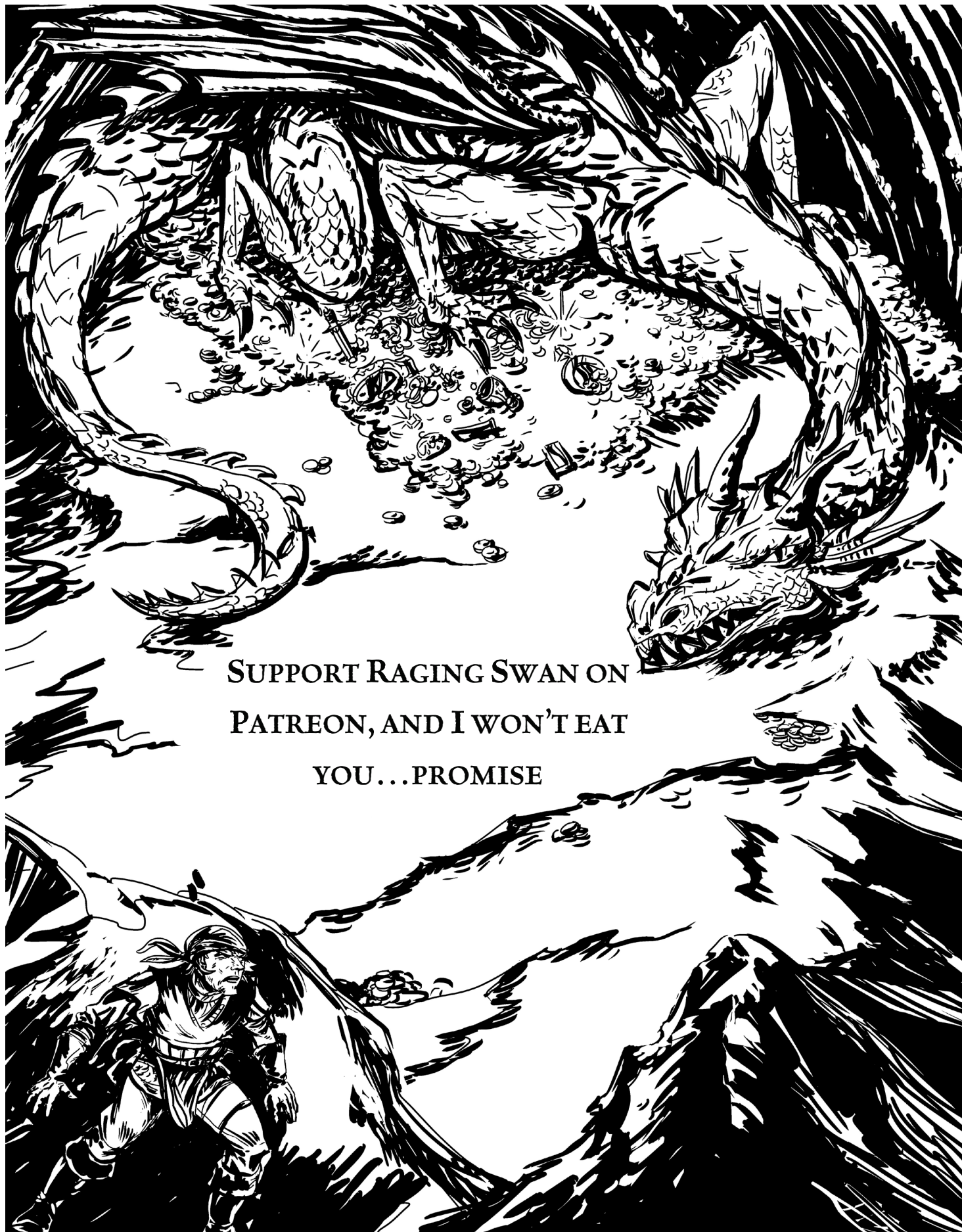


RAGING SWAN PRESS

# GM'S MONTHLY MISCELLANY:

APRIL 2015





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# GM'S MONTHLY MISCELLANY: APRIL 2015

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*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: April 2015*; 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:

- **Subterranean Enclave: Dilath's Hold** Brian Mønster Wiborg.
- **Village Backdrop: Red Talon** Richard Green.
- **Urban Dressing: Elven Town** Josh Vogt.



## FOREWORD

Welcome to *GM's Monthly Miscellany: April 2015*! Herein you'll find excerpts from some of Raging Swan's newest products including *Subterranean Enclave: Dilath's Hold*, *Village Backdrop: Red Talon* and *Urban dressing: Elven Town*.

Last month, I restarted my *Borderland of Adventure* campaign and the chaps are still going strong. They've already managed to get themselves into some tight scraps, but (amazingly) no one has died yet. If you want to keep up with our adventures (now often with pictures of the action), you can read weekly session summaries on my blog: [creightonbroadhurst.com](http://creightonbroadhurst.com).

In other rather exciting news, Raging Swan Press is now on Patreon! We launched early last month and already we've hit our first milestone target, which is tremendous news. The whole reason for the campaign is to get enough support to start paying our hardworking freelancers a decent word rate.

Already, we've been able to triple our rate and I'm looking forward to paying them even more once we hit our final milestone. If you like Raging Swan Press products (and I'm hoping you do) pop over and take a look—you get our books

earlier and cheaper than normal and you even get a warm fuzzy feeling you are helping fund my freelancers' hedonistic, party lifestyles. Even better, when you signup—as a hearty thank you—you get 50% discount vouchers for *Retribution Collector's Edition*, *Shadowed Keep on the Borderlands* and *Against the Cult of the Bat God*.

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](mailto:creighton@ragingswan.com). Alternatively, leaving a review

I hope you get some excellent gaming done this month!



DALY



## GM ADVICE: WHY (AND HOW) YOU SHOULD DESIGN UNIQUE MAGIC ITEMS

*Every player loves magic items. That said, magic items can also be quite boring. The best GMs take the time to make their magic items unique and compelling.*

Magic items make PCs stronger and more capable – they are a vital part of the game. Players love getting them, but once their affects have been added to a character’s abilities or they’ve been used a couple of times they tend to fade into the background.

