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GM'S MONTHLY MISCELLANY:

JUNE 2017





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GM'S MONTHLY MISCELLANY: JUNE 2017

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.

Design: Creighton Broadhurst, Jeff Gomez, David N. Ross and Martin Tideswell

Development: Creighton Broadhurst

Art: William McAusland, Matt Morrow and Maciej Zagorski (The Forge Studio). Some artwork copyright William McAusland, used with permission.

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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:

- **20 Things #15: War-Ravaged Land** Creighton Broadhurst.
- **Places of Power: Raveneye Sanatorium** David N. Ross.
- **Village Backdrop: Ronak** Jeff Gomez.
- **Villains** Creighton Broadhurst and Martin Tideswell

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I'm so organised this month, I've surprised myself! I'm well ahead on the release schedule which allows me to consider other things. I've been becoming increasingly interested in trekking, encumbrance, what's in an adventurer's backpack and wild camping. I'm hoping with the arrival of summer I'll be able to go out and run some actual "real live" tests of what would be in my

adventurer's backpack. Hopefully, I won't have too many dangerous random encounters on my adventures. In slightly more mainstream news, I'm beginning to plot the beginnings of a new line for Raging Swan Press. I'm hoping to be able to share the details with you soon.

In any event, herein you'll find excerpts from some of Raging Swan's newest products including *Village Backdrop: Ronak*, *Places of Power: Raveneye Sanatorium* and *20 Things #15 War-Ravaged Land* as well as one of the evil villains featured in *Villains*. I've also included a recent article entitled, "Are You Suffering From Option Fatigue." I'd encourage you to take the design challenge I set in the article at creightonbroadhurst.com. You might surprise yourself!

PATREON

You might be aware Raging Swan Press is now on Patreon. We signed up at the start of April 2015, and it's going rather marvellously. The thrust of our Patreon campaign is to be able to afford better rates of pay for our freelance game designers. As I'm sure you know, the economics of 3PP are notoriously tight, but Patreon gives us at Raging Swan Press a way to increase our freelancer rates. At time of writing, we've already massively increased our word rate to 11 cents a word, which gives me a warm, fuzzy feeling inside. We want to pay more, but to do that we need your help! If you sign up, you get our supplements earlier than normal and cheaper than normal. Even better, you can pledge what you want and cancel when you want. If you are interested in supporting us, check out patreon.com/ragingswanpress or head over to patreon.com and search for Raging Swan!

THANK YOU!

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.

10 PIECES OF BATTLEFIELD DRESSING

After the butchery and death has abated, a battlefield is an environment like no other. Hacked and broken bodies lie scattered about among severed body parts, broken equipment and the general leavings of the slaughter. Exploring or travelling through such a terrible, unique environment should be a memorable experience for the PCs.

Use the table below, to determine what the PCs find on the battlefield. Such discoveries could be nothing more than “dungeon dressing” or could be a hook for an encounter or entire adventure.

1. A corpse—festooned with arrows—lies sprawled on the ground. Almost a score of arrows pierce the unfortunate’s body, although strangely his face is completely unblemished. Nearby, lies the warrior’s small, much dented, iron shield.
2. Here lies a great tangled heap of bodies surrounding the hacked and mutilated body of an enemy champion. Blood soaks the ground and body parts lies scattered about. The enemy champion has been comprehensively looted—of his no doubt fine weapons and armour there is no sign.
3. Crows feast upon the bodies of the fallen in this part of the battlefield. The birds peck and tear at the dead; blood stains their feathers and beaks giving them a somewhat infernal appearance. Unconcerned by folk moving among the dead, they only take flight if attacked or assailed by a loud noise.
4. A ragged, blood-splattered standard yet stands (at a somewhat drunken angle) among the carnage. The fighting was

particularly savage here; piles of bodies lie scattered about. Macabrely, a severed hand yet clings to the banner.

5. Blood from the dead and the dying has flowed and oozed into this small hollow, which is now filled with a veritable pool of congealing blood. A stray dog laps at the blood, seemingly unaware of the surrounding butchery and slaughter.
6. Freshly turned earth—a crude grave—stands amid the slaughter atop a small rise. A broken sword is thrust into the ground at the head of the grave to serve as a grave marker; a helmet hangs from the sword’s pommel.
7. A low moaning emanates from beneath a pile of bodies. Investigation reveals a critically injured warrior mere moments from death. The warrior, who bleeds profusely, has suffered several deep scalp wounds and one of his eyes has been destroyed.
8. A heap of broken equipment shows where the victors have begun gathering up the leavings of the slaughter. Hacked suits of armour, splintered shields, broken weapons and so on all lie here in a pile.
9. A horse—several deep slashes along one of its flanks—wanders among the carnage. Wearing slashed and torn leather barding, the beast is a warhorse—bred to fight. It is skittish and exhausted; the PCs must earn its trust before it allows them to approach.
10. A small heap of bodies is the beginnings of what is destined to be a large funeral pyre. Nearby, lies a salvaged pile of useable equipment, weapons and armour. Slightly further away lies a pile of broken equipment.



