

# Almanac 1



This product requires the use of the Dungeons & Dragons (R) Player's Handbook, Third Edition  
published by Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

*Pommer*

# Almanac 1

- 2 Editorial**  
*Yours truly, talking about the issue.*
- 5 Reviews Section**  
*Five reviews of PDF products.* R.E.B. Tongue & Jason Shoemate
- 8 The Depths of the Earth**  
*How to make the legendary dungeons you've only read about.* Bernard Taylor
- 12 The Gold Rush**  
*What happens after you've started to explore the dungeon.* R.E.B. Tongue
- 15 Levelling Up Your Game**  
*How to make your dungeons more exciting.* Jason Shoemate
- 17 Lessons from History**  
*The Quest for the New World...* Robert Conway
- 20 Putting the SF in Fantasy**  
*A Fantasy Space Race!* R.E.B. Tongue
- 23 Hosting a Campaign Online**  
*How to run a D20 campaign on the net: the do's and do not do's.* S. Lyle Raymond
- 27 Extraordinary Cavalry**  
*Bringing a new meaning to the term 'Beasts of Burden'* Robert Sullivan
- 32 Lost Alley**  
*They've been trapped for centuries: can the PCs escape?* James Carter

## Preview of Lemurian Dreams.....

- 40 The Exile**  
*The tale of one who must choose between his magic and his home.* Christopher Scaturro
- 42 The Exile: Notes**  
*Notes to accompany 'The Exile'.* Christopher Scaturro

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**TRANSFINITE  
PUBLICATIONS**

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# Editorial

Well, here it is - the first issue of Almanac, and I hope the first of many. This magazine attempts to fill a niche that, as I write this, has grown wider with the death of D20 Weekly. That niche is a regular PDF magazine, offered every month, to provide an alternative to the print publications now offered. How are we different to the others, you ask? Why should I put down my five dollars every month for this magazine when there are magazines such as Dragon on the market?

To put it simply, Almanac will focus on ideas as opposed to rules (and as such is hopefully useful to anyone involved in fantasy role-playing, whether they use D20 or not). Where new rules are presented, they will not be simply for the sake of new rules, but to back up these new concepts and ideas. The articles in this issue are given as an example – you will not find a single prestige class, new spell, new magical weapon, or anything of that sort in these pages. Such items are available by the thousand, on and offline. Almanac will try to present new ideas, new concepts that perhaps you had never thought of before, or try to bring new life to old ideas.

To look at this issue, we have a few pieces about that old staple of the game: the Dungeon. A piece on designing a deep dungeon, a version of Greyhawk castle for your home campaign, the whys and the wherefores. The following article 'The Gold Rush' talks about the probable consequences of the opening up of such a huge dungeon on the local area, and how many adventures can be created to take advantage of this – in fact, how whole campaigns can be created around the premise of a huge dungeon without the PCs ever actually entering it!

Departing from the core theme, we have a piece on 'Extraordinary Cavalry' describing beasts of burden you would ordinarily be reluctant to trust a saddle pack to, let alone a PC – beasts that you would ordinarily kill without a thought. Now they can be used in a quite different way. 'Hosting a Campaign Online' is a comprehensive guide to setting up a 3E campaign on the net, providing all manner of valuable ideas and concepts that will serve to make the whole process far easier – and anything allowing you to get in more gaming has to be good! 'Lost Alley' is something of an experimental piece, detailing the inhabitants of an alley that has become stuck in time due to dealings with demonic forces – can your PCs escape, and can they free the captive inhabitants?

Three columns premier in this issue. The first will follow the theme of each issue, and Jason "Doc Ezra" Shoemate covers in great detail some tricks to try and improve your dungeons. The second, 'Lessons from History', will take a series of historical events and look at how they can be adapted for a D20 campaign – this issue covers the search for the New World, and all the exciting adventures of exploration that it can provide. Finally, we have 'Putting the SF into Fantasy', covering the race for the Moon. (Yes, I know it sounds odd. Read it first before passing judgment – it actually makes more sense than it sounds. Maybe your PC will get to utter the immortal words, "One small step for an elf, one giant leap for elvenkind....")

Then, to close, we have a preview of the publication which will be launching next month, on August 1<sup>st</sup>: Lemurian Dreams, a magazine covering fantasy short stories, but providing notes and statistics for the D20 System, to make it easier to simply drop them in your campaign. Read 'The Exile' by Christopher Scaturro, a preview of a whole magazine around this theme, soon to come.

