

RAGING SWAN PRESS

GM'S MONTHLY MISCELLANY:

AUGUST 2014



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GM'S MONTHLY MISCELLANY: AUGUST 2014

Featuring material from some of Raging Swan Press's newest products as well as classic releases of yesteryear, advice articles and material from Creighton's own *Borderland of Adventure* campaign, the *GM's Monthly Miscellany* series is a terrific free resource for the busy, time-crunched GM.

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Thank you for purchasing *GM's Monthly Miscellany: August 2014*; we hope you enjoy it and that you check out our other fine print and PDF products.

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SOURCES

As well as new, never seen before material from my own *Borderland of Adventure* campaign, this instalment of *GM's Monthly Miscellany* presents information from several Raging Swan Press products and advice articles including:

- **Village Backdrop: Vulcanbridge** Mike Welham.
- **Subterranean Enclave: Mith'Varal** Brian Wiborg Mønster.
- **Hobgoblins of the Mailed Fist** Creighton Broadhurst.

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FOREWORD

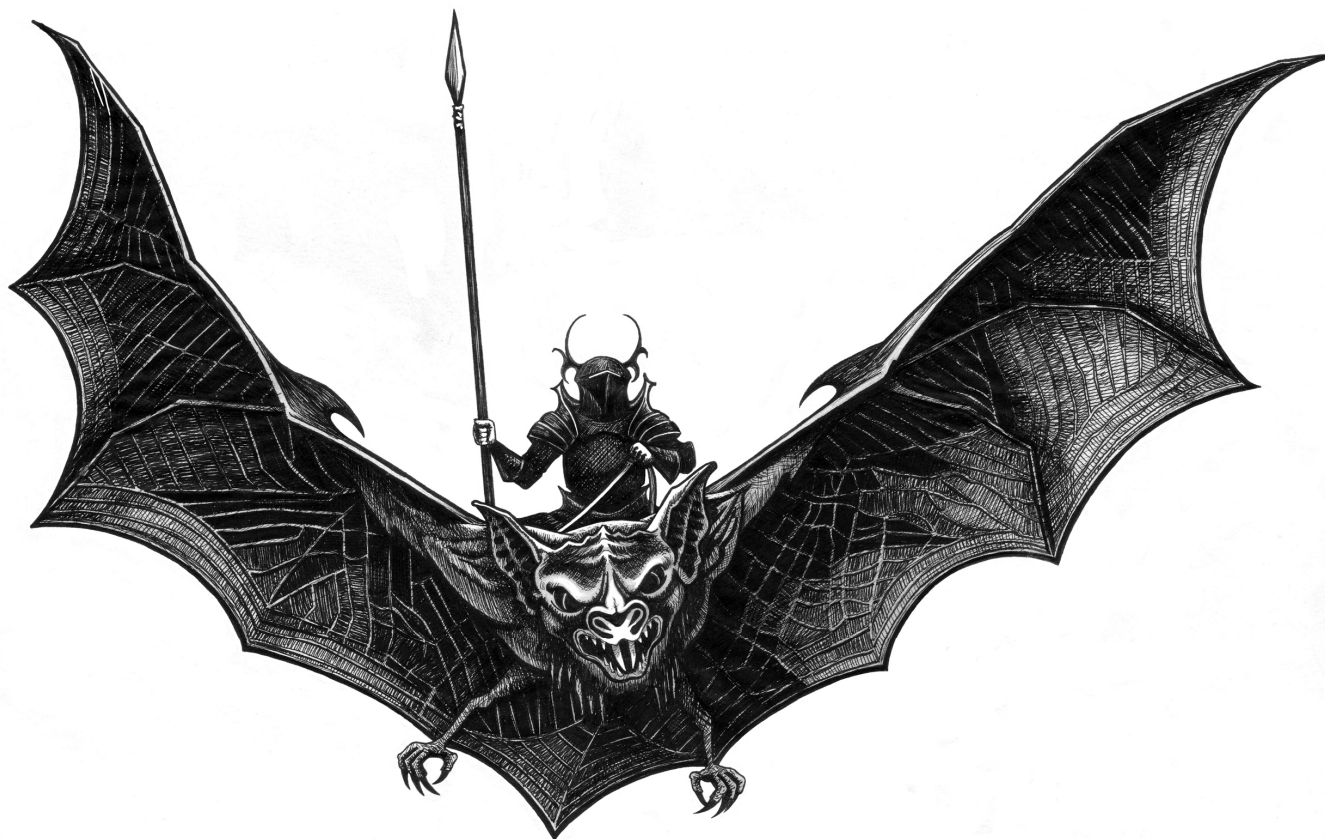
By the time you read this, summer will be in full swing – in fact it may even be over! Here at Raging Swan Press the summer is always a time of much reduced activity. Global HQ becomes infested with deranged halflings and it takes me at least seven weeks to winkle them out of their various hiding places. Luckily, I'm one of those people that likes to work some distance in advance so this doesn't particularly affect Raging Swan's operation. (In fact my children have recently got into Pathfinder so I'll probably be doing *more* gaming than usual!)

In slightly bad news, last month we had to take a break from my long-running Borderland of Adventure campaign. One of my players decided to take a month-long trip to Canada (the swine) while another is beset with important personal stuff. With a third of the group unavailable, we decided it prudent to take a break and to try a certain new set of rules that have just become available...

In any event, herein you'll find excerpts from some of Raging Swan's newest products as well as material from a golden oldie – *Hobgoblins of the Mailed Fist* – one of the first ever TRIBES supplements. (The awesome picture below is from the supplement and depicts one of the hobgoblin's winged scouts).

I've also included a selection of advice articles from those posted weekly at creightonbroadhurst.com as well as material from my Borderland of Adventure campaign. This month, I present the raw statistics of the sinister power behind the attacks on the PCs' kingdom – Lord Monel Dehar. The material from my campaign has been slightly scrubbed to remove the intellectual property of other companies but it is otherwise pretty much as I've used it myself. (Although in this case the party have not yet been insane enough to actually try to attack Lord Monel). If you want to keep up with our adventures, you can read weekly session summaries on my blog: creightonbroadhurst.com.