RONAK AT A GLANCE

Government Council

Population 68 (68 scaled dwarves)

Alignments N

Languages Ronakee (Hybrid Draconic and Dwarven, understood partially by speakers of either language, or perfectly by speakers of either language with a DC 10 Linguistics check).

Corruption -1; **Crime** -4; **Economy** -1; **Law** 0; **Lore** -1; **Society** 1

Qualities Ancient ancestors, insular

Danger 0

Nobody knows Ronak exists. Or, more precisely, nobody remembers. Ronak was the last hope of a dying trade company, a desperate attempt to settle and explore a distant swamp. When the colony found nothing but lizardfolk, the company did not have enough gold to retrieve their employees. Ronak never heard from civilization again.

The native lizardfolk, despite their peaceful culture, were seen as nothing but savage natives by the dwarves. As the dwarves struggled to survive, the scaled tribesmen taught them how to hunt and fish in these dangerous lands. But cultural misunderstandings and rising tensions quickly led to violence. In a night of blind fear, the dwarves massacred the lizardfolk.

Centuries later and the dwarves have reverted to a more savage state, transforming bit by bit from organized colonists to hunter-gatherers. They are haunted and guided by the ghosts of the exterminated lizardfolk who seek the continuation of their culture. The dwarves speak a hybrid of Dwarven and Draconic, build thatch huts amid the colony's ruins and worship a mixture of altered dwarven deities and heathen serpent gods.

Most disturbingly, the Ronakee now bear scales and jagged teeth, and grow to proportions unnatural for a dwarf. Perhaps one day soon the lizardfolk will be born again, this time from dwarven mothers.

The dwarves of Ronak believe civilization to be but a myth, but they cannot stay hidden forever. While some Ronakee may cautiously seek to learn more from trespassing outsiders, others view interlopers as evil spirits who must be destroyed.

VILLAGERS

Appearance: The Ronakee resemble a mixture between dwarves and lizardfolk, but vary greatly in their degree of transformation. Some grow shaggy beards over pink flesh, while others have rows of pointed teeth and scratch at malformed scales.

Dress: The Ronakee dress in furs and hides, as well as clothing woven from swamp plants. Children paint their faces with mud and adults sport intimidating tattoos.

Nomenclature: *male* Balgrik, Barik, Durnak, Garuk, Rorgek, Throrvak; *female* Frimaz, Gimdatz, Talez, Uslatz, Yadaz; *family* Bronzewall, Blackspine, Stonespear, Thundertooth.

MARKETPLACE

Resources & Industry Fish, peat

Base Value 500 gp; **Purchase Limit** 2,500 gp; **Spellcasting** 3rd; **Minor Items** 2d4; **Medium Items** 1d4; **Major Items** –

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

- **Potions & Oils** *oil of shillelagh* (50 gp), *potion of hide from animals* (50 gp), *potion of darkvision* (300 gp), *potion of gentle repose* (300 gp)

VILLAGE LORE

A PC making a Knowledge (geography) or Knowledge (local) check may know something about Ronak. A successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser result.

DC 15: The Ronakee are dwarves who have forgotten all ties with civilization.

DC 20: The Ronakee are decedents of a dwarven colony that disappeared almost 500 years ago.

DC 25: The dwarves of Ronak massacred the lizardfolk who used to live in these lands.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

A PC can use Diplomacy to gather information about Ronak 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	The gravepits to the north are filled with bones of the ancestors.
2	Urraz Scaleborn thinks those without scales should be expelled from the council.
3*	The Ronakee are descended from lizardfolk.
4	Smoking sawleaf allows communication with the spirits of the ancestors.
5	In funeral rites, the Ronakee consume the corpse raw, then add the bones to the gravepits.
6*	Long ago, a group of dwarves invaded the bog and tried to murder the Ronakee. They failed.

*False rumour



NOTABLE FOLK

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

Dunaz the Fisherman (location 1; NG male scaled dwarf ranger 3) Dunaz is far progressed in her transformation. Her large eyes pierce muddy water and she swims like a lightning snake with the help of a malformed tail.

Elder Karhok (location 3; CN female scaled dwarf cleric 8) Blind Elder Karhaz is the oldest of the Ronakee. After instruction from his god, he split his tongue in twain with an axe. Now he spits prophecies of rebirth, while raising his claws in reverence to Sskalaz. He reviles outsiders as evil spirits.