This magazine, like every magazine in the world, will live or die dependant on two factors – articles and readers. We need articles, and always will. If you have an idea, send it in. If you see one of the article ideas posted on the website and think you'd like to take a crack at it, then write in. We will also always need readers, so please keep reading! If you have any thoughts, ideas, concerns or queries, then please write to me, at [Methuslah@tongue.fsn.net](mailto:Methuslah@tongue.fsn.net) - I will always be happy to answer any questions you may have. You can also join the Yahoo Group of Transfinite Publications, available through our website (at [www.transfinitepublications.com](http://www.transfinitepublications.com)), and get involved in discussions about the latest issues.

We at Almanac will be guided by what you, the readers, want. The layout of the magazine is one obvious point – it has been optimised for printing, in terms of internal artwork and article layout. Is this what you want, or would you like something different? If something else is wrong, then let us know, and we'll see what we can do to make it right.

I'd just like, if I may, to write a brief hello to any OD&DITIES readers who've bought this issue: thanks. Thanks for helping me get this far – without you, Almanac would never have got off the ground. I hope you enjoy this issue!





A Normal Day at the Almanac Offices...

I'm sorry that I've been rambling on for so long – chalk it up to over-enthusiasm. A brief note on upcoming issues: as the theme of Issue 1 was 'the Dungeon', future issues will also have themes. Issue 2 will cover 'Apocalypse', Issue 3 will cover 'War' and Issue 4 will cover 'Arcana Unearthed' and 'The River'. Almanac 2 will be on sale on August 1<sup>st</sup> (indeed, as you read this it has been sent off to layout – unless of course August has already passed, in which case – never mind. Back issues make this too confusing....), and Lemurian Dreams 1 will be on sale soon after. This certainly isn't all that Transfinite Publications has in store – we'll have some surprises coming up over the next few months and years, I assure you. Well anyway, for now, goodbye. (After all, you skipped over this bit to get to the articles. You're just bored and thought you'd look at the useless Editorial. Don't worry, I don't mind. I'm used to it. Sniff.)

May your dice roll high!

*Richard Tongue*

Richard Tongue,  
Editor, Almanac

↑NIIH IH M YKMOJ  
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As a special bonus, the first person to correctly give the meanings of the runic inscriptions throughout the issue will receive a free copy of Issue Two of Almanac, or Issue One of Lemurian Dreams. Send in replies to [Methuslah@tongue.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:Methuslah@tongue.fsnet.co.uk)

# Reviews

## **Locus – Jalston**

*(Creative Mountain Games)*

Mark Alexander Clover

This product is intended as a 'player's perspective' of the town of Jalston, not only covering the geography of the town but also outlining its history, and the political, economic and religious bodies present. Essentially, this is a gazetteer of the same type as those for Greyhawk and the Scarred Lands, and in my opinion this is an excellent idea. Rather than outlining full details of a world or area, this is a product you can hand to a player in preparation – an invaluable tool if a campaign is to be set there, especially if the players originate from this town. Other companies could do well to follow such examples. (A player's guide to Green Ronin's Freeport would be most welcome, for example).

Back to the product itself. When reading it as a DM, it is important to remember that this is intended for player's consumption, and as such there will be little material for the DM – no stat blocks, none of the secrets of the setting, nothing of that type – this will be covered in an upcoming product.

The book briefly runs through the history of the town, and then moves to providing short descriptions of the buildings in the town, what services are available and a little on the people who provide them. Although some of these are the old fantasy clichés, many of them are quite original. The mundane nature of some of the businesses alerts you to the fact that this is designed to be a working town, providing the goods and service you would expect – so there are bakeries, slaughterhouses and carpenters, areas perhaps not normally noted for high adventure but still an important part of any town.

If I would have any complaint about the town, it is that Jalston seems to be rather cluttered with shops, and too few people to use them. Almost every house is detailed as a shop of some kind, and although there are a few private houses they are in the minority. This is a minor issue only however, on an excellent supplement. As it stands now, perhaps the best use would be as an origin for a group of PCs – this would provide them with all the information they would realistically know about their home. If the DM's guide to Jalston is as good as the Player's Guide, then the combination will be tough to beat.