In any event, I hope you enjoy the material in this GM's Monthly Miscellany, but more importantly I hope you find it useful and that it enhances your campaign. If you've got any comments or questions about Raging Swan Press, I'd love to hear from you. You can contact me at creighton@ragingswan.com.



GM ADVICE: WHY I LOVE THE SLOW ADVANCEMENT TRACK

MY BORDERLAND OF ADVENTURE CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN RUNNING SINCE OCTOBER 2012. IN THAT TIME WE'VE HAD ABOUT 80 SESSIONS AND PLAYED THROUGH OVER TWO ACTION-PACKED YEARS OF GAME TIME. OF ALL THE CAMPAIGNS I'VE RUN IN RECENT MEMORY, I'VE ENJOYED THIS ONE THE MOST. THE MAIN DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THIS CAMPAIGN AND OTHERS I'VE RUN IS THE SLOW ADVANCEMENT TRACK.

The campaign links to a previous kingdom-building campaign (which began two game years previously and suffered a rather spectacular end in a certain ruined elven tower). In total, the extended campaign has been running for about four game years. The most played characters on the Borderland of Adventure have now achieved the dizzying heights of 6th-level. (Everyone has more than one character to facilitate multiple story arcs and give players a chance to take a different role in the party now and then).

In previous campaigns, I'd grown frustrated by the speed in which PCs seemed to level. In some cases, we were levelling every other week. It seemed our characters could go from 1st- to 20th-level in under a year of game time, which didn't seem very particularly attractive (or dare I say it realistic). It made levelling mundane and reduced it to something akin to mere bookkeeping.

So we decided to try the slow advancement track for a change. I've been delighted with the results. To my mind, there are several main advantages to the slow advancement track:

- **Tell a Cogent Story with Slowly Scaling Challenges:** The Borderland of Adventure campaign is set in a relatively small geographical area. Because the PCs are progressing slowly it is possible to tell a tight, cogent story in which the villains make sense. With the slow advancement track, the PCs' opponents (ostensibly orcs and their shadowy, unknown masters) still make sense. In a faster game, I would by now have had to come up with reasons why the orcs had been replaced by giants (or whatever) as the party's main foes. That's fine as far as it goes, but it doesn't make a lot of sense given the region's flavour. Because the PCs are slowly gaining in power, it is much easier to slowly scale the threat they face in a way that makes sense to the overarching story. This also means they get fewer sudden, fatal surprises as they slowly learn more about their capabilities (and their opponents').
- **Get to know the PCs:** With the slow advancement track, the PCs are not exactly rocketing up the levels. Because of this, the players get to know their PC's capabilities very well. More importantly, they get to know the capabilities of their comrades, which means they act much better as a group. This has improved their survivability dramatically. To date, we've

only had a handful of PC deaths – and I'm not exactly renowned as an easy GM.

- **Players Are More Invested In Their Characters:** The players are much more invested in their characters because they've been playing them longer and have grown to know them much better than a normal character. When you've played a character for 50 sessions you are careful with that character; losing one would be a real blow. Interestingly enough, the players also seem much more invested in other people's characters – which is a very nice bonus – as they take risks to keep one another safe.
- **Sense of Achievement:** The sense of achievement you feel when achieving something is directly related to how hard it is to achieve the goal. It takes time and effort to gain power in the slow advancement track. I've found because of this the players enjoy levelling and savour their achievements much more than if they level every session (or every other session). Reaching 3rd-level was a real achievement. Now some PCs are 6th-level, attainment of levels in prestige classes is now a real possibility. PCs entering such an august class have achieved something special – nay prestigious. Imagine how they'll feel when they reach 9th-level!
- **Worldbuilding:** I think the world makes much more sense, if you assume the slow advancement track. It means, NPCs over 5th-level are special and those over 9th-level are truly amazing. When the PCs reach 9th-level, they will be some of the most powerful folk in the nation. In normal games, you are barely getting going at 9th! It also means that qualifying for a prestige class is actually special. I feel prestige classes have lost their lustre a bit in recent years – they often seem to be taken for a couple of levels to get a cool ability and not for the kudos of actually belonging to the relevant organisation.
- **Low Fantasy:** By its very nature, the slow advancement track naturally promotes a low fantasy campaign over its high fantasy counterparts. Think about it for a second. In a game where it takes longer to gain power, there are fewer higher level spellcasters in the campaign. This means there are fewer people capable of making magic items (particularly permanent ones). Thus, there are fewer magic items available. This makes magic items more special and far less mundane than they seem to have become in recent years.

VULCANBRIDGE AT A GLANCE

The volcanic plain upon which Vulcanbridge stands was uninhabited until 350 years ago. A group of dwarf and gnome adventurers wound up on the plain through a series of mishaps (or divine providence, depending on who tells the tale). A minor eruption spat unfinished emeralds up onto the plain, and one of the adventurers noted the lava contained traces of gold and silver. Realizing they had discovered a treasure trove beyond their wildest reckoning, the group vowed to settle the area.

The original settlers perished trying to tame the volcanic plain, but their associates and family carried on. Eventually, dwarf engineers devised several pylons and bridges between them that would allow the settlers to live safely above the plain while scooping up whatever material random eruptions provided. A gnome alchemist, Tervor Vulcan, further enhanced the pylons to protect against seismic events plaguing the settlement, which took its name from the alchemist.

Today, Vulcanbridge still reaps the benefits of the gems and minerals buried in deep caverns below the plain. However, the workers have shifted their focus to delving beneath the surface lava, which no longer has the ready treasure accounting for the village's initial success. Additionally, the village protects travellers who blunder across the dangerous land and provides a safe site for breath-taking vistas.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Ruler Korron Greymantle

Government Autocracy

Population 185 (91 dwarves, 31 gnomes, 23 half-orcs, 15 halflings, 14 humans, 11 half-elves)

Alignments LG, LN, NG, CG

Languages Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Gnome

Corruption -1; **Crime** -2; **Economy** +2; **Law** +2; **Lore** -1; **Society** +0

Qualities Insular, prosperous, strategic location

Danger +5; **Disadvantages** Volcanic activity

NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the population are nothing more than hardworking miners. A few, however, are of interest to adventurers:

Ander Hale (location 3; LN male human fighter 1/aristocrat 2) Ander, a shrewd businessman who feels he can improve the village's prospects, seeks lordship when Korron steps down.