Hildaz Scaleborn (location 4; CN female scaled dwarf barbarian 6) Feared and respected, Hildaz is the tribe's best. Past rows of jagged teeth, she dribbles froth at any who displease her. Hildaz often fights with her brethren, but she is a valuable tribeswoman. She hates outsiders.

Hinrok Throatsinger (location 5; CN male scaled dwarf bard 4) Hinrok Throatsinger comes from a line of bards. While his forbears played the lute, Hinrok intones modified dwarven epics in rough chants. He is fascinated by outsiders.

Tordaz Mudrunner (location 5; LN female scaled dwarf fighter 5) Though decisions are made in collective by all parents, Tordaz holds the most sway. She is respected among her peers for her patient and fair judgement. Tordaz is open to outsiders, but is highly defensive of her people.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

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

11. **Bitter Bog:** Bitter Bog surrounds Ronak for 50 miles in all directions, isolating it from the rest of the world.

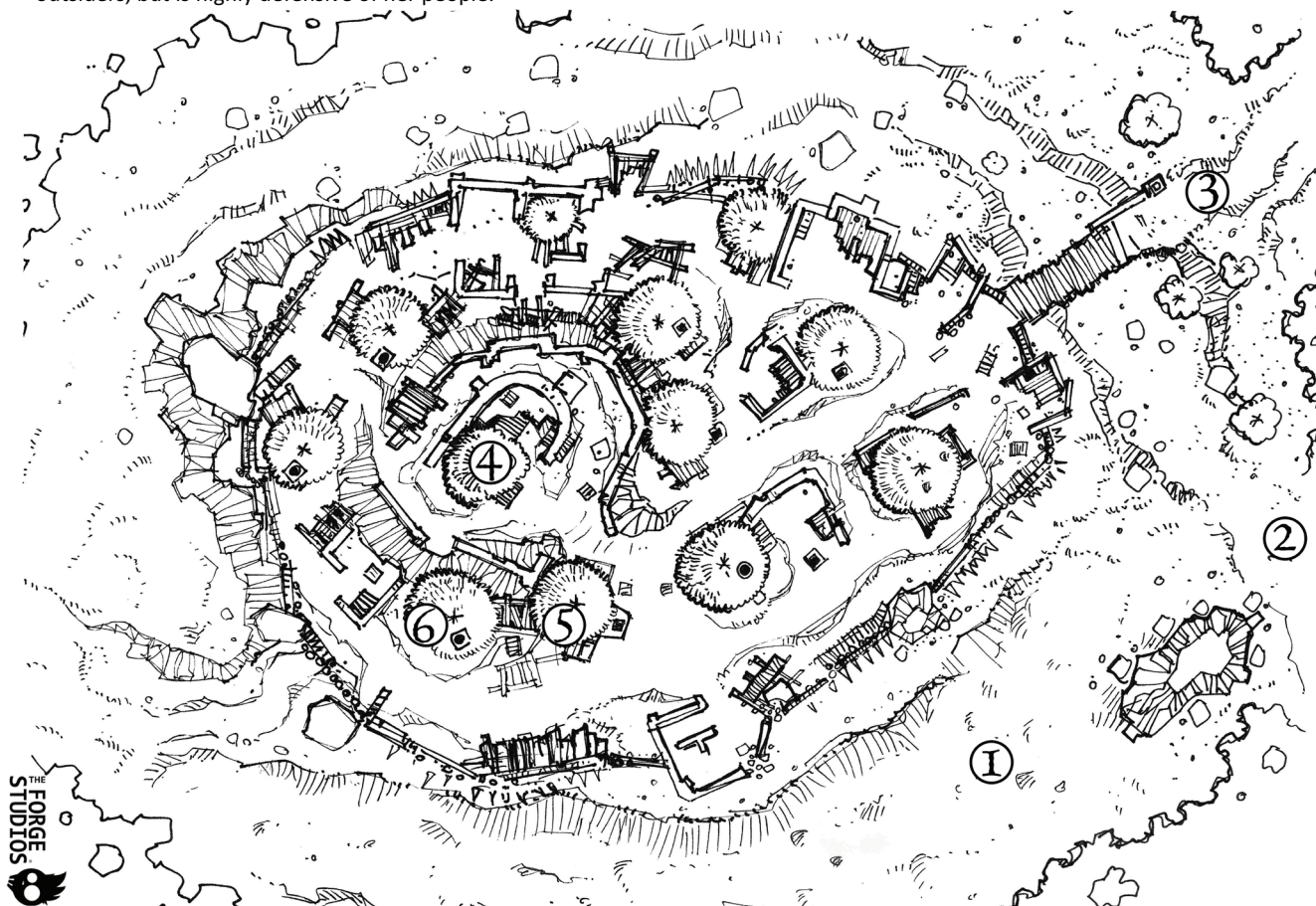
12. **Fangwaters:** The Fangwaters, a saltwater spring where alligators do not tread, is an excellent fishing ground.

