Elf or Faerie Folk it strikes. However, she mostly wears this for show. If attacked, she is more likely to go to town with her magical cudgel, a knobby stick that she uses as a walking stick/cane. The cudgel also is enchanted to be indestructible, can spit lightning three times a day (3D6+4), and can never be accidentally dropped or knocked out of its wielder's grasp.

Armor: Nissa wears a suit of Leather of Iron (A.R. 15, S.D.C. 188).

Magic Items: Other than her weapons, she has no magic items.

Money and other equipment: Nissa owns a bejeweled Gromek skull worth 100,000 gold in its gem value alone, but as an artifact, it is worth much, much more to a well-funded historian or collector of exotic relics. Otherwise, the warrior has about 25,000 gold in cash, and she also owns about 60,000 gold worth of cattle, her real measure of wealth.

Clan Kaderon (Nimro)

At 9,000 clan members strong, Clan Kaderon is one of the most dynamic Nimro powers in the Kingdom. Its stronghold houses over 3,000 full-time soldiers, many of whom are fairly recent converts to the new Giantese religion, the Church of the Blade. Indeed, ranking Nimro within this Great Clan are either Blade Priests themselves or those who aspire to become them.

However, unlike the Middle Kingdoms of the Western Empire, a region whose religious fervor makes it a source of division for the Empire, Clan Kaderon uses its religious beliefs to uphold the Giant cause, and defend the Nimro Kingdom from all who would threaten it. The Blade Priests of this Great Clan all foretell of a coming war that will engulf the entire Kingdom, and that only the most pure of heart will survive the trial and bring the Giant folk to victory.

To that end, Fortress Kaderon resembles an odd mix of a holy temple, military stronghold, and arena, with large training and drill yards for the Kaderon soldiers to practice their fighting skills as well as to gather together for large, open-air holy ceremonies conducted by the clan's Blade Priests.

One should note that while many Kaderon Nimro belong to the Church of the Blade, not all do (40%). These Giants are not particularly ostracized by their Blade-worshipping fellows, but they are looked down upon just a little, and certainly do not have access to the highest circles within the clan. This group is controlled by the Church of the Blade, for the Church of the Blade. Those who don't like it are more than welcome to join another clan.

Also of note is that nearly all (88%) of the "Shorties" who serve this clan are converts to the Church, yet receive no special recognition for it by their Nimro masters. While the Kaderon appreciate the extra support for their fledgling religion, the spiritual energies given to it by non-Giants just don't count as much as that from True Giants (at least in their view). As a result, Shorty believers are thanked for their fervor, and are bluntly informed not to expect any favors for it. Such is the way for non-Giants in the Nimro Kingdom, especially those affiliated with this Church-led clan.

The only really ominous note about the Kaderon Nimro is their high preparedness for war, yet they have made no overtly hostile actions toward anybody. This has led many outside of the clan to wonder: Who or what are these warriors preparing to fight? If not somebody outside the Kingdom, could it be the Kingdom itself? The Church of the Blade and the Kaderon Nimro have given no indication that this is the case, but a little vein of paranoia exists in most True Giants, and this is only magnified by the steadily increasing power and militancy of Clan Kaderon and its martial church. Rumors suggest that the Kaderon Nimro have a secret war to wage against an unseen foe that threatens the Kingdom. Still others believe that Sunder Blackrock is cultivating the Kaderon as a highly-efficient strike force for the next time the Nimro Kingdom finds itself gravely threatened. Of these tales, the last one remains the most likely, but as long as the Kaderon themselves and the King aren't giving out details, rumors will continue to abound.

Guran Rhadog

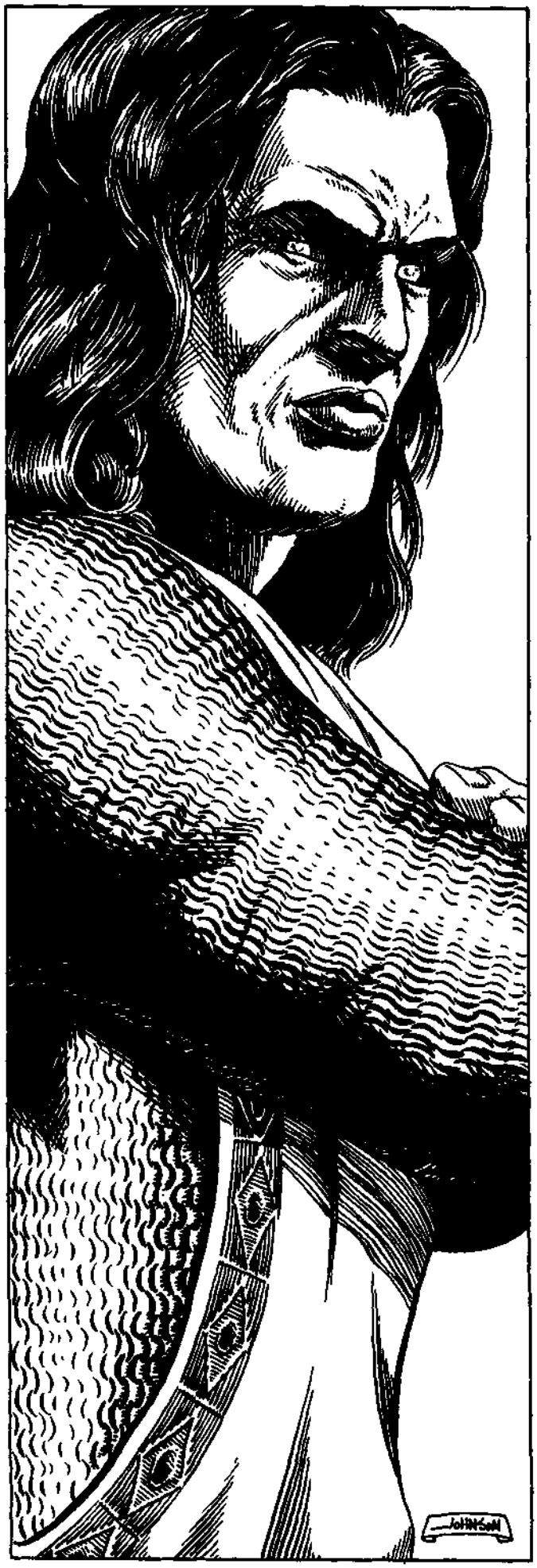
Kaderon Clan Chieftain

Guran discovered the Church of the Blade while living in the Old Kingdom, where it is thought that he encountered some Kobolds who had belonged to the Church of the Scar, but grew disenchanted with that faith and changed their spiritual allegiance to an obscure pantheon of Giant gods and goddesses (For details on the *Church of the Scar*, refer to the **Island at the Edge of the World™** sourcebook). Guran, who at this point was just a lowly foot soldier in some measly crew of bandits, latched on to this faith with a vengeance, and before long, he found himself the subject of numerous spiritual epiphanies and inner discoveries that ultimately led him to the special relationship with a deity that grants one the powers and abilities of a Priest of Light or Darkness.

Guran is most likely the first True Giant to have devoted himself to the Church of the Blade. It is also believed that he has developed most of the Church's rituals and theology. He is the leading expert on the Pantheon of the Blade, and periodically, enters trance-like periods that grant him further insight on the Pantheon, how the Church should serve it, and the role the Church will play in the years to come.

Guran lived in the Old Kingdom for some time, converting a cadre of Giants to the Church of the Blade before he was contacted by Sunder Blackrock. The Nimro King felt that any clan of Giant patriots whose very religion worshipped Giant gods would be a valuable addition to his nascent Kingdom. Guran saw in Sunder a worthy and pure leader, and accepted his offer. While disgruntled that the King has not converted to the Church of the Blade himself, Guran remains hopeful that one day, the Nimro King will enter the fold.

A mystic and a fanatic, Guran's loyalties are evenly split between his love for the Kaderon Clan, the Nimro Kingdom, and the Church of the Blade. Avoiding a paradox of loyalties, he believes that these three allegiances all serve each other, and that nobody can fully support one without supporting the other two. True Giants from other clans don't quite understand how it works, and most Kaderon Nimro don't either. They simply profess equal faith to all three things, and shrug off suggestions that they owe more allegiance to the Kingdom than their Clan or Church. The important thing is that King Blackrock, who has no



tolerance for any clan having greater loyalties to itself than the Nimro Kingdom, acknowledges the Kaderon Clan as a group of loyal subjects and admirable patriots. For him, the Kaderon have sufficiently vocalized their loyalty to him and the Kingdom of Giants, and more importantly, they have backed this up by fighting enemies of the state both in and outside of its borders.

Guran's most dangerous trait is his belief that the divine destiny of Giant people is to clash with the armies of humanity, someday. Guran does not profess to know the outcome of such a conflict, but to him, the Giants belonging to the Church of the Blade will win out either way. Either the Nimro Kingdom will reign victorious over the shattered armies of humanity, or the slain Giants will enter paradise, having died in service of their Church.

Quick Stats for Guran Rhadog

Race: Nimro

O.C.C.: 7th level Blade Priest and spiritual leader of the Church.

Alignment: Anarchist

Attributes: I.Q.: 14, M.E.: 18, M.A.: 14, P.S.: 21, P.P.: 18, P.E.: 19, P.B.: 10, Spd.: 20

Hit Points: 57

S.D.C.: 53; also see armor.

Attacks per melee: 5

Bonuses: +4 to strike, +5 to parry and dodge, +6 to damage, +5 to roll with impact/fall, +3 to pull punch, +3 to save versus Horror Factor and poison, +2 to save vs psionics, insanity, magic, and poison, +1 to save versus drugs and disease; +8% vs coma/death.

Other combat info: Karate Kick (3D4), Crescent Kick (3D6+2), Roundhouse Kick (4D6), Critical Strike 18-20, W.P. Paired Weapons, W.P. Sword (+3 to strike, parry; +1 to throw), W.P. Knife (+3 to strike, parry, and throw), W.P. Battle Axe (+3 to strike, parry, and throw; +1D6 damage), W.P. Pole Arm (+3 to strike and parry, +2 to damage and throw), Fire Breath (4D6, 40 feet/12 m).

Special Blessings: Blessing of a Warrior, of a Weapon, of Armor, and of a Battleground.

Special Prayers: Prayer of Strength, of Communion, and of Intervention.

Special Knowledge and Abilities: The Healing Touch, The Cleaving Touch, Remove Curse, Restoration, Turn Dead, and Penance and Self-Sacrifice.

Weapons: Guran fights with a pair of enchanted hand axes that each inflict 3D6 per strike and return when thrown. He also wears a long sword on his back that inflicts 3D6+2.

Armor: Guran wears a fine coat of chain mail (A.R. 14, S.D.C. 75).

Magic Items: The Priest owns a talisman of Tharsis the Reaver, his patron Deity, that confers a +15% bonus to the success ratios of any special blessing, prayer, or ability he wishes to carry out. This talisman will work for any Blade Priest.

Money and other equipment: None, per se. He has donated all other personal items to his Clan.

Clan Uluch (Jotan)

The Uluch Great Clan (est. pop. 8,000) grew from the legion of Jotan soldiers who fought on Sunder Blackrock's behalf during the Battle of Gondajar Road. The heroism, self-sacrifice, and overall toughness of the Uluch Jotan is legendary within Mount Nimro, and to other Giants and non-Giants alike, the Uluch are considered something of a hero clan worthy of the highest respect.

The Uluch stronghold is a massive, circular stone castle built around a kind of motte and bailey design. The entire structure is encircled by a dry moat roughly 300 feet (90 m) wide and 100 feet (30 m) deep. Inside this moat is a circular island on which the main castle grounds are located, surrounded by a series of stone walls 100 feet (30.5 m) high and 30 feet (9 m) thick, that support a number of tall watchtowers. As a defensive structure, Fortress Uluch is a marvel of Jotan engineering as well as an ingenious use of Earth Elemental magic, courtesy of the Uluch Chieftain, Rajor Kol. When under siege, Warlocks magically fill the moat with Rivers of Lava or send Ten Foot Wheels of Fire into it.

Although this stronghold has not been threatened since it was built shortly after the Battle of Gondajar Road, the Jotan living here are constantly modifying and adding to the structure. Thus, some part of this place is always under construction, and year after year, the scope of the place slowly creeps outward. This fortress is the only Great Clan stronghold in the immediate area not situated directly on Mount Nimrod. Instead, it is located some 10 miles (16 km) to the southwest, where the dangers of lava flow are virtually nonexistent.

The Uluch Jotan themselves are proud of their heritage as loyalists to the Nimro Kingdom, and they will fiercely defend the Kingdom during times of need. The clan is also rather close to King Blackrock, and if ever some kind of internal disturbance rocked the Kingdom and threatened the Nimro King, the Uluch Clan would immediately rally to his side.

Despite their history as fearless and cunning warriors, the Uluch spend most of their time building, which is their real passion. While Uluch Jotan are fond of working with metals to make weapons, armor and tools, they are especially gifted in masonry, stoneworking and architecture. As a result, the Uluch Stronghold and most Uluch houses and buildings are some of the most impressive and solidly built structures in the Kingdom. Indeed, the Uluch style of architecture is admired by many other Jotan, and there have even been incidents of Dwarves from the Old Kingdom Mountains trekking to Mount Nimro to steal a glimpse of these famed stoneworks. (Most such parties, however, are captured and killed by the very Jotans whose work they have come to admire. Needless to say, despite the allure of the Uluch's stoneworkings, only the painfully naive or foolhardy would ever dream of venturing here for such a trivial purpose as intellectual tourism).

The Uluch also have become renowned for their work on the many local roads surrounding Mount Nimro, particularly Gondajar Road, leading to the Baalgor Mountains. The Uluch take it upon themselves to maintain these roads and to lay new ones where well-worn footpaths occur.

Even more impressive is the Uluch's ongoing effort to build a massive network of large stone walls across the local countryside, dividing up the land into walled-off, 20 square mile blocks of land. So far, this effort has only cordoned off the land surrounding Mount Nimrod out to a distance of 20 miles (32 km). One day, the Uluch Clan hopes to have all of Mount Nimro blocked off like this, as both a supreme defensive measure against any non-giant defenders (the walls are 100 feet/30 m high and 20 feet/6 m thick) and as a tribute to the Uluch's stoneworking.

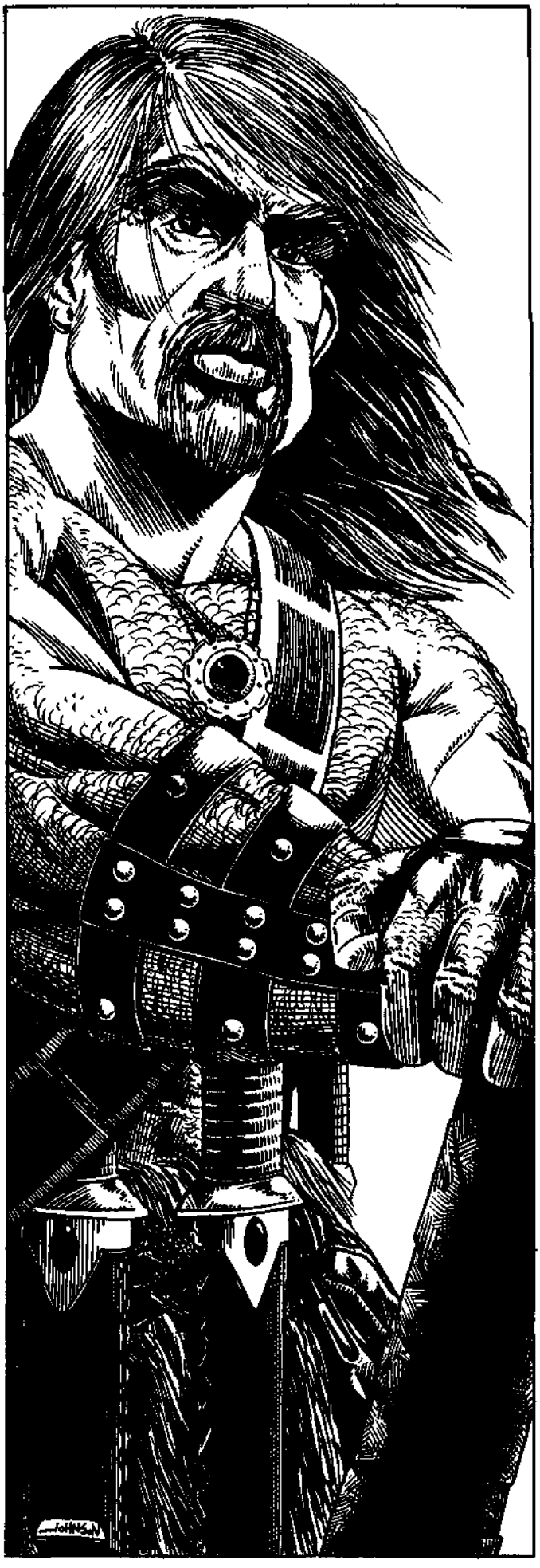
This is what separates the Uluch from their Jotan fellows. Where most Jotan feel that their best shot at gaining immortality is by forging a legendary weapon or by performing so well in battle that songs are written about them forever more, the Uluch feel that creating incredible pieces of architecture and infrastructure are their ticket to being remembered by future generations.

Unfortunately, not all other Giants appreciate the clan's hard work. Having a checkerboard of defensive walls across the land inconveniences travelers, who must stick to established roads if they want to move quickly and conveniently. Gateless, open arches are built wherever a road and wall intersect, but large guard towers are built at these junctions and manned by soldiers during times of invasion so that outsiders can't use the roads against the very Kingdom that built them. The openings can also be sealed via brick or magic, if necessary. Many Giants feel that the Uluch's walls only make it difficult for anybody to enter or leave Mount Nimro, as a kind of power trip to remind the rest of the country of the clan's presence. Given the already heroic reputation of the Uluch, reinforcing it with overly grand building projects seems like showboating to some (who are jealous of the Uluch's fine achievements). Furthermore, it is too restrictive and claustrophobic for the taste of most True Giants. Several clan heralds are actively lobbying to stop the clan from erecting more walls — roads, bridges, aqueducts, towers, and fortresses are one thing, but a grid of "country walls" is unacceptable.

Rajor Kol, Uluch Clan Chieftain

Rajor Kol is a figure of many contradictions. On one hand he is a constructive member of his clan and of the Nimro Kingdom. He gladly lends his earth-moving and stone-making abilities to any workcrew that needs them, and he has thrown himself completely into the development of the Nimro Kingdom's roads and "country walls." He also professes to lead the Uluch charge against any enemy who threatens the Nimro Kingdom, vowing to destroy such aggressors utterly. He vocally echoes King Blackrock's sentiments (as well as those of other Giant lords) that the Nimro Kingdom must expand to survive, and that by the principle of eminent domain, large portions of the Old Kingdom and the Baalgor Mountains and Wastelands should rightly belong to the Kingdom of Giants.

So going by this, Warlord Kol seems like an upstanding patriot of the Kingdom, but in reality, he is not. At heart, he is a selfish opportunist whose friendship with King Blackrock has lasted only because it has been very beneficial to him. During their first years as fellow fugitives from the Western Empire, Rajor stayed by Sunder's side because only together was their survival assured. An astute tactician, Kol recognized Sunder Blackrock's charisma and abilities as a Warlord, and stayed with him because of the opportunities and wealth their association would surely bring him. After the Battle of Gondajar Road, Kol realized that by continuing to work for the "new Kingdom,"



he would profit handsomely and gain much power. However, if things ever start to look truly bleak for the Kingdom, Warlord Kol will desert or betray King Blackrock, Clan Uluch, and the Nimro Kingdom. Up to this point, he has put on a very good show of looking like the concerned patriot, so very few folks (including Sunder Blackrock) suspect that he is capable of such underhanded actions. The fact remains that when the going gets tough for the Nimro kingdom, Rajor Kol will get going.

Quick Stats for Rajor Kol

Race: Jotan

O.C.C.: 8th level Earth Warlock and Clan Chieftain.

Alignment: Miscreant

Attributes: I.Q.: 8, M.E.: 10, M.A.: 12, P.S.: 30 (supernatural), P.P.: 24, P.E.: 23, P.B.: 9, Spd.: 11

Hit Points: 60

S.D.C.: 70; also see armor.

P.P.E.: 101

Attacks per melee: 5

Bonuses: +17 to damage; +7 to strike, parry, and dodge; +4 to roll with impact/fall, pull punch; +5 to save vs magic, horror factor (+9 vs elementals), +4 to save vs poison; +1 to save vs magic, possession, +2 to spell strength; +16% to save vs coma/death.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Expert, Kick attack (3D6), Critical strike on 19-20, Body throw/flip, and Paired Weapons. W.P. Blunt (loves Hammers; +3 to strike and parry, +1 to throw).

Earth Warlock Spells: Identify Minerals, Dust Storm, Chameleon, Hopping Stones, Create Dirt or Clay, Track, Animate Plants, Encase Object in Stone, Wall of Stone, Mend Stone, Wall of Thorns, Cocoon of Stone, Chasm, Close Fissures, Travel Through Earth, Travel Through Stone, Stone to Flesh, Mend Metal, Petrification, River of Lava, Wall of Iron, Cap Volcano, Suspended Animation, Earthquake.

Weapons: Kol's primary weapon is a stone maul enchanted as a Thunder Hammer and does 6D6 damage (+P.S. damage bonus).

He also has a belt of *eight* Giant-sized magical daggers which possess the following properties:

- Two are eternally sharp (2D6+3 damage) and return when thrown. The daggers can fly for up to one mile (1.6 km) accurately provided the wielder can actually see that far. Some kind of aid, such as having a magical Eye of the Eagle, or a familiar near the target, will be helpful.
- Two silver blades (2D6 damage) are indestructible and teleport to wielder three times daily. Both are also Demon and Deevil slayers (double damage to those creatures).
- One, a red blade, is indestructible and, three times daily, the blade will envenom itself with Scorpion's blood, which adds another 4D6 damage to the next strike.
- One is a Fire Dagger (does 5D6 damage) and is the equivalent of a flaming short sword to human-sized characters.
- Two are transformable and can turn into any type of normal weapon (axe, hammer, spear, etc.; not a bow weapon) or tool (shovel, pick, sledgehammer, etc.), giant or normal-sized.

Armor: Aside from some heavy furs he wears (A.R. 8, S.D.C. 50), he does not wear body armor.

Magic Items of Note: Aside from his magical weapons, he has three healing potions, a truth serum, and a stone the size of his fist that radiates magic (he "acquired" it in the Yin-Sloth Jungles). It is said to be able to transform into a Major Earth Elemental upon command, but can only be used once. Consequently, Warlord Kol will not squander his use of this precious item just to see if it works, but at the same time, he has no clue if this item is what he thinks it is or a sham or something else entirely. He refuses to let a psychic object read it for fear the psionic will use it against him or steal it.

Money and other equipment: 145,000 in gold and silver nuggets, 550,000 in gems and jewelry, plus at least a million worth of land holdings and cattle, in addition to access to the clan treasury.

Clan Sbesean (Cyclops)

Clan Sbesean is one of the smaller Great Clans (est. pop. 1,500), but existed well before the Nimro Kingdom ever came into being. For many centuries, the Sbesean Cyclops were noteworthy players in the upper echelon politics on the Isle of the Cyclops. Fifty years ago, the clan engineered a failed coup attempt that left many of the clan members swinging from the gallows, and a couple thousand survivors fleeing for their lives. Hundreds perished on the run as the retribution of the Island leaders hounded their every footstep.

For several very tense years, the Sbesean Cyclops sought refuge in the Western Empire, but fled to the Yin-Sloth Jungles when the climate in the Empire strongly suggested that they were about to be extradited home for execution. Year after year, more Sbesean blood drenched the earth as soldiers, bounty hunters and assassins from the Isle of the Cyclops whittled their numbers even further. It seemed that the Sbesean Clan was ultimately doomed until the fateful Battle of Gondajar Road.

Warlord Sunder Blackrock had heard about this renegade Cyclops Clan and had always wanted to recruit them for their lightning-making abilities. However, he feared that providing sanctuary to them would alienate his fledgling new Kingdom from the Isle of the Cyclops, so he never extended the offer to the beleaguered Sbeseans. However, as the Battle of Gondajar Road dragged on, Sunder became desperate and sent out a clarion call to all who would help. Realizing their opportunity, the Sbesean Clan responded, agreeing to help Blackrock's cause, provided he awarded them sanctuary in his new Kingdom of Giants as their reward.

The Nimro King agreed, the battle was won, and since then, the clan has found a safe home. The wily King did place one condition on the arrangement: in exchange for having a permanent home in the Nimro Kingdom, the Sbesean lightning-makers must produce a certain amount of lightning weaponry exclusively for King Blackrock. In turn, the King distributes them as he deems fit, with most of the magic weapons assigned to his personal legion of elite soldiers, a number placed into his armory, and a number of them distributed to select members of the other Great Clans as he sees fit (often as rewards and boons for favors and support). Nearly all Sbesean Cyclops know the art of making lightning weaponry, and all work very hard to produce enough to satisfy the King's quotas. The alternative is facing possible expulsion from the Nimro Kingdom, where it's likely that agents from the Isle of the Cyclops will resume their headhunt against them.

Offsetting their labors, the Sbesean Cyclops are not obligated to participate in any military actions on behalf of the Nimro Kingdom. In fact, they are discouraged from doing so, since their rare ability to make lightning weapons is considered a far greater service to the nation than endangering themselves on the field of battle. Likewise, any Giant caught assaulting any member of this clan is tortured most horribly before being put to death. This gives these Cyclops a kind of honorary position and security that few other citizens of the Kingdom enjoy.

As a result, the Sbesean Stronghold resembles a sprawling manor house rather than an actual fortress. Another oddity is that the Sbesean Stronghold houses the entire clan, not just select members. These "civilized" Giants prefer the city-life they knew back on their island home and are used to sticking together to survive. Now that they are in a safe environment, they again live in a massive, sprawling estate filled with lavish courtyards, plazas, apartments, and other niceties. The Cyclops' fine tastes makes the palace far more lavish and decorated than other Giant structures, lending a palatial, regal atmosphere to it. Far from fools, below the beautiful exterior of the Sbesean compound is an incredibly well-defended subterranean complex where the various lightning-forging workshops are located and from which the one-eyed Giants could hold off an army. No non-Cyclops, not even Sunder Blackrock, have been allowed into the Sbesean lightning workshops, a restriction all other Giants grudgingly respect. Even those who would consider trying to steal the secrets of lightning making for themselves realize that such an attempt would be suicidal. Not only do heavily armed guards patrol the workshops, but rumors abound about secret tunnels and impenetrable layers of ward defenses — ward mine-fields — that only the Cyclops know how to navigate. Even more disturbing are tales regarding the summoning of demons, Deevils, and other horrors, used to help protect the secrets of the lightning. The tales of such disturbing security measures have discouraged most folk from even visiting the compound, much less trying to infiltrate it.

Zossa Ybaemwen

Sbesean Clan Chieftain

Unlike many other kingdoms in the Palladium World, females are not barred from holding power or performing military service in the Nimro Kingdom. On the contrary, some of the most noteworthy warriors and chieftains of this new nation have been women. One such figure is Zossa Ybaemwen, the sly noble and wizardess who helped Sunder Blackrock during the Battle of Gondajar Road. Ever since, she has been exalted both by her own fellow Sbesean Clan members (for securing their safety), and the rest of the Nimro kingdom, as one of the brave few who helped the Kingdom pull through its darkest hour.

Zossa is a harsh, cruel and vindictive woman, but she respects strength, intelligence and bravery, all of which Sunder Blackrock has in spades. That respect, coupled with the enormous favors King Blackrock has done for her and her fellow refugees, have secured her loyalty to the Nimro Kingdom. Despite her history of trying to overthrow the rulers of the Isle of the Cyclops (she has always lusted after power and dreams of

ruling her own kingdom), Zossa is not so power-hungry that she would bite the hand that feeds her. She realizes there is no way to take King Blackrock's place in the Nimro Kingdom, so she has accepted her constrained but very comfortable position. After all, she *is* a Great Clan Chieftain, and that's got enough perks to make her happy — at least for the time being.

Zossa enjoys leaving lightning-making to her subordinates and instead busies herself with the goings-on of the Nimro Council and other leadership duties. She is one of the few Great Clan Chieftains who actually represents her clan personally at the Council, and she greatly enjoys hashing out deals and politicking with the heralds and chieftains of the other Great Clans. While her clan does not command great power, Zossa herself is highly intelligent and persuasive, and has become one of the premier power-players in the Nimro Council. Even more incredibly, she has done so without making very many enemies, so she is one of the best diplomats and peacemakers who can get opposing factions in the Council to deal with each other when all other measures fail. For this alone, the Nimro King places great value on Zossa's efforts.

Quick Stats for Zossa Ybaemwen

O.C.C.: 5th level noble, 6th level wizard.
Alignment: Aberrant
Attributes: I.Q.: 19, M.E.: 10, M.A.: 17, P.S.: 25, P.P.: 17, P.E.: 17, P.B.: 9, Spd.: 8
Hit Points: 71
S.D.C.: 66
P.P.E.: 110
Attacks per melee: 5 hand to hand or two by spell magic.
Bonuses: +5% to all skills, +1 on initiative, +3 to strike, +4 to parry and dodge, +10 to damage, +4 to pull punch, +3 to roll with impact/fall, +7 to save vs Horror Factor, +3 to save vs magic, +2 to save vs poison, drugs and disease, +2 to spell strength, 45% chance to trust/intimidate, and +5% vs coma/death.
Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Expert — Kick attack (3D6), Critical strike on 19-20, W.P. Archery (Rate of Fire: 5, +100 feet/30 m to range, +4 to strike and parry), W.P. Targeting, W.P. Sword (+3 to strike, +2 to parry, +1 to throw).
Spells: All common knowledge spells plus the following: Blinding Flash, See Aura, See the Invisible, Sense Evil, Mystic Alarm, Fear, Levitation, Armor of Ithan, Energy Bolt, Impervious to Fire, Sense Traps, See Wards, Blind, Carpet of Adhesion, Ley Line Transmission, Multiple Image, Eyes of Thoth, Domination, Call Lightning, Magic Pigeon, Fire Fist, Teleport: Lesser, Dispel Magic Barriers.
Weapons: Zossa relies heavily on her cunning and spell powers for fighting, but she is also a skilled archer and javelin thrower. She has a giant-sized bow (it is not a long bow, and does 2D6 damage per oversized ordinary arrow, or 3D6 per low powered lightning arrow or 6D6 per heavy lightning arrow). She typically carries two dozen heavy and six lesser lightning arrows with her into battle, along with 6-12 normal arrows). She also enjoys using lightning javelins and has six super javelins (2D4x10 damage), six heavy javelins (1D6x10), and 12 medium javelins (7D6) at her immediate disposal. She usually takes half of them into battle along with her bow and arrows.

Zossa also has a high quality, giant Jotan broadsword that does 2D6+4 damage (+P.S. damage bonus) and is +2 to strike and parry. Note: She has a supply of 96 of each type of lightning arrow and javelin in her private armory. She may also take two or three of her magic items with her.
Armor: Zossa does not wear armor. When she feels threatened, she relies on an Armor of Ithan spell.
Magic Items: It is rumored that Zossa hoards a great many magical items in a secret cache beneath the Sbesean Stronghold, but no one has been able to verify such talk, since this part of the structure is incredibly well protected by all manner of dark magicks and foul minions. Items of note include:

- Two invisible arrows (only the wielder can see them).
- One pair of Gryphon Claws.
- A giant-sized flying Carpet (a souvenir from the Western Empire).
- One potion each of the Might of the Palladium and Fly.
- A variety of Magic Fumes.

Money and other equipment: Likewise, Zossa supposedly has three million in gems and 1.5 million in gold stashed away; part of the loot she stole from the Isle of the Cyclops before she fled it.

Other Notes & Places Concerning Mount Nimrod

The Nimrod Cache

During the Millennium of Purification, Elves and Dwarves wishing to purge the world of all magic (not just the vile magicks responsible for so much of the destruction of the Elf-Dwarf War) ran into a problem. The most troublesome and powerful magic weapons were, by nature, indestructible and could not just be melted down or broken like so many other items. Moreover, the terrible carnage of the war depleted a good percentage of the world's alchemists, the only ones with the secret knowledge of deconstructing magic items. Not to mention, almost all of the **Dwarven Bio-Wizards** were either dead or had enlisted Mind Mages to blank their memories of how to build and destroy rune weapons.

This proved most troublesome to the "Purifiers," those who had appointed themselves the duty of destroying any and all magic knowledge deemed unworthy or too dangerous. Over the years, they had gathered thousands (some claim tens of thousands) of rune weapons and other noteworthy magic items, but had nowhere to safely dispose of them. Some were thrown into dimensional Rifts or hidden on alien worlds, but this was deemed too risky and irresponsible, because the powerful weapons could be found and used by dark forces on those worlds. Furthermore, there was a small chance that the magic items might be traced back to the Palladium World and bring new otherworldly menaces to the planet. Finally, it was decided to throw the weapons into Mount Nimrod.

Perpetually erupting, it would keep any weapons dropped into its fires covered by self-replenishing layers of molten magma. Furthermore, the volcano is inhabited by minor and major Fire **Elementals** and is reputed to be a portal to the elemental plane (three ley lines do intersect at the heart of the volcano), so there was reason to believe that the weapons might not even exist any longer in our plane of reality. Indeed, strange magical energies made it so that no Elemental being could be enslaved at Mount Nimrod and those originally enchanted or commanded elsewhere would be freed of their enchantment or obligation the moment they arrived at the simmering mountain. This meant no **Summoner,** Warlock or even god could send an Elemental into the fiery depths to retrieve the magic weapons. Thus, the ancient volcano became a major dumping site for all kinds of magic items. Big, small, good, evil, **powerful,** weak — it mattered not. Even good magic items and rune weapons that could have helped the world rebuild from the wreckage of the Elf-Dwarf War were discarded in a classic case of throwing the baby out with the bath water.

Needless to say, this priceless accumulation of rune weaponry is of intense interest to King **Blackrock,** and to a small number of scholars, mages, and other adventurers worldwide who know about it. Most folks write the weapons off as unattainable, for not only would one have to brave all the dangers of the region itself, but find some way to venture into the heart of an active volcano as well, and then see through the thick magma to even locate them! If it is indeed a dimensional nexus to the Elemental Plane of Fire one could endlessly swim through the molten lava to the core of the world and into the alien world of the Elementals and never find the items. Many powerful treasure-hunters have tried just such feats of magic and daring, never to be seen again, presumed burnt to a crisp, killed as intruders by angry Elementals or lost forever. Still, there remain those dreamers and daredevils who constantly cook up schemes and plans to mine Mount Nimrod for its many, many lost magic items. Perhaps one **day,** somebody will manage to find a way to recover these ancient magic items, but it seems most unlikely. However, if it were possible, whoever succeeded would possess the greatest treasure trove of rune weapons, magic items and ancient artifacts on the Palladium World.

The true tally of what was thrown into this volcano will never be known, since the Purifiers chose not to document the items destroyed. What few written accounts that have survived from the Millennium of Purification only suggest that thousands of items were thrown into the maw of Mount Nimrod. One tiny piece of a list of items is rumored to exist somewhere in the Great Library of **Bletherad's** collection of Uncataloged Works. Another is rumored to be held in the library of a wizards' guild in Caer **Itom.** A copy of one of these lists is *reported* to be part of a treasure trove belonging to a Great Horned Dragon that lives near Dragon's Gate in the Yin-Sloth Jungles. Another copy is said to rest at the bottom of the Sea of Despair, sealed in a stone cask in the cargo hold of an ancient pirate vessel. Another one or two copies are unaccounted for.

At least nine legendary rune weapons are believed to rest at the bottom of the core magma chamber in Mount Nimrod. These nine are **Bloodrazor, Vargus the Beast, Mridlis the Foehammer, Jihal the Talon, Korrigan the Soul Whip, Greigradamus the Vanguard, Aalzaraad, Nadaereon, and Yeremond the Executioner.** These, more than any other items, interest treasure-hunters everywhere. Indeed, the news of just one rune weapon has in the past pushed kings to send armies in search of them. If the world at large learned of the treasures to

be gained from this volcano, perhaps the nations of the world would gladly fight each other to retrieve them.

The Cattle Town of Arriekor Lagan

One of the major problems of running a nation like the Nimro Kingdom is keeping everybody fed. The average Giant consumes three to six times as much food and water as an average human in one day. Multiply this by the nearly 200,000 Giants living here and the many other non-Giant races as well, and one is faced with incredible food requirements.

King Blackrock gave this issue considerable thought before forming the Nimro Kingdom. Magic solutions — such as recruiting Algor Conjurers to pull cows and hogs from thin air or having Summoners draw forth huge animals for slaughter — were considered too impractical in the long run. Likewise, the large animals and monsters of the Baalgor Wastelands could be hunted for food, but it would be too troublesome to carry them all the way back home. No, the age-old Giant tradition of cattle raising would be the country's meal ticket. Only now, it was going to be raised to a whole new level.

Shortly after the Battle of Gondajar Road, the Nimro King encouraged the Great Clans to pool their many smaller cattle farms into huge operations where the efforts of each small farm could be pooled. This was not mandatory, of course, since the King figured that if he forcibly collectivized the cattle farms, production would somehow suffer. Instead, he established ridiculously high slaughter quotas for each Great Clan to reach each season. If they reached these quotas, they got a bonus of 10,000 gold from the King himself. If they beat the quota by more than 15%, they got a 15,000 gold bonus, and if they bettered the quota by 33% or more, they got a 25,000 gold bonus. This, on top of whatever money the Clans made from actually selling their beef made cattle raising a very lucrative business. At first, only the Great Clans could afford to set up operations large enough to win the King's production bonuses, but as the Kingdom flourished, more and more independent Giants began their own cattle farms, eyeing the bonuses for themselves.

Today, cattle farms dot the Nimro Kingdom and are perhaps the single largest industry in the land. Almost every farm in the country is dedicated to raising livestock in some way; either farms are directly raising cattle themselves, or growing grains to sell to cattle farmers whose operations are too small to raise sufficient feed on their own. The largest cattle farms are very self-sufficient, with large water supplies, such as a pond, well or stream. Fields of grain are usually part of the "spread," and contingents of well-armed guards patrol the premises on the lookout for wild predators, bandits and Gromek saboteurs.

A side effect of this new generation of cattle farms is cattle towns, places where cattle fanners can drive their herds for sale and slaughter. These places really are not towns as much as they are huge collections of holding pens, slaughter yards, and auction houses held together by small clusters of inns, saloons, and other trappings of "civilization."

The most noteworthy of these in the Mount Nimrod sub-region is Arriekor Lagan. Like most cattle towns, it is not formally affiliated with any specific Great Clan, for fear of driving away customers from other clans who would otherwise fear that the best deals were going to others on the basis of clan membership. No, here at Arriekor Lagan, clan affiliations do not matter. Just money.

This cattle town is only 35 years old, built on the ashes of a previous town that burned down under mysterious circumstances just 10 years after it had been built. The previous town had been the venture of Clan Asuloth, but Arriekor Lagan is an independent enterprise founded by two entrepreneurial Giants: a Nimro named *Ciaba Arriekor* and a Jotan named *Asaev Lagan* who had saved each others lives during the Battle of Gondajar Road. Each Giant bears terrible wounds from that fateful battle. Ciaba lost his left eye and his right hand, while Asaev lost his right leg at the knee and hobbles on an iron prosthetic. This has earned him the nickname "Ground-Pounder." (Note: Using the prosthetic leg to kick, Asaev inflicts an extra 1D6 damage, but is at -4 to hit).

Together, these two veterans retired from service and opened a saloon on a well-traveled crossroads not far from Mounts Nimrod and Nimro. Soon, the place became a popular stop-over for cattle drivers who were taking their herds to one of the Great Clan strongholds for sale and slaughter. Sensing an opportunity, the two Giants built a few holding pens and an auction house where the ranchers could buy and sell their herds without having to pay any taxes to the Great Clans. The scheme worked so well that soon all of the local cattle farmers began doing all of their business here, and what began as a small get-rich-quick scheme blossomed into a full-blown stroke of genius for Ciaba and Asaev.

Today, dozens of cattle towns mirroring the structure of this one can be found throughout the Nimro lowlands, but this one remains the largest and most successful. Ciaba and Asaev manage it with a very close eye on the bottom-line and security. They tolerate no thievery of any kind, and employ 30 enforcers (mostly Nimro and Jotan, but at least one Cyclops, Titan and Rahu-Man are in the mix, too) to crack down on anybody who breaks the Golden Rule: No thievery!

After that, this town is fairly wild and woolly. The feeling is that everyone here works very hard, so they like to play even harder. As long as nobody rips off anybody else, or commits wanton acts of violence or destruction, then the enforcers won't step in. This lends a kind of Wild West feel to the place.

As far as defenses go, the town is moderately defended, with a single outer wall (which doubles as a defining wall for many of the town's cattle pens). The town enforcers are charged with defending the town in case it falls under attack, but it never has. Structurally, Arriekor Lagan consists of a ring of large stockyards which can each hold up to 5,000 head of cattle. Inside this ring of stockyards are the town buildings, mostly saloons, inns, auction houses, and the odd granary, livery, slaughterhouse, and warehouse. Periodically, some other businesses will pop up, such as a brewery or fortune teller, or some other commercial enterprise, but they never seem to thrive for long. This is a simple town, run by simple folk, who are here for two things: to deal cattle, and to blow off steam. Anything else is a distraction.

One building of note is the home of Ciaba and Asaev, which resembles a stout, one-story stone stronghold with no towers. This is the only building to have survived the fire of the first cattle town, and it was the original saloon the two opened in the old days. They have become quite sentimental about this place and will do anything to prevent it from being harmed. Of course, it

is no longer a saloon, but the Giants' home, and is cordoned off by a high wooden pike-fence manned by a complement of six defenders at all times. Inside, the place is fairly spartan (as is the case in most Giant homes). Underneath the floor is an underground passage to a stone-lined cellar where wine used to be stored, but now serves as the town's treasury. At any given time, 1D6x10,000 gold can be found here, and during the peak selling seasons, up to ten times as much money is stored in this chamber. During such times, Ciaba and Asaev double the guard on their home, not realizing that doing so will probably only alert potential thieves that something of special value is in there.

The Trading Center of Oskin Gol

Farms, cattle towns and the fortified strongholds of the Great Clans are three of the four most common types of settlements found throughout the Nimro Kingdom. The fourth type are trading centers, which are less numerous than the other communities described, but are no less important.

The Nimro Kingdom does not support a particularly commercial economy, since Giants tend to make everything they need themselves or acquire goods through raids, combat or theft. This new sense of "commerce" has given the Giants a general dislike for professional merchants. From their point of view, if somebody spends his whole life buying, selling, and trading things, how can he be of any use to anybody when he's not helping money and goods pass between hands? This outlook makes merchants distrusted and unwelcome, which further stunts any serious commercial growth or connections to the outside world.

Yet, there remain those who choose to labor under this stigma, taking on the role of the untrustworthy money-mongering merchant in exchange for leading the life of a warrior or rancher. Compared to most communities, the Nimro Kingdom's merchants do very well for themselves, something which only heightens other folk's dislike and distrust for them (It would seem that here, as elsewhere, merchants are one of the more easily scapegoated segments of society). Despite all this, trading centers play an important part in keeping the Nimro Kingdom going. Giants in general do not gather together in towns and cities for a variety of reasons noted earlier. This causes problems when one needs to buy, sell, or barter for items that aren't readily available to the individual. Since most Giants do not even know their neighbors, much less like them, depending on them to buy, sell, and trade essential goods and services does not work. The only option the Kingdom has come up with are the so-called Trading Centers.

Like cattle towns, Trade Centers are found at popular crossroads where travelers of every stripe can meet and do business. Trading Centers look and act like the commercial district of any large town or city, except they have no other sections of town or residences as part of the community. They are simply a market and gathering place that focus on business.