Dwilla Copperpot (location 9; CG female gnome expert 4) The danger-seeking gnome Dwilla possesses remarkable engineering insight.

Korron Greymantle (locations 4 and 10; LN male dwarf aristocrat 1/expert 3) Current lord of Vulcanbridge, Korron looks forward to returning to "real work" in two months.

Manda Grimsdottir (location 7; LG female dwarf expert 4) Vulcanbridge's most successful miner, Manda has an uncanny sense for the volcanic plain's irregular eruptions.

Tagrissa (locations 4 and 6; LN female half-orc warrior 4) Tagrissa has served as head of Vulcanbridge's guard all her adult life, protecting against external and internal threats.

Verrix Gravelbeard (location variable; LG male young gold dragon) Verrix has not broken from his dwarf persona since he arrived in Vulcanbridge 27 years ago.

Yendari Indra (location 1; NG female halfling rogue 3/expert 3) Yendari took refuge in Vulcanbridge eight years ago and has since taken ownership of the Crimson Light Inn.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Most of the village comprises peasant homes. A few locations, however, are of interest to adventurers:

1. **Crimson Light Inn:** Situated at the base of Centre Pylon (Pylon One), this inn gets its name from the constant glow shed by lava resting on the surface.
2. **Sorrel's Sundries:** More for visitors to Vulcanbridge, the gnome Sorrel sells protective gear and rations from this store.
3. **Hale Imports and Exports:** From here, Ander Hale conducts his business deals that have proven lucrative for Vulcanbridge.
4. **The Hall:** This utilitarian building houses Vulcanbridge's government and serves as headquarters for the guard.
5. **Cooling Vault:** This refrigerated chamber provides a safe place in emergency situations and relief for those succumbing to the constant heat.
6. **Watchtower:** Situated atop Pylon Two, this location has the clearest view of the surrounding land.
7. **Manda's Pylon:** Pylon Three is named for Vulcanbridge's most successful delver.
8. **Rooster Geyser:** West of Pylon Four, superheated water blasts up 100 feet every morning at precisely the same time.
9. **The Skunkworks:** Located on the little used Pylon Four, and named more for the smell than the experimentation, Dwilla and her subordinates perfect mineral extraction techniques.
10. **Pylon Five:** A recent powerful earthquake cracked Pylon Five's foundations, forcing an evacuation of the crew there; several engineers work day and night to repair the pylon.

MARKETPLACE

Resources & Industry Mining, shelter, sightseeing, trade

Base Value 1,000 gp; **Purchase Limit** 4,500 gp; **Spellcasting** 4th; **Minor Items** 2d6; **Medium Items** 1d6; **Major Items** –

When the PCs arrive in Vulcanbridge, the following items are for sale:

- **Potions & Oils** *protection from energy* (fire, 375 gp)
- **Scrolls (Arcane)** *resist energy* (fire, CL 7th, 350 gp)
- **Scrolls (Divine)** *endure elements* (13 gp)
- **Wondrous Items** *elixir of swimming* (250 gp)

VILLAGE LORE

A PC making a Knowledge (geography) or Knowledge (local) check may know some information about the village. A successful check reveals all the information revealed by a lesser check.

DC 10: Founded centuries ago, Vulcanbridge built its fortune on gems and metal readily available in the lava flowing from beneath the surface. This was not a trivial matter, as those collecting the wealth endured hellish heat and poisonous gases.

DC 15: Vulcanbridge also serves as shelter for those desperate or crazy enough to cross the volcanic plain.

DC 20: The village no longer benefits from easily obtained wealth. Instead, the workers must delve beneath the plain's surface to gather its treasures.

VILLAGERS

Appearance Natives of Vulcanbridge have black hair, dark eyes of various colours and reddish skin. Most residents have shorn heads, but dwarven residents still insist on wearing full beards.

Dress Most villagers wear loose-fitting and utilitarian clothing. Those who deal with outsiders dress more fancily and wear jewels and gems harvested from beneath the village.