## **Lexus Culture Class – County Clergy**

*(Creative Mountain Games)*

Mark Alexander Clover

When I first saw this product, I immediately wondered whether it would be of any use at all, given the fact that the cleric class in 3E is general enough to serve most

needs. This, however, is intended for an NPC class, on a par with the Adept or the Aristocrat. As such, the use becomes more apparent, for I would argue that there is no 'religious' NPC class at the moment. It is a natural gap – it would not be expected that a fully fledged cleric would be stationed in a tiny hamlet, yet a clerical order would still surely wish some representation – and the 'County Clergy' fills this gap well.

To look at the supplement itself, it is only two pages of game material, but that is well presented. The 'County Clergy' themselves are outlined in a little detail, with focus on the diversity of this class. Although it is well done, some more specific detail would have been welcome, more on a par with that presented for the Trundlefolk. To be fair, it is intended to serve for any deity, like the cleric class, and to cover as wide a range of possible characters as possible. On a power level, the class itself is on a par to the other NPC classes. I would not recommend a player run a character of this type – considerable fleshing out would be needed – but that is not the point of the product. As a new NPC class, it works well, and is easily adaptable to any campaign.

## **Lexus Culture Class – Trundlefolk**

*(Creative Mountain Games)*

Mark Alexander Clover

This short item is one of the best of its type I've ever seen. In a remarkably short space the author manages to provide sufficient detail of a culture type rarely explored in D20 – the Gypsy. A short section provides detail on the Trundlefolk themselves, their appearance, their culture and the problems they have had with other cultures. Although the specific example of the Kingdom of Toeffrus is given, this piece is generic enough to be easily used in any setting, whilst given enough specific detail to be useful. The rules material given is also interesting, providing new NPC classes for the Trundlefolk that replace the Warrior and Adept classes. The Shaman class, which replaces the adept, is interesting and relevant given the cultural differences, but I would argue that the Warrior class given is not really necessary. Although it is only a couple of pages of game material, it is my opinion that this product could provide many hours of campaign use. While there probably is not enough to use a fully-fledged PC without considerable fleshing out, that is not the intent of the product – it is intended for NPCs rather than PCs, and it serves this purpose well.

## **101 Collection**

*(Studio Ronin)*

Philip J. Reed

The **101 Collection** compiles three of Philip J. Reed's fantastic PDF products into one handy package for an

excellent price. It includes **101 Spellbooks**, **101 Spell Components**, and **101 Mundane Treasures**, all revised based on feedback from their original release, and printer-friendly black-and-white versions of the same documents, without the beautiful artwork of Christopher Shy. These books combine to present a tremendous amount of excellent d20 material, most of it easily adaptable to other games. Superbly illustrated, well-designed, and filling a niche too often ignored by other gaming products, the collection is one of the best "bang for your buck" PDF gaming purchases currently available.

While much of the material is absolutely original, **101 Spellbooks** contains a fair number of spells, feats, and other material designated as Open Content in sources from other publishers. Despite the d20/OGC boom of producers, surprisingly few companies have taken the leap to actually begin incorporating material from somewhere other than the System Reference Document. Reed presents content from nearly two-dozen sourcebooks alongside his own contribution of more than 101 tomes of arcane wisdom, forgotten lore, and handicraft. There are spells galore, a decent selection of feats, an excellent section introducing a whole slew of new poisons, and random generation tables for the whole shooting match. If you're looking for something special to drop in the next evil wizard's library, or if you've ever been stuck trying to make up a title for some tome your players have acquired, this is a must-have.

**101 Spell Components** presents a variant on the rules for power components located in the DMG. These components, divided by spell descriptor, can be used with a successful Knowledge (arcana) check (and perhaps an increase in casting time) to add power or potency to one's magical incantations. The components range from the concrete (an attach's tusk) to the very abstract (losing half one's hit points in a round) to the environmental (casting during severe weather or an eclipse or while shrouded in magical darkness). Each component contains some descriptive text explaining how it is that such an item can become imbued with magical power, followed by detailed effects, casting modifiers, and the gp value of such an item. While a few of them might seem a touch unbalanced (spontaneously generating scrolls if one carries blank parchment in a scroll case), most of them are very useable and the mechanics well-balanced. This PDF is also a must if you need to decide what exactly is in all those jars in the alchemist's lab or what sorts of things the local magic shop keeps in stock.