When you’ve seen one *+1 longsword*, for example, you’ve seen them all. Designing unique treasures for your campaign is time well spent.

I include unique treasures in my *Borderland of Adventure* campaign for several reasons:

- **Flavour:** Magic items with a defined history and place in the world are a great way of stealth world building. If an item was present at certain events or was created or wielded by a powerful or legendary figure the PCs are bound to want to know more. This provides a GM with an excellent opportunity to share cool facts about his campaign world. What GM doesn’t want to do that?
- **Family Heirloom:** A PC who carries a unique magic item tied directly to his family is much more invested in the item than if it were merely a standard magic item. Cool heirloom items include those that are sentient or those whose powers scale as the PC gains in power.
- **Plot Device:** Often a unique magic item can serve as a plot device. Perhaps the PCs possess something the evil villain covets or they are searching for a legendary weapon that can be used to kill

a rampaging dragon, demon or whatever. Hunting for a specific, famed weapon is much more fun than simply buying a bane weapon of the relevant type.

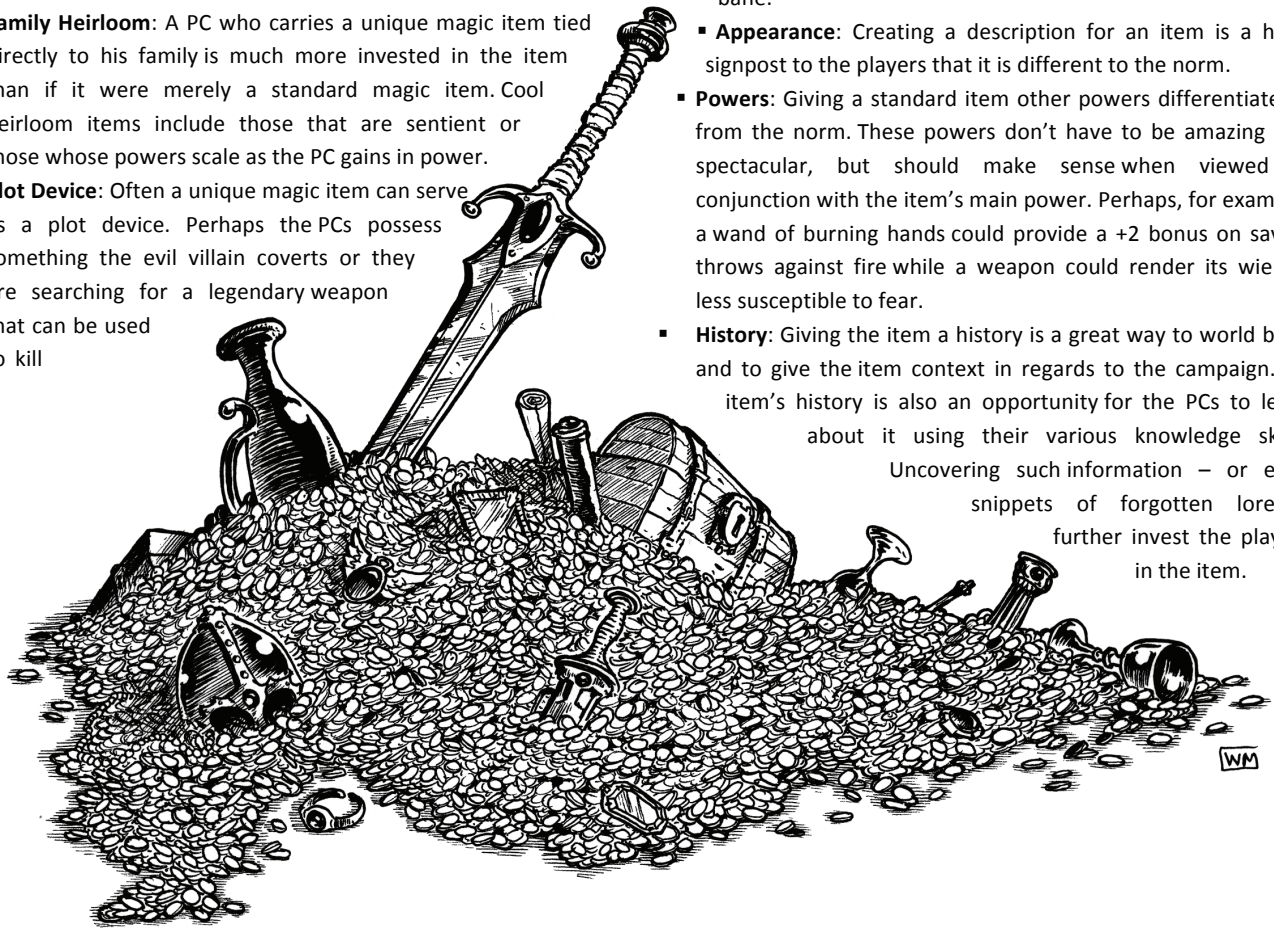
- **Differentiate Hero:** Anyone can own a *+1 spear*, but only one person can wield the *Spear of the North*. Owning such an item marks the hero as someone special – perhaps someone with an important destiny.

### MAKING THEM UNIQUE

Making unique items is relatively simple. A time-crunched GM can create a unique item in a matter of minutes.

- **Name:** A unique item must have a name. The item’s name is a great way of setting the theme for the item (and can also serve as an introduction to its crafter or most famous owner and so on). For example, a sword named “*Arundel’s Bane*” raises the question of Arundel’s identity and why the sword was his bane.
- **Appearance:** Creating a description for an item is a huge signpost to the players that it is different to the norm.
- **Powers:** Giving a standard item other powers differentiates it from the norm. These powers don’t have to be amazing and spectacular, but should make sense when viewed in conjunction with the item’s main power. Perhaps, for example, a wand of burning hands could provide a +2 bonus on saving throws against fire while a weapon could render its wielder less susceptible to fear.
- **History:** Giving the item a history is a great way to world build and to give the item context in regards to the campaign. An item’s history is also an opportunity for the PCs to learn about it using their various knowledge skills.