Oskin Gol is not a particularly remarkable Trading Center, but it does serve as a very fine example of what most of these centers are like. The Center is fairly well defended, with a large stone wall, several guard towers, and a complement of nearly 100 guards and enforcers running security within and outside the facility. There is only one gate to get in, which leads to an area where all visitors must check in. Here, guards learn each visitor's purpose for coming. If it's not to buy, sell, or trade something, then they are asked to leave and not return until they have some business to do. Casual tourists and troublemakers are not allowed! Typically, one proves his good intent by showing the entry guards what they have to sell, trade, or buy with (cash). A small donation (as little as 10 gold, a bottle or two of booze, etc.) to the guards ensures a quick and easy entry into town. Especially large bribes might even convince guards to let incoming visitors skip the next stage of entering the Trade Center: the weapons check (provided all weapons are concealed), and will certainly forego any thorough inspections of wagons, containers or trade goods.

Oskin Gol requires all visitors to check their weapons before entering the main part of town. A chip of stone with a particular engraving on it is issued to enable visitors to pick up the checked equipment later. Those who lose their stone claims check are out of luck, since the weapons check personnel are not allowed to give out ANYTHING to people without displaying a claims check.

Use of magic is very much frowned upon while in town, and anybody casting spells, performing religious rituals or using psychic powers will probably be set upon by guards, beaten badly, and ejected from town.

After visitors surrender their weapons, they proceed to the center of town to an open-air bazaar of various shops, stands, and businesses. The **Outer Ring** is where all of the permanent businesses are, including a few noteworthy blacksmiths, weaponsmiths, armorers, fletchers, stoneworkers, and jewelers. Within the Inner Ring is a jumble of more transient operations working out of tents and wagons. They include fruit and food stands, butchers, bakers, clothing merchants, travelling salesmen, etc. The average stay for merchants in this part of the town is about a month before they go out of business permanently, need to leave to restock, or have done well enough to move on (For a detailed list of the various kinds of businesses to be found at Trade Centers and in other towns and cities of the Palladium World, refer to the City Generation Rules on page 172 of the **Western Empire™ sourcebook**).

Oskin Gol is run by ***Salius Skaborra***, a rogue Cyclops who has nothing to do with Clan Sbesean. Salius has lived in the Nimro Kingdom for the last 25 years, coming to it from the Baalgor Wastelands where he was reported to have been a wandering adventurer. He helped set up Oskin Gol, and he and several of his adventuring friends oversee much of the security there — descending upon troublemakers with swift and terrible vengeance. Salius' only real concern is making as much money as he can so he can quit this life and fund a large and well-supported expedition to Dragon's Gate in the Yin-Sloth Jungles. Few people know of Salius' plan, and even fewer know why he is so interested in Dragon's Gate. Some say it is so he can learn from the mighty dragons living there. Or perhaps it's to steal some incredible treasure. Whatever the reason, Salius is likely to launch his trip within the next year, and he is willing to consider anybody to help him make the journey, even non-Giants.

Mount Nimro

Mount Nimro is the second great volcano marking this land. Although the two are frequently referred to as the twin volcanoes, they are not identical twins. Mount Nimrod is considerably older, larger and has a long history of being extremely active. Unlike its older sibling Mount Nimrod, Nimro doesn't produce the constant streams of glowing magma that flow like tiny rivers of fire. Instead, Mount Nimro constantly issues great plumes of smoke and ash into the sky, its inner fires not strong enough to well up to the surface on a regular basis. Still, the volcano has been active since its creation during the Time of a Thousand Magicks and ever few decades, unleashes one or more streams of lava.

Today, the older Mount Nimrod is the de facto capital and center of the Kingdom of Giants, but it is Mount Nimro, many say, where the real *work* of the kingdom is done. It is at, or more to the point, "under" Mount Nimro where the greatest forges and metalworks are located. A subterranean network of passages and chambers the Giants call "The Underworld." If nothing else, Mount Nimro is the "skunkworks," the factory of war that arms and armors the nation of Giants. To many of the citizens, this place is the real heart of power in the realm. For, as many say, "The Nimro Kingdom was bom into war, and so it shall be for all of its days." To that end, the work at Mount Nimro is more important than anywhere else in the Kingdom — at least, as far as this sub-region's proud inhabitants are concerned.

Since Mount Nimro puts out so much ash and noxious fumes, the land surrounding this volcano isn't very suitable for raising crops or cattle. So, those who live and work here tend to stay right on the volcano, where, ironically enough, the same winds that carry the spewing ash to the rest of the sub-region keep the actual volcano relatively free and clean of such debris.

While settlements and strongholds are located on the volcano's surface, the real work here is done underground. The great Nimro and Jotan forges, as well as the many famed passages of The Underworld, are all well beneath the rocky face of Mount Nimro. And while the volcano is still active, its outer layers are crisscrossed with numerous ancient, extinct lava shafts that serve as natural tunnels throughout the volcano and deep into the earth. Likewise, many of the forges where the Nimro and Jotan ply their trades are located next to active magma chambers, where the natural heat and ready supplies of molten material give the metalsmiths plenty of raw materials and an ideal working environment — for Jotan and Nimro, anyway. Most other races can not stand the extreme heat of the subterranean workshops.

Mount Nimro is home to four Great Clans — the Nimro Clans Jeroeloth and Grodnel, the Jotan Clan Goramal, and the Gigante Clan Saezan. Together, these four clans get a great deal of work done, with the Nimro and Jotan clans busying themselves with forging and building, while the Gigantes defenders keep all unwanted visitors away. The entire arrangement works fairly smoothly, and King Blackrock is most pleased with this central region's progress and achievements. So pleased, in fact, that he has repeatedly pledged extra military support to them should they ever fall under attack. While the King is fairly certain that the True Giants and Shorties of the mountain are more than capable of handling themselves (especially since invading the labyrinth of tunnels, many of which can be filled with steam or even lava, makes it more defendable than any stronghold), he also believes in publicly displaying how much he values this important part of the Kingdom. The Giants there appreciate that, and they remain extra-loyal to the King for that. The frequent and handsome bonus money that the King throws to the workers of this region also helps to make them feel important and keeps them loyal.

The Mount Nimro Forge is the nation's biggest manufacturing facility, making weapons, armor, and tools made of both steel and super-hard stone forged directly out of Mount Nimro's magma and laced with metal alloys. The Great Clans here trade and sell their wares directly to other Great Clans as well as the King. The Volcano Clans also stockpile weapons and armor in case of a massive, sustained war. Currently, the amount of weapons and armor stockpiled in The Underground is sufficient to restock every standing army and Great Clan in the Nimro Kingdom. The hoards of equipment are hidden in various underground chambers and buried caches throughout the area.

Traveling Notes for Mount Nimro

Traveling on foot: The bases of these volcanoes are covered in layers of solidified magma that is somewhat difficult to walk and ride on, especially as the terrain slopes up to the mountains' higher altitudes. Note that this goes only for the base area surrounding both volcanoes. Any higher than the base area and travel is reduced to mountain-climbing only, which proceeds at a snail's pace. Maximum rate of travel is only about two miles (3.2 km) an hour. A more reasonable pace would be about one mile (1.6 km) an hour. Nimro is a much less active and "hot" than Mount Nimrod, so except for sporadic periods, years apart, when the lava flows, the travel conditions and penalties regarding heat, hot rock and lava do not apply.

Speed Modifiers: Maximum speed is reduced by 40% for most humanoids, 50% for humanoids under four feet (1.2 m) tall, and 20% for Giants over 15 feet (4.6 m) tall.

Traveling on horseback: The fastest speed possible is only 15 miles (24 km) per hour, but traveling this fast incurs a 33% chance of the animal stumbling, injuring itself and/or throwing the rider every hour. A brisk but much safer pace is 4 to 6 miles (6.4 to 9.6 km) per hour, with only a 01-15% chance of stumbling and falling. A leisurely pace would be only one to two miles (1.6 to 3.2 km) an hour, with no danger of falling.

Speed Modifiers: Maximum speed is reduced by 30% at the base of the mountain, but 1D4x10+30% for most horses and riding animals at higher elevations — the smooth yet uneven surface and ash covering makes it slippery and dangerous for riding animals. Certain areas of Mount Nimro will be impassable to horses, pack animals, and other such beasts of burden. Mostly, this is where the slope of the land gets really steep, arcing up the side of the volcano. By that point, the hard magma-covered ground is just too uneven, steep and slippery for riding animals to handle (01-75% likelihood of stumbling and getting injured; 4D6 damage). Adventurers interested in climbing the mountain would do well to leave their horses at a base camp and proceed on foot.

Clan Jeroeloth (Nimro)

Holding steady at roughly 9,000 clan members, the Jeroeloth are the largest of Mount Nimro's four Great Clans. They maintain strong ties with King Blackrock, all of the Great Nimro Clans of Mount Nimro and Nimrod, as well as the Jotan and Gigantes Clans who work with them at (and under) Mount Nimro.

It was not always like this. In the beginning, Mount Nimro was shunned by many of the other True Giants of the then, newly formed Nimro Kingdom. It lacked the history of Mount Nimrod, and was a fairly infertile and unappealing place other than to Nimro Fire Giants. The only Giants who actually wanted to live here were those who ranked low on the pecking order, had nowhere else to stake their claim, and wanted to remain close to Mount Nimrod, the real seat and center of power in the Kingdom.

Numerous groups tried and failed to make the Nimro volcano into a workable power base, but it took the likes of Clan Jeroeloth, some 30 years ago, to see this place for the literal and figurative gold mine that it has become.

Since that time, Clan Jeroeloth's wealth and power have steadily grown as they have become the custodians of the primary weapons and armor-making facilities in the Kingdom. They have supplemented this with their seemingly never-ending production of pure metal ores and precious metals, against which the entire Kingdom's monetary economy is based. This alone is making the Jeroeloth a fortune. Now, for the first time in the Clan's history, folks are clamoring to join their tribe, rather than down and out Jeroeloth trying to fit in with some other group. It is a heady time for the tribe, and if it doesn't stumble, then the good times are likely to continue for a long while.

Everybody figures that the most likely event to derail the Jeroeloth's money train is a serious war with another nation. If

and when that happens, the Jeroeloth know that they'll be required to crank out as much military hardware as possible. When this happens, King Blackrock will nationalize the Jeroeloth smithies, promising to repay their workers once the war is over, but may not be in a position to do so. After that, it could take the Jeroeloth years to recover financially from the burden of supplying the entire Kingdom with arms, armor and other ironworks. And that's *if* the Giants win the war! There's no telling what depths of poverty the Jeroeloth will sink to if the tribe is devastated by an outside force and forced to abandon their Mount Nimro homes.

To minimize such a tragedy, the Giants have stockpiled incredible amounts of metal and stone armaments for the nation's use. Much of this equipment is not incredibly well-made, since it is the work of apprentice and novice smiths, but all are good, serviceable items (10% are high quality items). There is little more they can do. Joining the Kingdom of Giants in an effort to create a nation of True Giants comes with certain liabilities that can not be avoided. If the Kingdom should fall under siege, the Jeroeloth are not the only ones who will suffer, and they will do their part to keep the Kingdom standing. What other choice is there?

For all their hard work and preparation for such a conflict, few Jeroeloth really believe that the Nimro Kingdom will fall victim to such a war, at least not any time soon. The Gromek are too few and scattered to mount such an attack, and, for the moment, the rest of the world doesn't know the Kingdom even exists. On the other hand, they fear that the Kingdom of Giants can not win a long, sustained, all-out war with any human nation, be it the lowly Land of the South Winds or the mighty Western Empire. There simply are too few True Giants and their unreliable minions, and not enough tricks up their collective sleeves for them to take on the world. That the other Great Clans do not see this, is beyond the Jeroeloth's understanding. Good planners, many Jeroeloth Nimro have prepared for the possibility of the collapse of their Kingdom by stashing away large amounts of gold and silver (as well as personal caches of weapons, armor and other helpful items) to bribe their way to freedom. More than a few of these Fire Giants have also obtained, or plan to obtain, magic scrolls with Mystic Portal or Teleport spells on them to make for a speedy getaway, should such a need ever arise.

This does not mean the Jeroeloth Clansmen are not loyal to King or country. Quite the contrary, they will fight and work to support the dream of a free Kingdom of Giants with their whole heart and soul. It's just that they are also practical, so if the Kingdom is clearly collapsing despite their best efforts, they want a contingency plan to survive. They figure The Underground will be the last stronghold to fall anyway, so they will stand strong for as long as they can before making their mass exodus. If it should come to that, they are not willing to commit suicide for a lost dream.

The Jeroeloth's stronghold is a complex network of extinct lava tunnels and hollowed-out chambers within Mount Nimro. Like a weird cross between a Ratling warren and a Dwarven underground stronghold, dozens of twisting passageways lead to different chambers that house security checkpoints, living quarters, storage depots, massive forges, workshops, smithies, infirmaries and recreation halls (the noise in these confined spaces can get deafening). Security here is extremely tight, both because of the somewhat paranoid tendencies of the clan's Chieftain, and also due to the importance of the facility to the nation. Once a general alarm has been sounded, any intruders within the complex are going to find it nearly impossible to escape without some kind of magical help. In case of a siege, the Fire Giants can seal select tunnels and fill them with molten lava from the volcano to block intruders from penetrating deep into the complex. There are also pit traps (filled with lava or connected to steam vents), walls that can be collapsed onto the enemy, and lava or steam that can be unleashed to pour down on invaders at strategic junctions. As one might expect, secret tunnels connect with Mount Nimrod and lead to a number of different exits miles away. To prevent these tunnels from being discovered on the surface, most of these emergency exits have *not* been dug all the way to the surface, leaving 200-300 feet (61 to 91 m) of earth or rock yet to be dug out. However, it should take the Giants less than an hour (a matter of minutes if magic or Elemental beings are used) to dig out to freedom. Furthermore, it should take an invading enemy hours to navigate The Underground and its traps and obstacles before they discover (if ever) the secret tunnels.

The Jeroeloth Clan operates and manages the Forges, a massive complex of foundries and metalsmiths located in an expanded lava tube within the rocky shell of Mount Nimro. The Forge is next to a large, active magma chamber, which the Nimro smiths tap for white-hot lava, heat and steam, which they use to smelt metals and to forge metal and stone weapons and armor.

Helping the Nimro smiths are a legion of Kobold and Jotan stone and steel workers, whose expert knowledge of geology, metallurgy, and all manner of engineering have made the Forge operation the complete success that it is. The Nimro who run this place still like to tease and snub their Kobold underlings, but they cannot ignore the fact that the Kobolds' experience and expertise with underground (geothermal) forge systems has been instrumental in creating, developing and maintaining the Nimro Forge. Without them, the Nimro might never have gotten the system completely operational. Certainly it would have taken years longer. As a result, the Forge Kobolds share in the Giants' wealth and enjoy even greater freedom and privilege than those working elsewhere in the Kingdom. Orcs, Ogres and Trolls are used as basic manual labor in the Forge where their great strength and endurance is put to good work. Additionally, they are considered expendable, and therefore, best suited for the extremely hazardous tasks of pouring molten rock and metal, and tapping the lava chambers for fresh sources of heat, steam and lava.

Magma Shields are a defensive weapon unique to the Nimro Kingdom and made exclusively at the Nimro Forge. They are shields made of steel and lava rock, and are increasingly popular among Jotan warriors, who enjoy that they get a +1D6 damage bonus when using the shields as bashing weapons and +1 to parry. A minimum P.S. of 23 is required to use a Giant-sized "magma shield" without penalty, while a P.S. of 18 is needed to wield a human-sized shield (+2 damage and +1 to parry). Magma shields have twice as much S.D.C. as one of their normal counterparts, and always have a dark, distinctive look to them.

Nwerka Jiniver

Jeroeloth Clan Chieftain

The self-styled "Empress of the Flame," Nwerka is an ambitious, selfish, Fire Warlock who sees The Underground and everyone and everything related to the complex, as her personal, underground kingdom. Since coming to the Nimro Kingdom, Nwerka has spent most of her life underground, basking in the warmth of Mount Nimro, for which she has a quasi-religious reverence. Nwerka feels that her clan's work here is of the utmost importance to the Nimro Kingdom, and it also gets to the heart of what it is to be a Nimro Giant: Working with fire, forging weapons of wonder, commanding power over those weaker than you, and finding a place in the world where one can reign supreme.

Is it any wonder, then, that Nwerka has never dreamed of giving up her position of power? For the 20+ years she has reigned as Chieftain of Clan Jeroeloth, she has arranged for any rivals to meet a premature end, lest they somehow threaten her own position. Needless to say, over the years, Nwerka has gotten increasingly paranoid, and now many of her subjects wonder if her reluctance to go outside to the surface world stems from her love of living within the volcano, or out of some ludicrous fear that if she does, somebody will try to usurp her position down in The Forge?

As ridiculous as it seems, the second hypothesis is most likely. Nwerka has staffed her underground Forge with so many Nimro guards that it would be almost impossible to reach her, let alone assassinate her. Furthermore, her protectors are hand-picked fanatics who are so loyal to her that they could never be persuaded to betray her. She also regularly summons lesser Fire Elementals to give her comfort as guards.

Despite these things, Nwerka remains convinced that there exist secret plots to depose of her, and more than one innocent Nimro or Shorty has gone to the headsman's axe for their part in a conspiracy that did not exist. For now, her subjects grudgingly tolerate Nwerka's little madnesses, but if she gets much worse, her extreme and unpredictable behavior might prompt her subjects to really plot to overthrow her.

King Blackrock, interested as he is in the well-being of the Mount Nimro operations, frequently sends his lieutenants to tour the Forge and the other workings of Clan Jeroeloth, just to make sure there are not any problems. Currently, the King understands that all is not well with the Clan Leader, but he cannot tell if Nwerka is losing her mind or if she is just overzealous. As long as Forge operations run smoothly, he really doesn't care if she's crazy as a loon, but since the last visit from one of the King's lieutenants, labor disputes have bubbled to the surface and production in the Forge is dropping. This is all the result of Nwerka wrongfully purging nearly 40 Nimro workers and 150 Shorties who she (wrongfully) claimed to be plotting to kill her. Even her own Clansmen have sent messages to the King suggesting he remove her peacefully before they do by any means possible.

The Clan Jeroeloth does not have a surface stronghold, although there is a massive Trade Center at the base of Mount Nimro and a medium-sized farm and sheep ranch owned by the clan, but operated entirely by Shorties. The Underground Forge Complex'is effectively the Jeroeloth Clan's stronghold, and is, without debate, the largest and most impregnable of them all.

Quick Stats for Nwerka Jiniver

Race: Nimro
O.C.C.: 8th level Fire Warlock.
Alignment: Miscreant
Attributes: I.Q.: 11, M.E.: 11, M.A.: 10, P.S.: 20, P.P.: 24, P.E.: 28, P.B.: 5, Spd.: 10
Hit Points: 67
S.D.C.: 54; also see armor.
P.P.E.: 160
Attacks per melee: 5
Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +7 to strike, +8 to parry and dodge, +5 to damage, +4 to pull punch, +5 to roll with impact, +8 to save vs poison and disease, +7 to save vs magic, +7 to save vs Horror Factor (+13 vs Elementals), +3 to save vs possession, +26% to save vs coma/death and +2 to spell strength.
Other combat info: Martial Arts — Kick attack (3D6), roundhouse kick (4D6), foot sweep, Critical Strike 18-20, body throw/flip, Disarm, W.P. Paired Weapons, W.P. Sword (+3 to strike and parry, +2 to throw), W.P. Spear (+4 to strike and parry, +2 to throw), breathe fire (40 feet/12 m, 4D6 damage, once per melee).

Fire Warlock Spells: Cloud of Smoke, Globe of Daylight, Stench of Hades, Darkness, Cloud of Ash, Tongue of Flame, Circle of Flame, Fire Ball, Wall of Flame, Flame Friend, Fuel Flame, Cloud of Steam, Blue Flame, Screaming Wall of Flame, Wall of Ice, Eternal Flame, Flame of Life, Fire Whip, Fire Sponge, River of Lava, Ten Foot Wheel of Fire, Burst Into Flame, Drought, and Plasma Bolt.

Weapons: Not surprisingly, Nwerka has several Giant-sized fire-oriented magical weapons. The first is a flaming sword that has been enchanted to burn with a green flame, and inflicts 6D6 per hit and has a 60% chance of igniting something combustible on any target it hits.

The second is a flaming ball and chain that inflicts 5D6 per hit.

The third is a flaming dagger that inflicts 4D6 per hit and that can cast Mini-Fireballs at 6th level proficiency three times daily.

She also has five heavy damage lightning Javelins and six light, as well as a number of the best Kobold and Jotan items in her personal armory: 12 throwing knives (all +1 to damage and +1 to strike and parry), 12 spears (all are +3 to damage and +1 to parry), six different types of swords (each is +3 to damage and +1 to strike and parry).

Armor: Despite the problems it gives her with spell casting, Nwerka wears a full suit of scale mail (A.R. 15., S.D.C. 75).

Magic Items: A ring of teleportation, six truth serum potions and Nwerka's only other magical item is a pair of magical boots that will double the Speed attribute of whoever wears them (they will magically fit any size foot). In a fit of vanity, she forgoes wearing them because they match nothing in her wardrobe.

Money and other equipment: Nwerka carries 20,000 in gold and gems on her person and wears another 100,000 gold worth of jewelry, but has over eight million in gems and precious metals all hidden away at numerous locations that only she knows. In addition, she has access to the clan's sizable treasury and her choice of top quality weapons.

Clan Grodnel (Nimro)

On the other side of Mount Nimro, also occupying ancient lava tubes and dead magma chambers, lives Clan Grodnel, the other Great Nimro Clan of the Nimro Volcano. Just slightly smaller than Clan Jeroeloth, Clan Grodnel (est. pop. 8,000) is no less industrious than its counterpart. The Grodnel Nimro are relatively new to the Nimro Kingdom, and their stronghold is still in the final stages of construction. ("Final" is a loose term at best, since the strongholds of Clans Jeroeloth and Grodnel are constantly being expanded into new lava tunnels and chambers). Much of the metal veins under Mount Nimro are near the Jeroeloth Stronghold, leaving the Grodnel with little to mine. They have made a practice of tapping the volcano's lava to make stone items, and they even have worked on inventing great industrial engines that run off the volcano's heat, using it as a kind of weird steam engine. Sadly, these engines have never really worked right, and even if they did, the Grodnel have no idea how to fully implement them. Some Grodnel inventors speak of building enormous war machines, such as rapid-fire catapults or ballistas, powered by the heat of the volcano, but most write off such talk as the ravings of crackpots or somebody looking for attention.

In the last five years, Grodnel miners have made an incredible discovery. As they dug through the volcano's rocky crust, they discovered a vein of a dark, hard metal that nobody had recognized before. When mined, this mysterious substance tended to crumble, like super-hard, yet somehow brittle anthracite. On its own, the metal is of little use, but when mixed with molten lava, however, a startling change takes place. The metal fragments cause some kind of reaction in the lava, which crystallizes around the metal, turning the two components into an even stranger new substance. This vaguely purple, crystalline mineral, which has been named **"Grodnelite,"** is extremely volatile, and when smashed (it is only marginally harder than medium-thickness glass), it explodes with the force of a small bomb, sending deadly crystalline fragments everywhere.

Right off, the Grodnel knew they had made an incredible find, and immediately alerted King Blackrock to it. After seeing the crystals first hand, the King congratulated the clan and has helped fund their mining efforts to pull as much of the base mineral of Grodnelite out of Mount Nimro's seams as possible.

In the meantime, the entirety of the Grodnel Stronghold has been turned into a big Grodnelite workshop, nickname "The Blastworks." Much like the Jeroeloth subterranean stronghold, the Grodnel Blastworks consists of numerous tunnels and cave-like chambers, a mix of natural tunnels, Giant-made architecture and Jotan stone masonry (Jotan stonesmiths have often been recruited for difficult building assignments throughout the Nimro Kingdom). This underground operation has areas for tapping lava, conventional smelting and forging, mining the mystery metal, combining the ingredients, allowing forged Grodnelite weapons to cool, and storage for Grodnelite arsenals.

Security is insanely tight, for the Grodnel Nimro fear that some enemy of the Kingdom will find out about the Grodnelite operation and try to raid the workshops. Likewise, this is one of the few Giant workshops where safety is stressed above all. Everybody knows that Grodnelite is very touchy, and if dropped or mishandled, it can explode in your face. Moreover, a Grodnelite explosion is likely to set off all other Grodnelite in a 10 foot (3 m) radius, which can be a potential catastrophe in storehouses and workshops where large quantities of the stuff is handled and stored. As a result, only specific people, known as **"blastsmiths,"** are allowed to even touch Grodnelite items or to enter Grodnelite facilities.

The curious thing about Grodnelite production is that it wasn't a Nimro who discovered the explosive properties of the substance. It was an ingenious Kobold smith named Therig Skitkin who tinkered with the stuff until he found the right combination to turn it into a powerful explosive. Since then, Skitkin has been a high-ranking foreman in Grodnelite production, overseeing the material's final "refinement" and storage. He has also arranged for nearly 400 other Kobolds to become part of Grodnelite production. So far, their attention to detail has kept the process running smoothly and without any major incidents. Thankfully, Skitkin is a fanatic about procedure and following orders, so anybody caught disregarding even the most minor safety procedure is ejected from the Blastworks, usually with their hands cut off.

More than anything, Grodnelite is being considered a poor man's alternative to Cyclops Lightning weaponry, a cheap and powerful weapon to arm both Giants and the many Shorty soldiers who serve them in the military. The explosive properties of this stuff make it unusable as any kind of melee weapon (imagine what a quarterstaff tipped with a vial of nitroglycerine would do to you as well as your enemy, and you get the idea). Missile weapons with Grodnelite-coated arrow and spear heads have been very successful in the test runs. For some unaccountable

reason, Grodnelite crystal accumulations become more unstable the larger they get. The largest Grodnelite crystal that can be safely handled is 10 lbs (4.5 kg). Anything larger runs a 10% cumulative chance of spontaneously detonating each hour. This rules out making massively destructive catapult or ballista projectiles coated with Grodnelite, but it does not rule out both normal and Giant-sized Grodnelite-tipped arrows and javelins, or sling stones or rocks for throwing (effectively, low powered hand grenades).

Grodnelite Weapons

Note: Presently, these are top secret weapons that even few of the other Clan Leaders know about. King Blackrock hopes to keep them a secret in order to startle and surprise any invasion force that seriously threatens the Kingdom of Giants. Even the few outside of the Grodnel Clan who think they know something about this new "exploding weapon" believe it to be some sort of unstable type of magic. Consequently, none of these items are available on the open market, although some of the Gromek-fighting troops in the mountains have been given Grodnelite weapons for further field tests. The price listed is what they would cost on the open market if they were made available.

Also note that nobody has any idea of just how much Grodnelite exists under Mount Nimro. The Jeroeloth Clan has never found any, and neither has anyone else, so this precious vein *may* be the only known source in the world, and nobody knows when it might be completely mined out! Thus, it is presumed to be a rare and limited resource. The vertical arrangement of the Grodnelite "seam" makes it difficult to gauge its overall size. So, the stuff could keep being mined for decades, or it could run out tomorrow. This is another reason King Blackrock is hesitant to make any long-term plans involving this rare material, and why he is keeping it a secret to be unleashed only in the Kingdom's hour of need. Implementing Grodnelite on a large scale for more than a few key battles is probably not practical, and its deployment has minimal effectiveness against the Gromek who typically attack in small groups, spread out in the air, and use hit and run tactics (collateral damage has little impact). Still, the explosive has great promise against conventional ground troops. And for the time being, the Blastworks is keeping Clan Grodnel and its associated non-giants very, very busy.

Smaller than Giant-sized weapons are made for use by the Shorties who comprise 60% of the Kingdom's armed forces.

Grodnelite Arrows (human-sized): Light: 2D6 damage (would cost 100 each on the open market); Medium: 4D6 (cost 300+ gold each); Heavy: 5D6 (cost 400+ gold each). Effective Range: About 100 feet shorter for a normal bow weapon, due to the fact that their crystalline heads make them top-heavy. **Note:** For Giant-sized Grodnelite arrows, add 1D6 damage per type, and increase their cost by 30%.

Grodnelite Javelins (human-sized): Light: 4D6 (cost 500-750 gold each); Medium: 6D6 (cost 750-1,000 gold each); Heavy: 7D6+6 (1,000-1,250 gold each). Effective Range: Like Grodnelite Arrows, Grodnelite javelins do not fly as far as they normally would. Reduce effective range by 50 feet (15 m). **Note:** For Giant-sized Grodnelite javelins, add 1D6 damage per type, and increase their cost by 50%.

Grodnelite Sling Stones: Human-size/small/light, the size of a golf ball or slightly smaller: 2D6 damage (would cost 100 each on the open market), or (relatively) large/heavy, the size of a tennis ball: 3D6 (cost 200+ gold each). Effective Range: About 80 feet (24.4 m), double for True Giants. **Note:** Giant-sized sling stones are twice as large, and do 3D6 for small ones and 4D6 for heavy/large ones (cost 400+ gold each).

Grodnelite Throwing Rocks: Small/light, about the size of a hardball: 4D6 damage (would cost 300 each on the open market). Large, Giant-sized, about the size of a basketball (weighing 10-15 lbs/4.5-7 kg): 5D6 (cost 500+ gold each). Effective Range: About 80 feet (24.4 m), double for True Giants. Sling stones can also be thrown but only at about half range.

Important Explosive Weapon Note: When a Grodnelite weapon strikes its opponent, regardless if it hits the armor or skin, the crystal explodes on impact, inflicts its damage and sends out shrapnel in a 10 foot radius (3 m). Victims under 12 feet tall or 300 lbs (136 kg) will be either knocked off their feet (01-50% chance, and lose initiative and one melee action/attack) or are staggered (51-00%, and only lose initiative).

Damage: Any strike roll below the Armor Rating (A.R.) will do full damage to the armor *and* one third damage to the character himself (start with physical S.D.C. and then Hit Points). Any strike above the A.R. does full damage direct to physical S.D.C. or Hit Points.

Area Affect: Furthermore, everybody within a 10 foot (3 m) radius of the blast takes one third damage (start with the S.D.C. of armor), with no opportunity to dodge. Also, any attempt to dodge an attack is -3 to avoid a thrown and sling weapons, and -6 from arrows.

When a Grodnelite weapon misses its mark: It will go off when it hits the ground, wall or whatever hard surface it happens to strike. From the point of impact, all people within a 10 feet (3 m) radius will suffer one third damage from the blast, with the point of impact taking full damage.

Considering the blast effect of these weapons, one can see why King Blackrock is so excited about them. Imagine what a huge volley of Grodnelite-tipped arrows, javelins or even thrown stones would do to a humanoid army on the march! And imagine how this stuff could be used to disperse sieges, a sustained barrage of Grodnelite weapons hurled against one particular area of wall or door. Indeed, if used properly, this stuff could change the face of warfare in the Palladium world.

And that's the rub: using it properly. Most Giants will not like Grodnelite, because they would much rather use Cyclops lightning weapons. Moreover, the Orcs, Ogres and Trolls, especially Orcs, must be extremely careful not to blow themselves or each other up with them. Grodnelite crystals only have 1-3 S.D.C., so they are delicate and easily shattered and detonated. Even dropping or banging them together can set them off.

And that brings up another problem, anybody carrying more than one or two Grodnelite weapons is asking for trouble when entering combat. All one has to receive is a single blow on the explosive portion of the weapon to explode it, inflicting equal (full) damage to both the Grodnelite user and his attacker, with lesser collateral damage done to those within a 10 foot (3 m) radius. Never mind that poor Orc carrying a whole quiver of Grodnelite arrows or javelins on his back. One hit with a club or

sword, and it's adios! Consequently, these volatile weapons are best used strategically against massed troops (foot soldiers or calvary) or ideally, a charging enemy from a distance (i.e. archers and javelin throwers), rather than in close combat. The are also excellent against opponents storming defensive walls, where the explosives can be shot, thrown or even dropped on the closely clustered enemy below.

Rhog Agrelith

Grodnel Clan Chieftain

Of all the Great Chieftains, none has a greater hatred for humanity and its allies than Rhog Agrelith, Chieftain of Clan Grodnel. Hailing from the Old Kingdom, his family was all but wiped out several centuries ago by waves of Western knights and noblemen engaging in wanton Giant-hunting. Nearly all of Rhog's family was slaughtered, and the only reason he survived is because he fled deep within the Old Kingdom, where even the Westerners dared not go. Ever since, he refuses to call any human friend or ally, and he gladly enslaves, tortures, raids and kills them at the slightest provocation.

Rhog joined the Nimro Kingdom because he figured it would give him the means to vent his wrath upon the human world. Originally, he served as a clan warrior to help patrol the Kingdom's western and northern borders, and he has led more than a few skirmishes against Western scouts and wayward travelers. Still, he craves to launch a campaign into the human heartland, pointing to the Land of the South Winds, the Western Empire or Western settlements in the Old Kingdom.

Over the years, Rhog has mellowed somewhat, enough so that he can see that there is more to life than revenge. He has developed some small measure of patience and recognizes the value of plotting and picking one's battles, although he remains an aggressive hot-head. As the Nimro Kingdom of Giants rolls headlong into what he sees to be an unavoidable conflict with the human domains, Rhog feels energized and alive. At last, his destiny is coming to him, and he looks forward to the day that he commands his armies against humans and spills their blood so that the Kingdom of Giants can become a true world power.

Ironically, several years ago, Rhog accidentally blew off one of his arms (as well as suffering a few other debilitating injuries) while handling an overly large and unstable chunk of Grodnelite, thus making him unfit as a soldier. Just as he feels his time to shine on the battlefield is coming, he has been sidelined forever. A lesser man would be paralyzed by bitterness at this turn of events, but not Rhog Agrelith. Instead, he has thrown everything he has into making sure that the military production of Mount Nimro runs as smoothly as possible so when the Kingdom of Giants goes to war against its enemies, it will be as well-armed as possible. As a result, Rhog runs his work crews into the ground, pushing them mercilessly, and expecting nothing less than 100+% out of everyone. Smaller workers, such as Orcs and Ogres, frequently die of overexertion under his watch, but Rhog gives that little thought. To him, all that matters is arming the Nimro Kingdom to the teeth.

This has alienated him from his non-Giant underlings, who rightly view him as a dangerous taskmaster. Yet, there is something about this Giant that inspires his clan members and other fellow True Giants. Perhaps it is his iron will and relentless pursuit of perfection. Perhaps it is his ability to overcome every adversity, just as he has overcome his terribly crippled body. Or perhaps it is his pure, burning hatred for all Fair Folk; a sentiment his followers can warm to, despite Rhog's slave-driving ways. Whatever it is, Rhog Agrelith remains an efficient leader and clan Chieftain, making sure his heralds represent the clan well during Council Meetings, and brooking very little nonsense from the other Great Clans. The only person Rhog will defer to is King Blackrock, all others must earn his respect. Which, as anybody who has ever worked for him will tell you, is just about impossible, whoever you are. In the end, Rhog is a charismatic, forceful leader and competent military strategist, well equipped to command an army of patriots.

Still, even the Nimro King does not feel comfortable with Rhog having as much power as he does. Sunder knows this chieftain would gladly instigate some conflict with a human nation just to give the Nimro Kingdom an excuse to go to war. King Blackrock doesn't like that kind of recklessness, and he fears that Rhog's particular brand of hatred could someday bring down the Nimro Kingdom if it infected too many others. The Grodnel Clan is already a pack of seething killers-in-waiting, thanks to the bizarre and charismatic way in which Rhog conveys his hatred for all things human. Chieftain Agrelith is undeniably a megalomaniac obsessed with proving himself and his people to be superior over humans. This makes him dangerous and unstable without including his control over the secret weapon that is Grodnelite. If he should ever gain more power or, somehow, someway, become the new Nimro King, his frothing ambition to destroy humanity would surely bring the Nimro Kingdom (and perhaps all of Giantkind) to a premature end.

Thus, if Rhog Agrelith ever became too popular, King Blackrock ponders that it might become necessary to remove him from the center stage — permanently.

Quick Stats for Rhog Agrelith

Race: Nimro
O.C.C.: 6th level Soldier
Alignment: Aberrant
Attributes: I.Q.: 14, M.E.: 15, M.A.: 8, P.S.: 25, P.P.: 20, P.E.: 26, P.B.: 7, Spd.: 17 (it was 23 before the accident).
Hit Points: 50
S.D.C.: 85; also see armor.
Attacks per melee: 6

Bonuses: +10 to damage, +5 to parry and dodge (was +8 before the accident), +5 to strike, roll with impact/fall, and pull punch, +22% to save vs coma/death, +7 to save vs. poison, +6 to save vs. magic, +5 to save vs. Horror Factor, +1 to save vs. drugs.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Expert — Kick Attack (3D6), Tripping/Leg Hook, Backward Sweep. Critical strike 18-20. KO on a natural 20 when using fists. Body Block (3D6). Pin/Incapacitate 18-20. Crush/Squeeze (3D6). W.P. Chain (+2 to strike, +1 to parry), W.P. Blunt (+3 to strike, parry, and throw), W.P. Shield (+3 to parry, +1 to strike), W.P. Sword (+3 to strike, +2 to parry, +1 to throw), W.P. Battle Axe (+3 to strike, parry, and dodge, +1D6 to damage), breathe fire (40 feet/12 m, 4D6 damage, once per melee).

Weapons: Rhog's favorite weapon is a trusty ball and chain he forged himself (4D6+6 damage, +2 to strike). A special property of this weapon is that anyone hit with a Natural 20 is knocked out for 1D6 melee rounds, in addition to whatever damage they take. While this weapon is not magical, it is superbly crafted, and is twice as strong as any other normal weapon of its kind.

Rhog also may have up to six Grodnelite-tipped throwing irons on him at any time; vicious explosive weapons that inflict 5D6 per hit. It would seem that losing his arm was not enough to scare Rhog away from using Grodnelite forever. He'd better hope somebody doesn't whack those Grodnelite daggers on his belt during a fight.

The Chieftain also has a pair of heavy lightning javelins.

Armor: Plate and Chain (A.R. 15, S.D.C. 100). Through superior engineering, this non-magical armor is half normal weight and virtually noiseless. If Rhog were to devote his life just to building arms and armor, he could revolutionize arms production in the Nimro Kingdom.

Magic Items: Although Rhog is an incredible smith in his own right, he receives no small amount of help from a minor rune hammer crafted by the Dwarves of old. This two-handed war hammer is, to a Giant, a handy, one-handed, smithing hammer. As a weapon, the device inflicts 4D6 per hit, but used as a smithing tool, it adds 25% to the success ratio of any building efforts. Normal arms and armor made with this hammer are as if Dwarven made. Dwarven arms and armor are even more incredible than they would have been otherwise.

One of Rhog's goals is to find a Wizard with the power to regrow his missing arm. He has heard tales about a Spell of Legend called Absolute Restoration, with the power to completely restore a person to his normal, healthy self, regenerating lost limbs and even warding off old age (turn back the years by half). He refuses to accept that this legendary power is nothing but an unsubstantiated faerie-tale, lie or spell lost to antiquity. A dozen Elf and human scholars, and a half dozen mages, have been captured, tortured and slain in his search for this magic.

Money and other equipment: Rhog has compiled an impressive collection of both normal and Giant-sized weapons from around the world. Any weapons collector would find the arsenal fascinating and enviable. In fact, spending a week or more studying this vast martial array will permanently add +5% to one's Identify Weapon Quality skill. He has three million in gold and gems hidden away and an arsenal easily worth a million.

Clan Goramal (Jotan)

With heavy metal mining being handled by the Jeroeloth Nimro, and weapons production handled by the Grodnel Nimro, the Goramal Jotan (est. pop. 6,000) have decided to specialize in building and maintaining the various subterranean strongholds in the area, as well as dabbling in both mining and smithing.

Portions of both the Jeroeloth and Grodnel strongholds were built by Goramal engineers and builders, who figured out ingenious ways of drilling out the natural caverns and lava tubes in and underneath Mount Nimro in such a way that they could accommodate thousands of Giants and Shorties and not breach the walls holding back a churning sea of lava. To this end, the Goramal Jotan always have work thrown their way by these two Great Nimro Clans who employ them to maintain and upgrade existing tunnel complexes. The Goramal have also built their own stronghold, a magnificent tribute to Jotan stoneworking and engineering. The Goramal Stronghold is half on the surface of Mount Nimro, and half underground, winding its way through the ancient passageways and hollowed out chambers of this ever-rumbling volcano.

The surface structure resembles many other Jotan fortresses in the Kingdom. It is built directly into the face of Mount Nimro, and features high, vertical walls, squared-off guard towers, and winding roads leading up to it so that Jotan guards would have a very easy time seeing who is coming. Any invaders assaulting the stronghold would have to face a murderous rain of stones, lava and hot oil from above before they ever reached the front gate, where no less than 1,000 seasoned Jotan warriors would be waiting.

Inside, the stronghold houses a number of great halls, a chapel to the Church of the Blade, guest residences, terraces and balconies for viewing the magnificent sunset — a blazing reddish-orange, as the falling sun is filtered through the gases of Mount Nimro — as well as other amenities one might expect to find in a large, well-equipped castle.

Underground, the stronghold more closely resembles those of Clans Jeroeloth or Grodnel, with its mixture of natural and hand-carved passageways and cavernous chambers. These all house a variety of mining operations, workshops, meeting rooms, armories, arsenals and storage depots. However, it is far, far beneath the surface fortress where Stronghold Goramal's most distinguishing features exist. A good 2,000 feet (610 m) underneath the surface lies a particularly large, extinct lava tube that leads to a natural fissure in the subterranean rock. No Giant

can fit into this fissure, and as far as the Jotan can excavate it, the fissure itself never widens at all. It is as if there is a man-sized tunnel going endlessly into the depths of the world, into a darkened realm where no Giant may pass.

The Jotan might have written this off if they hadn't detected ancient Dwarven writing carved onto the tunnel wall as they were excavating it. The text of the message was unclear, referring only to, "the Mountain of the Old Ones," but the date of the message goes all the way back to the beginning of the Time of a Thousand Magicks! It would seem that over the eons, folks have been coming and going from this tunnel without the Giants' knowledge.

Intensely curious about this, the Goramal have sent numerous Ogre, Orc and Goblin scouts into the fissure to check it out, but none ever return. Several times over the years, Troglodytes have been caught coming out of the fissure, as well as a party of Dwarves (who all spoke an unheard-of dialect of ancient Dwarven), as well as some other strange humanoids nobody had ever seen before (but were killed and eaten before they could be catalogued by any scholars, few as they are in the Nimro Kingdom).

So it is that the Goramal guard a passage to what they call the "Dwarven Underworld," something scholars the world over have speculated exists but have never found or proven. It is, in theory, a worldwide network of endless caverns that extend to incredible depths and house entire civilizations of creatures both known and unknown to Palladium surface folk. Nobody knows what might await in the Dwarven Underworld, but one thing is for sure. Judging by the Goramal's discovery, it is almost certain that this legendary subterranean world does indeed exist! And that the Giants of Mount Nimro have found perhaps the only known entrance to it.

Gisa Skeg

Goramal Clan Chieftain

Gisa is the quintessential Jotan, both a master warrior and a master builder. Her particular expertise is blacksmithing, and she is especially well known for crafting superbly balanced blade weapons, something which has ingratiated her to more than one priest of the Church of the Blade.

Gisa came to power 15 years ago, when her father, Gerod Skeg, was killed by Gromek raiders on the western edge of the Kingdom. With nobody else to lead them and no clear heir named, Gisa took control herself. For the next year, she entertained challenges to her power from any and all takers, and had to duel for the right to be chieftain a half-dozen times. Of those times, only one of her challengers survived, and he no longer has any eyes, hands, or feet (It is said the poor wretch crawled into the Dwarven Underworld somehow, and crawls around in the bottomless dark, scavenging like a cave animal. True? Maybe).

Since then, Gisa has more than earned her place as the Goramal Clan Chieftain, and she has ruled well, if unremarkably. Gisa is not a power-hungry woman, and all she really wants to do is live a life like most True Giants: away from the distractions of others so she can do what she wants, when she wants. She is not looking for any trouble, nor does she really want to make trouble for anybody else. Of course, those who cross swords with her will wish they hadn't, but such are the risks of invoking a Jotan's ire. As a result, Gisa tries to stay out of inter-clan politics as much as she can. She figures that the deeper she gets into the inner workings of the Nimro Council, the more complicated life will get for her and her clan members. And really, who wants that?