13. **Gravepits:** When the dwarves of Ronak massacred the lizardfolk, they threw the charred corpses into mass graves. Centuries later, the Ronakee view the Gravepits as sacred, a place for meditation and reflection where the ancestors' whispers can be heard.

14. **Scaleborn House:** The Scaleborn family are closest to lizardfolk, and they wear their mutations with unusual pride.

15. **Spirithouse:** Hallucinogenic sawleaf smoke fills the spirithouse at all times. Hunters pray here, and the villagers seek counsel among the vapours.

16. **Temple of Sskalaz:** The Temple of Sskalaz was once a temple to the dwarven god of protection. However, the elements have reshaped the statue into the shape of a stone serpent, and religious customs have followed suit.



RAVENEYE SANATORIUM AT A GLANCE

Ruler Lady Alumora Raveneye

Population 83 (49 humans, 2 dwarves, 3 elves, 8 gnomes, 6 half-elves, 5 half-orcs, 11 halflings) plus visitors

Alignments NG, LN, N (staff), NG, N, CN (patients)

Languages Common

Resources & Industry Alchemical items, curse-breaking, long-term care, containing those who endanger themselves and others

Travellers can find the lonely Raveneye Sanatorium looming over the intersection of two backwater roads. Once a bulwark against the dangers of the wild, the sanatorium now presents the only opportunity for magical healing in an often-overlooked region. Here, the cold but efficient Lady Alumora and her staff contend with magical maladies and imprison those who are beyond help until new treatments are developed. Many come from afar to acquire Lady Alumora's rare alchemical remedies.

Adventurers might visit Raveneye to identify or cure their own maladies, unlock hidden magical powers or to seek help for another. The party might also be hired to escort here or even free a hapless lycanthrope, vampire-to-be, possessed innocent or natural spellcaster unable to control her powers.

LORE

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

DC 10: Patients are sent to Raveneye Sanatorium when they suffer from curses, madness, uncontrolled magic or other supernatural afflictions that make them a danger to themselves or others.

DC 15: Raveneye Sanatorium has grown steadily since it was founded thirty years ago. There are always more patients taken in than are cured.

DC 20: The sanatorium makes use of dangerous and questionably-legal substances in subduing and treating patients.

NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the patients and workers are nothing more than ordinary individuals.

- **Appearance:** Almost everyone in Raveneye looks tired and at least a little unkempt. Few sleep well and fewer care about the impression they make on others. Patients dangerous or restless enough to get shackled have marks on their wrists and ankles.
- **Dress:** Patients wear simple linen clothes without fasteners—easy to slip on or off, easy to repair and hard to injure anyone with. Staff wear grey, white or pale blue robes with aprons.

- **Nomenclature:** *male* Aberrick, Egger, Sarman, Vansarr; *female* Constance, Fidelia, Linseed, Pru; *family* Dunn, Livewood, Pallman, Silversmith.

Some of the inhabitants, however, are notable:

Chaplain Sister Marvielle Silverblossom (location 4; NG female elf cleric 2) Sister Marvielle knows the patients better than anyone and hears much, although she prefers not to gossip.

Chief Attendant Zox Ironwood (location 8; CG female gnome cleric [god of knowledge] 5) Zox relies on guidance from Lady Alumora and Erzot Chargrave to know what treatments are most likely to work. He oversees the other attendants.

Doctor Erzot Chargrave (location 2; N male dwarf expert 3) Doctor Chargrave diagnoses new patients and locks up anyone meeting a wide variety of ambiguous standards for at least temporary observation.

Head Orderly Janik Quinn (location 3; LE female human commoner 2/warrior 1) Janik oversees the other orderlies who ensure patients don't wander and whips those who cause trouble.

Lady Alumora Raveneye (location 8; LN female human wizard [universalist] 9) Lady Alumora is the founder and chief physician of Raveneye Sanatorium.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

A PC can use Diplomacy to gather information about Raveneye Sanatorium 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	Recently, more patients and visitors than usual have been critically injured or killed in the upper ward.
2	The alchemists at the sanatorium use dangerous poisons and herbs to sedate and treat the more extreme cases.
3*	The healers dissect any dead body found or killed within a mile of the sanatorium. (In truth, patients sometimes will their bodies to the healers for the furthering of the healing arts.)
4	Lady Alumora is the best physician but you must convince Doctor Chargrave that waiting for him to observe your symptoms over time would take too long before seeing her.
5	The apprentices who run the apothecary accept custom orders, but only from those who do them favours.
6*	Lady Alumora has hired bandits to capture travellers who will not be missed to use as extra test subjects for her frightful experiments.