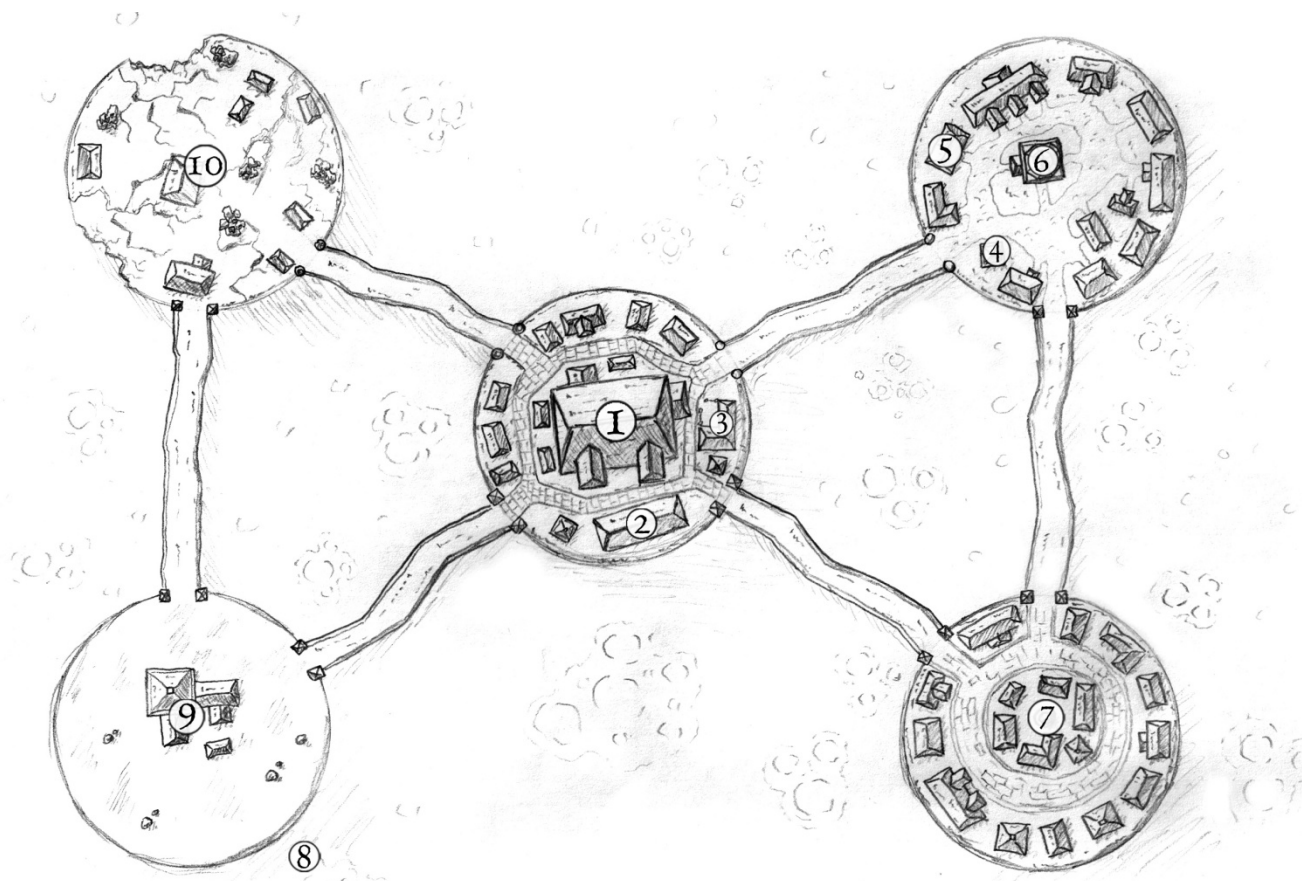
Nomenclature *male* Berrik, Kaarl, Trystan; *female* Dioni, Nessa, Quionne; *family* Deepdelver, Forgeborn, Vinnis.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

A PC can use Diplomacy to gather information about the village and its surroundings. This takes 1d4 hours and requires a DC 10 check. A character exceeding this check gains one additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10. Use the table below to determine which rumour(s) the PC learns.

D6	RUMOUR
1	The planned Pylon Six never got completed, since it sank beneath the plain.
2	Water is naturally difficult for the village to obtain, and the latest supply never arrived.
3	When Verrix drinks too much, he turns discussion to an ancient red dragon whose hoard has fattened Vulcanbridge's coffers while the creature sleeps.
4*	Pylon Five's damage was caused by sabotage timed with a convenient earthquake.
5	To every villager's surprise, Rooster Geyser failed to erupt last week—this marks the first time in anyone's recollection this has happened.
6	A couple of villagers have seen fiery human shapes several hundred yards to the west just after sunset.

*False rumour



MITH'VARAL AT A GLANCE

Four centuries ago, the first survey expedition from the dwarven kingdom of Thandrur finally reached the Endless Sea. Amid ancient ruins they discovered rich veins of mithral on the peninsula south of the fortress that would later become known as Sorrowhall. To secure the mithral they founded a village for the miners working in the nearby mines and named it Mith'Varal after the dwarven words for mithral and mine.

The Black Stream, an underground river, flows through Mith'Varal and makes the site perfect for a settlement. Mith'Varal prospered for nearly four centuries, with caravans leaving the village each week with arms, armour and raw ore; taking their goods back to the bigger forge towns of Thandrur.

Two decades ago the veins of mithral ran out. Over the next few years Mith'Varal went from being an important place, to a backwater village barely worth a mention in the annals of Thandrur. The thegn keeps his subjects mining in the hopes of regaining the glory of the past, but regardless no new mithral veins have been uncovered for twenty years.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Ruler **Thegn Thorak Arnirsson**

Government Overlord

Population 182 (180 dwarves, 2 cloaklers)

Alignments NG, N, NE

Languages Dwarven, Undercommon

Corruption +1; **Crime** -8; **Economy** -1; **Law** +4; **Lore** -1; **Society** -1

Qualities Insular, superstitious

Danger 0; **Disadvantages** None

NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the population are nothing more than hardworking miners. A few, however, are of interest to adventurers:

Astor Helmarson (location 8; N male dwarf expert 3) The last dwarven engineer in Mith'Varal, he guides the official effort to rediscover the mithral veins in Varal Tarak. He works for the thegn, but secretly helps Lila.

Bergda Yngradottir (location 4; NG female dwarf expert 4) Bergda, with her husband Sweirik, runs the Mead and Meats.

Captain Gunar Hammerblow (location 2; NE male dwarf fighter 8) Gunar Hammerblow is the captain of the Faceless Guard. He is the only member of the guard to reveal his face, and his scarred visage is a common sight throughout Mith'Varal.

Half-face Thorsson (location 8; NE male dwarf barbarian 6) The overseer of the Varal Tarak mine, he is unquestionably loyal to the thegn and the Faceless Guard.

Lila Steindottir (location 6; NG female dwarf adept 6) Lila is the village's only divine healer, as the temple is abandoned; she practises from her home, but secretly dreams of opening the temple again. She also leads rogue miners in Varal Tarak.

Nirls "Anvil" Gundersen (location 3; N male dwarf expert 4) Nirls runs the only operational smithy in the village; he is also one

of the remaining few that knows the secret of forging mithral arms and armours.