Clan Goramal runs several productive iron, gold and silver mines, most of which goes directly to King Blackrock, which fulfills the clans obligations to the rest of the Nimro Kingdom. That done, Gisa lets her clan members do what they want, for the most part. About 1,000 Goramal work the various mines near the clan stronghold, and the rest follow their own pursuits. As long as the gold and silver quotas are filled, Gisa doesn't really care how the rest of the clan fills its time.

Gisa spends much of her own time below ground, investigating the passage to the Dwarven Underworld, and forging specialized weapons and armor. Periodically, she ventures out on the surface to survey Clan Goramal's land holdings. She has even been known to disappear for days at a time, gone to who knows where, for reasons unknown. Some say she likes to hunt Tuskers alone (dangerous even for a True Giant), or that she likes to explore the neighboring sub-regions, and some claim she uses magic scrolls to whisk herself across the world, where she can adventure freely before coming home.

Quick Stats for Gisa Skeg

Race: Jotan
O.C.C.: 7th level Mercenary.
Alignment: Anarchist
Attributes: I.Q.: 9, M.E.: 15, M.A.: 11, P.S.: 31, P.P.: 26, P.E.: 28, P.B.: 11, Spd.: 22
Hit Points: S3
S.D.C.: 100; also see armor.
Attacks per melee: 6
Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +8 to strike, +9 to parry and dodge, +6 to pull punch, +2 to disarm; +5 to roll with fall/impact, +6 to save vs Horror Factor, +8 to save vs poison, drugs, and disease, and +8 to save vs magic.
Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts — All kicks at +1D6 damage, all jump kicks, Critical Strike 18-20, KO on a natural 20, W.P. Paired Weapons, W.P. Sword (+3 to strike and parry, +1 to throw), W.P. Shield (+3 to parry, +1 to strike), W.P. Spear (+3 to strike and parry, +2 to throw), W.P. Battle Axe (+3 to strike, parry, and dodge, +1D6 to damage), W.P. Net (+2 to strike and entangle, +3 to parry), W.P. Blunt (+3 to strike, parry, and throw).
Weapons: Gisa fights with a Jotan spear (3D6+5 damage, +3 to strike, +1 to parry) and a matching pair of giant, silver plated broadswords she made herself (2D6+4 damage, +2 to strike and parry). Since she spends so much time underground, these large weapons don't do her much good, so she has also taken to fighting with smaller weapons. Lately, she favors a giant-sized Falchion (3D6 damage, +1 to strike) and dagger (2D6) combination.
Armor: Gisa wears an enchanted half suit of splint armor (A.R. 12, S.D.C. 80) that regenerates lost S.D.C. at a rate of 1D6 per hour.
Magic Items: None. She once owned an incredible store of weapons, but, rumors say, she lost it when a group of human adventurers tricked her and raided her personal arsenal some time ago and made off with nearly everything. Since then, she has never gotten over the embarrassment of that humiliating episode. On the other hand, some rumors suggest this is a cover story, and that she has a selection of Dwarven rune weapons and other magic items.
Money and other equipment: Gisa has nearly 500,000 in gold coinage from different nations, 300,000 in jewelry, and a good 150,000 gold in loose nuggets of precious metals and gemstones.

Clan Saezan (Gigante)

The Saezan Gigantes number only around 4,000, but they are every bit as dangerous as a Great Clan twice their size. On sheer ferocity alone, these Gigantes can repel any group of attackers larger than they, and given their legendary unpredictability, most groups like to give them a wide berth.

And that's the problem with these troublesome members of the Nimro Kingdom, they don't work well in groups. Instead, they have what can be euphemistically termed as "poor impulse control," and they generally delight in causing mayhem and misery wherever they are.

If Clan Saezan really acted in accord, they would be tremendously dangerous, but for the most part, they remain a fractious and disorganized group who wait for orders from the King or one of the other Great Clans during times of trouble. During their "down time," they live along the base of Mount Nimro in what resembles a kind of big game preserve. The Saezan Gigantes have no stronghold, since the very concept of building and maintaining a large structure is beyond most Gigantes (Why spend time and energy building something when you can attack somebody and take things from them?), and no other clan is willing to build one for them. It is not as if the Gigantes mind, however. Unused to "civilized" life in strongholds and villages, they gladly live in caves underneath Mount Nimro, under boulders, on top of mountain peaks, or right out in the open.

The clan's biggest asset to the Kingdom of Giants is its numbers. When and if the Kingdom goes to war, Clan Saezan has always been considered one of the nation's secret weapons (as are the other two Great Clans of Gigantes). King Blackrock's plan is to round up the mutants when they are needed (knowing full well he'll have to kill a bunch of them to get them all to step into line) and point them toward the enemy. Gigantes are naturals at being great shock troopers, so a 4,000 man force of these maniacal and monstrous warriors could shatter the advance of most foes, both physically and psychologically.

Until the Nimro King has need for these Gigantes in such a dramatic way, he allows them to live freely, feeding off of the wild animals and herds of cattle raised by other Great Clans (Sunder periodically buys several thousand head of cattle and then lets them go in Saezan territory to keep the Gigantes from pillaging other people's food supplies). The Nimro King knows that trying to organize these folk during times of relative peace is a lost cause. They are so rowdy and rebellious that keeping them in line is more trouble than they're worth, leading them ultimately to revolt, or forcing the King to purge the lot of them. This way, the Gigantes can live freely, and the Nimro Kingdom can actually get some use out of them when the time comes.

The ongoing Gromek conflict is a problem, because the naturally aggressive Gigantes itch to engage them in battle. To pacify them to some degree, small bands of Gigantes are assigned to the guerilla mountain war on a rotating basis. Whenever Gromek dare to mount an attack against the volcano strongholds or lowlands, the Gigantes are frequently given free reign to battle them, along with the formal troops of defenders. To do otherwise is to drive the mutants insane.

The only hard and fast rule the Saezan Gigantes must live by is that they are absolutely forbidden from entering any other Great Clan's territory. To enforce this measure, all Saezan

Gigantes are branded with a distinctive mark on their left shoulder upon entry into the clan. Any Gigantes found in other clan-held territories are checked immediately for their clan brand. If an individual is found too far from home, he is apprehended at once, and may be killed if he is believed to have gone rogue. No trial, no jail time. Just straight to the headsman.

A note on Clan Branding: All Gigantes in the Nimro Kingdom, not just those of the Saezan Clan, undergo Clan branding. Some Gigantes with a penchant for pain like to get branded multiple times, or in unusual places, like their forehead or hand. Indeed, branding has become a bit of a freaky art form among the Mount Nimro Gigantes, who like to supplement their many brands with self-made scars, tattoos, and other body markings. Some think this is their way of concealing their Clan Brand, while others just chalk the behavior up to Gigantes being Gigantes. Both hypotheses probably apply depending on the individual.

Zhikov the Elder Wyrm

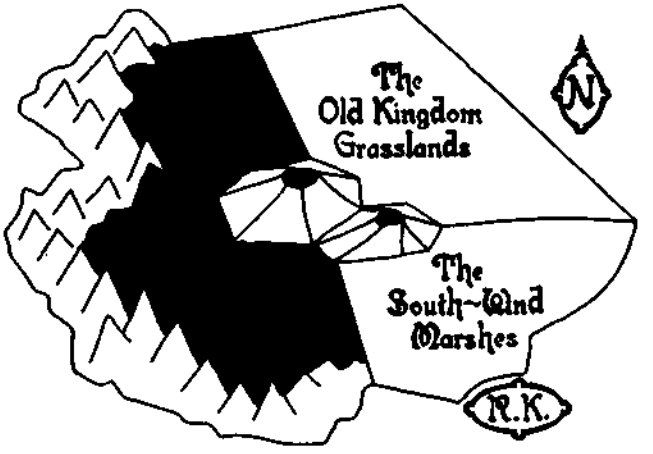
Saezan Clan Chieftain

Clan Saezan has no formal government or any other kind of social structure other than the strong rule, and the weak usually either learn how to hide really well or they get killed and eaten. In a land of incredibly tough and dangerous individuals, the Gigante Warlord Zhikov the Elder Wyrm, is undoubtedly the toughest. Zhikov has killed many of the other Gigante Warlords in this Saezan territory, ensuring that any competition for top dog within the Clan remains minimal.

Despite his many impressive natural abilities and his incredible fighting prowess, Zhikov's most noteworthy feature is that he actually thinks he is a dragon. Thus, he spends most of his time sleeping, collecting whatever treasure he can find, and demanding tribute from all he comes across. To say Zhikov is arrogant is to do a disservice to the meaning of the word. Not only does he consider himself the supreme ruler of all Saezan territory, but he also considers himself a superior life form to all those around him. This makes it difficult for emissaries from any other Great Clan to deal with him (most of the time, they are doing their best not to get killed and/or eaten). Even messages directly from King Blackrock require multiple repetition until they sink in. And even then, Zhikov only tolerates Sunder's authority. The Nimro King humors the Gigante Warlord, but if he ever were to exhibit serious insubordination, he would have Zhikov killed for the sake of his people.

Quick Stats for Zhikov the Elder Wyrm

Race: Gigante
R.C.C.: 9th level Gigante Warlord/Mercenary Fighter.
Alignment: Diabolic
Attributes: I.Q.: 6, M.E.: 3, M.A.: 4, P.S.: 35 , P.P.: 22, P.E.: 28, P.B.: 6, Spd.: 31
Hit Points: 70
S.D.C.: 100
Natural A.R.: 11
Horror Factor: 16
Mutations: Gigantic (20 feet/6 m tall, incredible P.S.), lizard-like head with a bony crest and dragon-like snout (+3 to horror Factor), pale yellow eyes, vestigial, dragon-like wings (no flight possible), jade green scaly skin (A.R. 11).
Special Powers: See the invisible, impervious to fire, cold, and acid (even magical), fire breath (4D6, 20 feet/6 m), chameleon ability as 1st level Earth Warlock spell, acute hearing (only 10% chance of being surprised), and leaping ability (as per the psionic physical ability, Telekinetic leap).
Defects/Insanities: Narcolepsy, glowing eyes, obsessed with collecting/hoarding treasure (compounded by the fact that he thinks the sun is a big shining pile of gold in the sky), megalomania, presence causes unease in animals.
Attacks per melee: 7
Bonuses: +2 on initiative, +6 to strike, +7 to parry and dodge, +22 to damage, +4 to maintain balance, +5 to roll with fall/impact, +4 to pull punch, +8 to save vs poison and disease, +7 to save vs magic, +6 to save vs Horror Factor, and +26% vs coma/death.
Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Expert & Boxing — Shark-like teeth inflict 3D6 damage from bites, talons (2D6 damage), tail slap (2D6 damage), body throw/flip, and disarm. Kick attacks (3D6 +P.S. damage bonus), Critical strike on 19-20, Paired Weapons, W.P. Blunt (loves clubs and tree trunks; +3 to strike and parry, +1 to throw).
Weapons: None! Dragons don't need weapons! Although he will use clubs, wagons, tree trunks, rocks, dead bodies, etc., as bludgeons (these "weapons" typically do 4D6 damage +P.S. damage bonus).
Armor: None! Dragons don't need armor, either!
Magic Items, money, and other equipment: Zhikov has not accumulated a serious treasure hoard. But he will, oh, yes, he will! All dragons do that, right? The Wyrm currently has about 12,000 in gold, 6,000 in gems and jewelry, a collection of common weapons (not that he'd use them himself), and the following magic items: a Giant-sized mace that does 4D6 damage and is indestructible, and a scroll with a 5th level Control the Beasts spell (not that he can read or use it).



The Nimro Plains

This is the largest sub-region of the Nimro Kingdom of Giants. It is a rocky stretch of ground that covers nearly half the realm, from the Baalgor Mountains to the western edge of Mount Nimrod, to the Yin-Sloth Mountains.

The Nimro Plains do not include any of the Baalgor Mountains, but they do include the portion of the Yin-Sloth Mountains that makes up the Nimro Kingdom's southern border. Many of the Kingdom's immigrants enter through this area, and since no other group controls it, the Giants have decided to annex it for themselves. So far, it has provided a convenient home for the handful of Algor and Rahu-Men who have allied themselves with the Nimro Kingdom, as well as a unique clan of Jotan who have revived an old practice of animalistic shape-shifting (for details on this, see the *Were-Shaman O.C.C.* in the beginning of this sourcebook).

This land is not particularly fertile, not easily traversed, and the site of almost constant fighting between Giants and Gromek. Still, it remains an incredibly important piece of territory, since it provides the Nimro Kingdom with a vital avenue to the Baalgor Wastelands, as well as a buffer zone against invading Gromek. During peacetime, the Nimro Plains are a primary spot for Giants and Shorties to move into when things get crowded in the other sub-regions of the Kingdom.

The premier feature of this territory is the famous **Gondajar Road.** An ancient stone roadway rumored to have been built by

the first Jotan Giants who ever lived in the region. It is the largest and oldest highway of the Nimro Kingdom, and one of the most famous artificial landmarks of the Palladium World. Most of the fighting between the Gromek and Giants here is over who controls it, since it beats a well-worn path from Mount Nimrod through the Baalgor Mountains to the present-day mountain city of *Gurthasi Tor*. (for information on Gurthasi Tor, refer to the **Baalgor Wastelands™** sourcebook). The high number of supply caravans and military patrols that walk the road have given rise to numerous villages, cattle towns and trading posts along its length, making the Nimro Plains the most active area of development in the Kingdom.

Away from Gondajar Road, however, the Nimro Plains are not very well developed (like most of the Nimro Kingdom). It is home to scattered villages and homesteads of True Giants and the Shorties who serve them. Both Giants and their allies are under constant, intermittent attack by Gromek raiders and guerrillas, as well as monsters, bandits, and other troublemakers from the Wastelands (and occasionally from the Western Empire and other human nations).

In terms of terrain, the Nimro Plains are flat and relatively even, but the ground is strewn with jutting rocks, or broken pieces of stone that have tumbled down from the Baalgor Mountains over the years. This makes building, cattle raising and farming here difficult, especially when it is conducted under the constant specter of Gromek attack. Many Giants have put their lives work in this region, only to see it destroyed by a big Gromek sortie in a matter of hours. As a result, not too many Giants (and even fewer Shorties) are eager to move here for any reason.

Despite its problems, the folks that do live here are proud of their homeland, for it is the site of the famous Battle of Gondajar Road. Most Plains Folk like to claim that their relatives fought in that incredible battle, but most of the time, folks are simply lying to cash in on the local glory. The truth is, many of the Giants who fought at Gondajar Road died there, and many of the survivors retired to Mounts Nimrod and Nimro to help form the Great Clans and the Nimro Council.

Still, those in the know are not likely to blow the whistle on those falsely claiming some link to the heroes of Gondajar Road. The way they (Sunder Blackrock included) see it is that all True Giants triumphed that day, and if the local people are so proud to be a part of the Kingdom's early history that they are willing to lie a little about it, then so be it. It is far better for a little dishonesty to keep everybody's morale up than to squash local legends and bring everybody down.

Aside from the local folklore over who did and didn't fight at Gondajar Road, the long history of bloodshed here between Giants and Gromek has left a lasting mark. Dotting the landscape are hundreds of small forts, strongholds, towers and bunkers, most of which are in advanced stages of decrepitude. Some of these provide homes for Plains Giants, while others have been rehabilitated by the Great Clans of the area. Most remain silent, crumbling memorials to the plight of this land. A curse that, as far as the True Giants of the Nimro Kingdom are concerned, wears horns and descends from the skies on green, leathery wings. Gromek.

Notes on Traveling in the Nimro Plains

Traveling on foot: This terrain is relatively flat and even, but travel here is made difficult by the blanket of small to medium-sized stones that litter the ground and permeate it up to 50 feet (15 m) deep. This makes plowing and farming incredibly difficult. Some scholars have suggested that the thick layers of splintered stone and rock mixed with the earth is, in part, the aftermath of the elemental magic that pulverized the Baalgor forests into a wasteland and shook the mighty Baalgor Mountains. Thus, the majority of the stone is shattered rock literally blasted and shaken from the Baalgor Mountains. Of course, some of the rock has been spewed forth from Mounts Nimrod and Nimro during periods of heavy volcanic eruption over the millennia.

Overall, the stone covered and rocky ground makes it difficult to get good traction or to maintain one's speed or balance. Humanoids can maintain a maximum walking speed of 6 miles (9.6 km) per hour, but this is fairly dangerous. For each hour of travel at this speed, characters have a 01-33% chance of stumbling, falling and getting bruised or cut, or twisting one's leg or spraining an ankle (a fall does 1D6 damage; a roll under 33 means a sprain or hurt foot or leg; reduce speed by half). Approximately three, miles (4.8 km) per hour (4-5 if a True Giant) is possible at a brisk but safe pace, or one or two miles (1.6 to 3.2 miles) per hour at a leisurely stride.

Speed Modifiers: Maximum speed is reduced by 20%-30% for most humanoids, 40% for humanoids under four feet (1.2 m) tall, and 10% for Giants over 15 feet (4.6 m) tall.

Traveling on Riding Animals: The stony ground cover of this area makes it especially hazardous for hoofed or long-legged animals of any kind. Riding at a full gallop is impossible, since the animal will certainly fall and break a leg or get seriously injured or killed after only 1D6 minutes of moving at full speed. Maximum rate of sustained travel is 12 miles (19.3 km) per hour, with a 01-75% likelihood of the animal stumbling, falling and breaking a leg, and/or throwing the rider after a half hour of riding at such a pace. The fastest safe pace is 6 miles (9.6 km) an hour. Creatures such as the reptilian Drayback are unaffected by the rocky terrain (no penalty to move at its maximum speed), and the penalty for the Silonar is 01-40% at speeds greater than 12 mph.

Speed Modifiers: The maximum speed for horses and most riding animals is reduced by 50%.

Special Note: Travelers on Gondajar Road (or any of the numerous Jotan roads) will find it a smooth, even surface ideal for walking. Despite the advanced age of this road, it was exceedingly well constructed and remains a viable roadway. The new danger is that the road is frequently travelled by True Giants, Shorties and others, as well as targeted by Gromek who assume all travelers on the Gondajar Road are their enemies. More information on the Gondajar Road is provided later in this book.

Walking on foot or on horseback, one can proceed at normal speed without any restrictions. *Running* on hard stone is fine for humanoids and Drayback, but hard on most riding animals, including Silonars and horses; reduce their speed by 20%.

Clan Terikon (Jotan)

Ten years ago, Clan Terikon (est. pop. 8,000) entered the Nimro Kingdom en masse from the Yin-Sloth Jungles. It seemed that it had taken nearly 30 years for the news of the formation of the Nimro Kingdom to reach all of the Terikon Clan members, who massed together along the Yin-Sloth Mountains before entering the domain of King Sunder Blackrock. The Terikon Jotan figured that if they all entered the Kingdom together, they stood a much better chance of being classified as their own Great Clan and having a seat of their own on the Nimro Council. Their patience paid off, for that is exactly what happened.

Long years in the Yin-Sloth Jungles have made the Terikon Jotan somewhat different, culturally, from their Jotan cousins in the rest of the world. Whereas most other Jotan enjoy working near the volcanoes, forging, and handling great feats of engineering, the Terikon Clan is more closely attuned with nature and used to living a minimalist existence in the jungles to the south.

Virtually all Terikon Jotan become Were-Shamans when they reach maturity, and stay with it for at least a brief time before they decide to dedicate their lives to it or move to another discipline. As a result, half of all Terikon Jotan are Were-Shamans, and will never deviate from that O.C.C. The other half will be 1st level Were-Shamans and some other, more advanced O.C.C. that is their main, ongoing profession. Note: Once a Terikon gives up being a Were-Shaman, he or she never goes back to it. Moreover, when determining a player character from Clan Terikon with dual O.C.C.s, try to duplicate as many skills as possible between the character's Were-Shaman O.C.C. skills and those of the main O.C.C. Terikon Jotan do not change O.C.C.s to gain loads of new skills, besides, many of those taken as a Were-Shaman will stay at 1st level, and will not increase in level, unless chosen as part of their second profession (duplicate skills advance starting with 2nd level). Furthermore, these mixed O.C.C. characters get only the O.C.C. skills of the Were-Shaman, no O.C.C. Related Skills or Secondary skills from the Shaman O.C.C. — they do get the full skills of their main profession.

Clan Terikon is loyal to the Nimro Kingdom, but they live along the Yin-Sloth Jungles, far from where most of the Kingdom's people (and troubles) lie. Gromek invaders plague the western half of the Nimro Plains, not the Yin-Sloth border. Likewise, invaders from any of the human kingdoms most often come through the Old Kingdom Grasslands or the South Wind Plains. Understandably, then, it takes a lot to get the Terikon riled up about any outside menaces to the Kingdom of Giants. Indeed, the other Great Clans worry that if push comes to shove, Clan Terikon may not help its mother Kingdom, but disappear into the Yin-Sloth Jungles, never to return. The Terikon have only been part of the Kingdom of Giants for a decade and are the youngest of the Great Clans. Consequently, their loyalty remains untested, and even Terikon Clan members aren't sure of how they might react if the Kingdom falls under siege. The only things keeping other Great Clans respectful of this particular Clan are their lineage as True Giants, their intriguing shape-shifting abilities and prowess as survivors and warriors. After all, they did live in the extremely hostile Yin-Sloth Jungles for who knows how long. There aren't many who can do that and tell the tale, much less a cadre of 8,000 of them.

Clan Terikon's stronghold is an enormous lodge-house high in the Yin-Sloth Mountains, surrounded by an enormous wooden palisade wall. Inside, the complex is made up of numerous longhouses and other buildings, rather than a single unified fortress structure. To the Terikon mindset, power comes not from a single, easily isolated structure, but from a group of resourceful, mobile individuals who can harass the enemy and fade away when needed. As such, the Terikon Stronghold is more of a trading post and a way station than a bona fide military installation.

Kusil Zed

Terikon Clan Chieftain

Chieftain Zed is the one who organized Clan Terikon and led them into the Nimro Kingdom. During the long years it took him to gather his clan members, he ran afoul of some of the Gromek war parties that had scattered to the wind after their defeat at Gondajar Road. In a brief and savage battle, Zed lost many of his friends and family, including his wife and three sons.

Prior to that battle, Zed had not really intended to join the Nimro Kingdom. He figured his clan would hash out some treaty with Sunder Blackrock so they would recognize the Terikon as a separate but friendly nation. However, after the skirmish with the Gromek, Zed became a changed man. Angry and bitter, he now yearns for a lasting, genocidal revenge against the Gromek, and he will side with ANY power that promises to do just that. From the few Gromek prisoners Zed has tortured, he's learned that they were gathering their forces, too, planning for a single, massed attack on the Nimro kingdom. That was 10 years ago, and Zed believes it is very likely that this Gromek invasion will be coming any day now. When it does, he will be at the front-line, helping his Giant brothers beat back the winged tide and destroy them utterly.

Aside from his lasting hatred of the Gromek, Zed is a fairly level-headed individual who has a keen understanding and appreciation for nature. As a Were-Shaman, he has mastered the art of changing into animal form, and often charges into battle in the form of a huge bear, wolf, or lion.

Zed is no huge patriot of the Nimro Kingdom, however, and he will stay by its side only as long as it serves his personal purpose of revenge. Once that need (to destroy all Gromek) is gone (which will probably be never, but one can never tell), Zed is likely to leave the Nimro Kingdom and fade back into the jungles. By that time, however, the rest of the Terikon Clan is likely to have grown used to life under King Blackrock, and may not wish to leave the security and prosperity of his realm. If that happens, then so be it. If his clan feels comfortable living under the Nimro King, Chieftain Zed will move on without them. All that really matters is that the Gromek are destroyed once and for all.

Quick Stats for Kusil Zed

Race: Jotan

O.C.C.: 7th level Were-Shaman.

Alignment: Anarchist.

Attributes: I.Q.: 7, M.E.: 19, M.A.: 11, P.S.: 30, P.P.: 24, P.E.: 25, P.B.: 9, Spd.: 13

Hit Points: 53

S.D.C.: 100

Animal Totem: Primary totem: Canine (Identify tracks 83%; Track 79%; +4 to damage; +2 to parry and dodge). Secondary totem: Feline (Prowl 80%, Scale/Climb Walls 76%, +2 to strike, +2 to parry and dodge).

Attacks per melee: 5

Bonuses (including animal totem bonuses): +1 on initiative, +8 to strike, +11 to parry and dodge, +21 to damage, +6 to pull punch, +5 to roll with impact/fall, +6 to save vs Horror Factor, +6 to save vs poison, drugs, and disease, +5 to save vs magic, and +20% to save vs coma/death.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Expert — Kick attack (3D6), critical strike 19-20, W.P. Spear (+4 to strike and parry, +2 to throw), W.P. Blunt (+3 to strike, parry, and throw), W.P. Axe (+4 to strike, parry, and throw; +1D6 damage.)

Weapons: Zed owns a stone battle axe (4D6 damage) and several stone daggers (2D6 damage each), but when in combat, he prefers to take the shape of an enormous bear and use his powerful claws and teeth to tear his enemies to pieces.

Armor: None. Zed forgoes it so that it will not interfere with his shape-shifting abilities.

Magic Items: None. He doesn't care for them, believing that most magic draws on the Old Ones in some way.

Money and other equipment: Likewise, he doesn't care for conventional wealth, since it signifies a tie to the corrupting force of "civilization" that has made places like the Western Empire so oppressive. However, he does have access to the wealth and resources of his clan (although it is among the poorest and seldom has more than 100,000 gold available at any given time).

Clan Gulthur (Gigante)

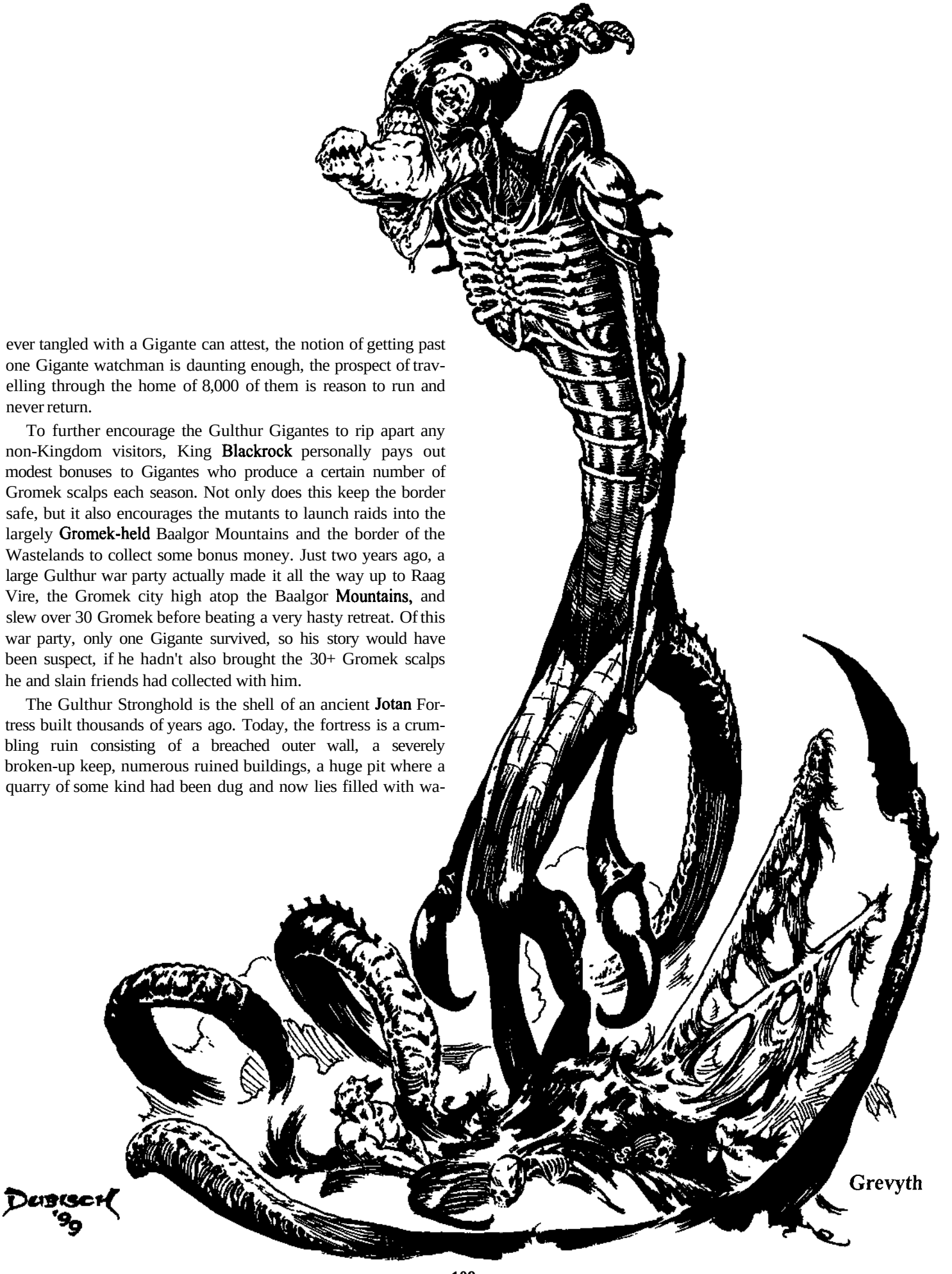
The Gulthur Gigantes (est. pop. 8,000) live a life very much like the other two Great Clans of mutants in the Nimro Kingdom. Except for running security for the Kingdom, they really have no formal duties. All they have to do is not wreak havoc in other parts of the Kingdom, and they can do whatever they like.

To give these Gigantes something to do, and to keep invaders from entering the Kingdom from the west, the Gulthur Clan live in a territory that hugs the border with the Baalgor Wastelands. That means any invaders coming over the Baalgor Wastelands must first get through Gigante-held lands before they make it to the more "civilized" parts of the Kingdom. As anyone who has

ever tangled with a Gigante can attest, the notion of getting past one Gigante watchman is daunting enough, the prospect of travelling through the home of 8,000 of them is reason to run and never return.

To further encourage the Gulthur Gigantes to rip apart any non-Kingdom visitors, King **Blackrock** personally pays out modest bonuses to Gigantes who produce a certain number of Gromek scalps each season. Not only does this keep the border safe, but it also encourages the mutants to launch raids into the largely **Gromek-held** Baalgor Mountains and the border of the Wastelands to collect some bonus money. Just two years ago, a large Gulthur war party actually made it all the way up to Raag Vire, the Gromek city high atop the Baalgor **Mountains,** and slew over 30 Gromek before beating a very hasty retreat. Of this war party, only one Gigante survived, so his story would have been suspect, if he hadn't also brought the 30+ Gromek scalps he and slain friends had collected with him.

The Gulthur Stronghold is the shell of an ancient **Jotan** Fortress built thousands of years ago. Today, the fortress is a crumbling ruin consisting of a breached outer wall, a severely broken-up keep, numerous ruined buildings, a huge pit where a quarry of some kind had been dug and now lies filled with wa-



Grevyth

ter, and several other ruins. For Gigantes, this is like a small paradise, since they didn't have to build it, and the place is crawling with all sorts of monsters, animals and Goblins, all of which make for excellent eating, by Gigante standards. Very little official business is conducted here, and only the biggest, craziest Gigantes have made this place their home. Anybody who wishes to deal with them must enter at their own risk.

Grevyth

Gulthur Clan Chieftain

This monstrous freak has come to power by slaying all of his rivals and sending their heads back to King Blackrock as proof. The Nimro King sent Grevyth a return message to tell him that he was recognized as Clan Chieftain of the Gulthur, to stop killing rivals, and to start killing Gromek along the Baalgor border. Grevyth took the position with glee, and has been collecting Gromek scalps and skulls (as well as those of weaker Gigantes, outsiders, and even a few friendly Giants on official business from other Great Clans) ever since.

Grevyth's tendency to kill *anybody* who is not a Gigante, including the occasional Shorty and True Giant of other Great Clans, has made the Gulthur something of an outcast clan best to be avoided. Not that the anti-social Gulthur mutants care. Most of these Gigantes barely understand what the Nimro "Kingdom" is, other than "a big gathering of True Giants to kill things." Grevyth and the other Gigante Warlords of the Clan have a reasonably good understanding, but don't much care, except that they are being encouraged to hunt and kill, which pleases them. To this end, they work to keep the more savage and ignorant mutants in line, and from slaying too many "friendly" folk from other parts of the Kingdom. Wanton slaughter of all passersby simply won't do, especially since so many supply-trains travel along the Gondajar Road from Mount Nimrod to the Mountain City of Gurthasi Tor (see the **Baalgor Wastelands** sourcebook for more on this place).

Aside from his loosely defined duties as a Gromek-killer, Grevyth spends his time in the Gulthur Stronghold, eating anything he can catch and generally living like an animal. Which, for all intents and purposes, is what he is: a very big, very unpredictable, very dangerous animal, driven by base emotions and mental instability.

Quick Stats for Grevyth

Race: Gigante
R.C.C.: 7th level Gigante Warlord
Alignment: Diabolic
Attributes: I.Q.: 7, M.E.: 2, M.A.: 2, P.S.: 33, P.P.: 27, P.E.: 27, P.B.: 2 (horrifyingly ugly), Spd.: 20
Hit Points: 57
S.D.C.: 150
Mutations: Grevyth is a rail-thin freak covered by a glossy, jet-black exoskeleton which lends him a frightening, bio-mechanical look. He can spit acid (20 feet/6 m; 4D6 damage) and has incredibly fast reflexes, as well as high strength, agility, and resiliency (the bonuses for which have already been factored into his stats).
Defects/Insanities: High food requirement, susceptibility to cold, no short-term memory, curse: mumble, insanity: mindless aggression.
Attacks per melee: 6 (including an extra attack because he has four arms).
Bonuses: +10 to strike, +9 to parry and dodge, +18 to damage, +4 to roll with punch/fall, +4 to pull punch, +7 to save vs Horror Factor, +7 to save vs poison, +6 to save vs magic, +1 to save vs drugs and disease, and +26% vs coma/death.
Other combat info: Hooked, insectoid claws (+1D6 to all hand attacks); exoskeleton (A.R. 12), bladed tail (3D6 damage), a secondary mouth inside Grevyth's mouth that springs out and can bite for 1D6+3D6 in poison damage; kick attack (3D6 damage), foot sweep, backward sweep, and critical strike 18-20.
Weapons, armor, magic items, money, and other equipment: None. Grevyth lives like an animal and has little desire to collect things that other people find valuable. Even if he did, his lack of memory would make him forget that he had them, making him particularly susceptible to theft, since he'd never notice that his things were missing.

That said, Grevyth has accumulated an incredible pile of bones over the years from his countless victims. If one were to pick through these bones, they could probably find enough exotic ones to fetch 1D4x10,000 from a respectable alchemist in a more civilized part of the world.

Clan Yoajan (Algor)

Only a handful of Algor have come to the Nimro Kingdom, mostly because of the difficulty in getting there from the Northern Wilderness, the lack of a cool, comfortable environment in the Nimro Region, and because the Algor generally distrust King Blackrock's motives. However, there are mavericks in every crowd, and such is the case with the Yoajan Algor Clan (est. Pop. 300).

Consisting mostly of men of magic, the Yoajan was founded as a cross between a True Giants' wizardry guild and a kind of commune for spell casters, where all clan members would have a safe haven for them to conduct their magical research. Once Sunder Blackrock realized the Yoajan's needs, he went to work fulfilling them. First, he had a handsome stronghold built atop the highest peak in the Yin-Sloth Mountains, a lightly snow-covered summit that Algor find just barely within their comfort level, temperature-wise. Then, the Nimro King promised that any and all Algor who came to the Nimro Kingdom would never be required to fight on its behalf. Rather, they were being recruited for their advice in the ways of magical knowledge and incredible breadth of historical expertise.

When the Algor arrived, the King made good on his promises, and for the last 40 years or so, the Yoajan Clan has resided in relative peace and solitude, far away from the rest of the Nimro Kingdom. Periodically, they receive some message from King Blackrock, or entertain visitors from other Great Clans, but for the most part, the Yoajan live and work by themselves. They know that if ever the Nimro Kingdom should truly need them, they will offer their services, but only in such a way that won't seriously endanger the clan. The Yoajan still remember how their kind were decimated thanks to their manipulation at the hands of the Elves during the Elf-Dwarf War.

Today, the Yoajan devote most of their time to conducting their own mystical studies, but they have increased their instruction of new students in the mystic arts, especially in the long-lost art of *Conjuring*, which had been common during the Time of a Thousand Magicks. Clan Yoajan represents the greatest collection of practicing Conjurers in the Palladium world, and they hope that one day, the art will again be alive and well in the Nimro Kingdom, where the powers of this discipline could be made to work many wondrous effects for the betterment of Giantkind.

Kayvia Aeaced

Yoajan Clan Chieftain

This Algor Chieftain has spent much of his life aiding the Wolfen in the Northern Wilderness as they prepare for what might escalate into full-blown warfare with the Eastern Territories (For more on this scenario, be sure to check out the upcoming **Wolfen Wars™** sourcebook). After all, Kayvia still hates all Elves for the cruel way in which they used his Algor ancestors during the Elf-Dwarf War, and humanity for allying itself with Elvenkind. To that end, any enemy of humanity is a friend of his. That, and the Wolfen's tendency to bend over backwards to gain Algor favor, made it easy for Kayvia to ally himself with the canine folk.

What ruined that for him, was how much the Wolfen were willing to curry Elven favor as well. True, Kayvia admired the Wolfen and wanted to help them smash the puny humans to the south, but not at the cost of doing business, however indirectly, with the hated Elves. Seeing that the Wolfen weren't about to give up their love of all things Elven, Kayvia grew disenchanted with them and began to seek other places to live. A place where he could distance himself from the Fair Folk as much as possible. During this period, he found a handful of like-minded Algor, who were also disgusted at their fellow Algor's ability to ignore their connection with Elvenkind by helping the Wolfen. So what if the Wolfen used to worship the Algor? So what if the Wolfen would do anything to protect their Frost Giant allies? The cost of that service, making nice with the Wolfen's Elf allies, was too much to bear.

Consequently, when King Blackrock contacted Kayvia about the prospect of moving to the Nimro Kingdom, the Frost Giant accepted the offer, bringing a few hundred like-minded souls with him. The trouble was getting to the Kingdom via magic, rather than attempting a long land journey. For several years, Kayvia adventured, seeking the elusive means of magical teleportation over such a great distance. The efforts of Kayvia and his followers branded them as extremist dissidents and outcasts from Algor society. To many other Frost Giants, the Nimro Kingdom seems a foolish idea destined to bring all Giantkind into conflict with the rest of the world, sealing the Tall Folk's collective fate. To join them is madness.

Kayvia ignored such talk and pooling the magic knowledge he had collected over the years, arranged for his entire cohort of 250 Algor to jump directly to the single snow-covered peak in the entire Yin-Sloth Mountain chain. True, the place was nowhere nearly as cold as the Algor would have liked, but it was a home, free from the taint of Elves and traitorous Wolfen. Here, Kayvia felt, he could live in peace and isolation, among his own kind.

Since his arrival, Kayvia has become something of a hermit, conducting endless arcane research studies, especially in the realm of *Conjuring*, a mystical art form thought to have been lost during the Millennium of Purification. During his treasure hunt in the Algor Mountains, Kayvia found an ancient Dwarven text that describes the fundamentals of Conjuring, and he taught himself this lost discipline within a decade's time. Now, he teaches other Algor this wondrous art in the hopes that he may revive it fully as a major form of spell casting, and thereby securing his place in history as one of the greatest mages of all time. In reality, Kayvia knows that Conjuring is likely to remain a small and obscure art, despite how many True Giants he teaches it to, but as his number of students grows, he is more than happy to pass along what he knows.

Initially, Kayvia was unsure about Sunder Blackrock and could not fully trust the Nimro King. But, as the Nimro King has made good on his promises time and again, treating the Yoajan Algor with much dignity and respect, Kayvia has gradually warmed up to his overlord. As long as the King doesn't go back on any of his agreements regarding how the Yoajan Clan is to be treated, Kayvia will support the Nimro Kingdom. The moment he feels that he or his people are being used as pawns, however, he will seek a terrible vengeance on those manipulating him, even at the cost of his own life. Most of the Yoajan Algor feel the same way.

Quick Stats for Kayvia Aeaced

Race: Algor

O.C.C.: 6th level Wizard and 6th level Conjurer.

Alignment: Aberrant

Attributes: I.Q.: 20, M.E.: 9, M.A.: 7, P.S.: 20, P.P.: 15, P.E.: 20, **P.B.: 15, Spd.: 8**
Hit Points: 69
S.D.C.: 65
P.P.E.: 149
Attacks per melee: 5
Bonuses: +4 to initiative (+5 on initiative to "quick conjure" something before an opponent acts/strikes), +2 to strike, parry, and dodge, +5 to damage, +5 to pull punch, +5 to roll with impact/fall, +10 to save vs Horror Factor, +7 to save vs magic, +3 to save versus poison, drugs and disease, +2 to save vs possession and mind control, +10% vs coma/death; +2 to spell strength.
Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Basic — Kick attack (3D6), critical strike 19-20, Frost breath (30 feet/9 m, 4D6 damage).
Spells: In addition to his Conjuring abilities, Kayvia knows all common knowledge Wizard spells plus the following: Globe of Daylight, Fool's Gold, Ignite Fire, Water to Wine, Purification (Food & Water), Spoil (Food & Water), Blinding Flash, See Aura, Turn Dead, Mystic Alarm, Armor of Ithan, Carpet of Adhesion, Fire Ball, Call Lightning, Telekinesis, Create Golem, Create Zombie, Create Bread & Milk, Create Mummy, Familiar Link, Magic Net, Magic Pigeon, Mend Cloth, Phantom Horse, Summon & Control Rodents, Summon & Control Shadow Beast, Summon & Control Animals, Summon Greater Familiar, Summon & Control Entity, Summon & Control Canines, Talisman, and Water to Wine.
Weapons: As a matter of principle, Kayvia does not carry any weapons. If he requires one, he will *conjure* it or rely on spells.
Armor: Likewise, if threatened, Kayvia will protect himself with an Armor of Ithan spell or *conjured* armor.
Magic Items: Over the years, Kayvia has, with the help of an as yet unnamed Alchemist (who probably does not live within the Nimro Kingdom), crafted six magical rings, each of which endows the wearer with the powers of a 6th level Conjurer. The rings have a P.P.E. battery of 100, which regenerates at a rate of 10 an hour. Kayvia keeps these rings as boons to grant those who have done him incredible favors.

In addition, Kayvia has a few personal magical rings: one provides him with a +3 bonus to save vs poison (in addition to his other bonuses), one that repels Deevils and demons, one that grants him superior eyesight as if he were wearing an Eye of the Eagle, one that lets him speak and understand all languages at 98% proficiency, and one that is a 100 P.P.E. battery that regenerates at a rate of only 1 point per hour.

As one can tell, Kayvia has a fondness for magical rings, and will be more than interested in hiring adventurers to investigate stories and treasure maps that supposedly lead to the location of new and obscure magical fingerwear.
Money and other equipment: Kayvia has only a few thousand gold to his name, because he spends most of his cash and valuables on magical research, and on procuring or manufacturing new items.

Clan Siad (Rahu-Man)

Although one of the smallest of the Great Clans in the Nimro Kingdom, these Rahu-Men (est. pop. 130) represent the largest known group of their kind in the Palladium World! Elsewhere, Rahu-Men are generally found alone or in pairs, if at all. That a collective the size of Clan Siad (pronounced "SHEE-ahd") has gathered in the Nimro Kingdom is nothing short of amazing. In fact, the group's very presence has helped keep humans from investigating reports of the Nimro Kingdom's existence. In most reports of the Nimro Kingdom by human scouts and spies, special note is made of the hundred or so Rahu-Men who have established a warrior monastery on the edge of the Yin-Sloth Mountains. Since all scholars know just how incredibly rare Rahu-Men are, the notion of a small army of them in Mount Nimro is just too fantastic to believe. As a result, the rest of such reports are discarded as paranoid fantasy, helping maintain the shroud of mystery that hangs on Mount Nimro to this very day. Of course, very few scouts and adventurers (and fewer spies) survive to tell about what they have seen.