Uncovering such information – or even snippets of forgotten lore – further invest the players in the item.



## DILATH'S HOLD AT A GLANCE

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Dilath's Hold was founded 400 years ago when the exiled drow nobleman Dilath Abair of Zaccharine fled the drow city of Zaccharine to escape punishment for treason.

Since then, Dilath's Hold has become the centre of the slave trade in the northern Ebon Realms. Dilath Abair recognized his enclave would not survive without trading with Zaccharine, and he knew Zaccharine would always need slaves. He negotiated complicated treaties with several duergar enclaves nearby, and slowly Dilath's Hold transformed into the only slave market near Zaccharine. Today, Dilath's Hold houses a sizable drow population as well as a large duergar contingent. The ancient treaties are the only thing keeping the two races tolerating each other, and lately there have been whispers of renegotiating the treaties...in blood if need be.

### DEMOGRAPHICS

---

**Ruler** Geriath Abair

**Government** Overlord

**Population** 188 (103 drows, 76 duergars, 7 driders, 2 bugbears)

**Alignments** CN, NE, CE

**Languages** Common, Dwarven, Elven, Undercommon

**Corruption** +1; **Crime** -2; **Economy** -1; **Law** 0; **Lore** -1; **Society** -3

**Qualities** Notorious, racially intolerant (dwarves and elves)

**Danger** 10; **Disadvantages** None

### NOTABLE FOLK

---

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

**Alianne the Grey** (location 3; CE female drider ranger 3) Alianne lead the driders of the Web Labyrinth; she always covers her face with a dark grey hood.

**Drugar Stonebelly** (location 5; CN male duergar expert 3) An elderly duergar, Drugar's dark eyes and black beard are well known to visitors to Dilath's Hold.

**Geriath Abair** (location 1; CE male drow fighter 8) A tall, lean drow, Geriath's purple eyes give away no emotions and his body bear the signs of rigorous exercise and more than a few skirmishes with Zaccharine patrols.

**Grumtusk the Vile** (location 8; CE male duergar wizard [conjurer] 7) Always hiding his face under a heavy cloak, Grumtusk's distinct hoarse whisper is known throughout Dilath's Hold.

**High Priestess Naryenn Abair** (location 2; CE female drow cleric 6) This beauty has dark blue eyes and stark white hair.

**Hyradyth** (location 9; NE female drow druid [cave druid] 8) Hyradyth's beautiful features are marred by an infection of small fungi on the left side of her face.

**Steinir the Fleshtrader** (location 4/6; NE male duergar rogue 6) Steinir runs the largest fleshtrader house in the enclave.

**Thanista the Alluring** (location 7; NE female half-drow expert 3) Thanista's grey skin and blonde hair sets her apart, but she bears the scars to prove her position in Dilath's Hold is hard earned.

### NOTABLE LOCATIONS

---

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

1. **Abair Manor:** This huge, stately manor house befits the arrogant nobles dwelling within. It is one of the few buildings in Dilath's Hold protected by its own wall.
2. **The Chained Shrine:** Uncountable pairs of manacles decorate the shrine's exterior walls—a stark reminder of the enclave's most lucrative trade.
3. **The Web Labyrinth:** Dark and gloomy caverns, webs and cocoons cover the walls and ceiling; the webs also form rooms and hallways in the caverns.
4. **Caravan Quarter:** This whole quarter of the enclave serves to accommodate visiting caravans.
5. **The Whip and Leash:** The inn is a rambling one-storey building covered in runic graffiti dating back centuries. Here drinks and food are offered at reasonable rates.
6. **Slave Pits:** Here each slave trader has their own pit or cage; conditions are dirty, but the slaves are usually sold very fast or put to work throughout Dilath's Hold.
7. **Cavern of Delight and Pain:** Tapestries with debased themes cover the cavern walls, the air is heavily scented and several small caverns connected to the central cavern ensure privacy should it be needed.
8. **Home of Grumtusk the Vile:** Within the hollowed out shell of a giant fiendish snail dwells the duergar wizard. Rumours speak of several basements and secret rooms, but no one has ever seen the inside of Grumtusk's home.
9. **Garden of Serenity:** This garden contains a variety of fungi; myconid and basidiroids can be seen within the tangled growth. From here, Hyradyth sends her minions into the Conocybe to fetch rare ingredients for spells and poisons.

### MARKETPLACE

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**Resources & Industry** Slaves and poisonous fungi

**Base Value** 800 gp; **Purchase Limit** 3,750 gp; **Spellcasting** 3rd; **Minor Items** 2d4; **Medium Items** 1d4; **Major Items** –

When the PCs arrive in Dilath's Hold, the following items are for sale:

**Potions & Oils** *knock* (300 gp), *levitate* (300 gp)

**Scrolls (Arcane)** *charm person* (25 gp), *web* (150 gp)

**Scroll (Divine)** *cause fear* (25 gp), *hold person* (150 gp)

## VILLAGE LORE

A PC making a Knowledge (geography) or Knowledge (local) may know some information about Dilath's Hold. A successful check reveals everything revealed by a lesser check.

**DC 10:** Dilath's Hold was founded by a drow nobleman 400 years ago. Today it is the centre of the slave trade in the northern Ebon Realms.

**DC 15:** Dilath's Hold is named after the founder, an exile from Zaccharine. Even today, relations between Zaccharine and Dilath's Hold are strained at best.

**DC 25:** A small group of driders in Dilath's Hold sell their services if the price is high enough. They prefer payment in slaves or rare gems.

## VILLAGERS

**Appearance** Both drow and duergar take great pains over the appearance—mainly to distinguish themselves from their filthy slaves.

**Nomenclature (Drow)** *male* Alak, Dwean, Jerat, Vorn; *female* Faeryl, Lilitha, Triel, Veray; *family* Larayne, Sherathan, Vrinn.