Last but not least, there's **101 Mundane Treasures**. The title is a bit misleading, as there's nothing boring or ordinary about the treasures presented herein. The book presents a bewildering array of non-magical armor, clothing, jewelry, weapons, musical instruments, and miscellaneous gear to spice up the next trade day or bazaar your players encounter. Each item gets a nice description, including historical notes in some cases to work the items into the lore of your campaign, any rules

information necessary, and a base price. This is perfect for making your party's next shopping trip something out of the ordinary, and also provides you with a stack of items to be included in hordes of treasure to add a dash of variety to the loot.

All in all, this collection makes an incredible resource for gamemasters and players alike, providing tons of richly detailed material to add variety to characters, treasure rooms, and town marketplaces alike. The value of the collection is immeasurable for those that don't have hours and hours of prep time for each and every game session, as Reed's creations are ready to drop in at a moment's notice and add that elusive element of detail to any game. Do yourself a favor and pick it up today.

### **The Book of Hallowed Might**

(Malhavoc Press)

*Monte Cook*

Put plainly, Monte Cook is d20. One of the chief authors of the core rulebooks that launched the third edition of the world's most popular fantasy roleplaying games, he has been at the forefront of both d20 open gaming publication and the PDF publishing boom. His Malhavoc Press has cranked out a steady stream of high-quality source material since the earliest days of the d20 boom. Now, following up the successful **Books of Eldritch Might**, Cook offers **The Book of Hallowed Might** to balance the scales for divine spellcasters and their divinely inspired warrior compatriots. This PDF presents hundreds of spells, feats, and magic items, all with a holy (or unholy) bent, as well as his oft-downloaded variant ranger class, a new spin on paladins, and a smattering of prestige classes.

In addition to the variant core classes, the book also presents a variant alignment system, along with rules for dealing with alignment restrictions and alignment-based spell effects if the system is implemented. For those that aren't huge fans of the stark black-and-white morality and ethics of the standard alignment system, this is an excellent solution that still allows for the use of all those alignment-dependent magic items and spells already in the game. Each character has the standard two components in their alignment, along the good-evil and chaos-law axes, but those components are also rated numerically from 1 to 9, representing just how steadfast in that particular portion of belief the character is. This allows for a much greater range of alignment interpretations to be presented, while preserving an ingrained portion of the game mechanics and all its dependent effects. It's a nice piece of design that should serve as a nice middle ground between chucking the alignment system completely and restricting player options and character design.

The feats present a pair of new categories, Blessed and Oath feats. The blessed feats are just what one might expect -- feats that one earns access to by pleasing one's divine patron. Oath feats are a bit more complex. By swearing to accomplish a very specific task in a set

amount of time, the character can gain bonuses to combat abilities, magical prowess, or diplomatic persuasiveness in pursuit of that goal. It's an interesting system, though many players may balk at spending multiple feats for an ability with such potentially limited application. In a campaign driven by very specific quests, however, the oath can be quite a powerful thing indeed.

Aside from these new mechanical additions to the game, there are the requisite spells, prestige classes, monsters, and magic items, but all with Cook's signature skillful design. The spells are well-balanced, interesting, and fill useful niches in the existing lists -- in short, very likely to be of interest to players. The magic items are mostly those designed around implementing the new spells, and all are slanted

(naturally) towards the divine classes. Some enhance class abilities of paladins or rangers, while others are geared towards those characters frequent crusades against evil. As with all Cook's entries, these "crunchy bits" are likely to be of interest to any player or gamemaster looking for a little variety to spice up the game.

Malhavoc has been, and continues to be, one of the finest sources of d20 material out there, and the continued commitment to the PDF medium for publishing means quality product at very reasonable prices. If you have never picked up one of their products before, now is a great time and this is a great product. You'll soon be looking to fill in the back catalog once you get a chance to peruse the fare here.

# LEMURIAN DREAMS

Lemurian Dreams, the new magazine from Transfinite Publications, launches in August!

In each issue will be found fantasy short stories, designed to be of extra value to your D&D campaigns. As well as the stories themselves, each issue will include 'Author's Notes', providing valuable conversion information.