The Siad Clan Stronghold is a fortress monastery capable of housing up to 1,000 True Giants at a time. For the most part, it is a wide, spacious facility, designed more as a training yard and a place of isolated reflection than as a serious military installation. However, the site is a fully walled, gated fortress built upon land that has been terraced directly on the face of a mountain. Directly assaulting this place from the ground would be extremely difficult, especially against the expertly trained and disciplined warrior monks who would defend it with their lives. To protect against an aerial attack from Gromek, the monastery has a large underground network of passages and chambers where extra supplies are stored, and where the monks can retreat and fight under a more enclosed environment (thus defeating the Gromek's winged advantage).

Clan Siad is the only Great Clan in the Nimro Kingdom that is multi-racial. While Rahu-Men make up the core hundred clan members, any citizen of the Nimro Kingdom is encouraged to train as a warrior monk. Those who do are considered full clan members for the duration of their stay. Afterwards, as long as one upholds the rigorous moral tenets of the monkhood, one may always reserve the right to consider himself an honorary clan member of the Siad.

Currently, nearly 50 non-Rahu-Men monks live and work in the monastery. Most of them are Ogres and Trolls, with a few "exotic" races, such as Minotaurs and Eandroth mixed in. The total population here fluctuates month to month, usually keeping within 120-160 students and teachers.

Clan Siad is also one of the few Great Houses that gets away with showing less than complete submission to King Blackrock. The Siad Rahu-Men feel it is their mission to help guide the Nimro Kingdom to a higher state of moral awareness, something nearly everyone in the Kingdom, the King included, grievously lacks. To that end, the Siad often counter King Blackrock's orders with rhetorical questions and philosophical puzzles, a tendency the Nimro King finds infuriating at times. However, the Siad exist only to help the Nimro Kingdom along, and the King knows it, so as long as it doesn't encourage sedition, he lets them go. It helps that Siad heralds and messengers never directly disobey the King in public, allowing the Nimro

King to save face when other Great Chieftains are present. But, the message from this Great Clan remains clear, to quote one letter sent to King Blackrock not long ago: "As long as you act like a tyrant, My Liege, then we shall continue to treat your edicts as those of an angry child."

While King Blackrock spins his wheels trying to figure out these enigmatic warrior monks, the Siad spend their time running their monastery, training a new breed of Giant warriors, ones who will fight with honor, mercy and dignity. Those who will fight to preserve Giantkind, not to inflict its excesses upon a wary world.

The Siad's wiser-than-thou attitude toward King Blackrock has led him to not support the Siad Stronghold with money, armaments and vital supplies. Somehow, the monastery remains well-stocked and self-sufficient. The question is: how? They do not produce any goods or services that they sell (all military training here is free), but they never lack for anything. Rumors abound that there lies in the inner sanctum of the monastery a series of teleportation circles, where the monks teleport supplies from elsewhere. Other rumors insist that some mysterious benefactor keeps the monastery well-supplied so that it may continue its good work throughout the Kingdom. And still other rumors insist that the Siad monks rob and loot from other True Giants to maintain their training facility. Despite such talk, the truth of how Clan Siad manages to keep itself going remains unknown. Moreover, those who leave the monastery appear to have their memory blanked somehow so they cannot reveal the clan's secrets (suggesting there must be psychics in league with the monastery).

Solan Ashursi

Siad Clan Chieftain

Next to nothing is known about this reclusive and mysterious Great Chieftain. He rarely speaks to anyone, and when he does, it is, invariably, in the form of some incomprehensible riddle or puzzle. He spends much of his time contemplating impenetrable conundrums and maintaining a grueling regimen of physical exercise and martial arts training.

Solan's fighting abilities are second to none, and it is said that he once defeated nine Gigantes at once, by himself, with no weapons! While this story may be exaggerated, what is true is that the Gigantes of the Nimro Plains absolutely refuse to enter the Yin-Sloth Mountains, for fear of encountering Solan, who they have dubbed "The Windmill," in reference to a style of arcing hand attacks he has made popular within his monastery. One can guess that if a few thousand Gigantes are afraid of one warrior, there must be a good reason for it. Thus, the stories of Solan's incredible feats stand unchallenged.

Solan's real quest, of course, is to guide the Nimro Kingdom out of its "dark period of moral infancy," as he once put it. Sunder Blackrock can do great things, but he can also do horrible things. It is Solan's self-appointed task to make sure the King does the former and not the latter. To that end, he is undertaking a very long-term project to "seed the Kingdom with the weed of purity, so that the tangled vines of tyranny may die." In other words, Solan's mission is to train his monks to be good and honorable fighters, and then let them into the world, where they can teach by example. The hope is that if the rest of the Nimro Kingdom can see the work of the Siad monks, then perhaps others will emulate that behavior, perhaps without realizing it. Maybe, if all goes well, in a few hundred years, there might even be a general alignment shift in the region from predominantly evil to predominantly good or selfish. And from there, who knows? It is a dream, to be sure, that the Siad could change the character of an entire nation this way, but perhaps a nation of predominantly good Giants is not as impossible as everyone else seems to think.

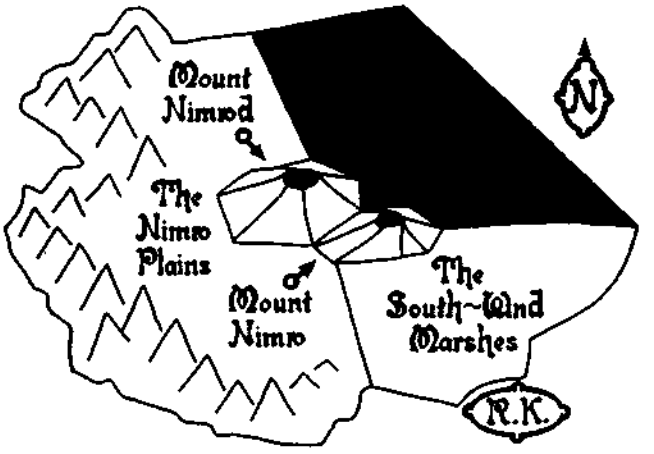
As the Clan Chieftain, Solan delegates much of his authority to his subordinates. He never attends Nimro Council meetings, preferring to let groups of six to eight heralds attend instead.

The strict laws of the monastery, which include vows of silence, fasting, and by-the-book adherence to a particular moral code (Principled or Scrupulous behavior), are enforced by nearly everyone in the order, so Solan rarely finds himself resolving conflicts between his students.

Behind Solan's Zen calm is a deeply saddened and troubled individual. While he likes the idea of the Nimro Kingdom, he secretly fears that for all of his work to improve its moral condition, he will ultimately fail in this task. Indeed, he has taken on an incredible quest, one no single person could hope to accomplish, but that matters not to Solan. To him, the purification of the Nimro Kingdom is all that really matters. And the more he sees that goal drift out of reach, the more despondent he becomes. If and when the Nimro Kingdom goes to war with some other human power, the monk will most likely leave the Kingdom altogether and live out the rest of his life in solitude. For to him, the mindless self-destruction of King Blackrock waging a war he can not win against the human nations represents Solan's utter failure to help make the Nimro King a better, wiser leader.

Quick Stats for Solan Ashursi

Race: Rahu-Man
O.C.C.: 9th level Warrior Monk
Alignment: Principled
Attributes: I.Q.: 17, M.E.: 16, M.A.: 11, P.S.: 23, P.P.: 21, P.E.: 20, P.B.: 15, Spd.: 25
Hit Points: 61
S.D.C.: 85
Attacks per melee: 11
Bonuses: +4 to initiative, +7 to strike, +12 to parry, +8 to dodge, +9 to pull punch, +8 to damage, +6 to roll with impact/fall, +2 to disarm, +10 to save vs Horror Factor, +6 to save vs possession, +4 to save vs poison, drugs, disease, illusion, and mind control, and +3 to save vs magic.
Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts, Boxing & Wrestling —All kicks at +1D6 damage, all jump kicks, leap attack (critical strike), critical strike 18-20, W.P. Paired Weapons, W.P. Staff (+3 to strike and parry, +1 to throw), W.P. Spear (+4 to strike and parry, +1 to throw).
Psionics: Minor psionic with the following psi-sensitive powers: astral projection, clairvoyance, mind block, presence sense, see the invisible, sixth sense. I.S.P.: 47
Weapons: Solan fights with a simple staff (3D6).
Armor: None.
Magic Items: None.
Money and other equipment: An excessive love of material trappings are the sign of a clouded mind and an unsure spirit. Whatever money comes into his possession is used for the betterment of the monastery and his pupils, and helping other people. Never has more than 4D6x100 in gold available at any given time.



The Old Kingdom Grasslands

This sub-region is probably the most amenable part of Mount Nimro, stretching from the base of Mounts Nimrod and Nimro, northward to the Old Kingdom. A tall savanna covers much of the rolling terrain here. In the north, the land switches to scattered meadows of short grass and deciduous forests. Along the northwest border of this region, small scattered deserts alert travelers that they are traveling close to the infamous Baalgor Wastelands. Overall, this section of the Nimro Kingdom is particularly warm and humid.

The Old Kingdom Grasslands are the Nimro Kingdom's doorway to the rest of the world. On the other side lies the vast and wild Old Kingdom, and beyond that, the Western Empire and the Eastern Territories. If any human nation decides to invade the Nimro Kingdom, it will almost certainly come through the Old Kingdom frontier to do it. As a result, this sector plays the largest role in maintaining the external security of the Kingdom.

It also has another kind of invasion to contend with — the never-ending streams of non-Giant immigrants who come to the Kingdom of Giants in hopes of joining it. There are plenty of Giant immigrants, too, but they are all automatically given sanctuary, and are not considered "immigrants," per se. Rather, they are considered citizens who always existed but just hadn't arrived yet. It is the "Shorties" who are the immigrants. Word of King Blackrock's quickly growing kingdom has spread far and wide in the Old Kingdom, and many of the folks living their miserable, short lives there find the allure of a large, powerful kingdom ruled by nonhumans irresistible. Even if it is run by callous Giants known for picking on most non-Giants.

A victim of its own success, the Nimro Kingdom now has got more people than it knows what to do with, and more keep coming. This is pushing the Kingdom of Giants into a critical resource shortage, so it is going to have to take drastic action to maintain itself, since the only other option is to push all of the newcomers away. But, since they are such a great source of cheap and expendable labor and soldiers, they are too attractive in their own weird way to turn away. The only workable option, then, to alleviate the Kingdom's overpopulation, is for it to expand north into the Old Kingdom, which gives the Old Kingdom

Grasslands its third and most important duty, that being an advance camp for the inevitable push northward (Immigrants are also given the most dangerous military assignments and difficult labor under the assumption that they are very expendable).

Notes on Traveling in the Old Kingdom Grasslands

Traveling on foot: This area is covered by flat, uncluttered grasslands that make for relatively easy walking. The maximum rate of sustained travel is roughly seven miles (11 km) an hour at a brisk pace and one 5-10 minute rest period every hour. At a more leisurely pace, characters can walk three miles (4.8 km) an hour, taking a 5-10 minute rest every four hours. Double for True Giants.

Speed Modifiers: Maximum speed (running) is reduced by only 10% for most humanoids, 20% for humanoids under four feet (1.2 m) tall, and zero for Giants over 15 feet (4.6 m) tall.

Traveling on horseback: Approximately 30 miles an hour (48.2 km) at full and constant gallop, but this is cruel punishment for the horse or riding animal and will fatigue, hurt, and even kill the animal if that pace is maintained for more than an hour. 20 miles (32 km) an hour is a brisk but reasonable pace; 12 miles (19.3 km) an hour at a leisurely pace.

Speed Modifiers: None.

Clan Travolg (Nimro)

The Travolg are the largest (approx. pop. 10,000) and powerful Nimro clan in the Nimro Kingdom. They live right on the outer border of the Old Kingdom Grasslands, keeping a sharp eye out for signs of invaders, Orc and Ogre raiders, and other hostiles who might encroach upon the Land of the Giants.

Only about 25% of the Travolg actually fought at the Battle of Gondajar Road or were in the Kingdom at that time. The remainder have come into the Kingdom afterward, lending this clan the dubious nicknames of the "Newcomer Clan," or in some circles, the "Castaway Clan." Being comprised mostly of immigrants has its advantages, such as an ever-renewing source of manpower, and plenty of members who are more than willing to take orders (after all, the Nimro Kingdom's immigrants come willingly, and usually have serious incentives for joining).

There are downsides, too, such as having too much of a good thing. No Great Clan feels the Kingdom's overpopulation pressures more than Clan Travolg, which is supposed to act as an immigration filter for the rest of the realm. Yet, no matter how hard the Travolg try to force newcomers away, they find themselves inundated with more immigrants than they can handle. That, and the Old Kingdom Grasslands' border is too long for even the Travolg Clan to maintain a tight watch over it. While no army could cross into the Nimro Kingdom without being spotted, small groups of travelers can do so quite easily. Most often, those newcomers who get spotted and turned back by Travolg border patrols simply try again when the patrols are away. Such groups typically sneak in and are not discovered until deep within the Kingdom, where they are out of the Travolg's jurisdiction and become somebody else's problem.

The Travolg don't let this happen intentionally, but that doesn't stop the other Great Clans from constantly accusing them of slacking off in their duties. Rumors abound that the Travolg could keep out all newcomers if they really wanted to, but they like to pretend that they're overwhelmed so King Blackrock will give them extra help in doing their job. Or that Travolg border guards will gladly let newcomers into the Kingdom for a hefty bribe. These charges are generally ill-founded (although some guards do accept bribes) and unfairly cast the Travolg in a bad light, blaming them solely for the population problems. Sure it's unfair, but when Giants need a scapegoat, they're not going to let a little thing like reason stand in their way.

The Travolg are used to catching hell from the other Great Clans and have come to expect it. After all, aside from the Nimro Plains Clans which still fight the Gromek regularly, the other Great Clans have forgotten what it is like to pull security detail for the Kingdom. Sure, the Travolg figure, it's easy to gripe about how the border guards are doing a bad job when you're living on Mount Nimrod! Try coming out to the frontier for a week, and you'll change your tune!

But Fire Giants being Fire Giants, The Travolg can not just brush off the constant trash-talk they receive from the other Great Clans. Nor can they just attack whoever badmouths them, since it would get them all killed or expelled from the Kingdom. So, to save some face, the Clan has begun to really crack down on unwanted immigrants along the Old Kingdom border. This means that anybody approaching the border is told to turn back (unless they are a True Giant, which garners special treatment). There is no second warning. Those who argue with the border patrols, continue to press forward, or are later found within the Nimro Kingdom, are killed outright. To keep their body count high, Travolg border guards sometimes kill approaching newcomers without warning, just to make themselves look like they are doing a good job.

The Travolg Clan Stronghold is a sprawling stone fortress right on the border. Extending from either side of the fortress is a mighty stone wall 100 feet high (30 m) and 30 feet (10 m) thick. The "Grasslands Wall" is one of the Nimro Kingdom's most ambitious building projects not under Jotan construction. It was begun some years ago by Clan Travolg to bar more immigrants from coming into the country, to prove to the other Great Clans that they are sincerely committed to serving the Kingdom, and to build a monument to the Nimro Kingdom that the rest of the world will recognize. So far, the part of the wall that has been completed extends from the *Dzereson River* (which forms the border between the Nimro Kingdom and the Land of the South Winds) to the *Dragon River* (which forms the Western border of the Eastern Territory and bisects the Old Kingdom). Very soon, the Travolg building crews will break ground on the second half of the Wall, which will extend west from the end of the Dragon River to the foot of the Baalgor Mountains. Once this project is completed, the Travolg figure, the Western Empire (or any other human nation) will think twice about attacking the Kingdom of Giants! **Note:** Wall construction is made under the supervision of the Travolg Nimro Clan, but the actual work is done by human, Dwarven, Ogre and Orc slaves — mostly people from the Old Kingdom who are not interested in joining the Nimro Kingdom and adventurers captured and enslaved by the Giants. Some have suggested that the Dwarven slaves, in particular, may have deliberately built secret weak spots or even secret doors or hiding places inside the wall (or even the castle!). The Travolg Nimro adamantly deny any such

"suggestions" (they aren't quite rumors or accusations), but refuse to let Jotan engineers examine the fortifications and have increased the number of supervisors and taskmasters just to make sure. Any fool who does make public accusations about the wall is challenged to a duel of honor — to the death. The current slave force assigned to building the wall includes 69 Dwarves, 220 humans, 200 Ogres, 500 Orcs and a hundred or so other humanoids, including a few dozen rogue Giants/criminals — five of whom are Jotan.

Cayvan Cerana

Travolg Clan Chieftain

Cayvan Cerana hates Sunder Blackrock with a passion and wants nothing more than to destroy him. Her animosity for the Nimro King is well known throughout Clan Travolg, yet for all of her venom, Cayvan never disrespects the King directly, nor does she instruct her clan members or any other Kingdom citizens to be the least bit subordinate. It is as if she loves the Nimro Kingdom (the Grasslands Wall was her idea), but she hates its founder and King. Nobody knows why she is like this, nor does she give anyone a reason for her wrath. All anybody knows is that she wants Sunder dead, but can't bring herself to make an attempt on his life for fear of how his demise would hurt the kingdom.

The truth of the matter is that Cayvan is deeply in love with the Nimro King and had a torrid affair with him many years ago, before the Nimro Kingdom had been founded. Back then, Sunder was a dashing and dangerous adventurer with bold dreams and wild ambitions. When he and Cayvan met in Caer Doragon, capital of the Orcish Empire, they spent several passionate weeks together before they parted ways. Sunder left to create the Kingdom of Giants he had always talked about, while Cayvan stayed with her fellow clan mates in Caer Doragon as they prepared a journey deep within the Yin-Sloth Jungles.

Some years later, Cayvan learned of Sunder's success at establishing his new realm, and she made the long, hard trek from the Dragon's Gate Mountains to Mount Nimrod, where she thought that she and Sunder would pick up where they had left off. She could not have been more wrong. Once Cayvan finally was granted an audience with the King, he didn't even recognize her, much less run into her arms! Moreover, he showed no interest in rekindling their long-lost romance. To Cayvan, Sunder had grown cold and cruel, not at all the man she had fallen in love with so long ago.

Angry and bitter, Cayvan left for the Old Kingdom frontier, vowing never to speak to Sunder ever again. Along the border, she took command of the Travolg Clan of Nimro and began a number of work projects (such as building their magnificent Clan Fortress and the even more impressive Grasslands Wall). Despite these successes, all these efforts were just a way for Cayvan to try to forget the Nimro she still loved, even though he had never given her a second thought.

As a result, the Giantess burns with conflicting emotions and the desire to punish Sunder for the hurt he has caused her. Yet, at the same time, she still loves the man, and could never really bring herself to harm him or undermine the Kingdom of Giants. As a result, she has turned to venting her anger on those around her, especially unfortunate newcomers who happen to cross her path when she's having a really bad day.

What's more, Cayvan is incredibly protective of the King, and will do anything to protect him if threatened. Unfortunately, this also extends to any other woman who may enter Sunder's life. Thankfully, he has been so overwhelmed with running his new Kingdom that he has not taken a wife. But if he ever did, he would have a dangerously unstable Cayvan Cerana to deal with ("Get away from him, you wench! He's mine, I tell you! Mine! MINE!").

Quick Stats for Cayvan Cerana

Race: Nimro

O.C.C.: 8th level Mercenary.

Alignment: Miscreant.

Attributes: I.Q.:10, M.E.: 10, M.A.: 5, P.S.: 21, P.P.: 21, P.E.: 21, P.B.: 19, Spd.: 16

Hit Points: 55

S.D.C.: 80; also see armor.

Attacks per melee: 6

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +5 to strike, +8 to parry and dodge, +6 to damage, +6 to pull punch, +5 to roll with impact/fall, +7 to save vs Horror Factor, +4 to save vs poison, drugs and disease, +3 to save vs magic and possession, and +12% vs coma/death.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Expert & Wrestling — Breathe fire, critical strike 18-20, body throw/flip, disarm, automatic knockout on a natural 20, body block/tackle (3D6 damage), pin/incapacitate 18-20, crush/squeeze (3D6 damage), W.P. Paired Weapons, W.P. Sword (+3 to strike and parry, +2 to throw), W.P. Shield (+3 to parry, +2 to strike), W.P. Battle Axe (+4 to strike, parry, and throw, +1D6 to damage), W.P. Spear (+4 to strike and parry, +2 to throw), W.P. Pole Arm (+3 to strike and parry, +4 to damage, +2 to throw), W.P. Archery (rate of fire: 6; +160 feet/48 m to range; +5 to strike and parry), W.P. Chain (+3 to strike and parry), W.P. Blunt (+3 to strike, parry, and throw).

Weapons: Cayvan's favorite weapon is a normal-sized saber halberd that is enchanted to inflict an extra die of damage (4D6 total), makes a strange humming sound when swung, and completely bypasses the A.R. of its target. Cayvan calls this weapon her "little cleaver."

She also owns two normal-sized enchanted swords and an enchanted Giant-sized battle axe.

The long sword gives its user a +4 bonus to strike and parry, as well as an extra attack, but it also will inflict three random curses on its owner! Cayvan knew this before using it and has managed never to touch the item, thus preventing its curses from rubbing off on her.

The broadsword glows softly and will point the way to precious metals and gems, like a dowsing rod will to water.

The enchanted axe inflicts double damage against dragons.

Armor: Cayvan wears a baroque suit of plate and chain (A.R. 15, S.D.C. 120) that is adorned with all sorts of lewd, unsavory sexual imagery. Somehow, she thinks other Giants find this attractive. The freaky thing is, she's right.

Magic Items: Cayvan is fond of potions and will have three on her at any given time. The exact type is left for the G.M. to decide.

Money and other equipment: Cayvan owns several pieces of jewelry worth 20,000, 9,000, 5,000, and 3,000, respectively.

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She only wears these, however, if she thinks she is going to be seen by King Blackrock. Otherwise, she keeps them bundled in a soft cloth in her satchel. Her other valuables include 24,000 gold in coinage, a lump of gold and silver-streaked ore worth 11,000, and an uncut diamond worth 13,000. Cayvan hoards her valuables in the hopes that she can one day use them as a dowry to present herself to Sunder. Ah, what some deluded Giantesses will do for love.

Clan Quaelin (Jotan)

All 7,000 members of this Great Clan are part of a massive army devoted more to an invasion of the Old Kingdom than to the preservation of its current borders. With the express consent of King Blackrock, the Quaelin are *preparing* to launch an all-out invasion into the Old Kingdom west of the Dragon River, where they hope to secure a route to the Sea of Scarlet Waters for the Nimro Kingdom.

Along the way, the Quaelin expect to encounter a great deal of other Giants, Trolls, Ogres, Orcs and other Shorties who have either made their home in the area or are already on their way to joining the Kingdom. Those on their way to join will be assimilated into the army and used as a disposable front line (Of course, these newcomers won't be told that). Anybody who gives the Quaelin Army any trouble will be beaten into submission or destroyed. Already, the Giants' scouts have located large enemy strongholds run by other Giants and Trolls, and bands of Ogres, Orcs, and Goblins throughout the target region, so winning the way to the sea will not be easy, but it will be very much worth it.

Once that goal is accomplished, the Quaelin expect to rest and recruit newcomers to bolster whatever losses they incurred. Meanwhile, they will watch for any human activity against them. This campaign will be the test of the Nimro Kingdom's expansion policy. Hopefully, nobody will notice if the Giants take this piece of land sandwiched between the Old Kingdom and the Baalgor Wastelands (they shouldn't). The only trouble of it is the proximity to the Western Empire. All it would take are a few panicky folks to run from the advancing Quaelin army and go to the Western Empire for protection. This is why the Nimro King hasn't given the final go-ahead for the clan to begin its thrust north. Blackrock is unsure of how the West might respond, or if the Nimro Kingdom is ready to defend itself if the worst-case scenario of a Western invasion results. His advisors say the Kingdom is ready, as do the heralds of Clan Quaelin, but still the King reflects on the issue. And while he waits, the Quaelin soldiers grow more and more restless. Indeed, word is spreading that they may launch the campaign on their own and only return when they have achieved victory.

Assuming the Quaelin successfully capture some coastline, they will then plan a joint campaign with the Giants of Gurthasi Tor to eradicate the Gromek presence in the Baalgor Mountains, thus paving the way for the Nimro Kingdom to colonize the Baalgor Wastelands, which is the real prize the Quaelin are really seeking. They figure if they can spearhead the capture of the Baalgor, then they will be left to govern it — truly a step up for this Great Clan. Never mind that their plans of destroying the Gromek, capturing the Wastelands, or even blazing a trail to the Sea of Scarlet Waters are overly optimistic at best. To these Giants, there is nothing they can not do, and worrying about the long-term repercussions of what may result from their actions today is a waste of time. "Worrying is for the weak," goes the Quaelin saying. "Victory to the hasty!"

Nevay **Bron**

Quaelin Clan Chieftain

Hunted by the Western Empire for numerous atrocities along their Old Kingdom Frontier, Warlord Bron has lived a life of intermittent conflict with the Empire of Sin. His last run-in with the Empire was when he led an ill-fated force of some 3,000 Giants, Trolls, Ogres and Orcs against the warrior monastery of Shandala, not far behind the Western Empire's border. Bron seriously misjudged the fighting ability of the monks there, and after a brief and bloody siege, his decimated forces withdrew before Imperial Troops had a chance to get involved.

That was the day Bron realized that if he wanted to keep harassing the Western Empire (which he wants to spend the rest of his life doing), he could not do it as a rogue warlord. He had heard of Sunder Blackrock and his new Kingdom, so Bron decided to give it a try — surely, he thought, this Nimro King would need somebody with his experience and courage (even if Bron's track record wasn't spotless). The King accepted Bron into the Kingdom, and before long the Jotan Warlord found himself commanding the newly formed Quaelin Clan.

Much of the reason why Bron was given a command so quickly was that he brought well over 1,000 seasoned troops into the Nimro Kingdom, troops King Blackrock desperately wanted. That, and Bron's knowledge about Western Empire tactics (better than any other Giant in the realm with the exception of King Blackrock himself). Who better to hold the line against the Empire of Sin?

Things have gone well for Bron over the last 20+ years. He has served the Nimro Kingdom well, but is growing restless and tired of waiting for the King to find the courage to let the Nimro Kingdom burst forth and claim what's theirs. So what if the Western Empire panics at the sight of an army of Giants? It is well that they should! After all, are they not the tip of Sunder's spear, the first wave of an unstoppable legion of Giant warriors, ready to destroy anything and anyone who stands in their way?

Unfortunately, Warlord Bron really believes all of his self-congratulating hype, regardless of how disastrous any sustained military campaign will be if it ends up provoking war with the Western Empire. If the Jotan sees the tactical error, he doesn't care, which makes his passion to fight the Western Empire an obsessive revenge and death wish that could threaten the entire Kingdom of Giants. Equally likely, is that Bron honestly believes he is as invincible as he says he is, and that the Nimro Kingdom really can shrug off any assault. If Bron had his way, he would rampage across the world until the other Palladium nations would be forced to respond. And then, he would see once and for all if he and the Nimro Kingdom really can crush the puny humans into submission. Perhaps with superior planning, motivation, magical weapons, and the help of the newly found Giant Pantheon, Mount Nimro could hold its own against anyone, but why force the issue? Bron is just one more deluded power-monger who should be removed from power before he does an incredible amount of harm.

Quick Stats for Nevay Bron

Race: Jotan
O.C.C.: 9th level Soldier.
Alignment: Aberrant.
Attributes: I.Q.: 10, M.E.: 15, M.A.: 10, P.S.: 28, P.P.: 20, P.E.: 25, P.B.: 13, Spd.: 25
Hit Points: 60
S.D.C.: 90; also see armor.
Attacks per melee: 7
Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +5 to strike, +8 to parry and dodge, +13 to damage, +8 to pull punch, +7 to roll with impact/fall, +5 to disarm, +9 to save vs Horror Factor, +6 to save vs poison, drugs and disease, +5 to save vs magic, and +20% vs coma/death.
Other combat info: Martial Arts & Boxing — All kicks (add +1D6 to damage), all jump kicks, leap attack (critical strike), critical strike 18-20, automatic knockout on a natural 20, body block/tackle (3D6), pin/incapacitate 18-20, crush/squeeze (3D6).
Weapons: Bron's chief weapon is a mighty holy weapon of the evil Dragonwright, a religion Bron worships in secret. The weapon has been constructed out of the *Blood of Styphon*, one of the major evil dragon-gods. The Blood of Syphon forms a magical black metal that is incredibly strong and lightweight. The holy weapon itself is a giant-sized, double-headed battle axe that inflicts 1D4x10+6 and has the following holy weapon powers: healing touch, remove curse, negate poison, and radius of protection. See the *Dragons & Gods* sourcebook for more information about Dragonwright.
Armor: A full suit of enchanted scale mail (A.R. 15, S.D.C. 150) that can cast each of the following abilities three times daily: Fleet Feet, Multiple Image, and Eyes of Thoth. Bron also has a magical shield that confers no bonuses but is indestructible.
Magic Items: Three magical javelins (normal-sized) that have been enchanted to teleport to their wielder three times daily, which is very handy. Each does 4D6 damage due to size and more magic.
Money and other equipment: Roughly 43,000 in gold. He also owns a scroll tube with six treasure maps in it, leading to ancient treasure hoards in the Old Kingdom, the Yin-Sloth Jungles, and the Baalgor Wastelands. He hopes that one day he will have the opportunity to seek out these treasures before anyone else finds them.

Note: The clan also manages a pig farm, sheep farm and humanoid farm and slaughterhouse. The latter is more of a sprawling prison where humans, Elves, Goblins and other enemies of the Nimro Kingdom are kept, fed, slaughtered and eaten by the Quaelin Jotan, Vorok Gigantes, and other Giants and Shorties (mainly Trolls and Orcs) who prefer the taste of humanoid meat. 4D4x100 humanoid cattle are penned and waiting for slaughter at any given time, but only 10-15% are human, 1% Elf and/or Dwarf, 3-5% Gromek, and 8% other (mostly enemy Ogres and Orcs from the Old Kingdom). The remaining 70+% are Goblins and Hob-Goblins. King Blackrock is not too thrilled with this grim compound, but allows it because of the food shortages and to placate the Quaelin Clan and Vorok Gigantes who often associate and work with the Jotan.

Clan Vorok (Gigante)

Clan Vorok (approx. pop. 8,000) holds the line against Gromek incursions coming from the Baalgor Mountains, much like their fellow Gigante clan in the Nimro Plains, Clan Gulthur. The Vorok delight in killing as many Gromek as they can, but they will also settle for any non-Giant, which keeps Shorties far away from the Vorok's sphere of influence.

When and if Clan Quaelin goes on the warpath into the Old Kingdom, it will be up to Clan Vorok to keep waves of newcomers (or enemy invaders) from pouring through the gap the departing Quaelin will leave in the Nimro Kingdom's border. All the Vorok have to do, really, is be themselves. There are so many of them in their particular area, that anybody passing through will be set upon by numerous hungry and vicious mutants. **Note:** Although they have been told not to, the King knows approximately 20% of these warriors will run off with Clan Quaelin to fight in the Old Kingdom. Such an act is not out of defiance but mindless excitement, so they will not be severely punished for this.

Otherwise, the Vorok serve the Kingdom the same as other Gigante Clans: they feed off the unsuspecting (their voracious appetites keep the local wildlife populations on the verge of collapsing and immigrants and troublesome Goblins from the Baalgor to a minimum), but don't do any real work. Their stronghold is nothing more than the remains of an ancient crossroads fortress built by the Dwarves during the Millennium of Purification (ostensibly to give Purifiers sanctuary on their way to and from dropping rune weapons into Mount Nimrod).

As the Vorok moved into this area, they laid claim to the ancient fortress ruins, which house anywhere from 500 to 750 Gigantes at any given time. They are ruled by the mighty Gigante Warlord So'Bath the Silent, the last of the original ad-

venturers who traveled with Sunder Blackrock back during the days before there was a Nimro Kingdom. *The Vorok Citadel*, as it is called, is a nightmarish place where the Gigantes living there constantly stalk and murder each other in an ongoing battle for supremacy. Here, the average life expectancy is only a year, which many other Giants of the Kingdom are grateful for, since it helps keep the number of most monstrous and mindless Gigantes down. Somehow, So'Bath the Silent has reigned here as the warrior supreme for decades, never once showing the slightest sign of weakness, mercy or remorse. It is said that the enemies of the Kingdom may breach the Grasslands Wall, they may even outmaneuver King Blackrock on the battlefield, and bring with them more powerful magicks than the Giants, but there is no one among them who can match the fighting prowess of So'Bath the Silent and his legion of deranged Giants. Whoever crosses swords with the Nimro Kingdom had better be prepared for the Walking Doom, as he is sometimes called. For he takes no prisoners and shows no mercy. The Doom can defeat all. And it is a damn good thing for the Nimro Kingdom that he's on their side.

Whenever some Giants fret that the Nimro Kingdom's northern border is not secure enough, one only needs to point out the presence of So'Bath the Silent, and the 8,000 or so other Gigantes striving to be just like him. As unsophisticated a fighting force as Clan Vorok may be, it does help much of the Nimro Kingdom sleep better at night, knowing that their northern border is much safer for them and much more dangerous for the rest of the world.

So'Bath the Silent

Vorok Clan Chieftain

The Walking Doom is a nightmarish figure of incredible strength, agility, and raw power. He is a pure killing machine, with natural fighting skills honed to near perfection from his years of constant battle at the Vorok Citadel. It is said that during his reign, he has killed over 1,000 fellow Gigantes who have tried to take a piece out of him. It is also said that he collects the heads of all he defeats, and that he has buried, somewhere, an incredible collection of skulls. Not only Gigantes skulls, either, but those of humans, Elves, Dwarves, Minotaurs, and even some demons, Deevils and (if you believe the rumors) a dragon!

For all of his viciousness, Vorok has always been attack-dog loyal to Sunder Blackrock. The reason for this goes back to

when the two first escaped the Western Empire together. So'Bath was in really bad shape (having already taken out an entire Imperial Janissary patrol by himself), and it was Sunder Blackrock who stayed at his side, shared his food with him, and brought him back to health. So'Bath had never received this level of friendship or kindness from anyone else, so when Sunder gave it, he found a friend for life. This loyalty extends to anybody Sunder calls his friend, as well. Thus, the monstrous Gigante Warlord adventured with Sunder and his companions for years without ever causing trouble for his companions.

Once Sunder formed the Nimro Kingdom, he decided to give So'Bath some room to run, and granted a portion of the Old Kingdom Grasslands to the mighty warrior to rum into his own personal battleground. Since then, most of the more troublesome and rebellious Gigantes are sent So'Bath's way, where they either learn to settle down, or they reach a premature end at the claws of the Walking Doom.

Quick Stats for So'Bath the Silent

Also known as: The Walking Doom

Race: Gigante

R.C.C.: 10th level Gigante Warlord/Mercenary Fighter.

Alignment: Diabolic, but unshakably loyal to King Blackrock.

Attributes: I.Q.: 11, M.E.: 8, M.A.: 11, P.S.: 30, P.P.: 24, P.E.: 30, P.B.: 3, Spd.: 40 (legs with hooved feet)

Hit Points: 78

S.D.C.: 142

Natural A.R.: 14

Horror Factor: 16

Mutations: Telekinesis, teleport: lesser, bio-regeneration 1D6 H.P./S.D.C. per melee round, invisibility, see the invisible, and impervious to fire.

Defects/Insanities: Susceptible to cold (double damage), severely claustrophobic, rotating mental illness (currently, he hates music and musicians).

Attacks per melee: 7

Bonuses: +2 on initiative, +7 to strike, +10 to parry and dodge, +15 to damage, +8 to roll with impact/fall, +6 to pull punch, +2 to disarm, +6 to save vs Horror Factor, +9 to save vs poison, drugs, and disease, +8 to save vs magic and +30% to save vs coma/death.

Other combat info: Martial Arts, Boxing and Wrestling — All kicks (+1D6 damage), all jump kicks, leap attack (critical strike), critical strike 18-20, automatic knockout on a natural 20, body block/tackle (3D6), pin/incapacitate 18-20, crush/squeeze (3D6), claws inflict 2D6 +P.S. damage, stinger-tail strike for 1D6 +paralysis for 1D4 melees if target fails saving throw; leathery, rhino-like hide (A.R. 14), W.P. Paired Weapons, W.P. Shield (+4 to parry, +2 to strike), W.P. Knife (+4 to strike and parry, +4 to throw), W.P. Whip (+4 to strike or entangle, +3 to damage), W.P. Blunt (+4 to strike, parry, and throw).

Special Bite Attack: Huge, T-Rex-style jaws with massive teeth that bite for 4D6 (On a critical strike, the Gigante can either inflict double damage outright or, when biting Gnomes and Goblin-sized opponents, can swallow them whole (those swallowed take no bite damage, but will take 3D6 damage per melee round until dead or freed).

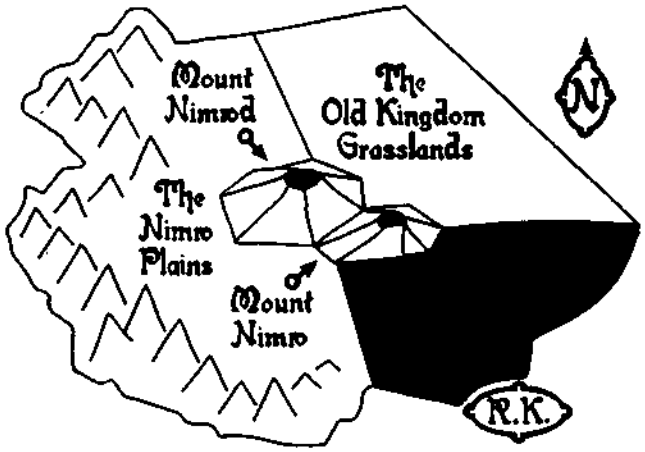
Weapons: So'Bath fights with a pair of weird weapons that he has constructed — a pair of small shields with jagged obsidian knives strapped to the sides. The weapons are equally suited for parrying and slashing, and So'Bath will not fight with anything else unless these are lost or destroyed. These "knife shields" give him +2 to parry (on top of his W.P. Shield bonus) and a +2 to strike. They slash for 3D6 damage, and can also bash for 2D6 damage (remember to add P.S. bonus to each attack). They cannot be thrown, however. So'Bath is so fond of these shield knives that he is looking into having them enchanted for indestructibility.

Armor: So'Bath wears a ragged, beaten up suit of plate and chain that affords far better protection than it looks, despite the many gaps in it. The reality is this is a unique item that he found in the Old Kingdom that confers a natural A.R. of 15 on whoever wears it. The tattered armor itself is indestructible and is not what is really providing the protection.

Magic Items: The mutant owns a Dwarven skull that can cast Second Sight once per day. When it does, the skull animates and says what it foresees in a language that, mysteriously, all who hear it can understand. So'Bath reportedly uses this skull to find out about plots against him and about his enemies before fighting them.

Money and other equipment: A small mountain of coinage, loose items, and personal effects taken from his legions of defeated opponents. Nobody really knows how much all this stuff is worth, or if any special items are part of the treasure. For all anybody knows, So'Bath's treasure hoard might be a pile of junk. Or it might contain rune weapons. Nobody knows, least of all its owner, who is too busy killing people and guarding his treasure to actually sift through it and catalogue the good stuff (there is at least one million in gold, gems and jewelry. Anything special is left to the G.M.).

Note: The Vorok Clan has excellent relations with the militant Jotan of Clan Quaelin and they frequently work together. The Gigantes of the other Great Clans also fear and respect So'Bath, and usually back down from him, giving him his way.



The South Wind Marshes

This is the last region of the Nimro Kingdom, covering the land east of Mounts Nimrod and Nimro, from the edge of the Yin-Sloth Jungles to the winding Dzereson River that separates Mount Nimro from the Land of the South Winds. This is the hottest and muggiest part of the Mount Nimro Region, thanks to the break in the Baalgor Mountains which allows the hot jungle air of the Yin-Sloth Jungles to blow in from the south. Fierce rains are also common here, contributing to the light jungle, many bogs, marshes and quagmires that dot this part of the region.

Strategically, the South Wind Marshes are the least important part of the Nimro Kingdom, since there are few serious enemies along that border. The land of the South Winds is a fractured and corrupt human power that poses no serious threat. If it did, they would have done something about the Nimro Kingdom long ago. Likewise, the only danger the Yin-Sloth Jungles poses is as a source for weird and exotic monsters and animals that sometimes wander into Mount Nimro.

King Blackrock has always placed little importance on this part of his realm, and incredibly, large tracts of it remain unexplored, especially in the southeast corner, as one approaches both the Yin-Sloth Jungles and the Land of the South Winds. Like many places in the Nimro Kingdom, and the rest of the Palladium World, rumors and lore abound about what really might reside in this mysterious region. Some say that aggressive colonies of Lizard Men have been spotted along the Dzereson River, while others note that Western spies, using South Wind guides, are using the marshes to keep tabs on the Nimro Kingdom. Still others insist that a small force of Titans, Rahu-Men, and other Giants opposed to Sunder Blackrock are gathering their strength and plotting to overthrow the kingdom. As with many stories, none of these have been proven, yet they all carry a wisp of believability that makes most folks consider them with at least a little seriousness.

Essentially, this land has so little to appeal to most Giants that it remains underpopulated and unexplored. Even with some parts of the Nimro Kingdom seriously overpopulated, the South Wind Marshes remain an undesirable place to support a big Giant population. For one thing, the ground is too wet and soft to support a Giant's weight, let alone any houses or strongholds. For another, this region is so far from where the "action" (either fighting the Gromek in the west or helping prepare for the invasion in the north) that most Giants feel that only cowards and Shorties would ever want to live there. After all, who but the lowliest of the low would want to live someplace where they could not prove themselves in combat?

Only two clans can provide an answer to that: Clan Olrigan, some of the most incredible builders in the Kingdom, and Clan Daumos, the Nimro Kingdom's only Clan of Titans.

Notes on Traveling in the South Wind Marshes

Traveling on foot: The rate of travel for this area is fairly slow because of the waterlogged marshlands, swamps, bogs, quicksand and vegetation. Even in the comparatively dry areas one must contend with patches of soft ground, mud, frequent pools of water, and many streams blocking major lanes of travel. Occasionally, there is a spot of completely dry ground where moving about is both easy and safe, but for the most part, travelers are forced to slog through miles of swampland that all too often turns unexpectedly into a deep pool of water or a mud pit capable of swallowing all but the tallest humanoids.

The maximum rate of travel on foot here is just 2-3 miles (3.2 to 4.8 km) an hour, with rests required every two hours or so, although this is not particularly grueling. At a more leisurely pace, characters might cover less than a mile per hour.

Speed Modifiers: Maximum speed is reduced by 60% for most humanoids, and 70%-80% for any Giant-sized humanoids (including Ogres, Trolls and Wolfen, but not Orcs), because their added bulk and weight makes them sink into the muck and mire, up to their knees in most marshes and swamp areas. One fatigues at twice the normal rate.

Traveling on horseback: Horses and other riding animals will prefer to avoid the South Wind Marshes due to the extremely unstable and soggy terrain. Riding through this area is slow and exhausting for long-legged animals, who, like Giant-sized humanoids, sink easily into the muddy ground here. A pace of 5-7 miles (8-11.2 km) per hour is astounding, but 1-3 miles (1.6-4.8 km) an hour is much more realistic. These are dangerous places for an animal so large and heavy, with a 01-50% chance of the animal (including Silonar and Draybacks) getting stuck in a deep mire, drowning in a pool, or sinking into a deep mud shallow. Roll for every half-hour of travel. Also realize that there are parts of marshlands that will be so deep with muck, mud or water, that the animal can not go through them and a detour must be made.

Speed Modifiers: Maximum speed is reduced by 70%-90% for most horses and riding animals, including Draybacks who are used to dry, hard ground, not swampland (they sink like a rock in bogs and quicksand and are lousy swimmers). Note: As travelers get closer to the Dzereson River, large stretches of earth become very swampy, with more than a foot (0.3 m) of water covering the earth. Except for the ridges of high ground threading through this swampland, most riding animals will not enter this area, knowing that it is simply too treacherous for them (Hey, horses might be hard-working, but they're not stupid).