**Nomenclature (Duergar)** *male* Holgar, Petrok; *female* Herdis, Undri; *family* Feldur, Khorvahr.

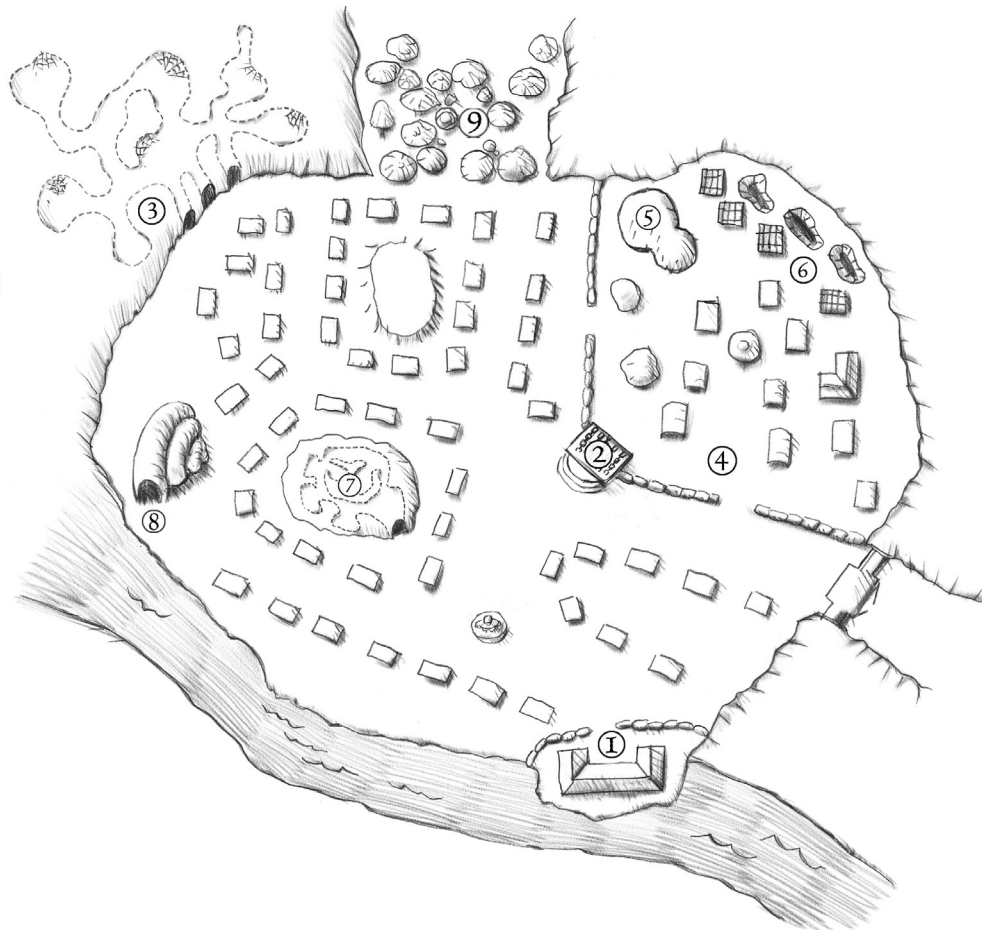
## WHISPERS & RUMOURS

A PC can use Diplomacy to gather information about Dilath's Hold and its surroundings. This takes 1d4 hours and requires a DC 10 check. A PC 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	Drugar Stonebelly threw Steinir out of the inn last night after they got into a heated argument over the slave trade. Steinir has vowed revenge.
2	Hyradyth is not what she seems; she is more at home in Conocybe than Dilath's Hold
3*	Geriath Abair has initiated negotiations with the fleshcrafters of Zaccharine to return to the city.
4	A newly arrived slave is in reality an assassin; his target (and master) remain unknown.
5	Thanista and Naryenn had a bidding war over a slave last week. Naryenn won, but Thanista is looking to free the slave before he becomes a sacrifice.
6	Alianne was once of the same blood as Geriath Abair himself.

\*False rumour



## ELVEN TOWN: SIGHTS & SOUNDS

Use this table to generate the sights and sounds the PCs experience as they move about the elven town. Ignore inappropriate results and simply re-roll.

D%	
1	The morning mist seems to cling to the trees, refusing to burn off even as the day brightens.
2	A group of elven hunters slip into the woods, making no noise as they navigate the underbrush.
3	Elven children perched in the tree branches, silently watch the party pass by below.
4	Clad in leafy garments, elven children prance around the town's central clearing.
5	An artist weaves numerous trimmed branches together to form a basket.
6	Beneath the moonlight, elves form a dancing circle to worship one of their gods.
7	Ethereal singing floats on the breeze, though the musicians are nowhere in sight.
8	An elven druid strolls through town, a friendly bear lumbering beside her.
9	A PC gets the distinct feeling a grove of trees is moving whenever he is not looking.
10	A peaceful river gurgles and ripples as it winds along just outside of the town border.
11	A band of elves light torches, preparing to burn a rotting tree from the forest border.
12	Several elven elders impassively watch the party as they go about their business.
13	As night falls, softly glowing lights wink into being in the darkness beyond the town limits.
14	A stately elf wearing a crown of thorny twigs gives the party a condescending look.
15	Peering up into the leafy canopy, the PCs spot platforms and homes built among the branches.
16	A dozen archers stand loosing arrows at targets across a field.
17	Two elves faces off, testing each other's guard with slim duelling rapiers.
18	A half-elf, obviously an outsider, looks uncomfortable as she walks through town.
19	A red-bearded dwarf trails after an elf, clumsily attempting to flirt with her.
20	An elven youth chuckles as he juggles at least ten stones without fumbling a single one.
21	Enchanting birdsong trills overhead, and birds flutter through the trees.
22	The pattering rainfall hasn't let up for a minute over the past few days.
23	Elves in grey shrouds form a sombre funerary procession along the town's main street.
24	Numerous traps and snares are set in the woods around the town—rather obviously so.