*False rumour

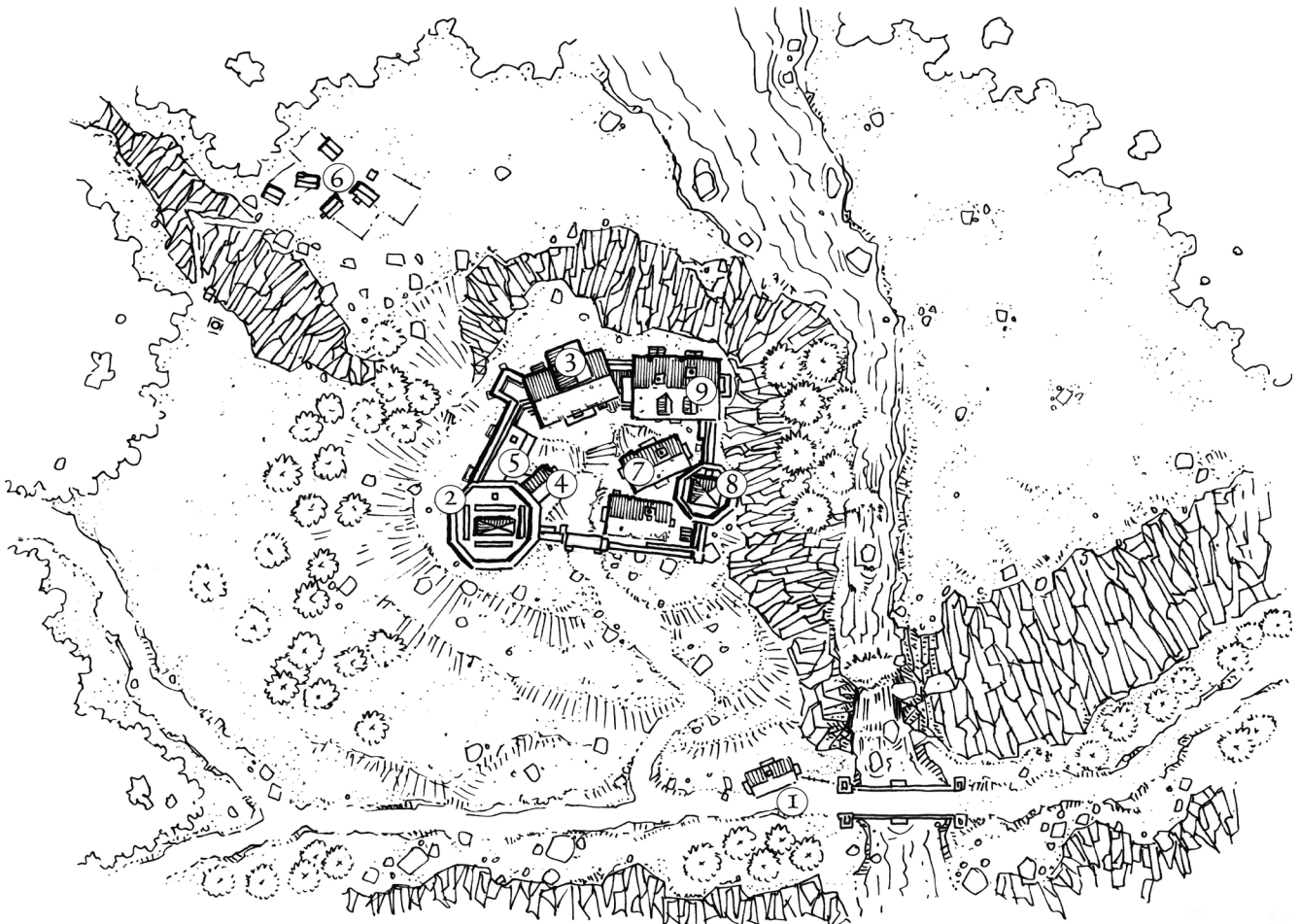
NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Most of Raveneye Sanatorium comprises locations of little interest to adventurers. A few locations, however, are notable:

1. **Tollhouse at Roserock Bridge:** This is the first point of contact visitors have at the sanatorium. Visitors must pay a 1 sp toll to cross the bridge whether they are visiting the sanatorium or not.
2. **Hospital Tower:** The most unwell patients as well as staff and visitors injured by patients rest here while they recuperate. Here works Doctor Erzot Chargrave.
3. **Garden Ward:** These shared rooms are used by the most stable and self-sufficient patients. The Garden Ward hosts numerous patients.
4. **Raveneye Chapel:** The simple chapel has minor trappings for a variety of faiths and is open to anyone. Here Sister Marvielle tends to patients needs and leads services to all major deities.
5. **Apothecary:** This large apothecary constantly bustles with activity to meet the needs of Raveneye's many patients. The staff are keen to try out their own concoctions and only sell

their excess stock of more common creations to those submitting to their experimentations.