Optional Consideration: Roll percentile dice once every 2-4 hours see if the traveler or his animal falls prey to one of the following:

01-25 Quicksand! One doesn't see it until he falls or his ride sinks into it. Any large riding animal like a horse is lost. Humanoids will sink and drown within 2D4 minutes unless pulled out or an appropriate type of magic is used to escape (levitation, fly, float, etc.). True Giants (15 feet or taller) will sink within 1D4 minutes, but there is a 01-40% chance the quicksand pool is not more than 15 feet (4.6 m) deep, giving the tallest a chance to keep their head above the devouring muck. Giants with their longer reach *may* have a much better opportunity to pull themselves out of quicksand provided the edge is within reach. Big or small, the more one moves and thrashes around, the faster he will sink. Thus, panicked animals are usually gone in a matter of 1D6 melee rounds.

26-50 Bog or mud flat. These are easy to see in the daylight, unless the traveler is running and not paying attention to where he is going. They are more dangerous in the night where a misstep can send one to his death. Same basic effect as quicksand, only a bog tends to be 2-4 times deeper.

51-75 Tangle Vine or other dangerous plant(s).

76-00 Swampland monster looking for prey or angry at being disturbed. The following are extremely common to the Marshlands: Poisonous snakes, crocodiles, Timrek, and Melech. Other common menaces include the occasional Tusker or two, Maxpary, Dogre, Adram, Manticore, Chimera, Serpent Rat, (2D4) Floaters, (1D4+3) Lizard Men, Nipper Worm of Taut, Tri-Fang Worm of Taut, Tomb Worms, and creatures that live in the southern jungles and Lands of the South Winds and might wander north.

Clan Olrigan (Jotan)

The Olrigan Jotan (approx. pop. 6,000) moved to the South Wind Marshes some 250 years ago as part of a major clan war. During the fighting, the Olrigan, which at that time had been very powerful, fell under a coordinated attack by three smaller clans. The Olrigan barely survived, and were whittled down to a fraction of their former size. When this happened, other clans moved in and pushed the survivors out of their homes in the Nimro Plains, and across the region, into the far less attractive South Wind Marshes.

There, the clan licked its wounds, but by the time they were in any shape to regain their old homelands, Sunder Blackrock had established the Nimro Kingdom, which pretty much froze all of the Great Clans where they were, territory-wise.

This development was a lot easier for the Olrigan to take than some had thought. By that time, all of the Olrigan's ancient enemies had either destroyed themselves or were rolled over by Sunder Blackrock when he conquered the region. While exiled to the marshes, the clan became rather used to them. To survive, they built vast bridges and villages on big platforms mounted on stone pylons. Once they got a foothold, they became the Lords of the Marshes, a title easily defended since nobody really wants this part of the Kingdom for themselves. To these Jotan, though, their position is all a matter of perspective. Sure, they run the least attractive part of the Kingdom, but they also have a lot more leeway to govern things as they please, much more so than most other Great Clans. So, it is a twist on the old saying: "Would you rather serve in Paradise or rule in Perdition?" Clearly, the Olrigan prefer ruling in Perdition.

Unlike nearly all other Great Clans, the Olrigan Jotan live clustered in villages or the Clan Stronghold, a wide, low fortress that sits on top of a massive grid of support pylons. Fortress Olrigan's sewage system consists mostly of floor drains everywhere for waste to wash down and feed directly into the wetlands below. While this is really effective, it tends to create a stifling stink which wafts up through the entire stronghold on particularly hot and steamy days. Similar problems are at all other Olrigan villages, which, ironically, has led many other Giants to believe falsely that the marshes themselves stink, which contributes to the lack of interest by others in the region.

Aside from expanding their noteworthy network of elevated roads and bridges (ground-level infrastructure just sinks into the mire at many places in this region), Clan Olrigan also patrols the border with the Land of the South Winds, where it had been reported that Western spies have been crossing the Dzereson River in the hopes of verifying rumors that the Kingdom of Giants exists. By orders of King Blackrock, the Olrigan are to capture any spies they find and bring them to Mount Nimrod for interrogation. So far, only one Western scouting party has been spotted. Olrigan soldiers captured the scouts, but they all committed suicide when they realized that they were going to be questioned.

That aside, the Olrigan are certain that more Western activity will pop up along the Dzereson River. After all, it is well-known that the Land of the South Winds and the Western Empire are very cozy, so it wouldn't be hard for the Empire of Sin to arrange for scouts to come into Mount Nimro from the southeast. For that reason, Clan Olrigan remains on high alert at all times, and in the past few months, have stepped up their river patrols both in frequency and size. Where a few Olrigan soldiers used to wade through the muck along the river, keeping watch, now 8-10 man groups patrol the river on big, low rowboats or flatbed barges. Since implementing these river patrols, Olrigan patrols have vastly improved their capabilities as the Nimro Kingdom's southern sentinels, especially since these boats can also float through the 20 mile (32 km) strip of deep swampland leading up to the Dzereson's west bank. Now, anybody sneaking into the Kingdom is going to have a considerably harder time getting past the river unseen. And even if they do, intruders are likely to get stuck in the 20 mile (32 km) zone of low-water marsh and are easily spotted by the River Patrols.

Skojo Voss

Olrigan Clan Chieftain

Skojo is a big-bellied, flame-haired archer and pugilist who enjoys brawling, building, and beer in equal portions. The great-grandson of Clan Olrigan's last great war chief, Skojo has never known a life outside of the South Wind Marshes. Thus, he doesn't desire to return to the central plains of the Nimro Kingdom, as some of his fellow clan members do (especially the older ones). No, Skojo likes it out in the swamps and bayous, patrolling the river, looking for intruders and battling jungle and swamp monsters.

An ace marksman, Skojo particularly enjoys picking off suspected spies or invaders spotted anywhere near the border. So deadly is his accuracy with the longbow that he has been nicknamed the "Hand of Sunder," referring to the Nimro King's edict that no unwelcome guests are to pass into the Nimro Kingdom from the southeast. But, for all of the patrols and watchman duty, few bona fide enemies have tried to penetrate the marshlands. Most of Skojo's shooting victims turn out to be Lizard Men, Dogres or Orcs who stumbled too close to his domain. The only Western spies Skojo has nabbed died before they could be questioned, something the Olrigan lord still berates himself over.

Recently, though, Skojo's patrols have sighted what appear to be Western skiffs moving up and down the Dzereson River, and even making short cross-border incursions. Could this be the beginning of a Western flank invasion? With little serious mass combat/war experience under his belt, Skojo is becoming nervous and jittery. For all his bravado, he doesn't know what to expect if something serious happens on his watch. As a result, he is becoming erratic lately, prone to punishing his soldiers for the slightest dereliction in duties, and forcing them to pull long, grueling patrols at all hours of the day. Morale is beginning to suffer badly for this, and if Skojo doesn't lighten up soon, Clan Olrigan, which historically has been one of the more informal and stable Great Clans, might find itself in the middle of a nasty little civil war.

Quick Stats for Skojo Voss

Race: Jotan
O.C.C.: 8th level Long Bowman.
Alignment: Anarchist
Attributes: I.Q.: 9, M.E.: 10, M.A.: 16, P.S.: 33, P.P.: 26, P.E.: 24, P.B.: 10, **Spd.**: 6
Hit Points: 52
S.D.C.: 100
Attacks per melee: 6 hand to hand, 8 with a long bow.
Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +8 to strike, +9 to parry and dodge, +18 to damage, +6 to pull punch, +5 to roll with impact/fall, +6 to save vs Horror Factor, +6 to save vs poison, drugs, and disease, and +5 to save vs magic.
Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Assassin and Wrestling, Special archery attacks, critical strike 18-20, body throw/flip, disarm, body block/tackle (3D6), pin/incapacitate 18-20, crush/squeeze (3D6), automatic knockout on a natural 20, W.P. Paired Weapons, W.P. Archery (+5 to strike and parry; see Long Bowman O.C.C. for other archery bonuses), W.P. Targeting (+6 to strike), W.P. Knife (+3 to strike and parry, +4 to throw), W.P. Blunt (+3 to strike, parry, and throw), W.P. Sword (+3 to strike and parry, +2 to throw).
Weapons: Skojo has a variety of missile weapons in his arsenal. For sniping, he relies on a Great Bow that is as tall as himself and can only be fired once per round, but its spear-sized arrows hit with incredible force (5D6) and will fly out to a whopping 1,500 feet (720 m)!

Under normal circumstances, he uses a normal long bow (not the Great Bow), only the arrows he fires have Jotan-crafted heads (+1 to strike, 3D6+2 damage).

When not using his bow, the warrior relies on a morning star he built himself (3D6+3 damage, +3 to parry) and has since had enchanted to return when thrown and to fly out to 500 feet (240 m) when thrown.

Armor: A suit of chain mail (A.R. 14, S.D.C. 65).
Magic Items: Skojo owns a quiver of 24 magical arrows. 10 are heavy Cyclops lightning arrows that hit for 6D6 damage, eight are Dragon Bone arrows that inflict 3D6 and fly twice as far as usual, and the remaining six arrows are silver tipped.
Money and other equipment: Only a few thousand in gold. He spends much of his money funding building projects and throwing incredible parties for his fellow clan members. Likewise, the clan treasury rarely has more than a quarter million in gold.

Clan Daumos (Titan)

Clan Daumos, the last and smallest of the Great Clans, consists of only 100 members, but it is tied with Clan Siad for being one of the most unusual Clans of the Nimro Kingdom.

As Giants and non-Giants alike know, Titans are extremely rare, and for them to band together is even more unusual. And for them to swear an allegiance to the likes of King Blackrock (who, for all his talk and posturing, really is nothing more than a somewhat sympathetic tyrant) is rarer still.

Most of the Nimro Kingdom doesn't like Clan Daumos, and most of the Daumos Titans don't care for the other Great Clans, either. These rogue Titans are dedicated to preserving Giantkind at any cost, so they have put their moral misgivings aside and have joined Sunder Blackrock in the hopes of shoring up his young Kingdom. The King appreciates this effort, but he also

knows that unless he isolates the Titan element in his Kingdom, it is only going to cause trouble. Titans and Gigantes, in particular, hate each other. And as it stands, the Kingdom's Gigantes are just barely under control. The last thing the King wants is for the Titans to start trouble throughout the land. So, he has isolated them the best he can by placing them in the South Wind Marshes.

The Daumos Titans feel this is a bit of a slap in the face, considering all that they are sacrificing to help the Kingdom. After all, that they have joined an evil Nimro nation has made the whole lot of Clan Daumos outcasts in the eyes of all other Titans. Even if the Daumos were to abandon the Nimro Kingdom, it is unlikely that these Titans will be welcome amongst heroes and champions of light ever again (those of them that actually know of the Nimro Kingdom and the Daumos' involvement in it, that is).

Still the Daumos are committed to helping the Kingdom of Giants to become a strong, independent nation and do whatever they can in and away from their stronghold in the Marshes. Clan Olrigan, who also have no love for Titans, handle all the border security in the marshlands, refusing any joint operations with the Daumos. Likewise, things are so quiet near the Yin-Sloth Jungles that no patrolling is really needed there, either. So, the Daumos have built a modest but solid stronghold in the southwestern corner of the sub-region as their base of operation. This is where they train, research the mystic arts, and engage in their own independent operations and schemes for the betterment of the Kingdom. Unlike Gigantes, the clan of Titans is not restricted to one particular zone, so they have the run of the kingdom.

They dream of bringing order to the land of the Giants and hope, in the long run, they will be vindicated in the eyes of their fellow Giant citizens and the world. Until then, the Daumos quietly despair that perhaps they have made the wrong decision in supporting Mount Nimro as a Kingdom of Giants. In the beginning, when their blood ran hot, helping the newfound Nimro Kingdom seemed like a noble and valiant (if unprecedented) cause, but now, decades later, as the Nimro King plots to expand into the southwestern edge of the Old Kingdom through conquest, and the majority of the nation's people seems anxious for a war with humanity, the Daumos Titans are finding their faith in the Kingdom put to the test. What makes matters worse are a recent flurry of messages they have received from anonymous Titans who have learned of the Daumos Clan and berated them for falling to such a low stature. "Cavorting with the scum of the world," the messages scold. "When the Armies of Darkness are scattered before the Light, know well that you shall be among the fallen hordes of evildoers should your kingdom wreak havoc on the land! For the friends of evil bear its foul stain as well."

Aara Galoniel

Daumos Clan Chieftain

Galoniel has always been a rogue of sorts, delving into taboo subject matter and realms of arcana such as Bio-Wizardry, Summoning, and other dangerous arts. From an early age, he was cast out by his fellow Titans as a reckless renegade who put far too much faith in his own abilities when dealing with powers beyond his reckoning. Galoniel always protested that at heart, he wished only to destroy evil, and how better to do that than by turning the weapons of evil against itself? This line of reasoning, while well-intentioned, is flawed in the extreme. "When you look in the mirror, the reflection looks back," goes an ancient Titan saying, which means that when one is fighting monsters, one must take care not to become one himself. And

despite his assurances that he would not fall prey to such temptations, Galoniel is, indeed, becoming corrupted by the very powers he seeks to control.

It began with his studying forbidden magicks, first with Summoning (an art typically shunned by Titans and other good folk). While he began with Summoning only animals and evil pawns (what better to send after the forces of evil than one of their own), he soon began dabbling with Summoning greater creatures, such as Deevils, demons, and other creatures that required foul components to summon. Not long afterwards, he lusted after the lost secrets of Bio-Wizardry, hoping to make good rune weapons, ostensibly learning from the mistakes of the Dwarves of the past. He failed in this quest, but along the way, Galoniel captured a Gromek Life Force Wizard, and after a lengthy period of torture, he forced the Gromek to give up his arcane secrets. Now, Galoniel is a fledgling Life Force Wizard, a vampiric monstrosity that feeds off the life energy of others. Having fallen this far, his corruption is nearly complete. It is not entirely too late for this Titan, however. If he could somehow be turned, and be convinced to forego his dark and evil ways, then perhaps he could again become a valiant and heroic figure.

The pivotal point for this troubled sorcerer is his decision to form Clan Daumos, and ally it with Sunder Blackrock. On one hand, Galoniel did this as a way of gaining more power — perhaps by partnering with the King, he could also learn the secrets of the Cyclops Lightning Magic, or perhaps even the art of Conjuring, practiced by the Algor. On the other hand, he also created this partnership to help all Giantkind be safe, and to help guide the King away from instigating a war with humanity that could destroy them all. Two goals: One selfish and corrupt, the other noble and worthy. In the end, which one of these shall hold sway over the Lord of the Daumos Titans, only time will tell.

Quick Stats for Aara Galoniel

Race: Titan

O.C.C.: 7th level Summoner, 3rd level Life Force Wizard.

Alignment: Originally, Galoniel was Principled, but he has slowly slid towards evil. Now, he is Aberrant, but with a much greater tendency to show mercy and perform a random act of kindness than most evildoers of this ilk. Ultimately Galoniel will become diabolic if he becomes fully corrupt. Or, if his inner self is saved somehow, and he is returns to the path of good, then perhaps he can ascend back to Unprincipled or even Scrupulous one day.

Attributes: I.Q.: 19, M.E.: 16, M.A.: 13, P.S.: 25, P.P.: 18, P.E.: 25, P.B.: 25, Spd.: 21

Hit Points: 78

S.D.C.: 80

P.P.E.: 222

Attacks per melee: 6

Bonuses: +2 on initiative, +3 to strike, +4 to parry and dodge, +12 to damage, +8 to pull punch, +5 to roll with impact/fall, +13 to save vs Horror Factor, +7 to save vs magic; +5 to save vs poison, drugs, and disease; +1 to circle strength.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Basic — Kick attack (3D6), critical strike 19-20.

Spells: So far, Galoniel has learned no spells as a Life Force Wizard, but he is obsessed with learning new arcana. He will pursue any leads on such information with incredible drive and ruthlessness. Any spell casters in his custody can expect to receive extreme pressure from him to give up their spell casting secrets. Otherwise, Galoniel has an impressive array of mystic abilities as both a Summoner and a Life Force Wizard.

Weapons: Only a magical Flamberge (4D6) that lets its wielder see auras at will. Galoniel likes to use this device to spot the most powerful opponents before him, so that he may absorb their life essence first.

Armor: A black suit of somewhat battered plate mail (A.R. 16, S.D.C. 140) enchanted to be both weightless and noiseless.

Magic Items: A large flying carpet (it can accommodate up to five normal-sized passengers, or two Giant-sized passengers very uncomfortably), a Giant-sized quill of endless ink, and a backpack-sized enchanted bag that Galoniel wears as a satchel.

Money and other equipment: Nearly 200,000 gold worth of mystic components (such as Faeries' wings, wizards' tongues and ground dragon bone) and another 50,000 in loose coinage from the Old Kingdom.

Adventures

The Fires of Mount Nimrod

By Bill Coffin & Kevin Siembieda

Far from the Mount Nimro region, where tales of this place become vague and strange, there circulate all manner of wild rumors and legends about what really is to be found in the Land of the Giants. In addition to the many stories of hordes of man-eating Giants, tales abound of how the Purifiers, a self-styled group dedicated to destroying all magic during the Millennium of Purification, used Mount Nimrod to dispose of hundreds, if not thousands of rune weapons! According to some, the area is so thick with magical artifacts and other treasures that they are practically lying on the ground, just waiting for anybody to pick them up! Of course, there are the Giants to contend with, which discourages all but the hardiest of treasure seekers. And those who do venture to Mount Nimrod rarely return. Still, if somebody could get there, find a way to get the weapons and make it back, they could obtain a treasure of unimaginable power.

Most people insist such yarns about Mount Nimrod are pure nonsense, or a severe exaggeration at the very least. Still, as the player characters begin to look for a new quest to embark on, such tales reach their ears, turning their attentions toward the Land of the Giants. What if these stories are even just a little bit true? What if there are rune weapons to be had? Indeed, there is no more coveted treasure on this world than these fabled weapons. Weapons which entire kingdoms have gone to war over, and even the gods themselves have entered the mortal world so they may acquire them. Perhaps a trip to Mount Nimrod has its merits?

The point is, such tales frequently lure adventurers, fortune hunters and the curious to Mount Nimrod. Whether ancient magic items ever really existed or not, it's as good a start for a Nimro-adventure as any.

A Peculiar Message

Note: This opening only works if the player group is predominantly good and known as heroes. Otherwise, they must learn of things through happenstance or more nefarious means.

This adventure begins outside of Mount Nimro, preferably in one of the nearby human nations, such as the Western Empire, the Land of the South-Winds, the Old Kingdom, or even the Eastern Territory. While the heroes are recovering from their latest exploits and enjoying some hard-earned R&R in one of the larger cities of the realm, they receive a magic pigeon that perches on top of the head of the shortest character in the group and issues the following message:

"Greetings! I need heroes such as yourselves for a dangerous mission. The risks are great, but the reward will be worth it! Go to the *Bumbling Baal-Rog* and ask for Ossilian."

Assuming the heroes take Ossilian up on his offer (otherwise, there will be no adventure), they will have no problem finding him. The Bumbling Baal-Rog is a fairly upscale establishment (no sloppy drunkenness or brawls, please) where the more affluent folks in town hang out. The tavern has a big sign with a cartoonish depiction of a Baal-Rog demon slipping on a banana peel. As the heroes enter, they gather a few odd stares from the patrons, but right away they are greeted by a lovely Elven maiden.

"Welcome, travelers," she says through a perfect smile. "Ossilian is waiting for you. Please follow me." She leads the group to the tavern's back rooms, which patrons can rent out for private parties. Inside one of the rooms waits Ossilian, an aging Gnome Wizard and Scholar. The room Ossilian has rented is quite nice, with a plentiful spread of food and beverages laid out. Once the heroes enter, Ossilian gives a 50 gold coin to the Elven hostess and shuts the door behind her as she leaves. He waits for a few seconds, and then locks the door. Turning to the player group, he smiles warmly and greets them.

"Thank you for coming! I cannot tell you how important it is to me that you have come. Recent events have led me to desperate action, and I am afraid that I need folk of action, such as yourselves. Please, help yourself to the food and refreshments while I spin you a tale."

As the heroes partake of Ossilian's generosity, he tells how for years, he has devoted his time to learning about the Millennium of Purification, and of the few ancient rune weapons of the Elf-Dwarf War that were *not* destroyed afterwards. In recent months, the Gnome discovered a number of ancient manuscripts that promised to tell of the fate of at least a dozen or so legendary rune weapons. However, the manuscript was written in an obscure dialect of ancient Dwarven, with a healthy bit of runic code-writing mixed in. To decipher the document, Ossilian employed his long-time apprentice, a young Elven Wizard/Diabolist named *Skyre* whom Ossilian regarded as an adopted son.

For months, Ossilian and Skyre translated the ancient manuscript, which was written by Is'kig Otska, a disgruntled Purifier who ultimately broke ranks with his organization and tried to save a number of rune weapons from destruction. Before he was killed as a traitor by the other Purifiers, he wrote about the order of Purifiers, their secrets and their activities. Most of the manuscript was destroyed, but a tiny fragment has survived to the present-day. What little remained told of how many rune weapons were thrown into the lava of Mount Nimrod, but that they could still be recovered.

It was then, Ossilian notes, that Skyre fell to greed. He assaulted him and stole the manuscript before the final part was translated, a part that promised to explain where the rune weapons were located and how to retrieve them. "I should have realized that dreams of limitless power were filling my poor assistant's head," Ossilian laments. His face still bears a few fading bruises from Skyre's brutal attack. "He feared that if he translated the rest of the manuscript for me, I would claim all of the Mount Nimrod arsenal for myself, giving him nothing for his hard work! Alas, I never would have done such a thing, but it would appear that poor Skyre has become drunk with greed and a lust for power."

A sad look crosses Ossilian's face as he pauses before continuing. "I have an extra copy of my manuscript that Skyre did not know about. I would like to give it to you so that you may venture to the Mountain of Fire and gain these rune weapons for yourselves. I have heard of your many deeds, and I believe that you will use these incredible treasures responsibly. More responsibly than Skyre would, at any rate."

At this point, the heroes are likely to ask Ossilian why he is doing all of this for them. After all, he is pretty much giving away a ticket to an entire rune arsenal worth untold millions, probably more! Nobody else would have been so generous. Why is Ossilian?

"I hesitate to speak of this, but ... Skyre seemed especially interested in a weapon of foul power and evil intent. I ... I fear that if he obtains this item of destruction, the havoc he may wreak

will be immense. Legends speak of certain rune weapons transforming their wielders into hideous monstrosities! It would shatter my heart if poor Skyre fell to such a fate. He may be misguided, but he has a good soul. And, I would feel even worse if his actions led to war or the deaths of hundreds of innocent people. I cannot help but feel partly to blame for his greed and theft. Had I not spoken so intensely about these wondrous but often cursed weapons, or introduced him to ancient words better left alone, he would not be headed for trouble, and I would not have put the world in jeopardy."

While this is Ossilian's prime motivation for letting the heroes in on this quest, he will offer another reason, if pressed for it. Ossilian is one of the few scholars of this world who suspects that the Giants of Mount Nimro are far more organized than popular folklore would have one believe. He has heard many tales of Sunder Blackrock, and even of the Battle of Gondajar Road. Ossilian believes the Nimro Kingdom to be an aggressive and dangerous nation which could potentially jeopardize much of the world by instigating the Western Empire to go on the warpath in order to smash the Giant nation. If the West were successful in this, they might discover these rune weapons for themselves, and use them to attack other nations of the world! If the Giants get the weapons, things could be even worse. This cannot be allowed to happen.

At this point, just about any hero should have a motivation to undertake this quest. Good-aligned characters will want to save Skyre, and prevent either the Western Empire or the evil Giants of the Nimro Kingdom from obtaining Mount Nimrod's buried rune arsenal. In fact, if they could find Skyre before he arrives at the Nimro Kingdom, they could recover the document and prevent him (one way or the other) from recovering and using these weapons, leaving them where they lie with none the wiser. Selfish characters will want to go to get the weapons for themselves. Evil characters will also covet these legendary weapons, either for themselves, or perhaps to cozy up to the Nimro Kingdom or Western Empire, or, armed with such an array of rune weaponry, evildoers might contemplate carving out a small kingdom of their own. Surely, they will have the power to do so!

Ossilian's manuscript is a small, hardbound book with approximately 24 pages of vellum parchment, each with a silver rune printed in the corner, making the pages themselves indestructible, and the writing on them indelible. The first 10 pages tell of the history of the Purifiers, who they were and what they accomplished. In a nutshell, they traveled throughout what is now the Old Kingdom, collecting magic items of all sorts and destroying them. Those they could not destroy, they dropped into Mount Nimrod. Among these, the following are specifically noted:

- **Bloodrazor,** a weapon of endless bloodletting.
- **Vargus the Beast,** a bringer of war and madness.
- **Mridlis the Foehammer**, a heroic Dwarven weapon unjustly cast into the fire.
- **Jihal the Talon,** also known as the "Claw of Shadows," a treacherous and cowardly implement.
- **Korrigan the Soul Whip,** a diabolic weapon of unspeakable evil (Perhaps Ossilian is most afraid that Skyre will reach this weapon, and will be further corrupted by it.)
- **Greigradamus the Vanguard,** a runic shield, a most rare item.
- **Aalzaraad,** a weapon as petty and jealous as it is powerful.
- **Nadaereon,** a kindly crusader also wrongly imprisoned in the flames of Mount Nimro.
- And finally, **Yeremond the Executioner,** a sword that revels in death like no other.

The manuscript also gives preliminary notes on the Mount Nimrod area, how it is populated by monsters and fiends, and how anyone daring to assault the volcano to find these weapons is crazy, delirious from greed, or worse.

Finally, there is a section of ancient text still undeciphered. To read it, one must either be able to read runes (such as a Diabolist) and/or be fluent in written Dwarven. Diabolists have a base 30% chance of deciphering the text, and anyone who knows written Dwarven has a 15% chance of translating the text. Those who know both have a 45% base chance. Multiple translators can pool their efforts to decipher the text (simply combine the base chance of each translator working on the project). And, if asked, Ossilian will help translate the last part — his base chance of translating it is 40%.

Those who mistranslate the text will think that the last part of this manuscript refers to how the Nimro themselves know of a secret passage underneath the volcano that leads to a place where the rune weapons thrown into the fire can be retrieved. One passage reads, "Those of the fiery mountain must be employed to retrieve the weapons. They have no use for these tools of smaller folk, and may give them to those who repay them in kind." This is untrue, however, but it may very well lead the mistaken heroes to seek out the help of Fire Giants (or Fire Elementals) on this matter, which will only cause them some very serious trouble.

Those who translate the text correctly will learn that the reference to "those of the fiery mountain" are not the Nimro living on and under the volcano, but a group of specific Lava Elementals (not the many other Fire Elementals) living *within* it. To this end, the ancient tome also lists the "true" names of four of the ten Greater Lava Elementals living within the fires of the volcano. Elementals, of course, don't have "true" names in the sense that mortals do that can be used in magical ceremonies and summonings. But, a skilled Warlock, armed with one such name, can summon a specific Elemental. This will come in very handy when on the side of Mount Nimrod. If the heroes translate this before embarking on their trip, they will also know ahead of time that they will need a Fire Warlock to carry out this quest successfully, since there really is no other way to get the weapons out of the volcano (and even this obvious means of recovery will have its problems). Otherwise, the heroes might make it all the way to Mount Nimrod before they realize they need to enlist the aid of a Fire Warlock. Given the hostile environment the heroes will be in, that may be rather difficult.

The Quest Begins

Once the heroes have done whatever research they need to do (including translating the last part of Ossilian's manuscript), they must begin the journey to the Kingdom of Giants. Depending on where this adventure is beginning, the trip may be more of an adventure for some than for others.

From the Western Empire, the heroes will either have to walk or ride all the way to the Old Kingdom Frontier, through the

western edge of the Old Kingdom itself, and then into the Nimro Kingdom. Alternately, if they are in the western half of the country and do not feel like making such a long overland trip, they could charter a boat and sail to the Baalgor Wastelands or the Old Kingdom shore and hoof it from there. Either way, there are plenty of chances for hostile encounters: pirates in the Sea of Scarlet Waters, bandits and marauders in the Old Kingdom, civil unrest in the Western Empire, and an innumerable host of problems waiting to be found in the Baalgor Wastelands.

From the Land of the South Winds, adventurers are going to have to cross the *Dzereson River* — not an easy task to do unnoticed, since that waterway is well patrolled by Giant sentinels. Even without them, crossing this waterlogged swamp will be difficult due to the lack of roads, navigable waterways, and in the land of the South-Winds, an abundance of hostile animals and monsters. Moreover, just getting to the Dzereson River can prove difficult, since the Land of the South Winds is not well developed, and much of the land leading to the river is wild and unsettled. Adding to problems are the people themselves. Those Southlanders who are not pirates or corrupt lords are downtrodden peasants unwilling or unable to help visiting adventurers.

From the Timiro Kingdom, heroes will have to exit through the north, which means passing through some of the most dangerous, Ogre-infested territory in that part of the world. If one tribe of Ogres (or Orcs, or Goblins, etc.) doesn't catch and eat a traveler, another one probably will. After that, things don't get much easier, since the land opens up into the Old Kingdom, a wild and mysterious land filled with uncharted ruins, endless hordes of marauding Orcs, Trolls and other monstrous peoples, and all manner of other dangers. Any trip from the Timiro Kingdom to Mount Nimro will be dangerous in the extreme. Traveling from the Eastern Territory will be just as bad, since one will have to travel through even more of the Old Kingdom. Unless you're a Giant, Orc, Ogre, or Troll, that is. Not only can these bigger folk handle themselves, but they are also more likely to be accepted or welcomed by Giants and other members of the monster races.

Getting to the Nimro Kingdom is only half the battle. Once there, the heroes will have to enter the Kingdom and make it to Mount Nimrod undetected. This is going to be an extremely difficult task for any group that doesn't consist of Giants or what the Nimro Kingdom considers acceptable "Shorties." First of all, the Kingdom of Giants keeps pretty good tabs on its border security, especially along the north, where a good stretch of the border is walled off, and approaching visitors can be spotted miles away. Any suspicious adventurers seen approaching or scaling the Wall will result in a general alarm being raised, and the entire local region going on high alert. Under such circumstances, it will be hard for the adventurers to make it very far without being seen, assaulted, captured, or killed. And let's not forget about the Gromek who see all non-Gromek as their enemies.

The western portion of the northern border is unwalled, but that land is occupied by both a fairly large Nimro army and a large number of Gigantes. While running afoul of the Nimro army will certainly result in the heroes' death or capture, running afoul of any Gigantes actually gives the heroes a chance. Sure, fighting the savage mutants is an uphill, life or death struggle, but they are so disorganized that non-Giant adventurers

can raise a lot of trouble in Gigante territory without any kind of formal or long-range alarm being raised.

Even if the player characters manage to slip through the border unnoticed (which should be difficult, but not impossible), or in disguise(!?), the heroes must avoid any contact with the locals, especially if they are Humans, Elves, Dwarves, Gnomes, or other "Fair Folk." Any sighting of these races will cause the locals to go into alert, which will put the group in a run for their lives. Maybe they can take out one Giant patrol, but when a whole region is on alert, eventually, the heroes will lose. That's why it is so important for them to stay away from any well-traveled roads, Giant Strongholds, or Trading Centers. The larger the population center the adventurers approach, the more likely it is that they will be detected. Stealth and cunning, not brute force, is the name of the game here. However that stealth is achieved, through magic, natural ability, sneakiness, or simply brilliant role-playing, is up to the players themselves.

Something else to consider: Just a few steps ahead of the player group is Skyre and the group of adventurers he has rallied to his own cause. During the trip, it is possible that he could discover that he's being followed, and may try to ambush, harry, hire or kill our heroes. His main goal will be to drive the do-gooders away, but if they persist in following him, he will try to destroy them. If during the course of the trip to the Nimro Kingdom, Skyre and his cronies are destroyed, it will be one less problem for the heroes to deal with once they are on Mount Nimrod. Depending on their goals, Skyre's death *could* be the end of the adventure (Well, sort of. They still have to get out of the region by traveling through miles and miles of hostile territory). If not, however, the plot will thicken considerably once the player group is deep into Giant held territory. For more information on the kind of trouble Skyre and his party might pose to the heroes, skip to the **Stone Cold Busted** section of this adventure.

The Mountain of Fire

In general, it will take at least several days (more likely weeks or months) of travel for the heroes to get to Mount Nimrod from any one of the borders. While that time could be shortened by riding horses or flying, such means are rather noticeable; especially horses, since virtually none are present in the Nimro Kingdom. As the heroes near Mount Nimrod itself, their chances of being detected will increase exponentially, since this is the capital of the Kingdom, and the largest concentration of Giants and their affiliated "Shorties."

To actually get to Mount Nimrod undetected will take every scrap of cunning the group can muster. The G.M. should roll for a chance encounter occurring three times each day — once each for the morning, afternoon, and evening.

To determine the likelihood of a random encounter, roll a D20. A 12 or higher indicates that the player group has encountered somebody or something. Who it is and how they react is up to the G.M. Perhaps it is a Giant patrol from the local Great Clan Stronghold. If so, they will probably attack the outsiders immediately. If the Giants are defeated, they will try to run away to raise an alarm to others. Or maybe the encounter is with a single Giant "civilian" who may or may not be hostile to the heroes. Or perhaps the encounter is with something more run-of-the-mill, such as a wild animal or a monster. An encounter is just as likely to be with one or more Shorties who might be willing to overlook the group's presence for a hefty bribe, food, wine or a favor. Maybe the encounter is with a renegade from the Nimro Kingdom, an outlaw Giant, a renegade Shorty, a Giant willing to look the other way, or a Goblin looking to extract revenge, steal or cause trouble, any of whom might actually be convinced to help the player group, if given the right incentive. After all, cutting somebody in on a treasure trove of rune weapons can be a powerful enticement.

If the encounter is with any dedicated citizen of the Nimro Kingdom, Giant or Shorty, however, the G.M. should remember that such characters are likely to be hostile to the heroes, will try to kill or capture them, or will try to raise an alarm. Giants are not stupid, regardless of what other folks of the Palladium World might think. It is entirely feasible that a Giant patrol that has the drop on a group of adventurers may pretend not to see them so they can return to their stronghold and get reinforcements. Or to secretly place them under surveillance, quietly watching their every move and revealing themselves only when they feel they have the advantage or need to step in to protect their nation.

Once at Mount Nimrod, random encounters should be rolled six times daily — twice each for morning, noon and night. This gives the outsiders only about a four hour window in between possible encounters, so if they are going to hatch a plan to access the lava chambers of the volcano, they'll have to do it fast.

Retrieving the Weapons

Theoretically, there are a number of ways to get the rune weapons. One could cast an Invulnerability and/or Impervious to Fire, along with Breathe without Air, and Swim as the Fish spells on himself and swim through the lava on a freaky kind of underwater dive. Except that humans and other mortals can *not* see through the thick lava soup, so they are diving completely blind and the chance of uncovering anything is super-slim and none!

Theoretically, a powerful Warlock, especially a Fire or Earth Warlock, could send one or more Elementals into the lava pits in search of the weapons. Except the Elementals at Mount Nimrod or who come to the volcano can not be commanded by any mortal or god!

Theoretically, a powerful Wizard or Warlock could cause a fissure in the side of the volcano for a big lava flow to erupt forth, hopefully spilling out at least one or two of the weapons. Except such desperate and destructive measures have been tried a hundred times over the years without result, other than causing widespread destruction and causing Mount Nimrod to erupt in violent protest (80% of the time killing the idiots who caused it all in the first place).

There is always divine intervention on the part of a priest, although many deities are going to resent being asked for such an immense favor just so one of their worshippers can have a rune weapon. Depending on the deity's demeanor, it might retaliate by giving the priest or follower a quest, punishing his impudence by reducing a priest's level of experience, placing a curse upon him, or ignoring that request and the next several scores of requests to teach him his place. The bottom line is that millions have prayed and prayed for such a boon, but *none* of these prayers have ever been answered. Think about it, if a god could retrieve such incredibly powerful and rare items of antiquity, why would that deity give it to a mortal? Wouldn't he keep them for himself, or give it to his most worthy priests or champions? And maybe nobody has been able to find one of these weapons because the gods have already retrieved them all! It's possible, even likely.

Note: Anybody diving into the volcano, regardless of the magic that may protect them, must face the wrath of angry Minor and Greater Fire Elementals and Lava Elementals who will see such an intrusion as an invasion of their home. Furthermore, as noted earlier in this book, three strong ley lines intersect at Mount Nimrod making it a powerful place of magic. This and other magical forces at play (the Old Ones perhaps) 1) have made the core of Mount Nimrod a constantly open dimensional portal to the homeworld (dimension) of Fire Elementals, and, 2) make all Elementals living in and on Mount Nimrod *impervious* to the commands of Warlocks, the summonings and edicts of Summoners, magic charms and mind control! In short, these Elemental beings can not be forced into retrieving the ancient weapons and magic items even if they knew where they were, and they don't. Of all the Elementals present, 99.9% don't know or care about these "things." They are *not* the protectors or guardians of any ancient magic or secrets; it's a happy coincidence that they are present at Mount Nimrod at all.

According to Ossilian's manuscript, there is only one feasible way to retrieve a tiny selection of rune weapons from the core of Mount Nimrod: To go to the top of the volcano and summon any of ten specific Greater Lava Elementals living inside the depths of the volcano. This can only be done via a simple ritual in which their true names are invoked. The manuscript describes the ritual (takes two minutes) and lists four of the ten (if the others were listed, those pages are gone). The invoking of their true names has a powerful effect upon the creatures and will usher them forth to speak with those who dare to call them. Each of these Greater Lava Elementals will tell that each one knows of the location of one particular item. The G.M. can pick one of the ones listed earlier or make a random roll. To determine what the Elemental recovers, roll 1D10: 1 = Bloodrazor; 2 = Vargus the Beast; 3 = Mridlis the Foehammer; 4 = Jihal the Talon; 5 = Korrigan the Soul Whip; 6 = Greigradamus the Vanguard; 7 = Aalzaraad; 8 = Nadaereon; 9 = Yeremond the Executioner; 10 = Something of the G.M.'s own design or roll again to determine which known item is recovered, ignoring a roll of 10.

However, the Greater Elementals will first *warn* that the items are best left outside the realm of mortals and that the act of retrieving each of them will bring "chaos and death to the land." However, the Elemental will not elaborate on that cryptic statement whatsoever. Saying only, "My words are clear. To retrieve the weapon(s) you seek is to bring chaos and death to the land."

Indeed, each weapon retrieved (four maximum) will cause Mount Nimro to erupt in volcanic fury. Ash and burning rock will rain down upon the mountains and the land within a 20 mile (32 km) radius of the mountain. Meanwhile, great clouds of smoke and sulfur will billow into the sky and rivers of lava will pour down the mountain covering 25% of the Mount Nimrod for each weapon retrieved (the characters stand at the last quarter to be affected). Each weapon retrieved causes a new, equally powerful eruption that will shake the Giant Strongholds and the heart of the region for an additional 48 hours, each causing more casualties and destruction. The Giant Strongholds will survive, but 4D6x10 True Giants and 1D6x100 Shorties will perish in each eruption, and farmland and livestock for 10 miles (16 km) around Mount Nimrod will be completely decimated (minor damage for the subsequent 20 miles/32 km). The death toll rises 10% every 24 hours.

Note: The player characters will each endure 6D6+20 points of damage to both armor and physical S.D.C./Hit Points for every 10 minutes they remain anywhere *on* the erupting volcano. It takes 10 +2D6 minutes for each of the rune weapons to be retrieved and at least a day to climb down from the top of the mountain without a magical means of escape! If the player group should die (from their greed or foolish resolve) the Elementals will return said weapons to their resting place until the arrival of the next person who calls them by name (the last was 2000 years ago).

Nobody knows why exactly these Lava Elementals are living in the volcano. Ossilian's manuscript hypothesizes that they were summoned to this world during the Elf-Dwarf War and were somehow permanently bound to this place, but the most popular theory is that at the core of Mount Nimrod is a gate to the Elemental plane of Fire — making Nimrod the front stoop to their home. Whatever the reason, these Elementals are here to stay, and attacking even a lesser Fire Elemental will provoke 1D6 others to join the fight every melee round!

Stone Cold Busted

It is possible for careful, wily and decisive players to get to the Nimro Kingdom, sneak to Mount Nimrod, and actually obtain some of the lost rune weapons. Of course, getting off the mountain alive and fleeing the country without running into serious opposition is another story. Trying to get more than one or two of the weapons is probably suicide and a number of greedy and foolishly brave individuals have died making such an attempt. Even grabbing one and leaving will result in grievous in-

jury and the probable death of one or more player characters (all NPCs automatically perish). Furthermore, characters of a good alignment will immediately realize the elemental force they have just unleashed and that they will be responsible for the deaths of hundreds if not thousands!

Note: The eruption begins immediately after the first rune weapon is placed in the hand or at the foot of one of the mortals who summoned the Elemental. There are only two ways to stop the deadly eruption.

1. If the Elemental is directly asked if there is some way to stop the eruption, it will tell them to return the weapon. This can be done by throwing it back into the mouth of the volcano or by giving it back to the Elemental who will immediately disappear, taking it back into the molten core. The Elemental does not return. If the others were also dispatched to retrieve a weapon, they must be sent back with the weapon as soon as they appear.

2. By instinctively throwing the weapon back into the volcano for any reason (remorse for the destruction they have caused, out of fear or panic, etc.).

G.M. Note: If necessary, the Elemental can prompt the character(s) with the weapon by saying. "To stop the chaos and death you have wrought, return thy vain weapon."

The moment all of the recovered rune items are returned to the molten core of the volcano (whether it be minutes or days after the eruptions have begun), the violence ends. If done within a few minutes of retrieving the first weapon, there will be no serious damage and no loss of life other than some livestock. Waiting more than 15 minutes will cause 25% of the deaths noted previously. Waiting an hour will cause the full amount of damage and death from the first recovered weapon. Each subsequent hour will see the death toll rise for each weapon recovered.

Part of the curse and the fall from grace (the headlong plunge into corruption and evil) is to be held responsible for the deaths of hundreds for selfish, personal gain. To prevent these deaths and to save one's soul, the character(s) must sacrifice one of his or her greatest desires, to own one of these legendary rune weapons and whatever dreams of power, greatness or revenge that comes with it. To do otherwise is to have the alignment of a good character to drop to Anarchist and for selfish or Aberrant characters to turn to Miscreant or Diabolic, whichever seems most appropriate.

Making an escape. Ironically, if the characters survive the eruption of the volcano, the panic it will cause provides them with the cover to escape. In the heat of the cataclysm, they will be thought to be just another bunch of "Shorties" running for their lives. Of course, making their way completely out of the Nimro Kingdom without incident is unlikely, and the stuff of continuing adventures. **Note:** If noble characters have made the right choice and forsaken the retrieval of the weapons, and/or have successfully prevented Skyre from doing so (the best case scenario being that one or more of the player characters present such an impassioned plea to throw the item or items back that they touch the good still inside Skyre and he willingly does the right thing. In the alternative, they can kill or beat him into submission and throw the item back in themselves to stop the eruption, but may now have a vengeful prisoner on their hands, and a guy who knows the secret of getting the items and who has no qualms about the "chaos and death" he will unleash. What do our heroes do with him?!).

Elements of the Adventure

At Palladium, we find the best adventures are the most open-ended ones, with the G.M. providing challenges to the players plans and actions, rather than forcing them to progress along a predetermined storyline. Choices are part of the game.

That having been said, here is a sample scenario that can be followed to make the Mount Nimrod treasure hunt interesting, harrowing, and ultimately, rewarding. G.M.s, feel free to run the following details as an adventure, or only use what parts you like, or don't go by what is to follow at all. However you wish to run the Mount Nimrod treasure hunt is left entirely in your hands, this material is offered as suggestions and possible adventure elements.

During whatever time the heroes spend mining Mount Nimrod for treasure, they probably will have more than their fair share of random encounters and subplots to deal with. They are deep in hostile territory and could be very easily discovered at any time. They could end up imprisoned, enslaved and forced to work on one of the building projects, locked up in one of the food pens (with them being the food) or worse. However, in each case, they should have some way to escape and flee Nimro or continue on their mission. If the player group doesn't quit while they're ahead, the odds of them being captured increases dramatically.