25	A band of hunters return from several days in the forest with much fresh venison.
26	A town resident uses a stick to idly write elvish sayings in the dirt.
27	A slim blacksmith hefts a work hammer that stands almost as tall as him.
28	A supremely sweet smell drifts over from the town's winepress.
29	A drunk elf staggers down the road, swaying like a willow in a breeze.
30	A shabby elf squats in an alley, wearing nothing more than ragged sackcloth.
31	A blind elf uses a wooden staff to tap his way through the crowd.
32	A song of adulation emanating from a nearby home shifts into a mourning tone.
33	As if by a secret signal, every elf in town suddenly falls into unified silence.
34	The subtle grinding of blades being sharpened reaches the party's ears.
35	A dwarf wanders by, openly sneering at elven craftsmanship on display.
36	A muscular elf stomps past, muttering death threats under his breath to no one in particular.
37	This ornate statue appears to be constructed entirely out of animal bones.
38	A large network of knotted vines has been strung over most of the town.
39	Rows of well-tended gardens sit outside almost every home in town.
40	A line of fat fish has been hung up on hooks to dry in the sun.
41	Dozens of oiled furs hang in a shop window.
42	Swatches of leather are stretched on wooden racks, slowly curing.
43	An elf that has fine white hairs covering every inch of exposed skin seemingly glides down the street.
44	Many of the villagers are wearing bear claw necklaces and black fur hides.
45	An elf warrior—missing an ear, with a rather savage scar where it used to be—strides passed the party.
46	A bunch of human lumberjacks loiter at the local inn, oblivious to the scowls aimed their way.
47	What look like earthen mounds are revealed to be underground houses, on second glance.
48	A wooden spout has been jammed into this tree, and drips golden sap.
49	A trio of brooks twine together in this spot to form an odd shape that can't be natural.
50	These boulders have been marked with white and red chalk streaks.
51	Dozens of game paths wind out of sight into the brush, trampled with animal tracks.



52	Out of the whole forest, this one tree stands wholly bare...not a leaf on a twig.
53	A charred shunt of wood is all that's left of this tree, after lightning struck.
54	Several large mushroom rings have grown from the soft earth here.
55	A stink of mildew floats about, heightened after the recent rain.
56	This toppled tree has a flight of stone stairs under where the roots once burrowed deeply.
57	A PC thought it was the wind, but now he's sure those are voices whispering just beyond comprehension. No one else hears the voices.
58	A curious rustling comes from the bushes off to one side.
59	The party discover themselves in a thick grove somehow hidden in the middle of town.
60	The trees on this side of town all appear to be fruit-bearing.
61	Numerous wooden and stone animal dens have been constructed around town.
62	A majestic centaur stands at the town's border, watching the residents with blatant curiosity.
63	A dryad slips out from her tree trunk and dashes off into the deeper woods.
64	The town's leader stalks past, wearing a headdress formed of deer antlers.
65	Elven children wear feathered garments, flapping their arms and making bird calls as they play.
66	Flagons of fine elven wine are set out for sampling and sale at this open-air market.
67	Harvesters haul baskets of berries into town, their fingers and lips stained with dark juices.
68	Dozens of paper lanterns have been hung up in the trees.
69	A spring bubbles up on the outskirts of town, providing fresh water for everyone.
70	Elves are clipping away at the thick, thorny bushes growing around the town.
71	A terrible stench emanates from the town alchemist's shop.
72	A priest marks a newborn elf with sap from the town's holy tree.
73	Green garlands are strung up between all the town buildings and walls.
74	Bright crimson ribbons are tied around every tree trunk in sight.
75	A human stands stripped to the waist and locked in stocks in the centre of town.
76	An elf walks by wearing a pair of wooden shackles around her slim wrists.
77	Hundreds of birds flock overhead, settling into the branches all about.
78	An enormous harvest moon hangs above the trees like a god's golden eye.

79	The evening starlight is unnaturally dazzling, bathing the town in a white glow.
80	The air is abuzz with swarms of winged insects that keep flitting about the party's heads.
81	A pack of wild cats prowls through the town, though nobody appears alarmed.
82	An arrow zips past a PC's ear and embeds itself in a tree trunk just a few paces away.
83	A group of elves stand in a sunny clearing, arms raised as they bask in the warm light.
84	Many townsfolk have gathered for a communal meal in the town centre. They invite the PCs to join the feast.
85	The sharp scent of spiced meat being roasted teases the party's noses.
86	A newly betrothed elven couple have eyes only for one another as they stroll through town.
87	Everyone is going about with dozens of wildflowers in their hair.
88	An elf's vibrant cape is made up of hundreds of leaves sewn together.
89	Clad in silvery armour, an elven warrior strides around town, looking troubled.
90	Elves laugh and play as they bathe in the nearby snow-fed lake.
91	A lone stone cairn has been constructed just outside of the town.
92	All the building roofs look to be covered in layers of mud and moss.
93	A bucket splashes down into the depths of the town's main well.
94	A mirror-calm pond sits in the exact middle of town, with homes built around its edge.
95	The wood used to build these houses appears to still be growing.
96	The streets of this town are demarked on either side by rows of colourful wildflowers.
97	No matter where the party goes, countless squirrels follow, chattering incessantly.
98	A shop window is crowded with intricate woodcarvings.
99	Hooves pound in the distance, as if something has caused a herd of deer to stampede.
100	The inhuman face carved into this massive tree animates and begins talking to the party.

## RED TALON AT A GLANCE

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Huddled in a sheltered cove at the base of lofty cliffs, the tiny village of Red Talon is inaccessible by land for all but the best climbers. Its folk are insular and vague rumours lay cannibalism and devil-worship at their door—with good reason.

Red Talon was founded 20 years ago by the bloodthirsty orc pirate captain Hagruk Stormrider when he retired from full-time plundering; he named the fledgling community after his infamous vessel. In his prime, Hagruk Stormrider sailed to the four corners of the globe in search of booty, visiting many exotic lands during the course of his long voyages. On a remote tropical island Hagruk raided the village of a strange orc tribe, worshippers of a dark god of gluttony and greed called Ukre'kon'ala. In exchange for his life, the tribal priest promised to teach the pirate captain vile rituals honouring the deity which would bring him great power and wealth. Hagruk agreed, making the priest his first bloody sacrifice to the god as soon as he had mastered the dark rites.