Thegn Thorak Arnirsson (location 1; NE male dwarf aristocrat 4/fighter 7) The ruler of Mith'Varal lairs in his castle. He has not been seen publicly in over a decade, and has not given audiences for almost as long.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Most of the village comprises peasant homes. A few locations, however, are of interest to adventurers:

11. **Mith'Varal Castle:** The castle sits on a pillar of rock protruding from a deep natural pit in the middle of the village. Only one bridge leads across the pit; it is riddled with traps and heavily guarded.
12. **Garrison:** This fortified building, once an inn, is now the headquarters of the Faceless Guard.
13. **Nirls' Mithralworks:** The only smithy in Mith'Varal, it is located amid several abandoned and ruined smithies.
14. **Mead and Meats:** This two-storey building is in good condition. The inn caters both for the locals and any travellers come to explore the ruins west of Mith'Varal.
15. **The Old Temple:** As mines played out, the villagers turned to their gods for help, but no divine aid was forthcoming. Today, the temple is in disrepair and empty.
16. **Lila's private home:** This small nondescript house is where Lila is when not in the temple.
17. **The Black Stream:** This river supplies Mith'Varal with fresh water and once powered the village's many smithies.
18. **Varal Tarak:** Literally Tarak's Mine, this is the only working mine near Mith'Varal and the village's last hope. The mine is a maze of shafts and caverns, where several groups dig in the hopes of finding mithral or any other kind of metal.
19. **Ancient Ruins:** These mysterious ruins lie to the west of Mith'Varal.

MARKETPLACE

Resources & Industry Hunting and mining

Base Value 500 gp; **Purchase Limit** 2,500 gp; **Spellcasting** 1st; **Minor Items** 2d4; **Medium Items** 1d4; **Major Items** –

When the PCs arrive in Mith'Varal, the following items are for sale:

- **Potions & Oils** *jump* (50 gp) *mirror image* (300 gp)
- **Scrolls (Arcane)** *detect secret doors* (25 gp)
- **Scroll (Divine)** *remove fear* (25 gp), *bull's strength* (150 gp)

MITH VARAL LORE

A PC making a Knowledge (geography) or Knowledge (local) check may know some information about Mith'Varal. A successful check reveals all the information revealed by a lesser check.

DC 10: Mith'Varal means "mithral mine" in Dwarven, and it is the name of the village which marks the dwarven kingdom of Thandrur's eastern border.

DC 15: Mith'Varal was founded atop rich mithral veins and prospered as a result. Twenty years ago the veins ran dry and Mith'Varal has been in a steady decline ever since.

DC 25: The current thegn of Mith'Varal, Thorak Arnirsson, has not been seen in almost two decades. Today the village is led by the Faceless Guard, masked dwarven men and women who bring edicts to the villagers from the thegn lurking in his castle.

VILLAGERS

Appearance The villagers often wear worn clothes; miners appear covered with dirt and grime.

Dress The dress style of Mith'Varal favors grey shades. The miners break the grey monotony with vibrant colors such as yellow or red, to be seen in case of a cave ins.

Nomenclature *male* Gorak, Larog, Thomir; *female* Deera, Herdig, Yrsa; *family* Annildottir, Jernsson, Thunderspear.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

A PC can use Diplomacy to gather information about Mith'Varal and its surroundings. This takes 1d4 hours and requires a DC 10 check. A character exceeding this check gains one additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10. Use the table below to determine which rumour(s) the PC learns.

D6	RUMOUR
1	Astor Helmerson is the oldest dwarf in Mith'Varal. He knows everything there is to know about the village and everything that happens below Mith'Varal.
2*	The thegn is dead and Captain Hammerblow is the real ruler of Mith'Varal.
3	There is a secret route from the Black Stream to the hidden caverns beneath the ancient ruins.
4	There are some groups of miners digging in Varal Tarak, that even the Half-face does not know about.
5	Nirls' Mithralworks is the place to go for anything mithral related, if you can pay the price.
6	The Faceless Guards do not only count dwarves in their ranks.

*False rumour



TRIBES: HOBGOBLINS OF THE MAILED FIST

Skilled and disciplined warriors, the Hobgoblins of the Mailed Fist operate as fighters-for-hire. They dwell in three heavily fortified hill forts (Eir-Andra, Eir-Darrh and Eir-Othim) deep in a range of bare, sombre crag-studded hills. From there they operate six battles (war bands 500 strong) under the employ of diverse employers including powerful nobles and even nation states. The tribe's most feared weapons – even more dreaded than their mail clad war bands – are the huge black bats upon which ride their most puissant warriors and spellcasters.

The tribe does not trouble nearby kingdoms instead raiding surrounding humanoid tribes for plunder and slaves. Thus, while the tribe remains lawful evil in outlook, most of its civilised neighbours do not view them as an active threat. Indeed, several kingdoms pay the Mailed Fist a yearly tribute to attack other humanoid tribes infesting the surrounding hills, thus binding them together in an alliance of sorts.

ECOLOGY & SOCIETY

Unsurprisingly, the Mailed Fist has a regimented, organised society. Every adult tribe member has served or yet serves in the in a battle and many specialise in useful, martial trades as well. Consequently, the tribe numbers engineers, animal trainers and siege specialists among its strength.

Relatively peaceful contact with so many nearby kingdoms and other powerful employers has somewhat mellowed the tribe's natural proclivity toward evil. While the tribe as a whole is still lawful evil in outlook the incidence of non-evil individuals is far higher than in other goblinoid tribes. Additionally, being highly lawful in outlook, the tribe has garnered a reputation for always honouring a contract.

The tribe's society (surprisingly for evil humanoids) thrives on equality with tribal members making no distinction between the sexes. All adults serve in one of their fort's battles for a minimum of five years and thus both males and females can rise to the position of war leader.

The tribe numbers about 6,500 individuals of which 3,000 are warriors. Each hill fort maintains two battles. It is for the services of these units that employers dare the long journey to the Mailed Fist's gates. Normally, one battle garrisons each fort while the other is on campaign.

Appearance: Tall and muscular, hobgoblins of the Mailed Fist are hairless, pale skinned warriors. Many mark kills by adding a small tattoo to their scalp for every slain enemy.

Nomenclature: Tribal members do not differentiate between males and females. Thus, both sexes share the same list of names: Aryex, Berastif, Ceral, Cerastuf, Daryex, Derarak, Keral, Felyex Gerarix, Herastuf, Leral, Lerastif, Marak, Raryex, Sarak, Saryex, Terall, Uverix, Yex.