Join the enemy! It may even be possible, especially if the group is predominantly composed of the monster races (any human or Elf could pretend to be a slave of one of the monstrous characters), to convince the Giants that they have come to join the Kingdom of Giants as loyal citizens. This opens up all kinds of opportunities for subterfuge and role-playing. Just remember what happens to "spies" and "traitors."

Don't forget about Skyre and the group of miscreants he's hooked up with. The player group will want to stop him whether they want the weapons for themselves or to save the lives of hundreds of nonhumans. What to do with Skyre and his gang will be a problem no matter what. To save himself or to get revenge (and maybe one of the magic weapons for himself), Skyre may tell King Blackrock or one of the Clan Chieftains that he alone can retrieve a few of the legendary rune weapon inside Mount Nimrod.

Don't forget about Goblins. One element of people who could be a help (hide and aid the group for a price) or hindrance (cheat, trick, rob, blackmail and/or sell out the group) are the various bands of Goblins and Hob-Goblins — the non-citizens of the Kingdom. This might even lead to some association and deal (or blackmail) with the Goblin's Troll, Ogre or rogue Giant protector. A potentially influential (although limited) individual (rogue or criminal) who *may* be willing to help or even smuggle the group out. But for what price (who do our heroes have to kill?) and can he be trusted to live up to his end of the bargain?

Get Captured

Regardless of what unfolds, after the player characters end their treasure hunt, they will have to spend a lot of their time eluding the local residents to get out of the Nimro Kingdom. As the heroes leave the volcano, they run into a heavily armed Nimro patrol investigating a report of some unknown Fair Folk or intruders in the area. Unless the players are very quick, level-headed and cunning, the Giants will engage the heroes,

who will have to fight or run to stay alive. Immediately, the Nimro patrol will raise an alarm (have one of the heroes notice a magic pigeon flying away from the patrol), and within minutes, every stronghold on the volcano will be on high alert. Under such conditions, if the adventurer group has no means of teleporting, flying away, or hiding, they are likely to be eventually caught. If the party can fly, they could try an aerial escape from the volcano, but lightning-wielding Cyclops (with their highly trained attack gryphons) and spell casting practitioners of magic would have a decent chance of snaring or shooting them down before they get very far (But, perhaps, not before some thrilling magical dogfighting). Characters on the ground may be on the run for days, eluding, tricking and fighting patrols of Giants and/or their "Shorties." Unlike previous run-ins with the Kingdom's guards, who probably were trying to kill the heroes, the guards swarming after them will be intent on capturing (at least some of) them for interrogation — presumably such daring individuals must be spies from the Western Empire or one of the other kingdoms of humanity. That means they will try to knock the heroes out, use traps and immobilization magicks like paralysis bolts, magic nets, and carpets of adhesion, or other means of capture. As soon as the players realize this, they may wish to surrender, so as to prevent themselves from being accidentally killed. Contrary to what common folklore says about True Giants and their refusal to take prisoners, the Giants on Mount Nimrod will take prisoners, and they will not kill those who have laid down their arms. At least not until they have figured out exactly who they are and what they want.

At this point, feel free to award the individual player characters with bonus experience points for having the good sense to leave Mount Nimrod in the first place. This will be some compensation for the fact that despite their plan, they got caught anyway. For greedy parties that overplayed their chances and caused death and destruction, or for unfortunate groups who ran into an encounter right away, this also would be an acceptable fate. Feel free to reward valiant characters with extra experience points for putting up a good fight or being cleverly elusive before getting caught. **Note:** Slain player characters *may* be resurrected by Giant priests so they can be interrogated (perhaps by King Blackrock, himself). Although this will do players of slain

characters a favor, they still might have some nasty side effects to contend with from having such a close brush with death, such as random insanities or permanent scarring or other bodily damage. Furthermore, they may find themselves sentenced to death or a life of slavery and hard labor.

Captured heroes will have all weapons, armor, magic items, and other equipment stripped from them, including any jewelry (the Giants know it is common for traveling adventurers to have magical baubles on their person; besides, the Giants take all valuables for their own use). Characters with the palming skill might be able to hide one or two small items, and heroes may try to swallow magical rings and other tiny items, if they are so inclined. Of course, retrieving them later won't be pleasant, but at least they will have some kind of device to save their skins!

Men of magic and clergy will have steel collars fastened around their necks that have permanent Mystic Energy Drain wards on them; these should keep the spell-wielding members of the group from escaping or wreaking havoc for the time being. Note: Giants are not very experienced with psychics, so psychic captives will still be at liberty to use their powers, if they do so carefully — Giants tend to kill those who they don't understand (better safe than sorry). All of the heroes will have their hands uncomfortably shackled behind their backs and their feet will be locked in leg irons.

Once the heroes are bound, they will be carried to the stronghold of King Sunder Blackrock, but not before being paraded through numerous villages and settlements along the way, so the Giants and Shorties there can hurl vegetables, curse, and spit on the fallen heroes. While the journey to Sunder's stronghold will be painful and humiliating, it will give the group a pretty good lay of the land, so if they escape later, they'll have a good idea of where *not* to run.

An Audience with the King

After arriving at the stronghold, the heroes will be taken down below, to the dungeon, where they are chained to the wall (their hands will no longer be behind their backs, but chained to the wall separately) to await their fate. The heroes will have about an hour to attempt any escape. Characters with the Escape Artist skill can try to pop out of their chains. Changelings, Goblin Cobblers and other shapeshifters can easily slip free of their bonds by changing their form. Psychics no doubt have a few tricks up their sleeves that can get them loose, not the least of which might include using some form of mind control on the single Nimro guard who sits at the end of the dungeon's hallway. If he could be enticed to come into or near the cell, and then somehow forced to free the adventurers, that would be another means of getting free. Also, as mentioned before, clergy characters might 6e able to caff upon their patron *deity for help* in their most dire hour. If they do, it might come with a hefty price tag; say, undertaking another major quest once the heroes are free from the Nimro Kingdom.

Getting out of their chains and their cell is only the first part. There will still be a Nimro guard stationed before the door leading out of the dungeon. He will have to be subdued or sidestepped somehow for the characters to escape. Attacking him outright might be tough, since the heroes probably won't be very well armed (save for whatever items they were able to palm or otherwise conceal when they were first captured) and the guard will raise an alarm if combat goes for more than a full melee round. Any alarm or loud commotion will bring 1D6 more guards, and almost certainly result in the player characters' recapture. If the heroes do manage to get out of the dungeon, see the section, below, **Free** At **Last!,** for details on the remainder of the escape.

In the event that the player characters are not able to break free in the first hour they are left alone, or if they are recaptured, they will then be visited in their cell by King Blackrock and a hooded Nimro who is known only as *The Interrogator.*

"Welcome to the Nimro Kingdom," Sunder says to the group in an almost friendly tone. "I see you came here to rob my land of its most precious treasures, eh? Who sent you?"

The King will listen to a few comments before cutting them off, saying, "This is The Interrogator, one of my most skilled and reliable men. A master at ... shall we say, procuring information from the reluctant. His specialty is encouraging conversation."

As Sunder says this, The Interrogator unrolls a bundled cloth on a nearby table, revealing a wicked array of Giant-sized scalpels, needles, and other implements of torture. (Note: If the characters manage to get their hands on these, they all work as human-sized weapons, mostly spears or short swords.)

"Now, you can try to be brave and resist us," Sunder continues in a calm, confident voice, "but it will do you no good. No one has ever successfully resisted my man's techniques. All you will gain by fighting is endless pain followed by a gruesome death. The decision is yours. Now, shall we begin?"

King Blackrock will question each of the characters in turn, choosing them at random. He will ask them who sent them to Mount Nimrod, how they knew to retrieve the rune weapons from the lava, what they planned on doing with the rune weapons, how they eluded capture until Mount Nimrod, and so on. Even if the heroes truthfully answer each of the King's questions (at this point, they have little incentive to lie), he will not be satisfied. He will then begin asking them questions about the Western Empire, its troop movements, whether they know about the Nimro Kingdom, as well as about rumors and troubles plaguing the Empire. He then asks about the ongoing situation with the Ogre tribes on the Timiro Kingdom border, plots against the Orcish Empire in the Yin-Sloth Jungles, and even plots among the Great Giant Clans to depose him.

Chances are, the player characters will know little if anything about such matters, but the Nimro King will torture them for more information anyway. The only way out of some pretty intense pain therapy is if the adventurers can somehow convince Sunder to believe them, or that they are useful to him in some way. The use of mental powers on him to make him believe mem or that tney are *telling him what he wants to hear, is one* possible option. Another is to break free from their bonds and capture the King. Those who break free will have both the mighty Sunder Blackrock and The Interrogator (7th level assassin) to contend with, but they can always grab one of the torture devices to use as a weapon. Keep in mind that any combat in the cell will be enclosed, since The Interrogator shut the cell door behind him, and it will take a full melee round for any frantic guards to unlock the cell and rush in to help the Nimro King. Of course, getting out with the King as hostage is an adventure in itself (he will not fight to the death and will surrender after los-

ing only 20-30% of his S.D.C. or Hit Pionts; waiting for an opportunity to escape or strike back).

If the heroes are unable to avoid torture, they will be in for a terrifying ordeal. The Interrogator's favored method is inserting long needles into the victim's body so they pierce key nerve clusters, causing incredible pain. During this time, the King will ask the individual the same questions again. Each character will be asked 1D6 questions to which they probably don't have the answers. Each time the character can not answer to Sunder's satisfaction, he will be tortured or struck by The Interrogator, taking 1D4 H.P. damage. For each hit taken from The Interrogator, have the player roll against his character's M.E. At the end of the torture session, tally the number of times the character failed M.E. checks against being tortured. For each failure, there is a cumulative 10% chance of falling unconscious immediately after the torture is concluded. He'll remain out for 2D4 minutes. Whether it is appropriate to roll for a random insanity is left to the discretion of the G.M.

After the torture session, the player group is left on their own for another few hours, but not until after the King tells them that they are to be executed in the morning, and that their bodies are to be the main course at a banquet being thrown for the members of the Nimro Council! Clearly, something needs to be done to get out of this place, but what? Weakened but with new resolve to get the hell out of there, the characters can use the next 1D4+3 hours to try escaping.

Strange Twists of Fate

If the group doesn't break free by the end of that time, they will get a reprieve in the form of a volcanic eruption — as many as four earth shaking eruptions, with the sounds of panic in the streets. One of the eruptions causes 1D4+1 parts of the prison walls to crack open or collapse, opening the way to freedom to the street below. In the ensuing panic, the characters can easily make good their escape. On the downside, the player characters should realize that Skyre has somehow acquired the rune weapons. If Skyre, was captured with them, it will turn out that he cut a deal with King Blackrock. The Nimro King will reluctantly sacrifice the lives of a thousand or so of his people for the betterment of the Kingdom, especially since it is the Shorties who will suffer the most. A small price for power. Of course, he will backstab Skyre, killing him as soon as all four weapons are acquired. Do our heroes flee the land (with the Baalgor Mountains being the closest way out), or do they hide, recuperate, regroup and try to get the rune weapons (either for themselves, or to dispose of in Mount Nimrod, Nimro or elsewhere), or do they seek revenge? Explore other possibilities as well. If the weapons have fallen into the hands of Skyre and the Western Empire (as described below), a group of "heroes" is likely to feel obligated to recover and return the weapons back to the molten heart of Mount Nimrod.

In the alternative, if the player characters have failed to capture or kill Skyre, it turns out that he has cut a deal with the ruler of the *Western Empire,* Emperor Itomas, to lend him a strike team of Janissaries so he could obtain the rune weapons at Mount Nimrod for the Emperor. Itomas also authorized Skyre to offer the following deal to King Blackrock: if the King allows Skyre's band to retrieve whatever rune weapons they can pull from Mount Nimrod, the Western Empire will sign a non-aggression pact, vowing not to even consider any invasion of the Nimro Kingdom for the next ten years. Unless, of course, the Nimro Kingdom attacks Western interests first. Furthermore, the Emperor makes it clear that the Kingdom of Giants is free to "expand" in any way they see fit into other territories without fear of intervention from the Western Empire, who shall remain neutral.

Skyre's personal request is that the meddlesome player characters be turned over to him so that he may extract his revenge upon them personally. This request is likely to be denied on the grounds that they must suffer Nimro Justice. However, the King will make absolutely certain the group hears the request directly from the mouth of Skyre. In fact, the Nimro King is likely to ask the villain exactly what he intends to do with them.

The plot thickens. After the evil agents of the Western Empire depart, King Blackrock has a proposal for the player characters. Accompanied by a pair of Rahu-Men (one is a psychic, the other a Wizard) and two Nimro Soldiers, all completely loyal to him and the Nimro nation, the King explains that he could not decline the request or the pact for fear that the Western Empire would extract an immediate and terrible retribution. It was news to him that the Empire even knew the Kingdom of Giants existed at all, although it does not surprise him. He also reveals his sincere feelings that the weapons are too powerful to be in the hands of any modern nation, but that he and his people can not openly oppose them. And that several magic pigeons were immediately dispatched to inform Emperor Itomas of the negotiations and conclusions as they were hammered out. Furthermore, part of the deal is to have four of King Blackrock's best men give the Western agents safe escort out of the Kingdom and to the coast of the Sea of Scarlet Waters where an Empire warship (unknown to the King, it is a Demon Black Ship) awaits their arrival. He is powerless.

However, escaped criminals, such as the player characters could extract whatever foul retribution upon these dogs, as they saw fit. To this end, the King will arrange for them to be completely healed, their equipment and armor returned to them, and any destroyed armor or weapons replaced. In addition, he will allow them to "steal" two heavy lightning javelins each (or six lightning arrows if a bowman in the group would prefer). In addition, he will give them three superior healing potions, and two Teleport Superior scrolls! He goes on to explain that they must each swear on their word of honor, and any dishonorable character must have the others vouch for him, that they will retrieve the weapons and either return them to Mount Nimrod or otherwise dispose of them so that no man nor nation can acquire them. If they do so, they will not only prevent future war and bloodshed, but earn the gratitude of the Nimro King. Unfortunately, they can never reveal what happened here, and he will deny any part in this matter (unknown to the group, the King will have key parts of this Mind Wiped from his memory).

There is a catch (isn't there always?). Once they make their "escape," neither the King nor any of his people can help them. In fact, only the King and those in the room know about this conversation. That means the group must find the villains on their own, will be announced as dangerous escaped prisoners and hunted by the Kingdom's Gigantes and soldiers, and they must kill the four Giant escorts accompanying Skyre and the Janissaries. Killing the Giants is imperative for three reasons:

One, they know nothing of this scheme and will fight to the death to protect the scum under their charge. Two, there can be no doubt in the Empire's mind that the King or Nimro Kingdom was involved in any way. And, three, the four Giant escorts will lose such face to have failed that death would be preferable.

In addition to fighting the Giants, the player characters must also deal with Skyre and the other three who now wield legendary rune weapons. Then return to Mount Nimrod to throw back the weapons.

Once they have disposed of the rune weapons and these "enemies of all people of the world," as the King calls these villains, the characters are free to go their way. He trusts they will not tell others of these events or about the Kingdom of Giants.

King Blackrock understands if the group refuses, and has them put to death before his eyes. He can not risk word of his offer getting out if they are not willing to work with him. **Note:** Any psionic or magical means of detecting the truth will reveal that the King is telling the truth and he will give them his word of honor.

Take it from here.

Free at Last!

If the alternate plot involving the Western Empire is used, the next course of action is fairly obvious, and an epic adventure is about to unfold.

If Skyre has already been taken care of, one way or another, the heroes free themselves at some point after they have been thrown into Blackrock's dungeon. How they escape is up to them. The players should be encouraged to make their own decisions on how and why they leave the stronghold as they do, but below are some details for some of the more likely options. None of these are mutually exclusive. The players may ultimately follow each of these plot forks on their way out of the Nimro Kingdom. Or they may follow none of them, coming up with clever plans all their own. Or, between their ingenuity and the G.M.'s innate desire to use prewritten material (hey, what else are sourcebooks for?), a combination of the plot elements above or below with original ideas of the players and/or G.M.

Let's get out of here! At this point, the heroes have had enough of the Nimro Kingdom's hospitality, and they just want to get away from this place as fast as they can before something

else bad happens to them. Hey, there is no shame in running, especially when one is not at full strength and terribly outgunned. Getting out of Blackrock Stronghold won't be easy, not with preparations for a major banquet going on. To sneak out of the place, the adventurers will have to make liberal use of their Prowl skills, as well as being able to hide wherever they can. Remember, they are in a building where everything is three to four times larger than usual. Imagine if somebody who only came up to your knees was walking around your house — that's how it appears to the player characters as they travel the stronghold. Thus, places that would not be hiding spots for a Giant will prove very useful to our heroes. Cracks in the wall, under or between furniture, storage boxes, and other mundane places can all provide impromptu hiding spots. The characters should be careful not to hide in something that might get picked up and carried to the banquet hall or kitchen however, lest they be in for a real surprise when the cover is lifted ("Hey, wait a minute! I'm on a dinner table! And I don't think I like the way those Giants with napkins tucked under their chins are looking at me!").

The player characters' best chance for success is if they wait until late in the evening, when many of the people at the stronghold will be fast asleep, and even the night watchmen are a little drowsy. Remember that the characters have only until the next morning to move about before they are discovered missing from the dungeon. After that, a general alarm will rise throughout the stronghold, and guards will scramble everywhere in a frantic search to find and recapture them.

Eventually, assuming they don't get recaptured, they can make it to a window or sneak out the front door when it's open. Once outside, they are free to make their escape. However, without any serious weapons, armor, equipment, or provisions, they are not likely to get very far. Their best chance will be to obtain essential survival gear from some Shorties along the way. But whatever the fugitives do, they'd better do it fast! Morning is quickly approaching, and it would behoove them to be as far from Mount Nimrod as possible by the time they are discovered missing from the dungeon.

Once the alarm goes up in the morning, a big manhunt will ensue. If the fugitives make it off the mountain by that time, then their chances are fairly good that they will make it at least to the border. If they get caught again, they will be thrown back into prison, tortured more severely (the King doesn't like anybody making him look foolish by sneaking out right under his nose), and executed the following morning. No banquet, no ceremony, just a quick, bloody beheading in full public view. While that scenario will present its own escape opportunities, it is left to the G.M.'s discretion to hash out the details.

What about getting our stuff back? The player characters' personal belongings (aside from the rune weapons they *may* have pulled from Mount Nimrod) were deposited in the King's personal treasure vault, in his bed chambers. If they are interested in retrieving their personal effects, they can find the location by interrogating a dungeon guard. After that, it is up to the players to figure out how to get their characters' stuff back. Wise players should probably consider it a loss and get the heck out while they still can.

The most straightforward way is to sneak into King Blackrock's bed chambers. Sneaking through the stronghold will require a mixture of stealth and taking advantage of unusual hiding opportunities, rather than raw strength (In any place populated by Giants, relying on strength alone is a pretty bad idea). The King's bed chambers are on the second story of the stronghold, behind a massive oaken door with a big lock on it. Picking the lock will be possible, but keep in mind that the lock itself will be roughly eight feet (2.7 m) off the ground, and will be three times as large as usual. That will make normal lock picking tools useless, so the characters will have to improvise (pilfered torture tools from the cell downstairs will work in a pinch).

If the adventurers sneak up there during the night, two Jotan guards will be posted in front of the door. They are part of the King's personal guard, but right now, they aren't guarding much because they will be sleeping soundly. Picking the lock without waking the guards will be tricky, though. Only two attempts at Pick Locks can be made before the sound begins to disturb the guards. Any subsequent attempts will have to be made with a successful Prowl roll. Failing the Prowl roll will result in the guards waking up, the escaped prisoners being discovered, and all hell breaking loose! The foolish adventurers can try to avoid this by taking the guards out beforehand, but good and even selfish characters will have a hard time killing innocent guards, and the group might not have any easy means of simply subduing these two sleeping beauties. Again, magic, psionics, or sheer ingenuity might be the order of the moment.

Once inside Sunder's chambers, the group will have to Prowl to get their things without waking up the Nimro King. Sunder's treasure vault is built into the far wall of his bed chambers, and it also is locked. The rules for picking this lock are the same as the previous door lock, only there will be a -20% modifier, because the vault lock is more complicated. The rules for picking the lock without waking the King are also the same as for opening the chamber door without waking the Jotan guards. Once the vault door is open, the adventurers will have access to their personal belongings, as well as all of the King's things, but gold, gems and other small items are all locked neatly away inside giant-sized trunks that weigh a ton. If the King has acquired any of the Mount Nimrod rune weapons, one or two of them will also be in the vault. The most notable item not accounted for is the King's personal rune sword, Gurthas Gurthasi, which he keeps hidden next to his bed.

Note: The vault door is covered with all sorts of mystical writing and signs, which, to the untrained eye, look like runes or wards. However, a Diabolist will recognize these signs for what they are, nonsensical writing intended to scare away ignorant burglars. It would seem that either the King does not trust wards or he has very few Diabolists in his Kingdom to write them for him. Both are probably true. In any event, it explains why his treasure vault lacks a security measure found on many other such vaults throughout the world. The vault door is extremely creaky and will squeak loudly when opened. The King has allowed the hinges to rust a little bit for this purpose, so it acts as a crude burglar alarm. Prudent player characters may have thought about this and if they check the hinges, they may get the idea to pour oil or some other kind of lubricant on them to make the door open silently. Otherwise, entering the vault is almost certain (90% chance) to wake up the King, which will make things very interesting, indeed.

If, by some miracle, the group has gotten this far, it is unwise to plunder the treasure trove, because the King is a light sleeper. They should grab their stuff and sneak out! Likewise, any attempt to climb up onto the bed or attack the King in any way will wake him. The King will bound out of bed, grabbing his sword in one fluid motion while he calls for help. 3D6 frantic guards will arrive within one melee round (15 seconds)!

]f Sunder awakes without the rest of his arsenal and his armor, and against opponents who very well may have weapons in their hands and magic at their command, the King will not be quick to attack, and instead makes a run for the door. Once out of harms way, he will let his guards handle me impudent intruders. Thus, if the group shuts the door and locks or pins it closed, they will buy themselves 2D6 melee rounds before it is forced open. This may give them the chance to climb out a window and get away.

If cornered, trapped or provoked, King Blackrock will attack with demonic fury, using fist and sword. He is likely to hesitate using his fire breath for fear of setting the room ablaze. But, if down by more than 70% of his Hit Points, or he feels his life is genuinely at risk, the King will do whatever it takes to escape or destroy his assailants. Remember, Sunder Blackrock is a wily and skilled warrior who got to where he is by knowing when to fight, when to run, and when to give up. He is not a mindless brute, and has a keen understanding of his limitations.

If the group should get the King to surrender, they will have a very interesting hostage situation to take care of. By the time King Blackrock is bound (how *do* the pint-sized heroes plan on securing him, anyway?), a large number of guards will have massed outside the bed chamber doors, and the entire stronghold will be on alert. How the adventurers get themselves out of this mess is up to the ingenuity of the players and/or the kindness of the G.M. (could the Nimro King be so impressed by their daring that he commutes their death sentence and he invites them to do a little job for him?).

At this stage of the game, keeping the King as a prisoner is their best insurance for escaping alive. The journey to the border will be a harrowing one, with the fugitives under constant surveillance by True Giants ready to attack at the first opportunity. Likewise, the surprisingly calm King will try to trick and mislead them (if not escape) at every opportunity, so the characters must remain sharp at all times. Given how long it may take them to get out of the Nimro Kingdom, however, that may be next to impossible, which will make for some hair-raising action sequences during the trip when King Blackrock tries to escape and/or his bodyguards try to effect his escape with traps, ambushes, magic and commando-style raids.

Note: While the King and his minions might let the adventurers make it to the border and allow the to make a dash for it, provided they abandon the King, alive, the people of Nimro will never allow their King to be taken to another human kingdom. Never. They'd rather risk the King's life than allow him to endure such humiliation and probable execution. Still, for those adventurers daring enough, the Western Empire has a bounty of 250,000 gold on Sunder Blackrock brought in alive, 70,000 gold dead.

If the player characters kill or cause King Blackrock to be killed (even by accident), all hell will break loose and they will be swarmed by a thousand plus True Giants regardless of the consequences. If by some miracle they manage to escape, there is no place on the planet where they can hide. They will be hunted down until each and every one is slain. Forevermore, they can expect the Kingdom to plot their demise, striking when unexpected, never letting their vengeance go forgotten. This goes double if King Blackrock is allowed to live after being humiliated by his prisoners. He will go to almost any length to have his revenge on the adventurers.

Oh, and don't forget about the Gromek. Do they hear about the King being taken hostage? Do they use the confusion of this incident to launch a major attack or several scattered raids? Do ftiey attack the player characters in an attempt to get or kill the Nimro King themselves?

Notable NPCs

Skyre
Race: Elf
O.C.C.: 5th level Wizard and 2nd level Diabolist.
Alignment: Anarchist with leanings toward Miscreant. It may not take much to push him over to evil. Or can he be touched and redeemed?
Attributes: I.Q.: 21, M.E.: 21, M.A.: 11, P.S.: 15, P.P.: 15, P.E.: 15, P.B.: 23, Spd.: 20
Hit Points: 47
S.D.C.: 35
P.P.E.: 200
Spells: All common knowledge spells plus the following: See Aura, See the Invisible, Befuddle, Concealment, Invisibility: Simple, Telekinesis, Fire Bolt, Fire Ball, Impervious to Fire, Multiple Image, Magic Net, Escape, and Domination.

Wards and Power Phrases: G.M.'s discretion, but probably very limited.

Attacks per melee: Four in hand to hand combat, or two by spells.

Bonuses: +1 to strike, +2 to parry and dodge, +2 to roll with impact/fall, +2 to pull punch; +1 on spell strength.

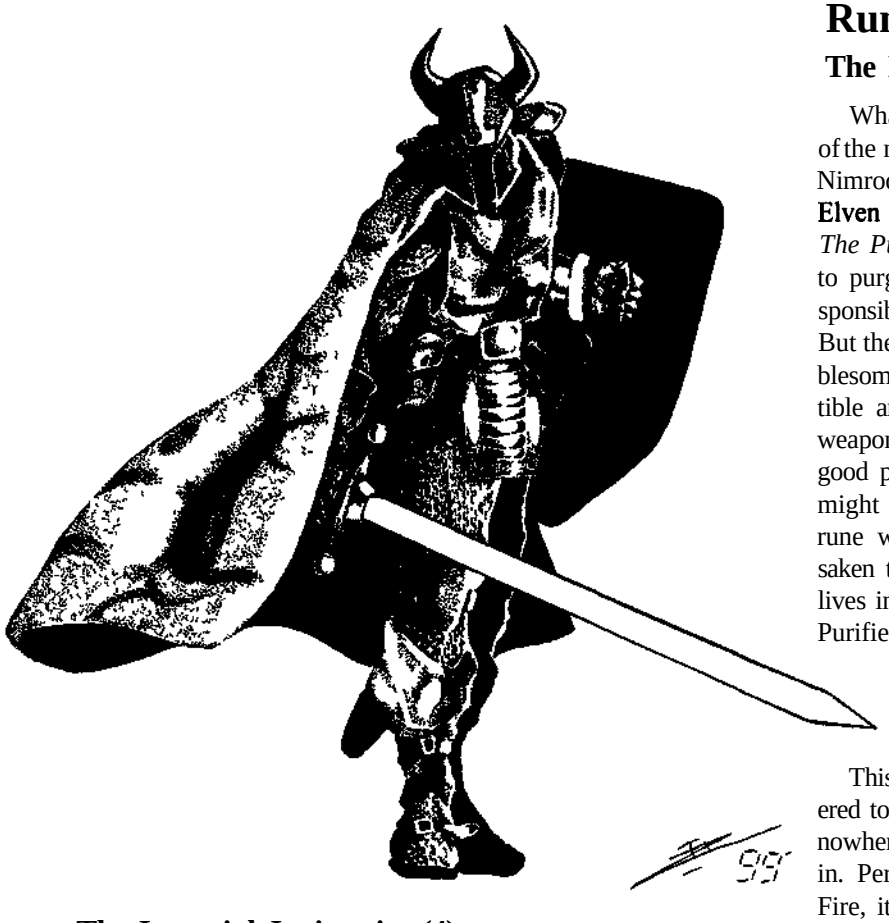
Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Basic — Karate kick (2D4). W.P. Staff (+2 to strike and parry, +1 to throw), W.P. Knife (+2 to strike, parry, and dodge), W.P. Sword (+2 to strike and parry, +1 to throw).

Weapons: Unless he has acquired one of the legendary rune weapons, Skyre will fight with an iron-shod quarterstaff (2D6+2). He also carries three daggers, mostly for throwing or manipulating through magical telekinesis.

Armor: Leather of Iron (A.R. 15, S.D.C. 271).

Magic Items: None, aside from his precious suit of armor. With his anticipated acquisition of one or more rune weapons, Skyre figures that incredible wealth, power, and magical items will be coming his way. Until then, he has very limited resources.

Money and other equipment: 15,000 in gold, the leftover cash he used to finance this expedition to Mount Nimrod.



The Imperial Janissaries (4)

Note: Start out as seven warriors, but by the time they get to Mount Nimrod, they are down to Skyre and four Janissaries.

O.C.C.: Pretend to be Mercenary Soldiers and adventurers, but are really 4th level Imperial Janissaries. Imperial Janissaries are the most efficient, fearless, and unstoppable soldiers in the military forces of the Western Empire. They are the equivalent of modern-day U.S. Navy SEALs or Russian Spetsnatz commandos (For information on this O.C.C., consult the **Western Empire™** sourcebook. Otherwise, treat them as a cross between the Soldier and Knight O.C.C.).

Alignment: All are Aberrant and loyal to their nation.

Average Attributes of all Four: I.Q.: 15, M.E.: 16 (+1 to save vs psionic attack and insanity), M.A.: 12, P.S.: 20 (+5 to damage), P.P.: 20 (+3 to strike, parry & dodge), P.E.: 19 (+2 to save vs magic and poisons), P.B.: 9, Spd.: 20.

Hit Points: 40

S.D.C.: 35

Attacks per Melee Round: 4

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +5 to strike, +7 to parry/dodge, +5 to damage, +2 to save vs magic and poisons, +1 to save vs psionic attack, +4 to save vs Horror Factor, plus applicable W.P. bonuses.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts (5th level) & Boxing — W.P. Paired Weapons, W.P. Archery, and Horsemanship: Knight. A Janissary will not surrender or flee combat under any condition. **Weapons:** Unless packing rune weaponry, the Janissaries fight with Dwarven long swords (2D6+3) and special shields used for bashing (also 2D6+3)

Armor: Chain mail (A.R. 14, S.D.C. 44).

Rune Weapons of Legend

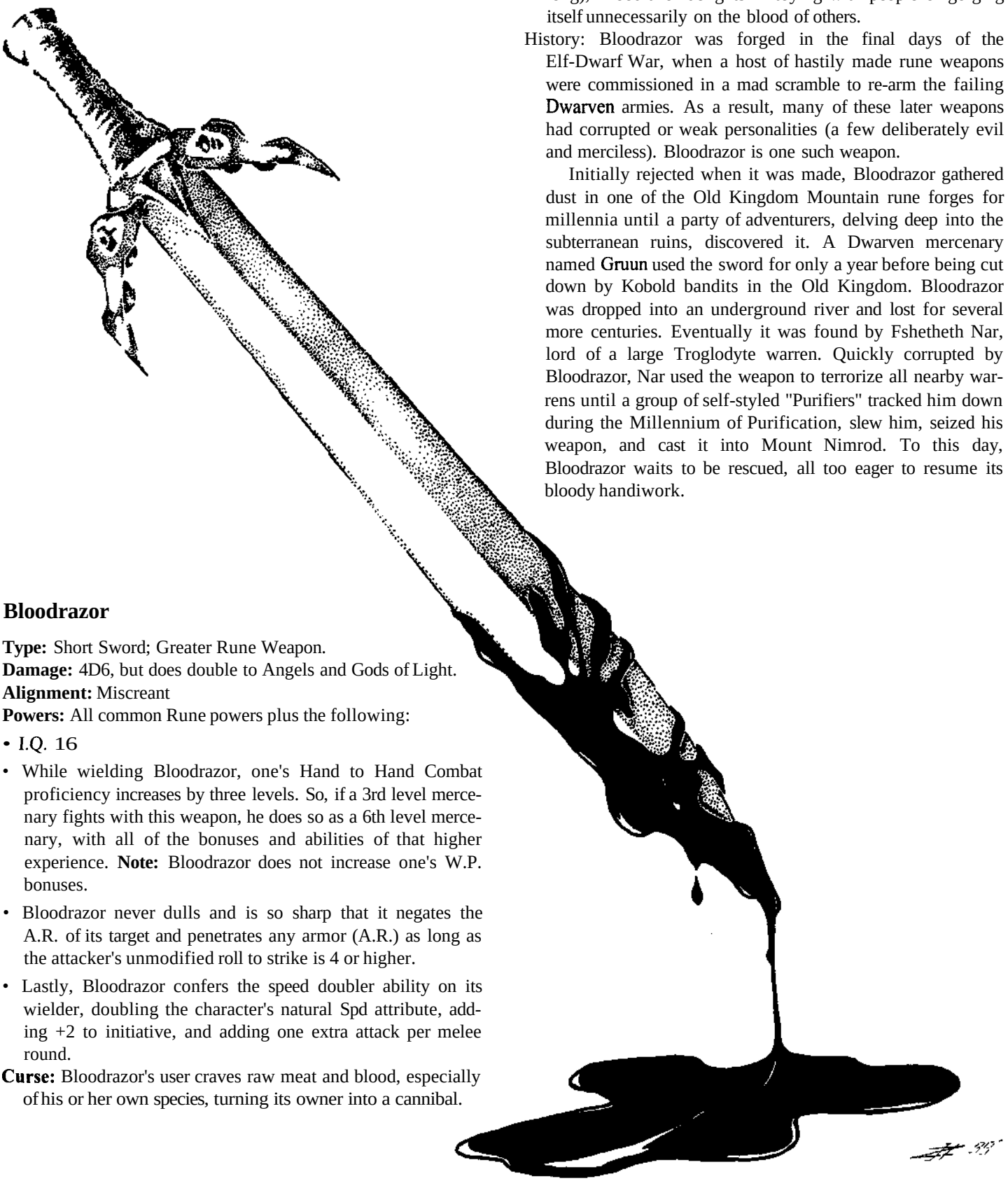
The Lost Arsenal of Mount Nimrod

What follows are the statistics, history and other information of the nine Legendary Rune Weapons known to be inside Mount Nimrod. During the Millennium of Purification, a group of Elven and Dwarven Wizards and Scholars calling themselves *The Purifiers* were one among hundreds of groups that wished to purge the world of all magic (not just the vile magicks responsible for so much of the destruction of the Elf-Dwarf War). But they ran into a problem. The vast majority of the most troublesome and powerful magic weapons were by nature indestructible and could not be melted down or destroyed like normal weapons. Moreover, the terrible carnage of the war depleted a good percentage of the world's alchemists, the only ones who might have been able to figure out a way to deconstruct even rune weapons (allegedly, all Dwarven Rune Masters had forsaken the black art and had gone into hiding to live out their lives in quiet shame, or had committed suicide, or been slain by Purifiers).

This proved most problematic when The Purifiers had gathered together large numbers of noteworthy magic items, but had nowhere to dispose of them. That's where Mount Nimrod came in. Perpetually erupting and a gate to the Plane of Elemental Fire, it would keep any weapons dropped into its fires covered by self-replenishing layers of magma. Thus, Mount Nimrod became a major dumping site for all kinds of magic items. Big, small, good, bad, powerful, weak — it mattered not.

Hundreds, if not thousands, of ancient magic items and the most powerful rune weapons ever created were thrown into Mount Nimrod during the Millennium of Purification. Even if only four could be recovered, it would be a historic event and have long-lasting repercussions. The true tally of what was thrown into this volcano will never be known, since the Purifiers

who did these deeds also destroyed any documentation of it. But, it is known that at least nine legendary rune weapons are in the core magma chamber of Mount Nimrod.



Bloodrazor

Type: Short Sword; Greater Rune Weapon.
Damage: 4D6, but does double to Angels and Gods of Light.
Alignment: Miscreant
Powers: All common Rune powers plus the following:

- I.Q. 16
- While wielding Bloodrazor, one's Hand to Hand Combat proficiency increases by three levels. So, if a 3rd level mercenary fights with this weapon, he does so as a 6th level mercenary, with all of the bonuses and abilities of that higher experience. **Note:** Bloodrazor does not increase one's W.P. bonuses.
- Bloodrazor never dulls and is so sharp that it negates the A.R. of its target and penetrates any armor (A.R.) as long as the attacker's unmodified roll to strike is 4 or higher.
- Lastly, Bloodrazor confers the speed doubler ability on its wielder, doubling the character's natural Spd attribute, adding +2 to initiative, and adding one extra attack per melee round.

Curse: Bloodrazor's user craves raw meat and blood, especially of his or her own species, turning its owner into a cannibal.

Personality: Bloodrazor is perpetually hungry, and yearns to drink deep of its victims whenever it can. Consequently, it is preoccupied with starting fights or even preying on the helpless for nourishment. This vampiric personality has made Bloodrazor genuinely evil, and it has grown so used to casual slaughter, it revels in mass murder and the misery of others caused by war and murder. Once sated (which is never for long), Bloodrazor delights in toying with people or gorging itself unnecessarily on the blood of others.

History: Bloodrazor was forged in the final days of the Elf-Dwarf War, when a host of hastily made rune weapons were commissioned in a mad scramble to re-arm the failing Dwarven armies. As a result, many of these later weapons had corrupted or weak personalities (a few deliberately evil and merciless). Bloodrazor is one such weapon.

Initially rejected when it was made, Bloodrazor gathered dust in one of the Old Kingdom Mountain rune forges for millennia until a party of adventurers, delving deep into the subterranean ruins, discovered it. A Dwarven mercenary named Gruun used the sword for only a year before being cut down by Kobold bandits in the Old Kingdom. Bloodrazor was dropped into an underground river and lost for several more centuries. Eventually it was found by Fshetheth Nar, lord of a large Troglodyte warren. Quickly corrupted by Bloodrazor, Nar used the weapon to terrorize all nearby warrens until a group of self-styled "Purifiers" tracked him down during the Millennium of Purification, slew him, seized his weapon, and cast it into Mount Nimrod. To this day, Bloodrazor waits to be rescued, all too eager to resume its bloody handiwork.

Vargus, the Beast

Type: Flamberge
Damage: 6D6, a rare Greatest Rune Weapon
Alignment: Principled
Powers: All common Rune powers plus the following
• IQ 20

- Vargus can cast any combination of the following spells up to 6x daily at 6th level proficiency Armor of Ithan, Superhuman Strength, Dispel Magic Bamers, Size of the Behemoth, Superhuman Speed, and Havoc Vargus has 90 P P E , which it recovers at a rate of 10 per hour
- Whoever wields Vargus becomes totally fearless and is thereby immune to all Horror Factor checks and any spell magic or psionic attack that would induce fear The downside to this power is that Vargus' wielder is prone to take unnecessary risks or refuse to break off from combat, even when death is imminent In such situations, the character can shake free of such self-destructive behavior by rolling a 15 or higher on a 20-sided die
- Adds 50 points to the S D C of the wielder All damage is taken off magical S D C first, then normal S D C, then Hit Points

The Curse: Vargus curses its owner with a randomly determined psychosis — the insanity is different for each of Vargus' wielders Many times, Vargus' wielders have suffered from some form of Mindless Aggression, a drawback that led them all to early graves, often after committing great atrocities while maddened Even those who give up Vargus will retain the curse until a Remove Curse is cast upon them Note, this does not work for those who still own Vargus, one must have relinquished the weapon voluntarily for a Remove Curse to have a chance of working

Personality: Vargus loves battle, and once unsheathed, will not wish to go back until it has tasted blood Vargus abhors cowardice or treachery of any kind, and his powers will not work when being used to such ends In fact, given the degree of disgust by the cowardly act, the sword may shock his user for 2D6 damage and demand to be relinquished

History: Vargus is an exceptionally old rune weapon, and something of an anomaly — what Dwarf is tall enough to wield such a large weapon, and who besides a Dwarf would a rune maker forge a sword for? Still, the ancient Rune Masters have been known to make weapons for non-Dwarves

Through the eons, Vargus has had hundreds of owners, so many that even the sword sometimes loses track of them all. Who owned him is not as important as the many foes he has slain. And what foes! Tycho the Great Horned Dragon! Foressu the mad Summoner of the Credia ghettos! And Sverituk, the most feared Gromek Warlord of the Baalgor Wastelands, among others. When not humming about the glories of battle and taking initiative, Vargus bombards its owners with tales of past fights — not to brag, but to relive the glory of a good scrap. Unfortunately, Vargus tends to repeat himself, despite the thousands of stories he has to tell, trying the patience of even the most even-tempered mind. However, those who can deal with Vargus' storytelling will find that he is an excellent source of lore, especially concerning famous weapons, battles, and warriors. Vargus was in the hands of the Dwarves when it was seized and cast into Mount Nimrod. It feels no small animosity for those who threw it into the fire, and would gladly prompt whoever reclaims him to vent on any Dwarf who crosses his master.

Mridlis, the Foehammer

Type: War Hammer; a rare Greatest Rune Weapon.

Damage: 5D6 to living creatures (double damage to Elves and Faerie Folk), and 1D4x100 damage to non-living but animated things, including animated objects, animated skeletons/dead, Golems and other automatons (does not include the undead). It can also inflict 1D4x100 damage to fortified walls made of stone or other earthen material (clay, sand, etc., but not wood).

Alignment: Unprincipled.

Powers: All of the common Rune powers plus the following:

- I.Q. 19
- Mridlis inflicts double damage to all Elves and Faerie Folk. In addition, the hammer will begin vibrating slightly when it comes within 1000 feet (300 m) of any Elf or Faerie. And, when in the presence of Elves or Faerie Folk, Mridlis' owner cannot be surprised by these beings and gains an additional +2 to initiative.
- When thrown, Mridlis will fly out to 1,000 feet (305 m), and automatically returns to its owners' hand after each flight.
- Mridlis can cast the following Earth Elemental spells at 6th level proficiency: Hopping Stones, Wall of Stone, Travel Through Stone, Cocoon of Stone, and Sand Storm. Mridlis has 80 P.P.E., which it recovers at a rate of 10 per hour.

Curse: Agoraphobia (a fear of open spaces) and obsessive hatred for Elves.

Personality: Mridlis is slow to anger and violence, willing to let a lot roll off its shoulders before answering in kind. However, this does not extend to Elves. The Hammer hates them with a vengeance, and will look for an excuse to start up with one at the slightest provocation. Overall, Mridlis embodies the classical Dwarven personality: dour, opinionated, and blunt.

History: Dwarves will remember Mridlis as the *Savior of Kolhalla*, while Elves remember it as the *Butcher of Threen*. Mridlis was made shortly before one of the bloodiest campaigns in the Elf-Dwarf War, and was wielded by Goral Vod, Dwarven General and military genius. Unfortunately, Vod also was slightly insane, and had no qualms about committing genocide against the Elves. Vod used Mridlis to rally Dwarven troops defending the stronghold of Kolhalla, which had been under attack for 100 days and was in danger of falling. If it had, the secrets of the rune forges would have fallen into Elven hands. But once the Elves were driven back, Vod followed them with an army of bloodied Dwarven troops, ready to hound the Elves to the ends of the earth. The Elves retreated to the City of Threen, where they made their stand. Using Mridlis, Vod cracked the walls of Threen and let in the Dwarven hordes, who slaughtered every man, woman and child in the city, soaking the streets with blood. To this day, there are those who speak of a plain in the Old Kingdom with red grass, where spectral images of slain Elves wander at night, eternally without peace.

After the Battle of Threen, Vod retired and passed Mridlis to his son, who was fighting in the northern Old Kingdom. Too old to make the journey, he sent Mridlis to be delivered to his son by a heavy contingent of guards. Hearing of the weapon's vulnerability, a force of Elves ambushed the procession and stole Mridlis. Rumor said they sought to destroy it for years, while others say the Elves used it against the Dwarves as a form of ironic retribution. Whatever the outcome, Mridlis has never been seen by the rest of the world since. Indeed, what happened is a sole Elven warrior stole the weapon, intent on destroying it (It seems Mridlis was used to kill the Elf's entire family). The Elf cast the rune hammer and himself into the fires of Mount Nimrod many years ago. According to legend, it is said that since Mridlis' disappearance, and despite the hammer's hatred of Elves, it feels ashamed for being part of the slaughter of Threen, and yearns to one day clear its conscience somehow, someway.