With the power of Ukre'kon'ala, Hagruk and his men were invincible: they took dozens of fat prizes and their vessel's hold swelled with plunder. No one survived an attack by the *Red Talon*—the captain and his men ate the crew of the ships they took in gory feasts to honour their new god.

Eventually, Hagruk grew old and settled down in Red Talon village, but would still sail forth on occasional raids. One fateful night in a furious storm, his ship struck the reef known as Devil's Shoulder as he returned to the village. Hagruk and his crew abandoned ship as the galleon started to sink beneath the waves, but they were too slow, and their drowned bodies were washed up on the beach. But the dark power of their cannibal god saved the pirates—Ukre'kon'ala brought some of the crew back from death to unlife as ghouls; Hagruk Stormrider became a ghost.

That was ten years ago. Nowadays, adventurers come to Red Talon to search for the sunken treasure of Hagruk Stormrider and the depraved cult continues to worship vile Ukre'kon'ala; their sacrifices go to feed the ghost captain and his ghoulish shipmates.

### DEMOGRAPHICS

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**Ruler** Berrig Saltblood

**Government** Overlord

**Population** 116 (68 humans, 24 half-orcs, 11 orcs, 4 dwarves, 2 halflings, 6 ghouls, 1 ghost)

**Alignments** N, NE, CE

**Languages** Common, Orc

**Corruption** +2 **Crime** -2; **Economy** -1; **Law** -3; **Lore** +0; **Society** -3

**Qualities** Insular, Notorious

**Danger** +10; **Disadvantages** Cursed

### NOTABLE FOLK

---

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

**Algrid** (location 3; N female dwarf expert 2/warrior 1) Burly owner of Algrid's Creels and Nets, Algrid is a skilful crafter.

**Berrig Saltblood** (location 4; NE male half-orc fighter 3/rogue 3) Retired pirate captain and Red Talon's unelected mayor; Berrig is a leading member of Ukre'kon'ala's cult.

**Captain Hagruk Stormrider** (location 6; CE male ghost fighter 5) The notorious captain of the Red Talon lurks in the tunnels beneath the village church, awaiting the next sacrifice.

**Deryn Kroal** (location 1; NE male human expert 2) Creepy landlord of the Flensed Whale and loyal cultist.

**Father Connel** (location 5; CE male human cleric 5) Posing as a cleric of the sea god Serat, Father Connel is actually a priest of Ukre'kon'ala.

**Thagg Shantyman** (location 2; CN male half-orc expert 2) Crazy (and usually drunk) old lobsterman and former pirate; teller of tall tales.

### NOTABLE LOCATIONS

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

10. **The Flensed Whale:** Red Talon's unwelcoming inn stands in the middle of the village; it has few guests.
11. **The Docks:** Busy during the day with fishing boats and merchant vessels arriving from Deksport and other ports.
12. **Algrid's Creels and Nets:** This shop stocks a variety of general goods, as well as lobster pots and fishing nets.
13. **Saltblood Hall:** This well-appointed house is home to Red Talon's mayor, and once belonged to Hagruk Stormrider.
14. **Village Church:** At first glance a small stone temple to the sea god Serat, the church is in reality dedicated to Ukre'kon'ala.
15. **Ossuary:** Located beneath the church, this charnel house is the lair of Hagruk Stormrider and his undead crew.
16. **Cliffs:** Steep, 300-foot high white cliffs surround the village, making it hard for anyone to reach Red Talon by land.
17. **Devil's Shoulder:** This dark reef is where the galleon *Red Talon* met its doom, and acts as a magnet to treasure-seekers.

### MARKETPLACE

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**Resources & Industry** Fishing, lobsters

**Base Value** 650 gp; **Purchase Limit** 3,750 gp; **Spellcasting** 3rd; **Minor Items** 2d4; **Medium Items** 1d4; **Major Items** –

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

**Potions & Oils** *mage armour* (50 gp), *water breathing* (2; 750 gp each)

**Scroll (Divine)** *bless* (25 gp), *owl's wisdom* (150 gp)

**Weapon** +1 *underwater light crossbow* (2,370 gp)

## VILLAGE LORE

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

**DC 10:** The isolated fishing village of Red Talon brings in some of the best lobsters along this stretch of coast.

**DC 15:** Red Talon is named after the ship captained by the village's founder, the bloodthirsty orc pirate, Hagruk Stormrider.

**DC 20:** The *Red Talon* went down when it struck a reef in sight of the village; the wreck full of pirate booty lies on the sea bottom just waiting for an intrepid soul to find.

## VILLAGERS

**Appearance** The villagers are of diverse appearance and ethnic backgrounds; mostly former pirates, they come from far and wide. Many have at least one tattoo, often several; the men are almost always bearded.

**Dress** Most villagers wear simple, practical work clothes and stout boots; bandanas and earrings are common.

**Nomenclature** *male* Bart, Kazmir, Reory, Saddok; *female* Alana, Danika, Dervla, Vita; *family* Bitterleaf, Helvett, Lazyeye, Okeswabb.