Arcane Magic: Members of the Mailed Fist are the rarest of hobgoblins because they use "elf magic" to wage war. This is a new development for the tribe only beginning after the tribe settled their hill fort homes. The tribe's sorcerers (there are no wizards) theorize that some forgotten echo of whoever or whatever built the hill forts yet lingers in these desolate places and that its unseen influence sometimes unlocks the arcane potential lurking in a select few of the tribe. Such sorcerers exclusively possess either the draconic or elemental bloodline.

Religion: The Mailed Fist worship a war god, the details of which will vary from campaign to campaign. By default, battle clerics and battle masters have access to the Protection and War domains. A GM changing these domains should remember the Protection domain's resistance bonus to saving throws.

LAIRS

The Mailed Fist dwells in three heavily fortified hill forts (Eir-Andra, Eir-Darrh and Eir-Othim) hidden deep within an inaccessible range of hills. The hill forts sprawl across the highest and least accessible hills and are visible from the others. All are sited well for defence and have excellent views of the surrounding area. Surprising the Mailed Fist in strength is difficult, if not impossible, without magical aid.

The tribe clear the land around each hill fort, cutting back encroaching vegetation every spring, preparing and maintaining their defensive works. Steep-sided ditches, hidden pits and fields of caltrops litter these bleak, wasted areas.

The Mailed Fist has augmented and expanded the hill forts – themselves the progeny of an unknown elder race – and have constructed their own stone redoubts as a final refugee in the face of overwhelming force. Caves and caverns pockmark the hills upon which the forts stand. Within these lightless realms, the tribe's bat masters train the great beasts for which the tribe is famed. These beasts, a surviving remnant of an elder age, have served the Mailed Fist for generations.



ANATOMY OF A BATTLE

Each battle is subdivided into five companies of 103 warriors each. Each company comprises nine ten-man squads led by an elite warrior. Every third company comprises archers led by an elite archer while three war chanters aid the company's commanding battle cleric. Thus, every company comprises:

- 60 Mailed Fist warriors
- 6 elite Mailed Fist warriors
- 30 Mailed Fist archers
- 3 Mailed Fist elite archers
- 3 war chanters
- 1 battle cleric

A full battle comprises:

- 300 Mailed Fist warriors
- 30 elite Mailed Fist warriors
- 150 Mailed Fist archers
- 15 Mailed Fist elite archers
- 15 war chanters
- 5 battle clerics
- 1 battle marshal

Battle Cleric: Standing in the front ranks with their comrades, battle clerics provide much needed healing and protection as well as commanding a company.

Battle Marshal: Battle marshals stand in the very centre of the front line inspiring their men and driving them on. Battle marshals rarely bother to hurl javelins and so on, instead concentrating on spellcasting and inspiring their men. A cadre of war chanters always accompanies a battle marshal so that he can easily pass orders to his troops.

War Chanter: Deployed behind the front line, groups of war chanters beat their drums both to inspire their companions to great heroics and to quickly transfer orders across the battlefield. Before an advance, war chanters pass through the lines to demoralise the enemy using Dazzling Display.

War chanters also serve as emergency healers for their companions using their ability to spontaneous cast spells to save those close to death.

BLACK WINGS

A squadron of Black Wings always accompanies deployed battles. The exact makeup and composition of this squadron depends on the nature of the battle's mission and the depth of its patron's purse. Black Wing can act as scouts, an extremely mobile strike force able to strike at the best protected targets with near-impunity or aerial artillery.

COMBAT & TACTICS

Trusting to their heavy armour and superior training, units of the Mailed Fist often prevail against far more numerous foes by forming nigh-impenetrable shield walls. Their training, discipline and lawful nature enables them to keep fighting long after other more disorganised rabble have spent themselves against the Mailed Fist's defences. Against cavalry, they sow the ground in front of their lines with caltrops and their sorcerers ward their fellows with *trench* and other defensive magic.

Heavily protected by their fine armour, warriors often fight defensively to limit casualties while pinning their opponents in place for their archers to annihilate. Utilising their darkvision, the tribe is equally able to fight during the day and night – an advantage they ruthlessly exploit.

Overhead the famed black wings soar. Clad in intricate barding and commanded by the tribe's most puissant warriors and potent spellcasters, they provide a valuable battle advantage to the tribe.

IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

Hobgoblins of the Mailed Fist's design enables a GM to easily insert the tribe into a home campaign; their hill fort bases standing in the kind of desolate, isolated hill range that marks the border of many civilised kingdoms.

Due to the tribe's mercenary proclivities, its warriors appear in a variety of locations and situations – even far away from their hill top fortresses if employed.

Alternatively, a player could play a tribal member cast out of his tribe for some terrible crime. Hobgoblins make excellent fighters, rangers and rogues, but (of course) often elicit negative reactions in civilised nations. The skill and reputation of the Mailed Fist can go some way to mollify these reactions, but such a character will no doubt have more than his fair share of encounters with bigots, racists and so on. In an all-hobgoblin campaign, the players could take the roles of squad members employed to eradicate an infestation of humanoids or other similar menace.

TRIBAL LORE

Character with ranks in Knowledge (local) can learn more about the Hobgoblins of the Mailed Fist with a successful skill check. A successful check reveals all information revealed by a lesser check.

DC 6: This creature is a hobgoblin.

DC 11: The hobgoblin belongs of the Mailed Fist tribe. The Mailed Fist are renowned as doughty, disciplined warriors, some of who fly into battle upon gigantic bats.

DC 16: The Mailed Fist often despatches war bands to serve nearby kingdoms and other employers as mercenaries.

FROM MY CAMPAIGN: LORD MONEL DEHAR

LORD MONEL DEHAR

CR 19 (XP 204,800)

Clad in soot-stained, blood-splattered plate armour this scorched and burnt skeletal lord wields a gigantic greataxe. A palpable aura of death and evil surrounds the warrior.