6. **Botanical Garden:** This garden grows a variety of herbs and magical plants, many of which are dangerous. Its gardener—Warmark Ironaxe—sells excess herbs and drugs to line his own pockets.
7. **Dormitory:** The dormitory houses most of the staff and hosts visitors. Many of the staff come from families that have served the Raveneyes for generations. Most are loyal to their mistress.
8. **Laboratory Tower:** The laboratory tower contains chambers used to examine patients as well as Lady Alumora's personal chambers. Here she formulates new remedies, potions and elixirs
9. **Upper Ward:** These locked rooms keep the dangerous patients isolated. Visitors are not often granted access to this area; most rooms are stoutly secured here. The inmates' movements and freedoms are carefully managed to keep the other patients and staff safe.



VILLAINS: TERAIM ARASTEN

As tough as the rock of the mountains that spawned him, Teraim the One-Eyed is a brutal, unstoppable killer for hire...

A drunken savage, Teraim has been variously employed as muscle, for the purposes of extortion, or as an executioner. No job for Teraim is too big or small if the price is right. He has no qualms about killing anyone or anything – as the notches on his wicked morningstar, Widowmaker, attest.

Background: Some cultures believe that children cannot be born evil. Teraim Arasten surely disproves that rule. Banished by his clan at the age of 11 for the brutal and drawn-out murder of another young dwarf, Teraim became almost feral. He lived in the wild for several years and it was during this time that he lost his eye in a fight with a wolf, which almost cost him his life.

One day Teraim, barefoot and wearing little more than rags and a crude wolf-skin cloak, staggered into a village, half-starved and desperate. The blacksmith there – a kindly man named Dunstan – took pity on the emaciated young dwarf and foolishly welcomed him into his home.

For three years, Dunstan cared for Teraim and schooled him in the ways of metalwork whilst attempting to civilise the brute. It was, ultimately, to no avail. Teraim, by now a burly youth with a strength forged by the smithy, bludgeoned his benefactor to death one night in a haze of alcohol-fuelled violence leaving a grieving widow and an orphaned son in his wake. Teraim even made off with much of Dunstan's wealth and a suit of armour (which the dwarf wears to this day), consigning the smith's family to a life of poverty.

Since then Teraim has been the instrument of pain and death for many unscrupulous merchants or noblemen.

He can most often be found boozed-up on dwarf spirits in a tavern, awaiting his next purse. His signature item is his morningstar – Widowmaker – which he looted from the tomb of a long-dead priest during service with one of several mercenary companies all of which ultimately tired of the brutal and savage warrior.

Personality: Teraim is almost entirely devoid of emotion. He is oblivious to the cries of his victims and sees only his personal gain in their suffering or death.

The pursuit of wealth to furnish his need for splendid lodgings, the services of whores (whom he treats appallingly), and a near-endless supply of ale drives him to commit ever-worsening acts of appalling violence and cruelty.

His greatest motivation, however, remains his sole weakness. Teraim is an alcoholic who very often completes his tasks while deep under the influence of strong spirits. He now fights virtually from memory. He is slower than he should be and carrying more weight than is good for him, as a result of his excessive consumption of all kinds of alcohol.

Mannerisms: Teraim is unable to read or write, despite the best efforts of the elders in Dunstan's village. His illiteracy is a source of great embarrassment to the dwarf and one of the many things that can spark an explosive outbreak of violence.

Needless to say, Teraim is quick to anger and not one for conversation. He ordinarily shuns company and simply lets Widowmaker do the talking. When drunker than usual, he can sometimes be found slurring the words to an old folk song that Dunstan's wife sung to him to soothe his nightmares.

Distinguishing Features: The intimidating warrior wears a leather patch over his right eye and pays handsomely for his beard to be trimmed and braided in the style of his kin – something which stands out compared to his generally unkempt appearance.

Whether wearing armour or not, Teraim never lets Widowmaker leave his side.

TERAIM ARASTEN

CR 7 (XP 3,200)

Male dwarf fighter 8

LE Medium humanoid (dwarf)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +8 (+10 vs. unusual stonework), Sense Motive +2

Speed 20 ft.