Jihal, the Talon

Type: Dagger; Greater Rune Weapon.
Damage: 4D6
Alignment: Anarchist
Powers: All of the common Rune powers plus the following:

- I.Q 12
- Jihal returns when thrown.
- Three times a day, Jihal can envenom its blade with the equivalent of Scorpion's Blood poison. The poison will last until Jihal scores its next hit. The poison does an additional 4D6 damage, compounded with the weapon's cutting damage. Victims who make their saving throw versus poison will resist the toxin and take only 1D6 damage.
- Jihal may cast any combination of the following spells up to 6x daily, at 6th level proficiency: Shadow Walk/Meld, Darkness, Multiple Image, Horrific Illusion, and Hallucination. Jihal has 70 P.P.E., which it recovers at a rate of 10 per hour.
- And finally, Jihal's owner will never accidentally drop this weapon. Somehow, Jihal has a way of not accidentally falling out of its owner's grasp. However, Jihal's owner can still be disarmed, but gains a +4 bonus against any such attempts.

Curses: This weapon confers two curses on its owner. The first is Glowing Eyes (red). The second is that Jihal's owner will take 1D4 points of damage each time sunlight touches his or her exposed skin. This means that to go out during the day, one must entirely cover himself. This usually means the character will end up looking like a ninja or a desert bedouin with a scarf wrapped around the face and head, hooded robes or clothes covering the body, gloves covering the hands. Such garb can draw unwanted attention, depending on the environment and circumstances.

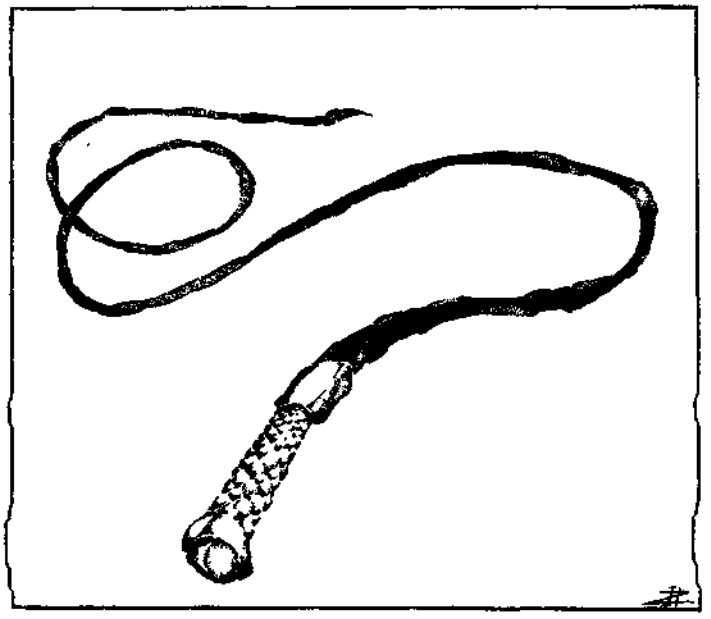
Personality: Jihal is a thief at heart, and does not like open combat. Fighting is best done from a point of distinct advantage, and then, with lots of friends to help out. Although indestructible, Jihal is overly concerned with self-preservation, and is really afraid of being lost somewhere unpleasant, like at the bottom of a well or under a rock in some cave. In such places, the rune dagger will become uneasy and will not wish to be used, for fear of getting lost and left behind. It hates to be alone.

History: Jihal is fairly secretive, and does not relinquish details about its history easily, as if it is afraid that it could be incriminated for its past — like somebody it had wronged (or one of its owners had wronged) might take vengeance on the weapon. Jihal admits to having been the property of a Western Empire Thieves' Guildmaster for 20 years, before being lost in a game of chance (of all things!) with a prominent Wizard who is said to have known of the Guildmaster's fondness for gambling. The weapon was removed to a far off Wizards' Guild for study. There Jihal languished for three long years before a corrupt novice stole the weapon and fled By the time the novice was tracked down and killed, Jihal was missing. Rumor has it the weapon was in the hands of *Beregin the Wanderer*, a mad shaman of the Northern Wilderness who is periodically sighted between Ophid's Grasslands and the Dragon's Claw Lake (but in reality, the weapon lies at the bottom of Mount Nimrod. How it got there exactly, remains a mystery).

Korrigan, the Soul Whip

Type: Bullwhip; Greater Rune Weapon.
Damage: 5D6
Alignment: Diabolic
Powers: All of the common Rune powers plus the following:

- I.Q. 16
- Up to six times per day, Korrigan can inflict the effects of the 7th level Wizard spell Life Drain on an opponent. This ability only works when Korrigan strikes an opponent, and Korrigan's user must announce the intention to use this ability before rolling to hit. If Komgan tries to dram life from an opponent, but misses, that counts as one of the weapon's life drain attacks for the day. Multiple Life Drain attacks on the same opponent will have a cumulative effect.
- Evil Eye — Pain: This is Korrigan's only psionic power other than telepathic communication with its wielder. It can perform the Evil Eye ability at 6th level proficiency, six times a day.
- Just owning Korrigan gives the user a horrifying, evil aura that confers a Horror Factor of 15. The only way to remove



this ability is to relinquish the weapon. Those who own Korrigan for more than a year, however, retain this evil aura for the rest of their lives.

Curse: The very nature of Korrigan is practically a curse. Every week, Korrigan's owner must win a Battle of Wills with the weapon, or become controlled by it. Once controlled, the Korrigan persona will take over, and all the character will be interested in is creating widespread destruction and mayhem. While in this state, the user's true persona has a chance to break out once a week, again, by winning a Battle of Wills with Korrigan. Korrigan's M.E. is 21.

Personality: Korrigan is as diabolic as can be. Play this up to the hilt. Killing children is for sissies. Burning churches is ho-hum. We're talking about poisoning water reservoirs, salting the earth EVERYWHERE, and trying to wake the Old Ones, just for fun.

History: Korrigan has long been used by evildoers as an instrument of torture and domination. Although Korrigan isn't really intended for open battle, there have been accounts of dark knights wading into historic battles with this whip as their main weapon. The longest it has been owned by a single individual was a century before the Elf-Dwarf War began. Its owner was an evil Palladin named Sir Gehrid the Dark. In the 35 years Gehrid held onto Korrigan, his reign as an iron-fisted dictator over a small portion of the New Kingdom was well documented. When his subjects finally rose up and destroyed him, one of their number stole Korrigan. The evil of the weapon corrupted that individual too, turning her into an assassin who worked for both the Elves and Dwarves during the onset of their titanic conflict. When the assassin was slam, Korrigan fell into many hands during the millennia of warfare that raged between Elf and Dwarf. Finally, after the conflict ended, this weapon was one of the first to be cast into Mount Nimrod, for its reputation as an instrument of evil was well known, and all thought that destroying this weapon would be a good way to begin the campaign to purge this world of evil and foul magicks. Little did they know that Korrigan lives still, covered by a small ocean of magma, seething with hatred, and yearning to return to the world so that it may spread misery, decay and unhappiness wherever it goes.

Greigradamus, the Vanguard

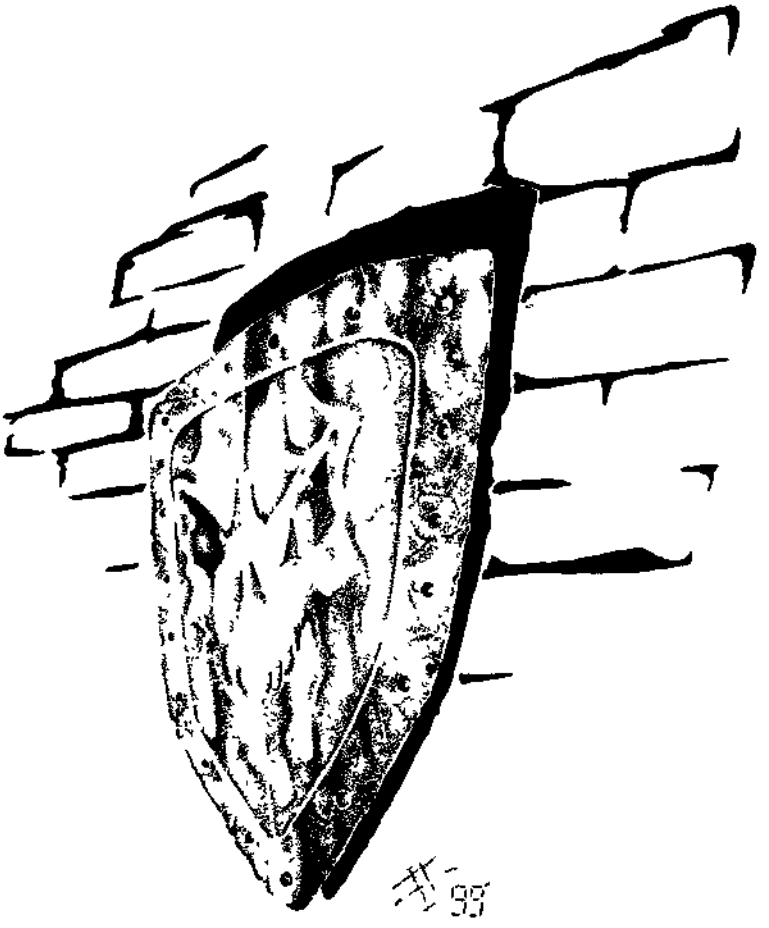
Type: Large Round Shield; Lesser Rune Weapon.
Damage: 2D6 (slamming or when thrown)
Alignment: Unprincipled
Powers: All the common Rune powers plus the following:

- I.Q. 10
- Greigradamus adds the following attributes to its wielder: a natural A.R. of 12, +25 Hit Points, and the ability to regenerate 1D6 Hit Points/S.D.C. every other melee round (30 seconds).
- Greigradamus confers the W.P. Shield skill to its owner, at *their current level of experience. Those who already have the* skill enjoy a +3 bonus.
- Greigradamus also returns when thrown, like a *boomeranging frisbee.*

Curse: Whoever owns this shield will lose one attack per melee fat as long as the item is in his possession. Otherwise, there are no ill effects.

Personality: Greigradamus has been without a real owner for so long that it will bond very quickly with whoever acquires it (all bonding bonuses apply after only two months). Otherwise, Greigradamus is stoic and unshakable, and not particularly fond of communicating with its owner. In fact, it will never initiate communication or offer advice or information without being asked for it first. Maybe one day Greigradamus will grow out of this, but not any time soon.

History: Greigradamus was the experiment of a young maverick Runesmith who thought the best way to distinguish himself would be by forging unusual rune items. Greigradamus was one of his better works, but hardly anybody ever got to



see it. Shortly after being forged, the owner of the shield was slain by a summoned lord of the undead, a hideous skeletal zombie creature brought forth from the nether regions by the mad Summoner Zazaqua. The creature broke loose of Zazaqua's control and returned to its home dimension with Greigradamus in tow. There the shield existed in that alien place for many thousands of years until the zombie creature was once again summoned to the Palladium World during the final days of the Elf-Dwarf War. The Dwarven Summoner who brought the zombie creature forth was killed, but not before trapping the thing in a circle of permanence, marooning it there for several centuries more. After the war, the group known as The Purifiers hurled the zombie and its shield into the fires of Mount Nimrod. The zombie creature was destroyed (or was it?), and the shield sunk into the lava, where it has waited to be rescued by somebody.

Aalzaraad

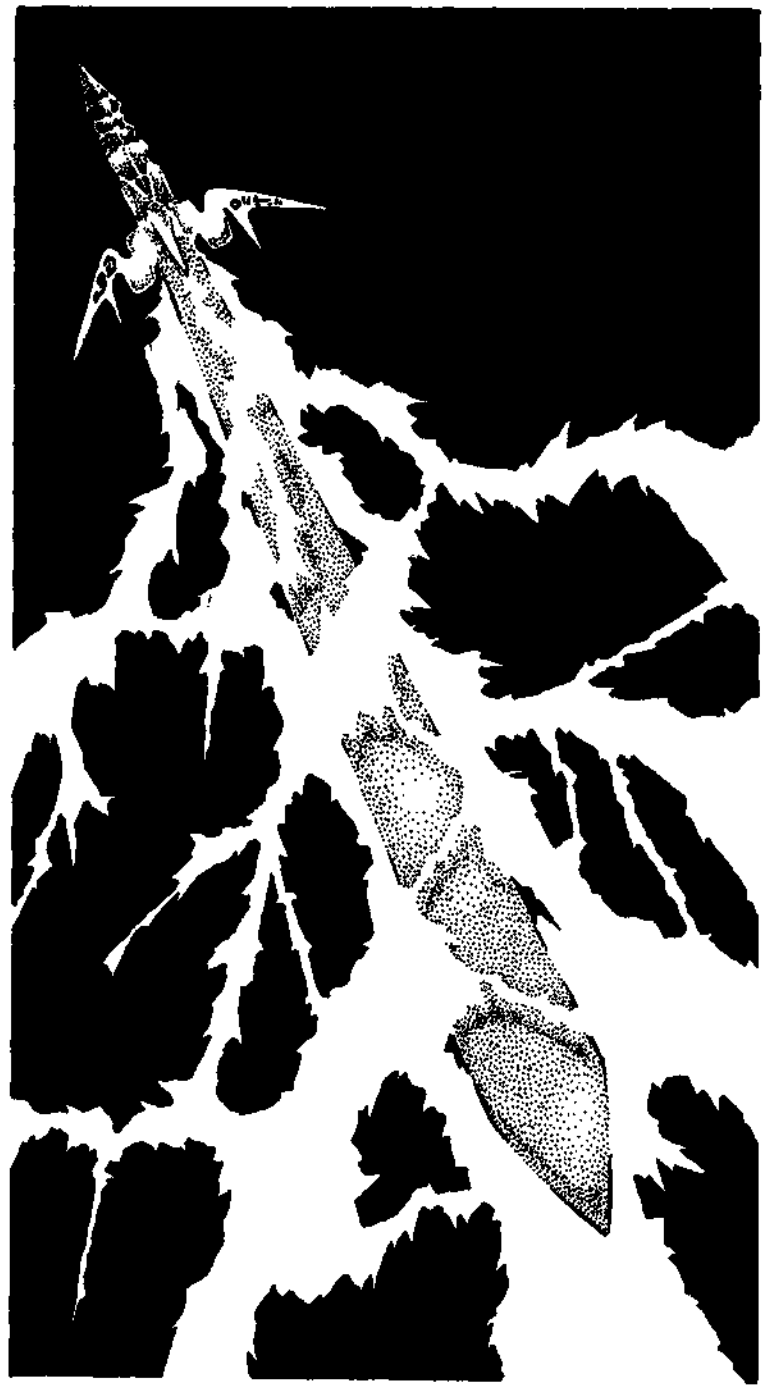
Type: Long Sword; Greater Rune Weapon.
Damage: 4D6
Alignment: Scrupulous
Powers: All the common Rune powers plus the following:

- I.Q. 15
- Aalzaraad can cast the following Air Elemental spells at 6th level proficiency: Call Lightning, Ball Lightning, Electrical Field, Electro-Magnetism, Protection From Lightning (to others, not to self), and Spark of Life (identical to the Fire Elemental spell Flame of Life, except its power is conveyed through a bright blue spark). Aalzaraad has 100 P.P.E., which it recovers at a rate of 10 per hour.
- The possessor of this weapon becomes impervious to all lightning or electrical effects (magical and non-magical)!
- Once a day, Aalzaraad can discharge a 50 Hit Point blast of built-up electricity. This power must be announced prior to making an attack with the sword. The electrical discharge only works if the sword connects with its target; if the user discharges the electricity and misses that attack, then the discharge dissipates harmlessly.

Curses: Aalzaraad's user will always retain a slight electrical charge, so that whenever he touches another person (skin to skin contact), they both suffer 1D4 damage from the spark. Aalzaraad's user also suffers from the Glow curse.

Personality: Stalwart and unflinching in the face of adversity, but also cheerful and radiant, not quite the overstarched crusader that many good-aligned rune weapons (like Nadaereon) tend to be. Aalzaraad has been owned by many different people, so it will not forge an especially close bond with its owner for the first few years. After that, Aalzaraad will become quite close to its owner and will do all it can to keep him or her alive.

History: Shortly after the weapon was forged, it vanished without a trace for nearly 4,000 years. Whatever transpired during that time, Aalzaraad either cannot or will not discuss. All that is known is that the weapon next resurfaced in what is now the Baalgor Wastelands, shortly after the end of the Elf-Dwarf War. The weapon was used briefly by an Eandroth rogue named Grottok who was slain, legends say, by The Purifiers. Presumably, this secret group was bent on destroying



the Rune weapon, since Aalzaraad now sits amid the magma of Mount Nimrod.

Nadaereon

Type: Berdiche Pole Arm; Greater Rune Weapon.
Damage: 1D4x10
Alignment: Principled
Powers: All the common rune powers plus the following:

- I.Q. 17
- Opponents hit by Nadaereon must save versus magic or be struck with incredibly numbing cold. Failure to save means the victim is -1 attack per melee, -2 to strike, parry, dodge and initiative. The penalties last for 1D4 melee rounds. Subsequent hits will have a cumulative effect if separate saving throws are not made.

- Nadaereon can cast the following Elemental spells at 6th level proficiency: Shards of Ice, Sheet of Ice, Encase in Ice, Ten Foot Ball of Ice, and Wall of Ice. Nadaereon has 90 P.P.E., which it recovers at a rate of 10 per hour.
- Once a week, Nadaereon can cast the Air Elemental spell Snow Storm, at 6th level proficiency. However, Nadaereon lacks the power to stop these storms once they are started, so it is reluctant to use this power recklessly.

Curse: This weapon places the Cold curse upon its owner.

Personality: Nadaereon is a hard core crusader that lives for smiting evil. It will not tolerate selfish or evil behavior from its owner. If Nadaereon's owner conducts repeated selfish or evil acts, the weapon is likely to shut off its magical powers (aside from basic rune powers and 1D4x10 damage) until the owner atones for his deeds by doing an equivalent amount of good. Nadaereon is not fond of the legendary rune weapon *Frostfoil* (see **Dragons & Gods™** for more information), and will react angrily whenever that weapon's name is brought up. The reason for this is because Nadaereon is intimidated by Frostfoil, which is a vastly more powerful weapon. Nadaereon also is deeply jealous of Frostfoil's great beauty.

History: Nadaereon predates the Elf-Dwarf War by nearly 10,000 years, and regards that apocalypse as the saddest event in Palladium history. Nadaereon was used throughout the war by various owners, both Elf and Dwarf. As a result, the weapon is an authority on the history of that Great Conflict. Shortly after the war, Nadaereon was brought to Mount Nimrod by Elves and Dwarves who both benefited from it, and decided that destroying it jointly would be a good show of faith during the first years of post-war peace. Needless to say, Nadaereon did not appreciate the gesture, especially since it is a creature of coldness that has been subjected to such incredible, searing heat for so long. It desperately wants to be pulled from the fires of Mount Nimrod and carried far, far away from this region, preferably to the Great Northern Wilderness.

Note: Nadaereon absolutely refuses to let any Fire Warlock touch it, regardless of alignment. Any Fire Warlock who even so much as brushes against this weapon must save versus magic or take 4D6 in cold damage.

Yeremond, the Executioner

Type: Executioner's Sword (Bastard Sword); Greater Rune Weapon.

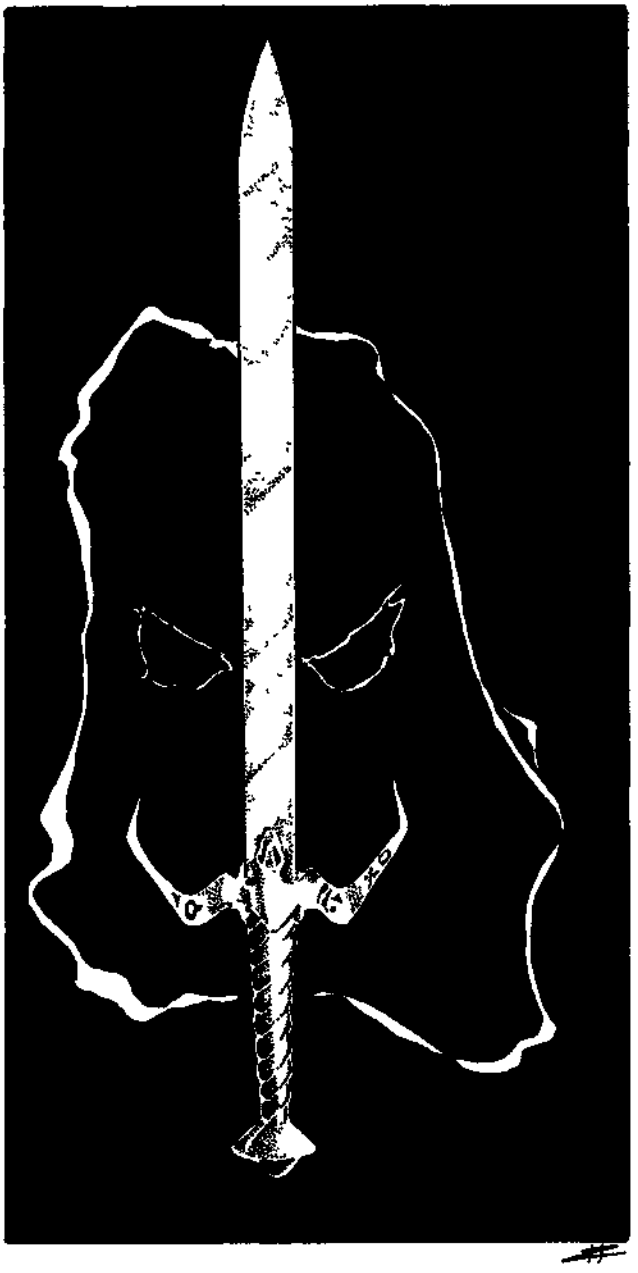
Damage: 6D6

Alignment: Aberrant.

Powers: All common Rune powers plus the following:

- I.Q. 18
- Bio-Manipulation, as per the Super Psionic Power, 3x daily, at 6th level proficiency.
- Life Drain, as per the Wizard spell, 3x daily, at 6th level proficiency.
- Soul Drinker, 3x daily.

Curse: Whoever owns this legendary weapon for more than a month shares the fate of this ever-hungry life force blade. The owner becomes an energy vampire, gaining sustenance only from the hit points absorbed by Yeremond and conferred to its master. Basically the user must absorb an equal number of Hit Points as his P.E. daily, either by doing Hit Point or S.D.C. damage with the weapon, or by using the Life Drain power. Failure to do so results in starvation (reduce all bonuses and Hit Points by half). After a week of starvation, the user will slip into a coma and die if he does not receive sustenance immediately. However, Yeremond can store up to 150 Hit Point's worth of life force within it for up to a week that the user can feed off of during dry times. So for example, say Yeremond's user, who has a P.E. of 25, does 75 Hit Points worth of damage in a fight. The first 25 of those Hit Points will keep the user fed for a day, leaving the rest for Yeremound to absorb and store (a two day supply if the sword shares it). Being an energy vampire is a harrowing existence, however, and the user will look slightly pale and gaunt, as if he is ill.



Personality: Although Yeremond does not need to absorb life force for nourishment, it loves to kill and feed. However predatory Yeremond may be, it also has a very strong sense of honor and morality. That means no feeding off of the innocent (usually women and children), and it prefers to feed on selfish and evil individuals. Yeremond has a particular appetite for diabolic individuals, which sometimes drives its owner to perform what are considered to be dark acts of vigilantism. Since Yeremond's owners often feel that they have been turned into monsters by this weapon, Yeremond tries to counsel each new owner through the first transition months, helping its owner to adjust to his new role as a life force predator. To Yeremond, as long as one preys on those who deserve it (to whatever degree), then the ends justify the means.

History: Yeremond is perhaps one of the oldest rune weapons in existence and has appeared in numerous legends. It is even referred to twice in the Tristine Chronicles (once as the "Life Stealer" and the other time as the "Predator"). Forged by some of the most powerful Dwarven Runesmiths, Yeremond remains one of the most unique weapons of its kind. While the list of Yeremond's owners stretches for millennia, its most famous owner was *Lellellian*, an Elven Wizard who retrieved the weapon from the treasure hoard of the Great Horned Dragon, Oskotha Nakaas, in the Land of the Damned! Several hundred years later, as Lellellian entered her sunset years, she used Yeremond to lay waste to one of the Dwarven Kingdom's greatest Rune Forges, deep within the New Kingdom Mountains. The assault sparked a series of retributive battles that is partly to blame for the escalation of what would become the Elf-Dwarf War. Yeremond was eventually captured by the Dwarves at the end of the War, and subsequently deposited into Mount Nimrod as a way of atoning for their crimes during the war. Still, the weapon is obsessed with being pulled from its fiery prison, and numerous Nimro and Kobolds working in and near the mountain have reported feeling a strange essence calling out from the depths of the fires, beckoning anyone who would brave the flames to gain such a powerful weapon.

Other Items?

In addition to these nine legendary rune weapons, countless other Lesser, Greater and super-rare Greatest rune weapons and other magic items are rumored to also exist inside the volcano. While those cast directly inside are said to be forever lost to mortal man, rumors persist that ancient magic items are, from time to time, carried out on the flow of cascading lava. However, while only one such item has ever been recovered this way, many seem to believe that dozens of others are buried in the rock of cooled lava from throughout the centuries. Maybe, maybe not.

Among the other fabled items *rumored* to be within Mount Nimrod include:

- A true rune book said to contain, among other things, the secrets of the lost Dwarven art of Bio-Wizardry and Runesmithing. (G.M. Note: This rumor is false! While there are actually three true rune books in the Fires of Mount Nimrod, none of them contain this information.)
- A series of runic rings all said to confer wondrous powers, especially magical abilities of arts and disciplines practiced during the Time of a Thousand Magicks, but now long forgotten. It is also said that whoever wears all of these rings at once will be transformed into a god-like being of incredible power.
- A runic crown said to have been the mantle of one of the ancient Prestida Kings. Whatever powers this mysterious item may have are unknown. There have been many tales, however, speaking of a magical crown that gave its owner mastery over each of the four elements. Could this crown and the one said to have been cast into the lava of Mount Nimrod be one and the same?
- A rune-covered Iron Golem said to have been the property of the insane Mind Mage, *Rezebar the Indomitable.* According to legend, Rezebar constructed or obtained this runic Golem, which contains many rune powers of its own, and then transferred her life essence into the Golem in a bid for immortality. From there, she supposedly became ruler of a kingdom of monsters in the Land of the Damned, but was defeated by the legendary Defilers, who had her runic golem-body cast into the fires of this great volcano.

Hook, Line, & Sinkers™

These bare-bones adventures can be used as simple, one-shot storylines, or they can be expanded upon and made into a larger adventure, or each be incorporated as one of the many episodes of a larger campaign.

The hook is the current situation or location of the adventuring party.

The line is an opportunity for adventure that presents itself to the party.

The sinker is the clincher to the line, a dilemma that makes the situation a true adventure.

Note: In keeping with the Palladium Fantasy Role-Playing Game's tradition of encouraging players to play races of all kinds, even monstrous races, these Hook, Line and Sinker adventures cover adventure opportunities for both heroes affiliated with the Nimro Kingdom, and those who are not. The HLS was originally created by Jolly Blackburn.

Saving Private Rystrom

Hook: Renowned scholar-adventurer Rystrom Khejas ventured into Mount Nimro some months ago and has not been heard from since. His benefactors, the Order of the Scroll, an ancient and somewhat mysterious group of scholars, have become concerned about the young scholar's welfare and have decided to hire some stalwart adventurers (our heroes!) to find him and return him safely to the Western Empire.

Line: The Order of the Scroll has obtained, by means which they care not to disclose, a copy of what appears to be the last entry into Rystrom's travelling journal. The player characters are given a copy of this text in the hopes that it might provide some clues as to where Rystrom might be found (The text is the introductory story at the beginning of this sourcebook). It would appear that Rystrom was about to be captured, judging by how his writing ends, but there were no signs of bloodshed, or so the Order says. Of course, as any adventurer well knows, there are many opportunities for a trip to go awry, especially in the wild Baalgor and Nimro Regions.

The Order of the Scroll is confident that Rystrom never arrived at Mount Nimrod, but that he is alive and somewhere in the Mount Nimro Region. How they know this they will not disclose (perhaps they can monitor Rystrom through a Crystal Ball, which would account for their knowing his general, but not precise, location). Likewise, they claim that they do not have any scrying devices they can lend the heroes (any crystal balls or other such devices are too valuable to lend out to wandering adventures who may or may not return with them).

Sinker: Rystrom, and the Giants who were escorting him to Mount Nimrod, have all been captured by an invading *Gromek Army* that has swept into Mount Nimro from the Baalgor Mountains. The army is constantly on the move and even the Nimro Kingdom is just finding out about it. The players will certainly discover this if they approach Mount Nimro from the Baalgor Wastelands or the Yin-Sloth Jungles, because the locals will have known about the massing Gromek for weeks. If coming from another direction, all the players will hear about are alarmed citizens of the Kingdom reacting to news of a major Gromek invasion or increased raids along the Western border. News is, the Nimro King is scrambling his forces now and intends to find these pillaging Gromek cutthroats and destroy them.

That doesn't bode well for Rystrom, who will be squarely in the middle of such a battle. If there is any good fortune here, it is that this "army" has divided itself into multiple small bands of 1D4x10, and Rystrom is being held by one such squad or platoon. For the heroes, the trick now will be to locate the particular Gromek band where the scholar is being held captive and rescue him. Furthermore, rescue does not necessarily mean an all-out battle. Perhaps they can slip in and out undiscovered. Of course the Gromek will pursue. The clincher is to do all this and avoid roving bands of angry Giants and their Shorties, in the process. These brutal Giant forces (thousands of Gigantes scattered in the mountains as lone individuals, in pairs and small groups [1D4+2] among those forces) are likely to kill or capture anybody they don't know, especially "outsiders" and "Fair Folk."

However the heroes manage to rescue Rystrom, he will be incredibly grateful, and the members of the player group will have made a friend for life. He is a 7th level human scholar with above-average attributes who knows Hand to Hand: Martial Arts and a host of scholastic skills that make him a valuable addition on any adventure.

Optional Plot Twist #1: Before the player group can rescue the scholar, the Gromek who held him (60 strong) are waylayed by a company of Giant warriors. Rystrom is unharmed, but has been put in the hands of a squad of Jotan and Orc warriors assigned to take him to Mount Nimrod for questioning. So now, our heroes must rescue him from this mixed group of giants (3 Jotan, 1 Gigante, 4 Orcs).

Optional Plot Twist #2: Rystrom explains that this is actually the second time he has been rescued. A band of Giants had rescued him and were taking him to Mount Nimrod when they were attacked and he and a Jotan were both taken hostage. Complicating matters, though, is that Rystrom has, improbably enough, befriended that Jotan. It seems they actually fought side by side when the Gromek attacked them, and now the scholar and the Giant (who watched over him and saved his life) have formed a bond. Rystrom begs the group that if possible, they help him rescue his Giant friend, as well. He is a Jotan warrior named ***Jeruush Stonehammer***, and according to Rystrom, is at heart a valiant and honorable warrior who has much influence with his particular clan and will repay whoever frees him. He is being held by a small band of Gromek not far away.

If the heroes follow through and rescue Jeruush (a 9th level mercenary with slightly above-average stats for a Jotan), he will be just as grateful as Rystrom was. He will suggest that the entire group retreat eastward, into the advance of Blackrock's main army. There, he will make sure the entire group is given safe passage to wherever they wish to go from there. Jeruush's offer is genuine, and if the player characters take him up on it (Rystrom wants to), then all goes according to plan. The group will run into the Nimro Army, the heroes and Rystrom will be

given a rare escort to the border, and Jeruush will stay behind to fight the Gromek. Otherwise, they must make it out of the Nimro Region and back to the Western Empire entirely on their own.

If the Jotan was rescued, however, they will have made a useful friend in Jeruush, who is the third-in-command of his clan (the G.M. may pick which one). Rystrom will wish to return to the Western Empire, so he may log in his account of what happened to the Order of the Scroll and so his rescuers can get paid (20,000 gold each) by the Order of the Scroll. They will also have earned a potential, regular client in the Order, who may hire them for other adventuring work.

Cruel Vengeance

Hook: Lord Brassus, a representative from the government on the Isle of the Cyclops, contacts the player characters for a job he would like to hire them for. It would require the heroes to locate, track down, and apprehend several members of a renegade family of Cyclops wanted for an old but heinous crime. If necessary, he will paint a picture of them as murderous traitors and villains. The job pays 60,000 gold, per man — or 24 6D6 lightning arrows or eight 1D6x10 lightning javelins, whichever they prefer.

Line: The old Cyclops family, of course, is *Clan Sbesean*, which now resides safely (or so they think) in the Nimro Kingdom. If the player group takes this job, they are specifically required to nab *Zossa Ybaemwen*, the chieftain of Clan Sbesean. The heroes will also be asked to nab as many other high-ranking members of the Clan as possible. To aid in this task, Brassus will give the player characters a dozen vials of a strange, ultra-rare magical potion that when drunk, produces effects similar to those of the magical spells Reduce Self and Paralysis. Those Cyclops forced (or tricked) to drink this potion will shrink to only 6 inches tall, regardless of their former size (but their weapons, armor, and other possessions will not drop in size), and they will be in a state of enhanced paralysis or stasis — not only can they not move, but their heart rate, respiration and metabolism simulate hibernation. That's good, since the effects of these potions is not a mere 10 minutes, but a whopping *10 days]* A standard saving throw versus non-lethal poison applies, which is a 16 or better to save. The idea is that getting the Cyclops captives to drink the potion will make it easy to transport them back to the Isle of the Cyclops where they will stand "trial" for their crimes. To further expedite their return, a boat will be waiting in the Sea of Scarlet Waters at the eastern edge of the Baalgor Wastelands.

Finding Ybaemwen won't be hard, since the Cyclops government has known her rough whereabouts for years: the Sbesean Stronghold on Mount Nimrod, not far from the Blackrock Stronghold. The difficult part will be getting there, nabbing Ybaemwen and whoever else is possible, and getting back out without being captured or killed by various Giants and their legion of Shorty followers. Lord Brassus, for some strange reason, will not provide the team with any means of magical transportation that would make the job much, much easier. If questioned on this point, Brassus will only answer that the Isle of the Cyclops has its ways, and that they should not be questioned. If the heroes wish to obtain their own magicks of that sort, they are more than welcome, but the Cyclops government has provided all the help it can in the form of those 12 magical potions and a boat to bring them back.

Sinker: The truth is that the Cyclops government is not arranging this action; it is a personal operation being funded by Brassus himself. It turns out he is not hiring the heroes on behalf of his government at all. He is acting on his own, in direct violation of his rulers' wishes!

The Brassus family was nearly wiped out when the Sbesean clan tried taking over the Isle of the Cyclops, and now he wants to avenge his fallen forefathers. The only problem is that the Isle of the Cyclops is considering establishing some kind of relations with the Nimro Kingdom, and they are reluctant to demand the release of Clan Sbesean for fear of scuttling any future diplomatic avenues. As a result, they have temporarily revoked Clan Sbesean's criminal status, and have asked all affronted Cyclops to put a hold on any vendetta they would like to carry out on the Clan. By arranging for Ybaemwen's capture, Brassus is directly violating that order. He is financing the entire mission himself, and simply does not have the resources to offer any other magical items to the group. That explains why the group could not be given any Mystic Portal scrolls or other such items, or why the Isle of the Cyclops didn't just send a strike team to Mount Nimro itself.

Another problem: While the heroes are away on this mission, the Isle of the Cyclops learns of the plot, and they will arrest Brassus. Thus, it will not be an agent of Brassus waiting at the rendezvous point at this mission's end, but a dozen soldiers of

the Isle of the Cyclops, all waiting to ambush the group! They will play themselves off as official agents of the Isle, and will ask for the captured Cyclops. Once they are handed over, the soldiers from the Isle will try to apprehend the heroes. If they are successful, the Cyclops will take the heroes (and Brassus) to the Isle of the Cyclops, where they will be tried for their crimes. Brassus will be executed. Depending on how well the player group handles themselves, they might get off with a reprimand (and no money) because they were pawns who thought they were actually serving the greater good of the Cyclops nation. However, Ybaemwen is not so forgiving and will lobby for their execution or life imprisonment. Since she is still hated by many, her request is likely to be declined (although it might not be if they thought it would help bond relations with the Nimro Kingdom; leading to an adventure that could be called "escape from the Isle of the Cyclops"), but she is likely to seek revenge on her own.

All these lovely details await the heroes only if they manage to capture Ybaemwen. As with all sorties into the Nimro Kingdom, just getting to the Sbesean Stronghold will be a minor epic, and infiltrating that compound or luring her away will be especially difficult.

As the heroes survey the stronghold thinking of a way to get their target, they are presented with a rare opportunity — Ybaemwen and a small entourage of 5-10 fellow nobles and soldiers are making a rare trip to visit King Blackrock. The player group can grab the lot of them if they act quickly, and if a healthy bit of luck is on their side.

Especially daring adventurers may wish to trail the convoy until it gets to Blackrock Stronghold, where they might even try to capture the Nimro King himself. But, such plans are dangerous in the extreme, and will almost certainly result in the group's death or capture. Still, the greatest rewards await those of the greatest daring.

In Sickness and In Health

Hook: Certain nobles in the Western Empire have learned about the existence of the Nimro Kingdom and wish to put a stop to it. However, Emperor Itomas will not sanction any military action against the alleged Kingdom for a variety of reasons (among them may be that he cut a deal with King Blackrock as detailed in the adventure **The Fires of Mount Nimrod).** Undaunted, the nobles have decided to take matters in their own hands, and are hiring adventurers (our heroes among them) to undertake missions of sabotage in the name of humanity and national security.

Line: All the player characters must do, the nobles maintain, is bring a magical idol with them and bury it underneath the ground (the deeper the better) of the first cattle town they find. The idol, the heroes soon learn, is a vile-looking statue of an ancient and forgotten deity. Heroes making their Religious Lore roll (at -20%, due to the extreme obscurity of the object) recall that this deific idol resembles an ancient god of pestilence. But, no other details can be recalled, and the nobles will not elaborate on the role the idol shall play. Once this is done, the group will receive a lump sum of 50,000 gold upon their return. When they return, the nobles will have Words of Truth spells cast upon them, as well as mind-reads performed by a hired Mind Mage to ascertain that they honestly did as instructed. If they did, they will receive full payment and be dismissed. If not, they will receive nothing. Mysteriously enough, several weeks after the player group and the nobles part company, the heroes will begin to grow sick, the victims of a strange magical malady of unknown origin. Well, not exactly unknown, the group is pretty sure that the idol had something to do with it.

Sinker: This idol is the vile artifact of the dread god ***Viquesh***, a diabolic figure of sickness and malady. The idol spreads sickness and death upon whoever stays near it for more than a few days. It is hoped that by burying it underneath a cattle town, the idol will sicken all of the cattle who pass through, infecting a large portion of the Nimro Kingdom's food source. As the sick cattle are slaughtered, the unsuspecting Giants eat the tainted meat and should become sick themselves. By that time, a full-blown contagion will grip the land, infecting huge numbers of Giants, with a 50% mortality rate. Whether they realized it or not, the player characters have committed biological warfare against the Kingdom of Giants.

Good and even some selfish characters will be appalled at what they have done, and might want to find some way of fixing the damage they've caused. Aberrant and Principled characters will find this act disgraceful and dishonorable, especially when thinking of the many innocent Giant children who will fall victim to this plague. Sure, many Giants are evil, but a child is a child, and they are all innocent of any wrongdoing. Something must be done. But what?

Rumor has it that the Rahu-Men of the Kingdom know of another idol from this same lost Pantheon. The idol is that of Ashan-da, the Goddess of Life and Fertility. Perhaps if this idol were found and also buried under the same cattle town, the sickness could be reversed. Or what if the idol was destroyed or thrown in one of the volcanos? It's worth a shot. Regardless, the people need to be warned.

Traveling to the Clan Siad Stronghold will take the group through the heart of the Nimro Kingdom, but, when they arrive, if they truthfully present their case, the Rahu-Men are willing to help. The idol, as far as they know, is lost somewhere in the South Wind Marshes. The player group should go there and enlist the help of Clan Daumos, who can help them find the idol.

The problem there is that the leader of Clan Daumos is slowly becoming corrupted by evil, and once he hears of this life-giving idol, he will lust after it for himself. Especially now since he has become a Life Force Wizard; possession of this idol will alleviate his need to feed off of others!

So, facing the player group is another journey and adventure. Exactly how things go is up to the G.M., but if the heroes do find the idol, it *will* reverse the effects of the idol of Viquesh when buried near the other. This will not only negate the plague but cure them as well. If the group acts quickly, they may yet be able to eradicate the magical plague before any loss of life occurs, since the disease itself requires a 3-4 week incubation period, longer among Giants because of their high P.E. attributes. However, many of the non-Giants at the town are already showing signs of the disease.

Of course, getting the good idol will involve tracking it down (in the Yin-Sloth Jungles perhaps) and burying it.

Note: If the group decides to keep either idol, instead of burying them, they will receive certain magical benefits and drawbacks.

The Idol of Viquesh will turn the owner into a sickly version of his former self, with pale, pasty skin on a gaunt and sickly frame. The character's P.B., P.S., and P.E. will all reduce by half, but the character will become quasi-immortal. No natural causes of death, such as old age, disease (especially that!), poison, or other causes will kill the character. Only beheading or the removal of the character's heart will result in permanent death. However, the character also becomes a walking specter of death, spreading disease wherever he goes. After owning the idol for three months, any vegetation within 10 feet (3 m) of where the immortal character lingers for more than 30 minutes turns brown and dies, and any animal or humanoid has a 01-25% chance, per hour of exposure, of becoming sick with a dread plague that will kill it within a couple weeks. At this point, the only way to reverse these effects is by destroying the idol (S.D.C.: 600). After owning the idol for more than a year, its effects on the person are permanent, even if the idol is destroyed.

Until claimed by death, the victims of this disease see their P.B., P.S., P.E. and Spd all reduce by half, plus their skin turns pale and blotchy. After the first week, all combat bonuses are gone, the victim feels weaker, has no appetite and suffers from fever. Heart failure claims the victim 1D4 days after the end of the second week.

The only cure for this magical malady is a Remove Curse spell, but while such powerful magic may save an individual or small group, it is too P.P.E. demanding to save a population of thousands, let alone tens of thousands. Furthermore, as long as the idol remains without being neutralized, the plague will continue for decades to come.

The Idol of Ashan-da: This idol radiates an aura of life and positive energy. Anyone holding the idol will be instantly cured of disease or poison, including magical afflictions. Twice a day it can be made to heal wounds of any two people touching it at a rate of one point per minute (up to 100 H.P. maximum). Staying in this item's constant presence (within 10 feet/3 m) for three months or more will permanently bestow an additional 10 Hit Points on that person. Staying within this item's constant presence for one year will permanently bestow the ability to bio-regenerate 1D6 hit points/S.D.C. each minute. And finally, being within this item's aura for 10 years or more makes the person quasi-immortal. They will age five times slower than usual, automatically bio-regenerate 3D6 S.D.C./H.P. once every minute after sustaining injury, and they will become entirely immune to any poison or disease. Also, the person will no longer require food and drink, although they may partake of them if they wish.

Naturally, owning the Idol of Ashan-da will entail depriving the Nimro Kingdom of its regenerative powers and allowing thousands to die. Throwing the cursed idol into Mount Nimrod (the center of a dimensional anomaly to begin with) will effectively destroy it and prevent the plague from spreading, however, hundreds, if not thousands will still die from the initial infection. Keeping the *pair* of statues together, each negates the other's powers.

More hard choices.