Male advanced human graveknight fighter 17

CE Medium undead (augmented humanoid)

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +30, Sense Motive +5

Speed 20 ft., base speed 30 ft.; Step Up; **ACP** 0; Acrobatics +4 (+0 jumping), Climb +31, Ride +32

AC 35, touch 14, flat-footed 31; **CMD** 35 (+37 vs. overrun)

(+13 armour [+4 mithral full plate], +2 deflection [ring of protection +2], +3 Dex, +1 dodge [Dodge], +6 natural)

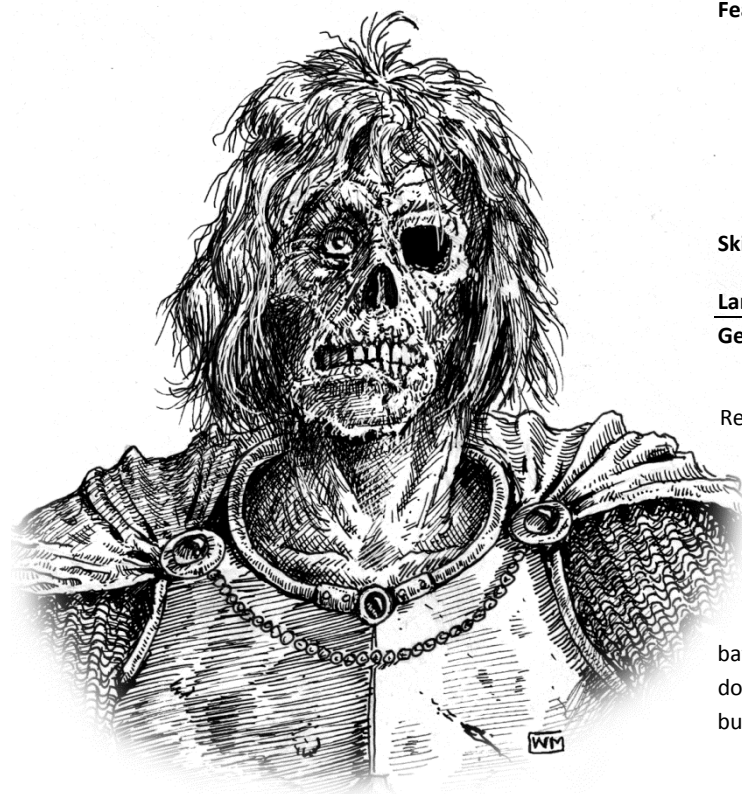
Immune mind-affecting effects, death effects, disease, paralysis, poison, sleep effects, stunning, nonlethal damage, ability drain, energy drain, damage to physical abilities, exhaustion, fatigue, massive damage, any effect requiring a Fortitude save (unless it affects objects or is harmless), cold, electricity, fire

Fort +20, **Ref** +13, **Will** +14 (+18 vs. channelling); **SR** 30

hp 272 (17 HD); **DR** magic/10

Space 5 ft.; sacrilegious aura (30 ft.); **Base Atk** +17; **CMB** +28 (+30 overrun)

Sacrilegious Aura (Su) This aura functions as a *desecrate* spell and Lord Dehar's armour acts as an altar. Any creature that attempts to summon positive energy must make a DC 24 concentration check. If the check fails, the effect is expended but does not function.



Melee +2 human bane adamantite greataxe (Power Attack [-5/+15]) +38/+33/+28/+23 (1d12+28 plus 4d6 fire/19-20 x3) or

Melee slam (Power Attack [-5/+10]) +33/+28/+23/+18 (1d4+16 plus 4d6 fire)

Atk Options Cleave, Critical Mastery (Bleeding Critical, Blinding Critical), Dazzling Display (+44), Greater Vital Strike, Improved Overrun, Lunge, Ride-By Attack, channel destruction (fire), devastating blast

Devastating Blast (Su [standard; 3/day]) Lord Dehar unleashes a 30 ft. cone of fire; 10d6 fire; DC 24 Reflex halves.

Special Actions phantom mount, undead mastery

Phantom Mount (Su [standard; 1/hour]) Lord Dehar can summon a skeletal horse similar to a *phantom steed*, but which can carry an additional rider, with these statistics (AC 18, hp 24, speed 100 ft., fly 100 ft, Fly +17).

Undead Mastery (Su [standard; at will]) Lord Dehar can bend any undead creatures within 50 ft. to his will. Each undead must make a DC 24 Will save or fall under the his control. This control is permanent for unintelligent undead, but an intelligent undead can make a new save each day to throw off the control. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected by Lord Dehar's undead mastery for 24 hours. Lord Dehar can control 85 HD of undead.

Combat Gear

Abilities Str 33, Dex 18, Con —, Int 16, Wis 20, Cha 22

SQ armour training (4), bravery (+4), rejuvenation, ruinous revivification (fire), weapon training (axes [+4], heavy blades [+1], natural [+3], spears [+2])

Feats Bleeding Critical^B, Blinding Critical, Cleave, Critical Mastery, Dazzling Display^B, Dodge^B, Greater Vital Strike^B, Greater Weapon Focus (greataxe)^B, Greater Weapon Specialisation^B, Improved Critical (greataxe), Improved Initiative^B, Improved Overrun, Improved Vital Strike, Intimidating Prowess, Lunge, Mounted Combat^B, Power Attack, Ride-By Attack^B, Step Up^B, Toughness^B, Vital Strike^B, Weapon Focus (greataxe)^B, Weapon Specialisation^B

Skills as above plus Intimidate +44, Knowledge (history) +12, Knowledge (religion) +11

Languages Abyssal, Common, Orc, Goblin

Gear as above plus *cloak of resistance* +2, *belt of giant strength* +4, unholy symbol

Recently identified as the power behind the attacks on the PCs' home kingdom, Lord Monel Dehar is a sinister figure of legend, terror and infamy. Lairing in an isolated stretch of hills he claims as his own, he is surrounded by legions of both unintelligent and intelligent undead. Surrounding kingdoms leave his territory well alone.

Lord Dehar is famed for his depravity, viciousness and battle-skill. Over the long centuries of his life, he has hunted down and slain many valiant knights and has developed a burning hatred for the northern barbarians and their allies.