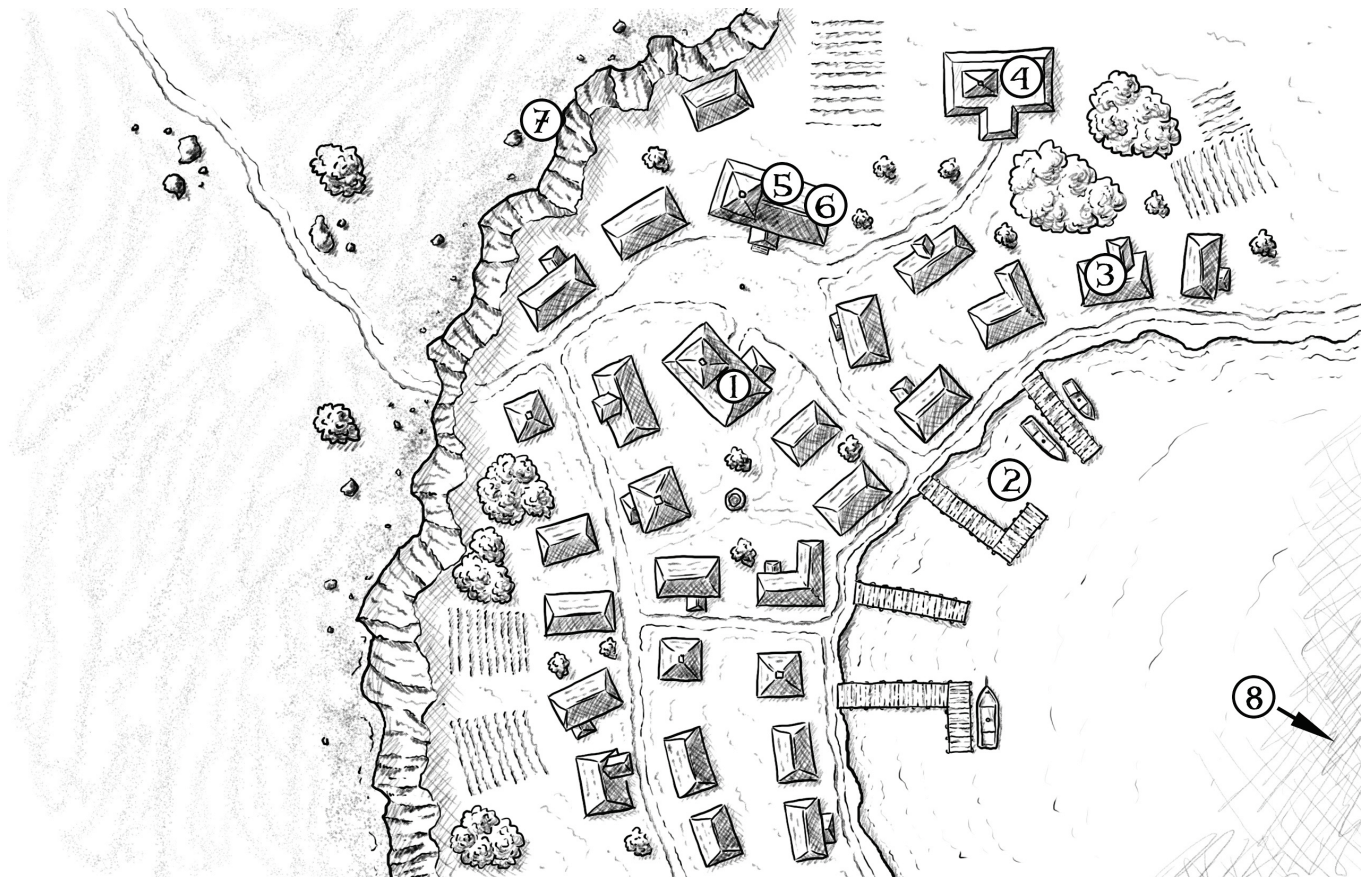
## WHISPERS & RUMOURS

A PC can use Diplomacy to gather information about Red Talon and its surroundings. This takes 1d4 hours and requires a DC 10 check. A PC 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	Hagruk Stormrider's treasure is out there for the taking, but beware the giant octopus lurking in the <i>Red Talon's</i> wreck.
2	Serat has blessed the village again this year—the fishing has been excellent and the lobsters plentiful.
3	Deryn Kroal's daughter, Janna, has a thing for handsome adventurers.
4	Hagruk Stormrider would sail to the four corners of the globe in search of booty, and visited many exotic locales.
5*	The pirate Black-Eyed Saddok hid his chest of plunder in a cave near the top of the cliffs.
6	Algrid came to Red Talon after falling out with the pirates in the nearby town of Deksport. She's welcome here as she makes the best lobster pots and nets on the coast.

\*False rumour



## GM ADVICE: PUTTING THE WONDER BACK INTO WONDROUS ITEMS

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*In the 3rd edition of the world's most popular roleplaying game, magic items got a new name. They were now called wondrous items. Ironically, with the name change they became anything but wondrous.*

For me, the big problem with magic items in 3rd edition was that they became nothing more than a commodity to be bought and sold at the PCs' whim. Even with the move to the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game, this state of affairs has essentially stayed the same. If a magic item's price is equal or less than an settlement's base value, there is a 75% chance the item is available to purchase.

Think about that for a minute.

This means in a village (base value 500 gp) of perhaps 200 people there is a 75% chance a scroll of pretty much any spell of 3rd-level or lower is available. Similarly, a PC in a small city has a 75% chance of finding exactly the kind of +1 weapon he needs (as long as it costs under 4,000 gp).

And, of course, PCs are free to sell magic items they don't want—assuming the local settlement has a high enough purchase limit.

With this development, equipment lists begin to look more and more alike. The quirky, off the wall magic items all but disappear. (Or if they do turn up they are instantly sold). Because magic items can be bought and sold, everyone seems to gravitate to a certain group of items—the so called “Big Six”:

- Magic weapon
- Magic armour
- Ring of protection
- Cloak of protection
- Amulet of natural armour
- Stat boosting item

While I get wanting to be better protected and better at dealing damage I think we've lost sight of something. In the rush to optimise we forget that quirky, odd magic items can be fun, even (dare I say it) wondrous. Just as importantly they promote creative, innovative—and, above all, memorable—game play. For example, I remember when—in a panic—I tried to squashed a certain demilich under an *instant fortress*. I don't remember my character being slightly harder to hit or casting slightly better fireballs in the run up to that fight, but after ten years I still remember that encounter.

### DOWN WITH MAGIC SHOPS!

The easy fix for this is to do away with the virtual magic shops that must exist in every community to support this flourishing trade. (The self-same magic item shops no one ever seems to burgle or otherwise attack). It's a simple matter of supply and

demand. Reducing the supply of magic items inevitably increases the wonder they evoke when they appear.

Several years ago, Raging Swan Press released a series of products called *So What's For Sale, Anyway?* Broken down by settlement type—village, town, city and so on—they listed what was for sale (and even included the odd cursed item!) Using such lists gives the GM more control over the amount and type of magic available in his campaign world.