ACP -6; **Acrobatics** -5 (-9 jumping), **Climb** +2, **Swim** +2

AC 24, touch 11, flat-footed 23; **CMD** 22 (26 vs. bull rush and trip); +4 dodge vs. giant subtype foes (+1 Dex, +9 armour [+1 *half-plate*], +4 shield [+1 *heavy steel*]); **Shield Focus**

Fort +10 (+12 vs. poison), **Ref** +6, **Will** +7 (+9 vs. fear); +2 vs. spells and spell-like abilities

hp 88 (8 HD)

Space 5 ft.; **Base Atk** +8; **CMB** +11 (+13 bull rush)

Melee +1 *morningstar* +14/+9 (1d8+7)

Ranged mwk throwing axe (range 10 ft.) +10 (1d6+3)

Atk Options Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack (-3 attack, +6 damage), Vital Strike, +1 vs. goblinoids and orcs

Combat Gear *elixir of fire breath*, *potion of cure moderate wounds*

Abilities Str 16, Dex 12, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 6

SQ armour training (1), bravery (+2), stonecunning, weapon familiarity, weapon training (flails +1)

Feats Improved Bull Rush, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Shield Focus, Toughness, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (Morningstar), Weapon Specialisation

Skills as above plus Appraise +0 (+2 vs. metal or gems), Knowledge (dungeoneering) +6, Knowledge (engineering) +6

Languages Common, Dwarven

Gear as above plus *cloak of resistance* +1, 20 gp

ADVENTURE SEEDS

Teraim is likely encountered in the dark corner of a tavern, well-oiled with liquor.

Often in a foul mood, it is not long before he begins to pick on one of the other patrons in the taproom or begins to make lewd and graphic suggestions to a terrified serving wench. If the PCs intervene, a brawl immediately ensues and although Teraim does not use lethal force, he takes great delight in beating anyone in his way. Rescuing the target of Teraim's attention gains the PCs a friend who could prove a useful future contact able to provide local news or other small resources (such as a place to lie low, news and rumours and so on).

Subsequent encounters with the dwarf escalate as Teraim either reminds the PCs of the beating he meted out to them or tries to reassert his dominance over his new best enemies.

Alternatively, the PCs may be hired to hunt down Teraim and bring him to justice by the orphaned son of Dunstan the smith. Now grown to manhood, the young man thirsts for revenge against the dwarf responsible for destroying his young life and breaking his (now dead) mother's heart. Ironically, his father's death warped and twisted the young man's outlook on life. Now bitter and consumed by revenge, he is little better than Teraim (although he attempts to hide this from the PCs).

Finally, one of the PCs' enemies could hire the dwarf. Along with a gang of hired thugs and hangers-on, Teraim hunts the PCs down and begins to frequent the tavern in which the PCs are staying. His presence in the taproom scares away many of the establishment's other customers. Late one night, he strikes, attempting to cut the PCs down in the taproom. If the battle goes badly, he grabs a terrified serving wench cowering under a table and threatens to kill her unless the PCs let him go. If he escapes, anger over his humiliating defeat consumes him. Several weeks later – ragingly drunk and with a much larger gang of hired thugs – he attacks again. This time, he fights to the death.

ENCOUNTERS

Chance encounters with Teraim probably occur in a dive or other back-alley drinking establishment. He is no-doubt half drunk when the PCs arrive and in a bad mood.

The PCs could encounter Teraim (and/or his minions) in one or more of these encounter groups:

EL 8 (XP 4,800): Teraim Arasten and two Thugs (CR 3 each, page 10).

EL 9 (XP 6,400): Teraim Arasten and Grash the Destroyer (CR 7, page 6).

EL 10 (XP 9,600): Teraim Arasten, two Brawlers (CR 5 each, page 10) and four Thugs (CR 3 each, page 10).

EL 11 (12,800): Teraim Arasten, Grash the Destroyer (CR 7, page 6) and four Brawlers (CR 5 each, page 10).

LORE

Characters can learn more about Teraim Arasten with a successful Knowledge (local) check. A successful check reveals all information gained by a lesser result.

DC 17: This is Teraim Arasten, a famed dwarven warrior and notorious drunk known for his sudden, terrible anger.

DC 22: Teraim is wanted for several murders, including that of the man who adopted him after he was cast out of his dwarven home. His favoured weapon – Widowmaker – is a vicious spiked morningstar. He is never without it.

DC 27: Teraim wears a patch over his right eye. he lost the eye beneath in a vicious wolf attack when he was younger.



ARE YOU SUFFERING FROM OPTION FATIGUE?

I think we've lost our way. Over the last two decades or so there has been a general rush (perhaps even a stampede) toward ever increasing amounts of choice in our games.

While I love Pathfinder and its rich complexity, I don't want games so stocked full of options I need dozens of hardback books to keep up with the available options. Having that many options is utter madness and leads to choice paralysis.

Do you know what is better?

A good story, exciting challenges and memorable characters.

Of the three, a good story and exciting challenges are fairly self-explanatory.