GM ADVICE: HOW TO USE THE SLOW ADVANCEMENT TRACK

I RECENTLY WROTE ABOUT HOW MUCH I ENJOY USING THE SLOW ADVANCEMENT TRACK IN MY BORDERLAND OF ADVENTURE CAMPAIGN. HOWEVER, USING THE SLOW ADVANCEMENT TRACK (SADLY) IS NOT AS SIMPLE AS JUST PLUGGING IT INTO A NORMAL CAMPAIGN...

A slow advancement campaign is a different kind of beast to a normal campaign. Using the slow advancement track alters the playing experience in several fundamental ways. Diving into a slow advancement campaign without recognising and planning for this is a recipe for disaster. The GM should:

- **Set Expectations:** Your players are likely used to levelling pretty fast – perhaps every 2-3 sessions. With slow advancement, fast levelling is a thing of the past. You need to explain this to the players so they are ready for the experience. Depending on how long your campaign runs, the players may never reach 10th-level (or even 5th). Many players like to plan their characters in advance. With this in mind, discuss how long the campaign will likely last and what level you see the PCs reaching. After all, a PC's build may differ radically if the campaign is destined to never reach high levels.
- **Focus on the Story:** The PCs will not be advancing mechanically – levelling – as often. It's therefore important they progress in other areas, so they have a sense of achievement and accomplishment. The overall story arc of the campaign is an excellent way of giving your players that sense of achievement. Defeating the kobolds threatening the nearby mine, thwarting an attempt to burn down a village or gaining a clue regarding the PCs' shadowy enemy all provide a sense of real achievement. This is particularly true if the players can see how their actions and choices affect the overall campaign.

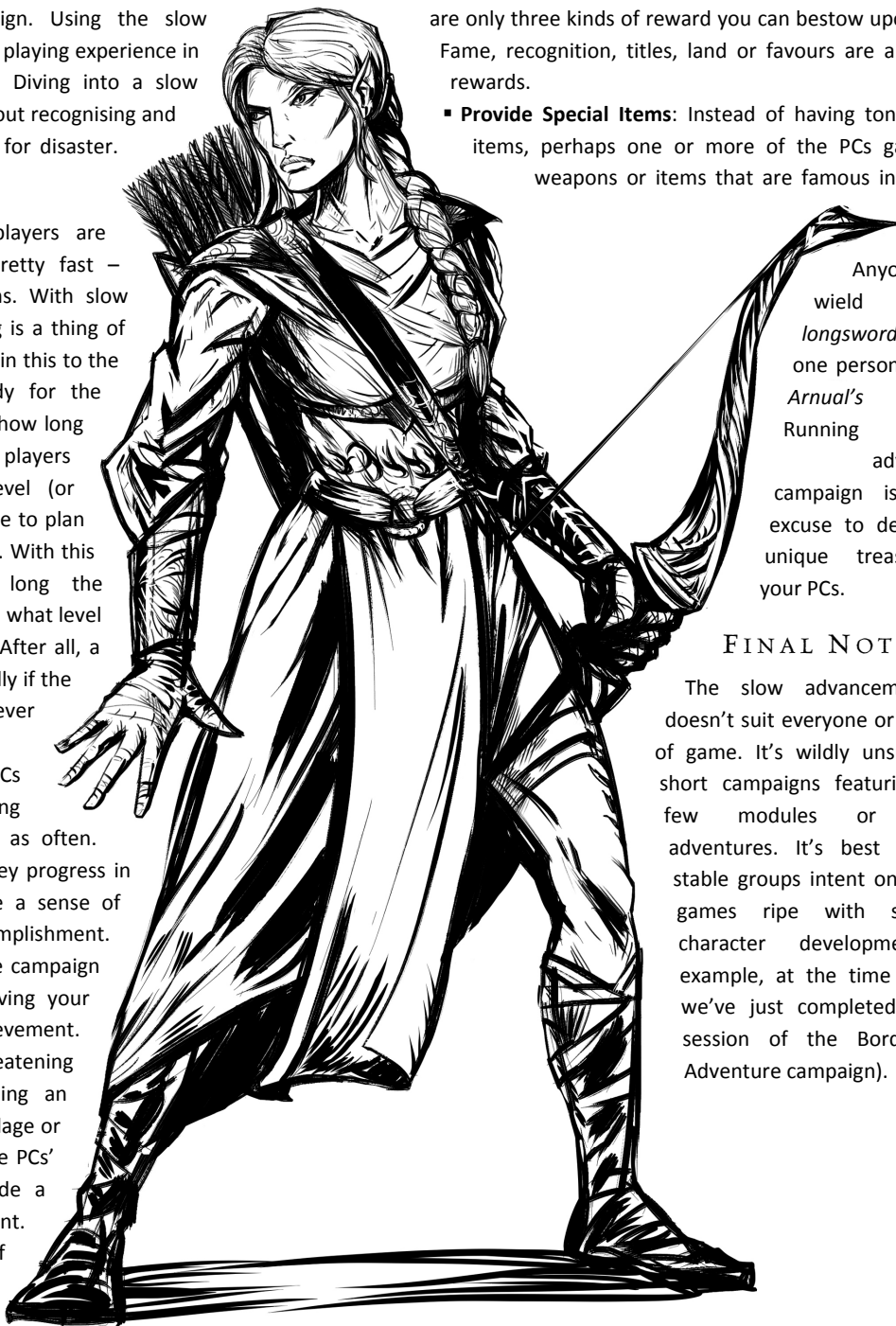
- **Make the PCs Feel Special in Other Ways:** Gold, XP and magic are only three kinds of reward you can bestow upon the PCs. Fame, recognition, titles, land or favours are all excellent rewards.

- **Provide Special Items:** Instead of having tons of magic items, perhaps one or more of the PCs gain certain weapons or items that are famous in their own right.

Anyone can wield a +1 longsword, but only one person can wield Arnual's Bane. Running a slow advancement campaign is a great excuse to design more unique treasures for your PCs.

FINAL NOTE

The slow advancement track doesn't suit everyone or every kind of game. It's wildly unsuitable for short campaigns featuring only a few modules or one-shot adventures. It's best suited for stable groups intent on long-term games ripe with story and character development. (For example, at the time of writing we've just completed our 80th session of the Borderland of Adventure campaign).



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