I was genuinely surprised at the popularity of these supplements. For a while, they were some of our fastest selling products. No mean feat for what essentially was a book of lists, and I think its popularity a symptom of the frustrations many GMs have with the magic shop concept.

### NO SPECIAL MATERIALS EITHER

With their introduction in 3rd edition, adamantine, cold iron and mithral were described as fabulously rare materials much sought after for their quasi-magical properties. Of course these could be bought and sold just as easily—or even more easily—than magic items; 1st-level characters could conceivably afford adamantine or cold iron ammunition if they chose. And, of course, these fabulously rare materials are available in any sizable settlement. To me, that doesn't seem particularly special.

To recapture the wonder of these special materials, their availability must be limited so they once again become special. The commonplace is in no way wondrous, after all.

One of word of caution with limiting the supply of these metals: one knock-on effect of this is monsters with DR cold iron or adamantine become much harder to defeat, so a GM needs to look carefully at encounters featuring such creatures. However, limiting the supply of these items can also lead to new, exciting adventures as the PCs (for example) search for just the right kind of sword to slay the evil fey warlord. Simply popping down to the market to get a +2 fey bane battleaxe, is somewhat less memorable.

### OR ALCHEMICAL ITEMS

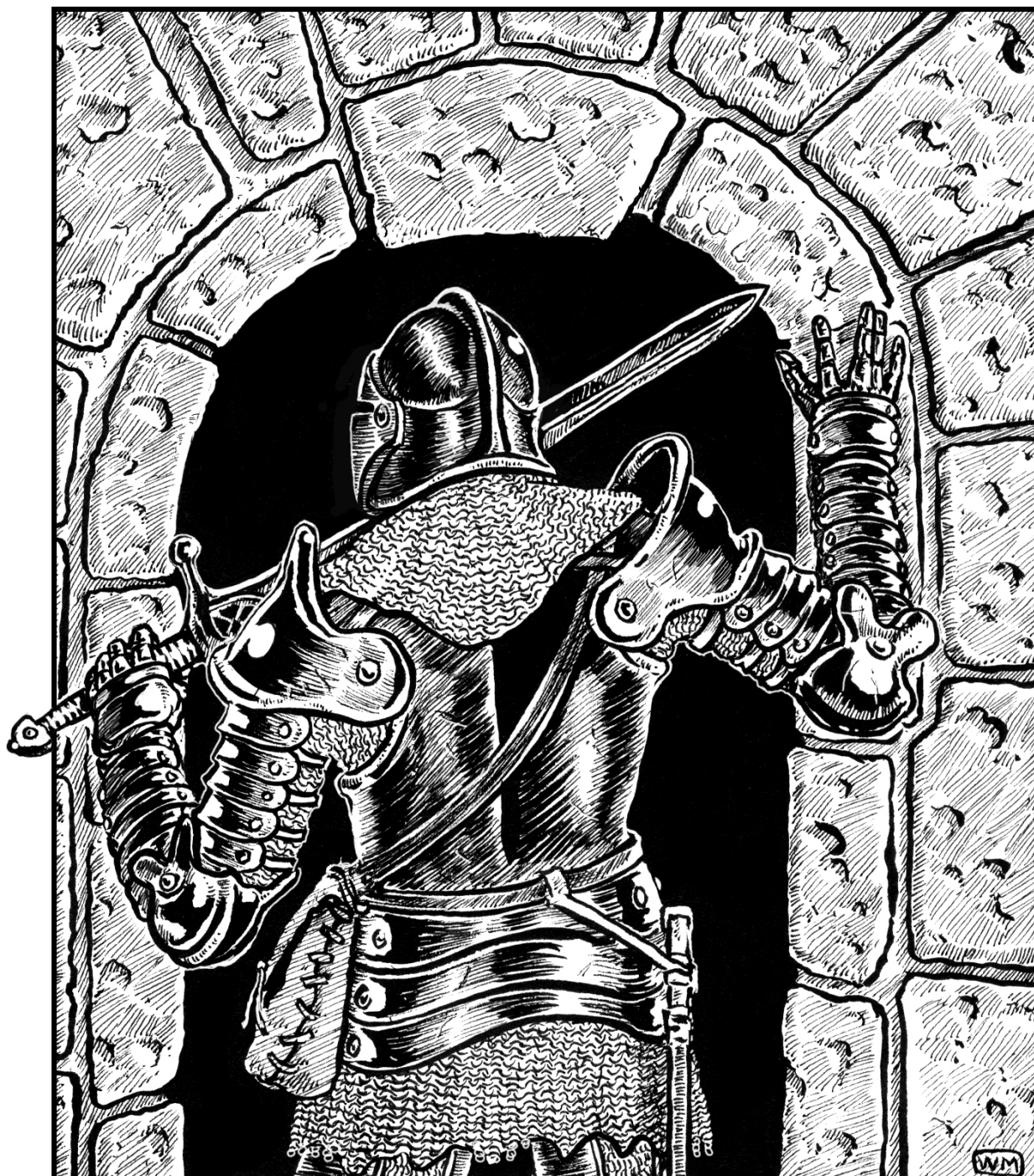
Free access to unlimited amounts of alchemical items, I believe, also erodes the wonder of magic. The idea that a PC can walk into a shop and just buy ten flasks of alchemist's fire seems to be a bit silly. Why would a general provisioners in a village have that kind of dangerous stuff available? Who made it? How did it get here? If there is a proper alchemist in the village, why is he there? Deliberately placing such individuals can help grow the setting and even act as the catalyst for a new adventure!



I have no problem with the general concept of alchemical items, but I think they need to be treated like very minor magic items. GM's should place specific individuals in his campaign with the relevant skills to make such items. That way, when the PCs finally secure access to a supply of alchemist's fire or acid it feels like an achievement and not the "climax" of a mundane shopping trip.

## DESIGN UNIQUE MAGIC ITEMS

I've discussed designing unique treasures before, but I think it bears repeating. Designing unique magic items is cool, and both makes the owner feel special and adds depth and verisimilitude to the campaign. If something is unique it is by default more special than something generic.



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