But what do I mean by memorable characters? Frankly I don't care which new and/or "cool" mechanic you use to slay your foes. To me, what is important is the character behind those mechanics. I've said it before and I'll say it again. The *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook* has an amazing amount of player options within its covers. With seven races, eleven classes (if you ignore the different flavours of clerics and wizards) and hundreds of magic items, spells and feats I defy anyone to have exhausted the various options within that book. I've been running Pathfinder since the playtest and I certainly haven't. I don't think my players have either.

AS A PLAYER

Instead of focusing (or obsessing) over which new cool feat or spell to take instead work on your PC's non-mechanical aspects (personality, background and personal development). That's what sets your character apart from a piece of paper with some numbers and name scribbled on top.

(Incidentally, these aspects of your PC's design—personality, background and suchlike—are the elements of the game hardest for publishers to sell; imagine the sales for *Complete Personality* or *Ultimate Background*!)

AS A GM

From one GM to another: it's okay not to allow every option under the sun in your game. Sometimes less is more. Stripping away extraneous options allows you to focus on the game's bedrock. Focus is a wonderful thing. It provides flavour and clarity; it strips away the "noise"—the unimportant and extraneous distracting crap we seem to be filling our games with these days. It enables us to concentrate on what's important.

Instead of spending hours going through umpteen books in search of something new the PCs haven't faced before instead focus on crafting exciting and memorable quests, opponents,

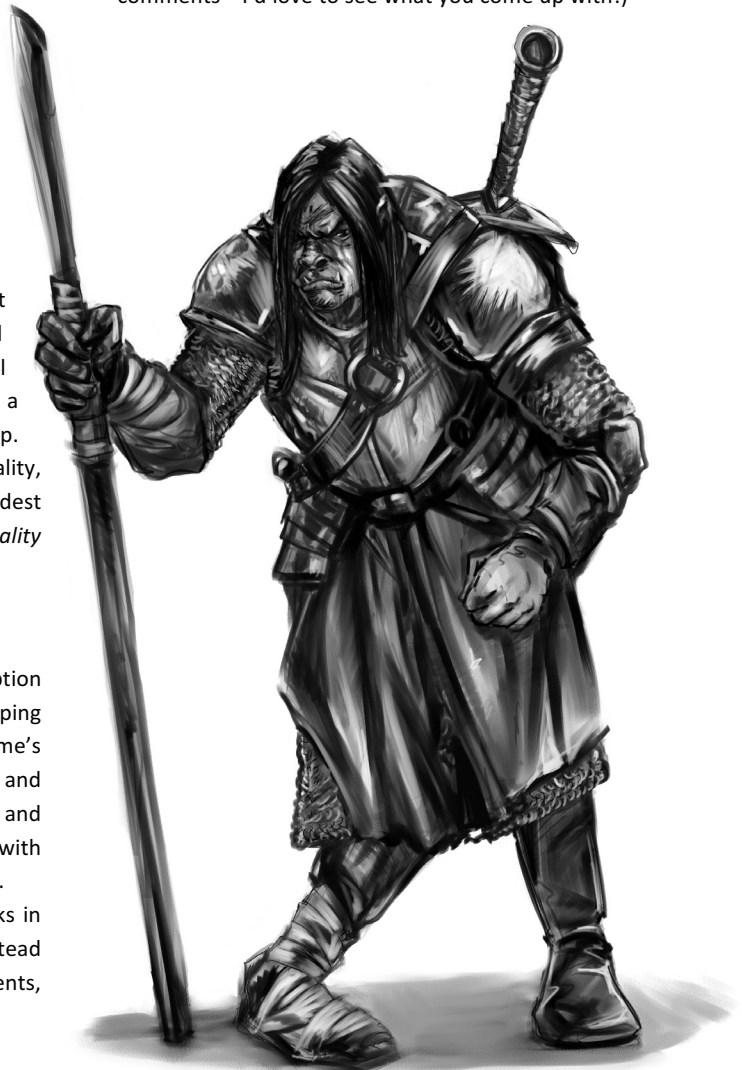
encounters and adventures. That's what will live in your group's memories.

THE DESIGN CHALLENGE

Gygax once said that the hallmark of a great player was the ability to think imaginatively and creatively.

If you are a player, here's a design challenge: take one of the standard, "boring" race/class combinations—for example, a human fighter, halfling rogue or elf wizard—and in a short paragraph describe a compelling, unique and flavoursome neophyte adventurer you'd like to play.

GMs: do the same thing, but take a standard monster—for example, an ogre—and make him unique, flavoursome and memorable. Make him an NPC your players will remember for ages. (And if you do this, please head over to my blog—creightonbroadhurst.com and leave your design in this article's comments—I'd love to see what you come up with!)



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