The Buddy System

Hook: While adventuring in the Nimro Kingdom (perhaps while on an adventure laid out in another Hook, Line & Sinker, or during the course of *The Fires of Mount Nimrod),* the player group is captured, stripped of their possessions, and sent to the Trading Center of Oskin Gol, where they will be auctioned off as slaves.

Line: The Cyclops who runs Oskin Gol, Salius Skaborra, recognizes these downtrodden characters as folks with serious ability and potential, so before they go up for open auction, he buys them for a hefty sum of cash. The reason? Salius is ready to give up the management business, and wishes to pursue an adventure deep in the Yin-Sloth Jungles. But he doesn't trust other Giants, and figures non-Giant slaves might be a better bet to help him in his quest. What this quest is, he won't say. Only that it entails going to the Dragon's Gate Mountains, and that it could very well yield a fabulous treasure lost to the world since the Battle of the Gods. The only additional rumors the heroes can get is that Salius might be onto the whereabouts of an incredible artifact belonging to the Church of Dragonwright, but what that artifact is, and where it might be, and who exactly has it now, are all great, big X-factors.

Sinker: This long, arduous and danger fraught trek is all for nothing. The stories Salius has heard and the treasure map sold to him are all fake.

The Terrors of Nadjizae

Hook: As the Nimro Kingdom feels the ever-increasing pressures of overpopulation, and as the soldiers of the Kingdom itch for a new war to fight, King Blackrock must finally push to expand his Kingdom. For now, he has decided that the best avenue of expansion is to go north and secure the bit of the Old Kingdom that would attach Mount Nimro with the Old Kingdom's coastline along the Sea of Scarlet Waters. It is risky, sure, with the Western Empire so close by, but there are few alternatives for a faster expansion of territory. Plus, the land the King is eyeing is lush and could support numerous cattle towns as well as a few newly formed Great Clans, which would alleviate population pressures throughout the Kingdom.

Line: Already, an entire army has gathered on the Kingdom's northern border, ready for a massive invasion northwards. But before they are cut loose, the King wishes to reconnoiter the area first. Thus, he has sent for the player characters. This could be because he secretly trusts them (as per one of the possibilities in the previous adventure) or because they are expendable pawns, dupes or meres hired to do the necessary scouting (they may not even realize they have been hired by the Kingdom of Giants, as the covert nation often uses non-Giants to hire outsiders and keep their identity a secret). The adventurer group is to venture all the way to the Sea of Scarlet Waters and come right back, reporting on any large groups of folk or settlements they spot along the way. They are not supposed to engage any potential enemies as much as simply note who, what, and where they are, so that the Jotan Army can do its work.

Sinker: The only notable settlement the player characters will find during their sojourn through the Old Kingdom's westernmost stretch is an ancient Jotan Stronghold that had been built long ago. It has been partially destroyed, and, by all indica-

tions, recently rebuilt and occupied by a large army of independent Jotan, Troll, Ogre and Orc marauders who call themselves the *Terrors of Nadjizae*.

The Terrors number close to 5,000 and would be either a valuable ally to King Blackrock or an incredible hindrance. If the Nimro Kingdom must make war with this band, the fight will be long and bloody, and travelers are bound to take notice and alert the Western Empire. These Terrors have probably raided and caused trouble for the Western Empire as it is, so any news of extraordinary activity among them will attract their attention (and possibly provoke an all-out assault by one of the noble lords in the Empire's Old Kingdom Frontier).

The scouts will know they need to investigate further to see what these brigands are up to. Very soon, they will discover that the Terrors bow to no nation, and if they discover the scouts/intruders, they will make every effort to capture them. If the characters are captured, or if they manage to gain entry to the Terrors' stronghold, they can speak with their leader, a battle-scarred Jotan named *Jiktek Bongsou*, the self-proclaimed Warlord of "the" Old Kingdom.

Jiktek knows about the Nimro Kingdom, and he has no desire to do any kind of business with it. In fact, he is insulted that anybody would even insinuate that he should bow to some other lord! For this indiscretion, that individual must pay! "Throw 'em in the pit!" he orders, and the members of the player group are hurled into a big rock quarry in the center of what used to be the stronghold's inner courtyard. Residing in "The Pit" is a massive, misshapen Gigante Warlord named the Mucker. "Defeat the Mucker in a bare-handed contest, and be allowed to live," Jiktek instructs. Lose, and all end up as the Mucker's lunch.

Stats for the Mucker are left to the G.M.'s discretion, but try to design this guy to be absolute hell on wheels in combat. A terrible and insane Gigante Warlord perhaps. Remember, he should be able to hold his own against the entire group. That means taking on multiple attackers and doing reasonably well. On an aesthetic level, the Mucker probably should be made as an extremely ugly and disturbing-looking brute. If his opponents are too powerful or there are more than 5 of them, the G.M. might want to give the Mucker a pair of underlings or pals (humanoids or monsters like a sphinx, manticore, Loogaroo, Melech, etc.).

If the player group triumphs (they don't have to kill anybody to win, but it must be a decisive win), Jiktek will be incensed at this humiliation. As the group gathers their wits after the fight, they will hear Jiktek's horde chanting, "Newcomers! Newcomers! Newcomers!" This only enrages Jiktek even more, to the extent that he will begin to consider having the "newcomers" killed just to save face.

Astute player characters at this point may wish to challenge Jiktek himself to a duel of honor. An offer that Jiktek will gladly take in his enraged state. The stakes for such a duel are simple: The challenging group versus Jiktek and a group of warriors hand picked by him. Each pairs up and engages an opponent in a one-on-one combat. The side with the most victories at the end wins. Surrender is an option, but it is seriously frowned upon — for both the person who gives up and for the person who grants mercy.

Jiktek's group will consist of himself, a Jotan Mercenary, another Gigante Warlord named Big Head Torg (this guy's cranium is ENORMOUS, among other weird physical attributes, plus he is a major psionic), a Cyclops Warrior Monk, and a Nimro Wizard. The level of experience for each of these combatants should be one or two levels higher than whatever "hero" they are paired up with.

The combat should be without weapons, but other than that, anything goes. The fights are run one at a time, so nobody can gang up on each other. If the player group wins at this, then Jiktek will become a raving lunatic and will attack the group's strongest fighter. For one melee round, a period of brutal combat will ensue. If Jiktek dies during this one melee round, then the rest of the Terrors will gaze upon the character responsible, dumbstruck, not knowing what to do.

Whether they have meant to or not, the player group has now become the leaders of this very large and powerful group of inhuman warriors! What they wish to do with their new position is up to them. Do they become part of the Nimro Kingdom, swearing allegiance to King Blackrock? Do they turn the Terrors over to Blackrock, hoping the Nimro King will reward them for their great service? Or do they break with the Nimro King and act as their own power, demanding to discuss terms with the Kingdom? This latter option holds the most promise and peril. If they decide to resist the Nimro Kingdom's northern army, they'll be outnumbered 2 to 1; possibly worse. Meanwhile, keeping the Nadjizae Terrors under their control and from splintering will be a chore in and of itself. Furthermore, the player group will have trouble keeping them from running off in smaller bands and attacking other tribes or raiding the border of the Western Empire. Characters of a good alignment will have an especially difficult time, and may be challenged by other young turks looking to usurp their power.

Any subsequent battles between the player characters and the Nimro Kingdom are up to the G.M. to determine.

Kindred Spirits

Hook: Hard times have befallen the Nimro Kingdom, and Sunder Blackrock has decided that it is high time the Kingdom of Giants establishes formal, diplomatic relations with a friendly nation. To that end, he has proposed to the Orcish Empire that each nation exchange diplomats for a simultaneous visit to each other's country to help speed along the process of establishing some kind of alliance.

After all, it wasn't long ago when the Orcish Empire bravely broke free of their Western oppressors and founded a fledgling nation of their own. King Blackrock can not help seeing some similarities between them and his Nimro Kingdom. Now that both countries are on their feet and have something to fear from other nations, the Nimro King thinks it's time for an alliance.

The way the King sees it, there are plenty of reasons why the Orcish Empire and the Nimro Kingdom can strike a friendship. Most importantly, they have never come into conflict. Just as importantly, they both hate the Western Empire. Both nations need all the friends they can get, what with the resurgence of the Western Empire, and the expansion of the two nonhuman nations. Besides, there are cultural ties, too. Orcs and Giants have always tended to get along. Why not in diplomatic circles, too?

Line: So far, preliminary contacts with the Orcish Empire have been encouraging. The Orcs are a bit too disorganized for King Blackrock's tastes, but they are worth dealing with and

seem interested in formalizing their ties with him. Establishing trade routes has been shaky, since there are no easy ways to get from the Orcish Empire to the Nimro Kingdom. Maybe if the Nimro Kingdom ever secures a route to the Scarlet Sea, things could change, but by that time, a whole new set of obstacles will be waiting. Namely, the powerful and ever-present Western Navy, which has a habit of acting on its own and harassing other ships, regardless of what the Emperor has ordered.

It will be interesting to see where this alliance takes both countries over the next 20 years or so. Perhaps they will become a strongly attached power, sharing culture, trade, and military power, and effectively claiming the entire southwest corner of the world as the domain of nonhumans. Or perhaps they might turn on each other, adding to both realm's long list of difficulties. Or perhaps nothing will happen, which for some reason, seems the scariest alternative to both sides. Both have become so used to acting and reacting under the most severe circumstances, neither would really know how to take it if the issue simply atrophied due to a lack of interest. After all, for something like that to happen is just so weak. So unfocused — so ... human!

Both nations agree to "swap" diplomats as a way of opening better relations. The player characters have been charged with the responsibility of escorting the Nimro Kingdom's diplomat all the way to *Caer Doragon*, at which point, they will then escort the Orcish Empire's representative back to Mount Nimrod. This is a most challenging and important mission, for if it fails, relations will ice over between the two countries.

Sinker: The trip to and from the Orcish Empire will be wrought with peril. There is no good way to get from one place to the other. One way is to launch a boat from the Old Kingdom coastline and sail to Caer Doragon. But this exposes the group to pirates and monsters on the Sea of Scarlet Waters. And a run-in with Western ships in the Strait of Scarlet Waters is almost certain. Coming back, passing the Western Empire will be even more dangerous, since the Empire will already be on the lookout for more Giant ships passing through.

An alternate route would be going through the Baalgor Wastelands into the Yin-Sloth Jungles and to Caer Doragon from there. This way exposes the group to the myriad dangers of the Baalgor Wastelands (not the least of which are Gromek who will descend upon any Giant formation at the earliest opportunity) and the Yin-Sloth Jungles which boast a lethal variety of hostile Tezcat tribes, unpredictable weather, and many vicious monsters.

A third way would be to go through the Marshes and into the jungles, perhaps following the mountains by land. However, such a land trip would take months and is filled with obvious perils.

Another possibility is to blaze a trail to the southern coastline of the jungles and launch a ship from there. One could ride down the Dzereson River, but its dangers are many, and a Giant ship sailing these waters is sure to grab the attention of the Land of the South Winds. Once on the open sea, the travelers will either have to trade up for a hardier vessel (one that can withstand the rigors of deep water travel), or they will have to hug the coastline. Either way, they will be exposed to a variety of dangers. The deep water promises sea serpents, destructive weather, and navigational problems. The shallow water promises run-ins with pirates, Lizard Men, hostile headhunters, monsters, and wood-rotting fungi borne in the Yin-Sloth coastal waters.

Once the group arrives in Caer Doragon, they switch emissaries and head back the way they came. This is where the real challenge begins, for now the representative of an entire nation is in their hands. If anything happens to this person, it will be on the characters' collective heads! Naturally, this begs for some kind of misfortune to happen, just to make life exciting.

Along the way, the group could get split up accidentally, and the adventurers must find the lost emissary before he succumbs to the hostile environment or is captured by unfriendly forces.

The entire group could be assaulted by pirates, or agents of another kingdom, or conspirators from within the Nimro Kingdom or the Orcish Empire (who, for some reason, don't want the two powers to ally themselves), or Gromek marauders looking to disrupt any operation that would benefit the Nimro Kingdom, or any host of other hostile encounters. In any such situation, the player characters' top priority must be protecting the Orcish emissary before protecting themselves. This will be a good test of character, for if the player group lets the emissary die to save their own skins, they will have a heck of a lot to answer for when they return home. Such a disaster can only hurt the entire Nimro Kingdom and create strife for years to come.

Feeding the Beast

Hook: Far and away, the Western Empire looms largest and darkest on the Nimro Kingdom's horizon. In large part, the Kingdom of Giants was founded to protect Giantkind from the murderous onslaught of the West, who for years routinely hunted and killed Giants for fun and sport. No other human na-

tion is so hated, or so feared by the Nimro Kingdom. Even now, a military conflict with the dreaded Empire of Sin appears more likely than ever, a battle that the Nimro Kingdom would fight bravely, but could very well lose. The well intentioned King Blackrock has hatched a plot that might stave off such a conflict and might even make the Nimro Kingdom some much needed money, too.

Line: Right now, the West only suspects the Nimro Kingdom even exists. Unless circumstances demand otherwise, the Nimro King would like to keep it that way. Sure, some Western nobles may want to march the Imperial Army to Mount Nimro and crush the fledgling nation of Giants, but the reality is that the West has only recently regained its power. It must pick its fights wisely and consolidate its gains before it conducts any risky business like a preemptive strike into the Land of Giants. Besides, as far as many Western nobles are concerned, stories of an organized kingdom of Giants are crazy yarns to be ignored. Giants, Ogres and Orcs are too stupid and savage to ever build a "real" nation. At least not one worth worrying about. They are more concerned with the brewing war between the Eastern Territory and the Wolfen Empire, as well as civil war within the Western Empire itself. As long as a host of other issues are in the air, mounting some expensive campaign to bully a "handful of Giants pretending to have built themselves a kingdom" is a dangerous waste of time.

While this attitude prevails among Western politicians, it will only be so until the Empire of Sin is faced with irrefutable evidence that the Nimro Kingdom is real. As long as the Nimro Kingdom plans to expand into the Old Kingdom, exposure to the West becomes an increasing possibility. Still, the (comparatively) tiny, monster ridden land the Kingdom has targeted is of little concern or interest to the Western powers. Its conquest is likely to go unnoticed.

Some of the Great Clans feel that the West will react to the specter of a Giant nation as they always do — with military force bent on genocide. Others feel that perhaps the West can be bargained with or threatened into backing off. After all, they do deals with the Isle of the Cyclops, so why not the Nimro Kingdom? Still others feel that the West deserves a watchful eye but nothing more at present. If the Land of Giants handles its future expansions carefully, without running headlong into the Western Empire's territories, holdings and people, then perhaps the Nimro Kingdom can grow and avoid a confrontation with the West. King Blackrock falls into this latter school of thought, although he also recognizes that the other positions are also valid. To be safe, he is preparing his nation for all of these contingencies, but the one he holds highest is the thought of opening trade with the Western Empire, whether the West knows it or not.

For trade of any kind to work, the Giants must have something to offer the West, and to that end, they have something that has always been a fertile market in the West, drugs! Within a 50 mile (80 km) radius of Mount Nimro grows an ultra-rare flower that produces the potent perception-altering drug *Fugue*, also known as Distance or Marionette. Oddly enough, Fugue has no effect on true Giants, and only a diminished effect on Wolfen, Trolls, Ogres and Gromek. Fugue sells for 6,000 to 10,000 gold per dose in the Western Empire. Currently, there are only small patches of flowers to produce this substance, but if it were cultivated and sold to the West (even through under-the-table channels such as the Free City of Troker in the Baalgor Wastelands), it could become a cash cow for the Nimro Kingdom. And, it could prompt the West to not attack the region for fear of destroying the growing fields of their precious imported narcotic, especially if large numbers of noblemen — who are known for their debauchery and chemical dependencies — get hooked on the stuff. Hey, the West has made foolish foreign policy decisions based on their collective drug habits before. As far as King Blackrock is concerned, using the West's excessive taste for drugs against them is not only smart, but kind of fun, in a vicious sort of way.

Sinker: The player characters learn that a band of Ogres and Orcs have been charged with transporting a large shipment (ten 55 gallon casks) of refined Fugue from Mount Nimrod to the Free City of Troker, in the Baalgor Wastelands. There, it will be given over to pirate-merchants contracted to take the stuff to the Western Empire and distribute it.

"Heroes" will feel uncomfortable with this insidious scheme. Whether the fools in the Empire want the drug or not, its sale and mass distribution is just plain wrong! Furthermore, while no Elf or human can imagine the Evil Empire ever making an alliance with the Kingdom of Giants just to get drugs, even a super-rare one, the possibility is there, and frightening. Two hostile, aggressive kingdoms such as these, allied? It's too unnerving to think about. So the question remains, do they take any action to sabotage and prevent delivery? If so, and their identity is discovered, they will have made enemies with both the Kingdom of Giants and the pirates who looked to profit from this. Even if successful, and their identities preserved, more shipments will follow. What then?

A group of selfish or evil characters might want to steal the shipment and sell it themselves! Perhaps ingratiating themselves with important Western nobles.

Or what if it is the player characters who are duped into making the delivery to the pirates? This is especially likely if they are predominantly members of the monster races. To keep the adventurers from sampling the goods or simply making off with the stuff themselves, they are told the casks contain a very old, very fine wine obtained from the Land of the South Winds. The wine, They are told, is part of a peace offering to a particular influential noble house in the Western Empire who has promised to lobby on behalf of the Giants. The wine is to display the Kingdom of Giants' willingness to conduct civilized negotiations with the Empire of Sin. As further incentive not to tamper with the casks and to deliver them as charged, they are reminded that betrayal or carelessness will be punished severely!

Aside from the trials and tribulations of transporting any precious cargo over a long distance (especially in an environment as harsh and dangerous as the Baalgor Wastelands), any number of additional adventures can develop. Among these are:

- Thieves might steal the casks, and the heroes must retrieve them before they are lost, destroyed, used, or sold.
- The adventurers discover what is really in these things and have serious misgivings about their nation and the task at hand. Although the Western Empire is the enemy of Giantkind, does that merit enslaving a large amount of its populace to a vile and sinister drug? Moreover, do they really want to stay loyal to a King who is willing to engage in wide-

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spread drug trafficking and the cruel undermining of human civilization?

- Titans who disapprove of the Nimro Kingdom's existence and methods may waylay the group along its journey, trying to destroy the cargo more than kill its bearers. In a bit of espionage, these Titans will bear the crest of Clan Daumos, the Titan Great Clan of the South Wind Marshes. If and when the group returns to the Nimro Kingdom, they may wish to vent their wrath upon the Daumos, much to the Daumos' surprise, because they had nothing to do with any troubles the characters may have experienced. They are being framed! But the characters won't know any better until they hear rumors otherwise. Do they feel obligated to help the Titans they've gotten in trouble, by proving them innocent and revealing the real culprits?
- For heroes who understand what this shipment is, but don't care about the incredible harm it will do to the Western people (much as they may deserve it), do they give it over to the pirate-merchants as instructed, or do they sell it themselves? If the group stays in Troker and sells the shipment bit by bit, they will be able to make enough money to live like kings in this den of thieves. However, that will make them sitting ducks for the Nimro King's other (many secret) agents, spies, assassins, and informants who *will* notify the King and attempt to extract his vengeance.

The Thin Green Line

Hook: Decades after their disastrous defeat at the Battle of Gondajar Road, the Gromek have regained their lost strength and are once again declaring war on the Giants. For the Nimro Kingdom, this will be the first serious test of this nation's mettle since it was founded. Dust off that sword and armor, soldier, it's time to go to war.

Line: From the Baalgor and Yin-Sloth Mountains, a force of some 20,000 Gromek have swept down into the Nimro Kingdom and laid waste to many homesteads, cattle towns, and trading centers. Practically overnight, the Gromek have gained control over large parts of the Nimro Plains and the South Wind Marshes, areas that have been largely undefended because of the perceived lack of a danger to them. Assuming the indigenous Giants survive this crisis, they will not make the same mistake again. But for now, they must focus on the task at hand — driving the Gromek out of the Nimro Kingdom. Ideally, for once and for all.

This *will not* be easy. Unlike past invasions, the Gromek are not trying to hold on to the land they've conquered. As the Nimro Armies approach captured areas, the highly mobile Gromek forces take wing and fly to another part of the Kingdom to ravage it. In doing this, the Giants forces become spread thinly throughout the entire Kingdom in a vain attempt to engage the Gromek at numerous locations. That's where the player characters come in.

Sinker: Fighting on behalf of the Nimro Kingdom, the heroes find themselves guarding a lonely cattle town out in the hinterlands, near the feet of the Yin-Sloth Mountains. Very few other soldiers are here to support them, perhaps a dozen warriors with only average equipment and little training. So far, things have been quiet, almost too quiet.

One morning, the town is overflown by a pair of Gromek scouts just out of bow shot. They fire several arrows into the town bearing the following note:

"Abandon your station! Tomorrow, dawn, we shall take this place by force. No one who stays shall be spared."

With this ultimatum, the players are put in a serous bind. They have strict orders not to abandon their post under any circumstances, yet they will face overwhelming odds within 24 hours. What to do? If the player characters run, they shall become outlaws and might as well leave Mount Nimro forever, because if even one dedicated soldier or citizen survives they will certainly get the word out about the group's cowardice and desertion. For Giant characters, this kind of exile promises only a life of inconvenience at best, and of misery, shame and death at worst.

If the player group stays at their post, they must prepare for the coming battle. They can send their soldiers out as messengers to local outposts to ask for help, but the Nimro forces are spread so thin against so many incursions that the chances of getting reinforcements are slim and none (01-15% chance).

Since there is no way to tell if the threat is real or just a hoax (the Gromek are known to be fond of psychological warfare), nobody feels they can leave their post. Besides, there's a big case of denial going on. "No, it can't be my post they're talking about overrunning. It must be a trick. Yeah, a trick to divide us even more." Perhaps.

We leave it up to the Game Master as to whether or not the Gromek are really planning a raid or just playing mind games with the Giants. Does a flock of 20-80 Gromek appear the next morning only to launch another arrow or spear delivered message that says, "Next time," Or do they attack with a vengeance? Or could the approaching Gromek be part of an advance task force that's probing the area on behalf of the rest of the army, searching for weaknesses in the Nimro Kingdom's defenses? If so, a strong stand here, now, may prevent future incursions.

Quick Stats for True Giants

Algor, the Frost Giants

Alignments: Any, but lean toward selfish and miscreant.
Attributes: I.Q.: 3D6, M.E.: 2D6, M.A.: 2D6, P.S.: 4D6+6, P.P.: 4D6, P.E.: 4D6+1, P.B.: 3D6, Spd.: 2D6
Hit Points: P.E. +1D6 per level of experience.
S.D.C.: 60 plus those gained from O.C.C.s and physical skills.
Average P.P.E.: 6D6
O.C.C.s: Any, except Thief, Long Bowman and Palladin; most tend toward men of arms. Note that a small number of Algor have turned to the ways of magic and are practicing the lost art of *Conjuring*, a leftover craft from the Time of a Thousand Magicks.
Skill Note: Almost all Algor speak Troll/Giantese and Wolfen; most are illiterate.
Horror Factor: 10
Physical Appearance: Giant, pale white or pale blue skin, golden or silver hair, dark eyes.
Height: 14 to 20 feet tall (4.2 to 6 m); 14 feet +1D6 additional feet.
Weight: 600 to 1,500 pounds (270 to 630 kg).
Average Life Span: 300 years; few live past 400.

Natural Abilities: Superior physical strength and endurance, nightvision 60 feet (18.3 m); can see in total darkness. Good overall vision and hearing; impervious to cold (including magic cold), taking no damage.

Frost Breath (special): Range 30 feet (9 m), inflicts 4D6 points of damage. The first breath attack per melee round counts as an extra attack. Frost breath can be used twice per melee round, but the second breath attack counts as one of the character's regular melee actions.

Bonuses: +1 to strike with frost breath during hand to hand combat, +2 to save vs Horror Factor, plus those gained from attributes, O.C.C. and skill bonuses.

Magic: By O.C.C. only. Wizards, Warlocks (especially water and air) and Witches are the most common.

Psionics: Standard.

Enemies: Traditionally, Elves, Dwarves, and humans. Algor dislike Orcs, Goblins, and most other folk.

Allies: Algor love Wolfen and they like most other canine races, although they have little patience for the antics of Coyles. Bearmen, Kankoran, Emerin, Jotan, Cyclops, Trolls and Kobolds are also frequent allies. Nimro are somewhat mistrusted, due to the Fire Giants' legacy of scheming and manipulation. Indifferent towards most others.

Habitat: Can be found anywhere, but most common in the Great Northern Wilderness and the northern part of the Eastern Territory.

Favorite Weapons: Giant-sized axes, ball and chains, and pole arms (especially berdiches and saber halberds).

Cyclops, the Lords of Lightning

Alignments: Any, but lean toward anarchist and evil.

Attributes: I.Q.: 3D6, M.E.: 2D6, M.A.: 4D6, P.S.: 5D6+2, P.P.: 4D6, P.E.: 4D6, P.B.: 2D6, Spd.: 2D6

Hit Points: P.E. +1D6 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: 50 plus those gained from O.C.C.s and physical skills.

Average P.P.E.: 1D6x10 plus P.E. attribute or by magic O.C.C.

O.C.C.s: Any, although most tend toward men of arms.

Skill Note: All Cyclops speak Troll/Giantese and Western Human. About 40% are literate in Elven and/or Western Human or another language. Also, regardless of their O.C.C., 90% of all Cyclops get the W.P. Archery and targeting skills. Only about a third of all Cyclops know the secret of making magic weapons.

Horror Factor: 12

Physical Appearance: Olive-skinned Giants with one large eye in the center of their head. Usually have long, dark hair. Cyclops prefer to wear roman-style togas or tunics and clothing made of silk. They also love to wear gold and gem-encrusted bracelets, necklaces, and other fine jewelry.

Height: 14 to 18 feet (4.2 to 5.5 m); 14 + 1D4 additional feet.

Weight: 600 to 1,000 pounds (270 to 450 kg)

Average Life Span: 600 years, but some have lived to 1,000!

Natural Abilities: Superior physical strength and endurance. Nightvision 60 feet (18.3 m; can see in total darkness). Good overall vision and hearing. Impervious to all lightning and electricity (even magical electricity; no damage). Also resistant to other forms of energy, such as fire, energy bolts, cold, etc. (besides kinetic energy, that is), taking half damage.

Bonuses: +3 to save vs Horror Factor, +2 to roll with impact, plus those gained from attributes, O.C.C., and skill bonuses.

The Cyclops' Magical Lightning Weaponry: Many Cyclops (33%) can create four types of lightning javelins and two types of lightning arrows. The damage and average cost for each type is included.

Javelins: Light: 4D6 damage (cost 650-1,000 gold); medium: 7D6 (cost 1,000-1,500 gold); heavy: 1D6x10 (cost 1,600-2,400 gold, rare); or super: 2D4xlO (cost 2,000-5,000 gold; super-rare). The magic javelins look like jagged rods pointed at both ends and range from six to ten feet (1.8 to 3 m) long. Effective throwing range (magically enhanced, of course): 1,000 feet (305 m), but a Cyclops can throw them as far as 2,000 feet (610 m). Limitation: The javelin or arrow can only be used once because it turns into a lightning bolt in mid-air and dissipates after it strikes. Roll to strike as usual, but with an additional +1 bonus to strike.

Arrows: Light: 3D6 (300-500 gold) or heavy: 6D6 (800-1,200 gold; usually long bow size). Both light and heavy arrows can be designed to fit short bows, long bows, or crossbows. Like javelins, they are crooked. Effective range: 200 feet (61 m) farther than the normal bow weapon, 600 feet (183 m) further for a Cyclops.

Magic: By O.C.C.

Psionics: Standard.

Enemies: Traditionally Gigantes, Titans, changelings, and Trolls. Generally indifferent to others, but most humans still fear them. For reasons that are unclear, Cyclops and Gigantes hate each other and frequently engage in duels, feuds and skirmishes. Cyclops try to avoid them and consider them to be savage, mindless barbarians incapable of appreciating art or culture (a reasonably correct assessment).

Allies: Kobolds, Ogres, Jotan, Nimro, and dragons. Indifferent towards most others; may associate with the supernatural and creatures of magic. They are frequently worshipped by Kobolds.

Habitat: Cyclops can be found anywhere, but are most common in the Great Northern Wilderness, the Old Kingdom, the Baalgor Wastelands, and the Western Empire (as free citizens!). Thousands inhabit the Isle of the Cyclops, a small nation of Giants that has existed for centuries (See the **Adventures on the High Seas** sourcebook for more details).

Favorite Weapons: Cyclops love to use their own lightning weapons and all types of magic weapons, armor and items. They also like ordinary javelins, spears, bows, and large weapons.

Jotan, the Earth Giants

Alignments: Any, but lean toward selfish and evil.

Attributes: I.Q.: 2D6, M.E.: 3D6, M.A.: 2D6, P.S.: 5D6+10, (supernatural) P.P.: 4D6+6, P.E.: 4D6+6, P.B.: 2D6, Spd.: 3D6

Hit Points: P.E. +1D6 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: 1D4x10+40.

Average P.P.E.: 1D4x10.

O.C.C.s: Any men of arms, clergy, witch or warlock.

Skill Note: Speaks Troll/Giantese and Gobblely (98%) and gets the skills of Recognize Weapon Quality and Field Armorer, both at +15%, regardless of the O.C.C. selected.

Horror Factor: 12

Physical Appearance: Bronze-skinned Giants with powerful builds, dark eyes, and brown hair (usually worn long and somewhat shaggy).

Height: 18 to 20 feet (5.4 to 6.1 m).

Weight: 800 to 2,000 pounds (360 to 900 kg.)

Average Life Span: 300 years, but some have lived to 500.

Natural Abilities: Superior physical strength and endurance. Nightvision 40 feet (12.2 m), good overall vision and hearing, and resistant to non-magical heat and fire, taking half damage. Have a natural aptitude for mechanics and metal-working.

Bonuses: +3 to save vs Horror Factor, +2 to pull punch and roll with impact, plus those gained from attributes, O.C.C., and skill bonuses.

Magic: By Witch, Warlock, or Clergy O.C.C.s only.

Psionics: Standard.

Enemies: Traditionally, Rahu-Men, Titans, Elves, Dwarves and humans. Generally indifferent to others.

Allies: Nimro, Cyclops, Gigantes, Trolls, Ogres, Orcs, and Goblins. Indifferent toward others. May associate with the supernatural and creatures of magic. Jotan can be extremely hostile and frequently command troops of Orcs, Goblins, and other monster races.

Habitat: Can be found anywhere, but most common in the Baalgor Wastelands, the Old Kingdom, the Land of the South-Winds, and Mount Nimro.

Favorite Weapons: Giant-sized large swords, battle axes, ball and chains, and blunt weapons. They prefer to wear chain, scale and plate armor.

Gigantes, the Barbarians

Note: This race was originally designed as, and is best suited as, a villainous Non-Player Character (NPC).

Alignments: Any, but lean toward anarchist, miscreant, and diabolic.

Attributes: I.Q.: 2D6, M.E.: 1D6, M.A.: 2D6, P.S.: 4D6+8, (supernatural) P.P.: 3D6+6, P.E.: 4D6+6, P.B.: 2D6, Spd.: 4D6

Hit Points: P.E. +1D6 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: 1D6x10 plus possible mutations that provide extra S.D.C., as well as any from O.C.C. or from physical skills.

Average P.P.E.: 2D4x10.

O.C.C.s: Any Men of Arms, Clergy, or Witch. They generally are not smart or patient enough to practice magic.

Horror Factor: 13 and higher, depending on their appearance.

Physical Appearance: Varies dramatically. Most have a freakish, monstrous look about them.

Height: 15 to 20 feet (4.6 to 6 m); 14 feet +1D6 additional feet.

Weight: 1,000 to 2,000 pounds (450 to 900 kg).

Average Life Span: 150 years, rarely lives beyond 200 (although this is more because of their violent, insane lifestyle, otherwise, Gigantes might live to 300 or 400, but the real longevity of a Gigante will probably never be known).

Natural Abilities: Superior physical strength and endurance. Nightvision 40 feet (12 m), good overall vision and hearing, instinctive swimmers (60%).

Bonuses: +4 to save vs Horror Factor, plus other bonuses from attributes, O.C.C., skill bonuses, and mutations.

Gigante Mutations and Ability Table: Roll four times on the following table to determine random abilities and features.

01-05%: Nightvision 3D6xlO yards/meters.

06-10%: See the invisible.

11-15%: Turn invisible at will.

16-20%: Impervious to fire, including magical. Add 20 points to S.D.C.

21-22%: Poisonous bite that does 3D6 damage.

23-24%: A second mouth or a mouth at the end of a tentacle; bite does 1D6 S.D.C. and adds one additional attack per melee round when the opponent is within range.

25-26%: Single large horn; add 1D6 damage to any ramming attack or head butt.

27-32%: Additional pair of arms; adds one additional attack per melee.

33-40%: Scaly skin; add 1D4x10 S.D.C.

41-45%: Thick, lumpy skin; add 6D6 additional S.D.C.

46-50%: Leather wings; 50% chance character can fly at a speed of 2D6x10.

51-54%: Additional eye; +2 to initiative, nightvision at +30 feet (9 m).

55-59%: Large, heavy tail; can strike with tail for 2D6 damage.

60-64%: Large fangs; bite does 3D6 S.D.C.

65-69%: Ape-like body; covered in fur; add 15 S.D.C.

70-75%: Feathered wings; 50% chance character can fly at a speed of 3D6x10.

76-80%: Claws; does an additional 1D6 to punching damage.

81-84%: Large, flat teeth; bite does 2D4 damage.

85-90%: Breathe fire; 20 foot (6 m) range, does 3D6 damage.

91-95%: Spit acid; 20 foot (6 m) range, does 4D6 S.D.C.

96-100%: Additional leg; adds +20% to maintain balance, adds +1D4x10 to speed attribute.

Gigante Insanity Table: Roll once initially, with additional insanities resulting from trauma likely (roll at least once again for NPCs).

01-10%: Random psychosis.

11-34%: No insanity.

35-44%: Random obsession.

45-77%: Random phobia.

78-91%: Random neurosis.

92-100%: Random affective disorder.

Magic: By witch O.C.C. only.

Psionics: Standard, although Gigantes generally don't have the mental endurance to become adept at psychic powers.

Enemies: Traditionally, Rahu-Men, Titans, Elves, Dwarves, humans, all canine races, and most other non-giants.

Allies: Nimro, Trolls, Ogres, Orcs, and Goblins. Generally indifferent to others. Frequently join other forces of evil and the supernatural.

Habitat: Can be found anywhere, but are most common in the Yin-Sloth Jungles, Mount Nimro, the Baalgor Wastelands, the Old Kingdom, and the Great Northern Wilderness.

Favorite Weapons: Giant-sized large swords, axes, ball and chains, and blunt weapons. Generally don't like missile weapons. They like to wear heavy armor, but many Gigantes either are too misshapen to fit into armor, or they have armored skin that precludes the need for armor.

Nimro, the Fire Giants

Alignments: Any, but lean towards anarchist and evil.

Attributes: I.Q.: 3D6, M.E.: 4D6, M.A.: 3D6, P.S.: 3D6+6, P.P.: 3D6+6, P.E.: 4D6+6, P.B.: 3D6, Spd.: 2D6

Hit Points: P.E. plus 1D6 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: 50 points, plus those gained from O.C.C. and physical skills.

Average P.P.E.: 1D4x10 or by magic O.C.C.

O.C.C.s: Any except Knight, Palladin, or Long Bowmen.

Horror Factor: 11

Physical Appearance: Copper- or red-skinned Giants with black or red-brown hair and bright yellow eyes.

Height: 14 to 18 feet tall (4.3 to 5.8 m); 14 feet +1D4 additional feet.

Weight: 800 to 1,400 pounds (360 to 630 kg.).

Average Life Span: 300 years, with some living to 500 years.

Natural Abilities: Superior physical strength and endurance. Nightvision 40 feet (12 m), good overall vision and hearing. Impervious to fire (including magical). All other forms of energy, such as electricity, cold, energy bolts (except kinetic energy), do half damage.

Magic: By O.C.C. only.

Psionics: Standard.

Enemies: Traditionally, Titans, Elves, Dwarves, humans and non-giants. Generally indifferent to others. Note: The Nimro of the Nimro Kingdom have generally put aside their dislike for Titans in order to make the "Dark Titans" of this kingdom feel more welcome. To the Nimro, it is far better to put aside some petty dislike than allow it to jeopardize the unity of the kingdom. This trait alone probably explains why they have been so successful at uniting and leading other Giants and monster races.

Allies: Jotan, Gigantes, Ogres, Trolls, Orcs, Goblins, and fire dragons. Nimro may occasionally ally themselves with Cyclops and Algor, although these three Giant races are scheming enough in their own rights to know that the other two races are not to be trusted. May associate with the supernatural, creatures of magic, and anybody who can best serve them. Indifferent toward most others. Note: Nimro are aggressive and hostile, but they are also calculating, cunning and tricky. They also tend to be greedy and arrogant, which tends to get them in trouble, even with their traditional allies.

Habitat: Can be found anywhere, but are most common in Mount Nimro, the Old Kingdom, the Yin-Sloth Jungles, the Baalgor Wastelands, and the Land of the South-Winds.

Favorite Weapons: Nimro love to use Giant-sized large swords, axes and blunt weapons. They sometimes use spears and pole arms, and stay away from missile weapons. They often wear light armor, half suits of plate mail, or full suits of plate and chain.

Rahu-Men, the Mystics

Alignments: Any, but at least 50% are good, 25% are selfish, and 25% are evil.

Attributes: I.Q.: 4D6, M.E.: 3D6, M.A.: 2D6, P.S.: 5D6, P.P.: 3D6, **P.E.: 4D6, P.B.: 3D6,** Spd.: 2D6

Hit Points: P.E. +20, plus 2D6 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: 2D4xlO, plus O.C.C. bonus and those gained from physical skills.

Average P.P.E.: 1D4x10.

O.C.C.s: Any, although they seldom pursue the ways of clergy, with the exception of the Warrior Monk or the Scholastic Monk (see the **Old Ones sourcebook** for details).

Horror/Awe Factor: 10

Physical Appearance: Four-armed Giants with lightly tanned skin, light to dark hair, and dark eyes.

Height: 15 to 18 feet (4.6 to 5.5 m); 14 feet +1D4 additional feet.

Weight: 500-1,000 pounds (227 to 450 kg).

Average Life Span: 1,000 years, but some have lived to 1,600.

Natural Abilities: Superior I.Q. and great physical power, as well as natural psionic abilities (see Psionics for details). Also Rahu-Men receive the following skill bonuses that are in addition to their O.C.C. bonuses due to their size, four arms, and outlook on life: +10% to Climb/Scale Walls, +5% to Pick Locks, +5% to Palm, +10% to Concealment, +10% to Carpentry and Boat Building, +6% to Streetwise, +10 to Lore skills, and +5% to all communication, military and medical skills (even if taken as secondary skills).

Bonuses: In addition to attribute and skill bonuses, +2 on initiative, +1 to strike, +4 to parry, +4 to pull punch, +1 to roll with impact, +3 to save vs Horror Factor, and +2 to save vs. possession.

Penalties: -15% to prowl and -5% to Pick Pockets.

Combat: Four attacks per melee without any hand to hand training, or four plus those gained from Boxing and/or hand to hand combat skills. An experienced Rahu-Man will have six to nine attacks per melee round.

Magic: By O.C.C. Many Rahu-Men become formidable wizards, diabolists, and warlocks.

Psionics: All Rahu-Men possess minor psionics and can select eight psionic sensitive abilities. I.S.P.: M.E. +30 plus 1D6 per level of experience.

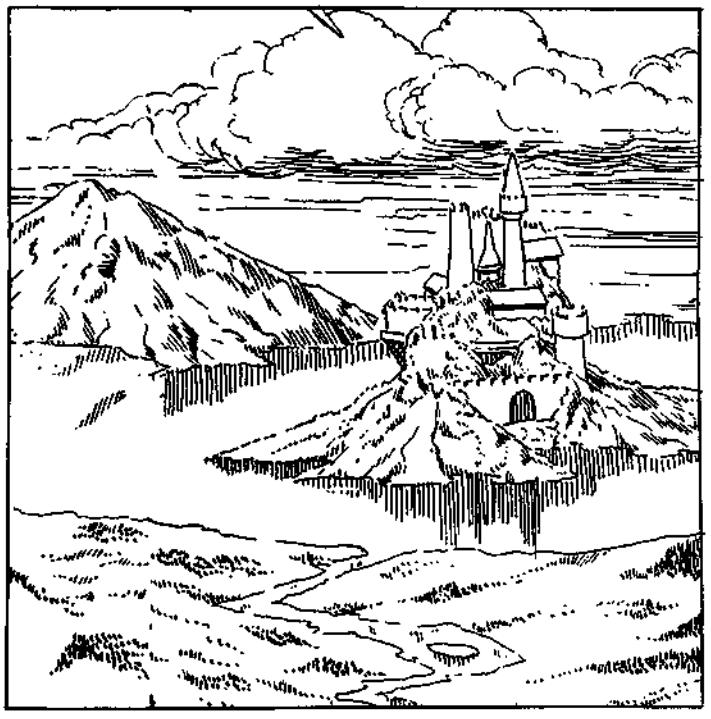
Enemies: Most evil Giants, Ogres, Trolls, and the forces of evil in general. Distrusts humans, Dwarves and Elves.

Allies: Titans and Kobolds. Generally, Rahu-Men tolerate any intelligent, hospitable creatures.

Habitat: Old Kingdom mountains. An individual Rahu-Man may occasionally come down from the mountains, but this hasn't happened for the last several hundred years.

Favorite Weapons: Pole arms, forked weapons, and ball and chain. May wear any type of armor.

Note: Long ago, these Giants practiced cannibalism, eating the organs of their opponents as a sign of respect. Today, only 5% of traditional warriors continue this practice.



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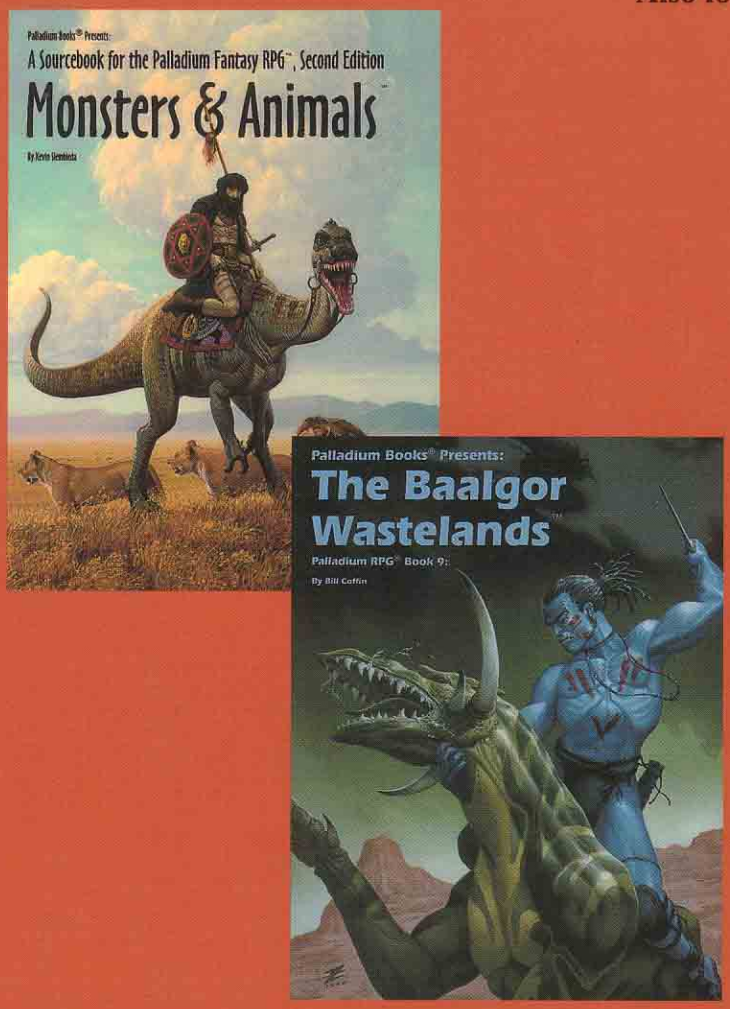

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