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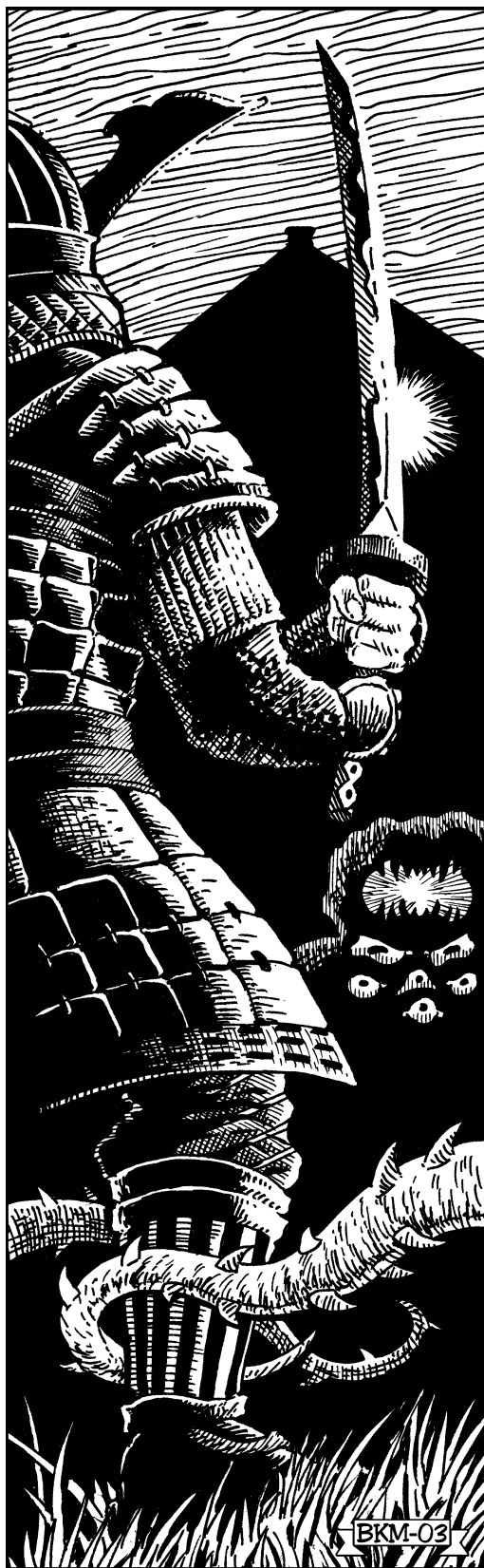
LEMURIAN DREAMS 1:  
August 1st!

**TRANSFINITE  
PUBLICATIONS**



# The Depths of the Earth

Bernard Taylor



Greyhawk, Blackmoor, Tegel Manor, The City State of the Invincible Overlord. All of these are names to conjure with, names from the earliest days of role-playing. And they all have large dungeons associated with them. Castle Greyhawk, with level upon level of monsters, treasure and other related devilry. Blackmoor, ten levels of the same. Tegel Manor, a huge, sprawling haunted house filled with horror. The City State of the Invincible Overlord, with a huge complex of underground chambers below (detailed in the excellent 'Wraith Overlord' expansion). The name of the game is, after all, *Dungeons and Dragons*. Not Wilderness and Wyverns, or Cities and Centaurs.

The huge, sprawling dungeon complex is often seen as something of a cliché. After all, it is hard to design, hard to explain, and can ultimately become boring. This article will cover the reasons for a return to the dungeon, back to the roots. How it can be useful to both beginning and advanced DM's (Dungeon Masters, remember!), rationalizing it, and designing it. And more importantly, how to get prolonged use out of it. If a group of PCs simply descend through a dungeon once, clearing it of monsters, and then never return, then all the hard work that has been put into designing it is wasted. This article will illustrate ways in which the dungeons can be reused, again and again.

What is a dungeon? A dungeon is a series of underground passages, rooms and caverns, filled with monsters and treasures. It is an excellent place for a DM to learn his technique, because it is an enclosed environment. Much less free-form work is required when a party is romping through a dungeon, because your notes already illustrate what is waiting in the passage to the left. It is not necessary to cope with unplanned diversions through Gnarly Forest, or the Desert of Unquenchable Thirst. It is recommended, however, that a beginning DM should not attempt to create the sort of fifteen-level, three-hundred room monstrosity suggested in these pages – start with a couple of levels with maybe a dozen rooms in each. Possibly you could take the dungeon maps out of a published supplement, such as *Sunless Citadel* or *Forge of Fury*, and simply fill them with your own monsters and contents.

For advanced DM's, a massive dungeon can often be a challenge of a different type, and a way to keep the focus of his players tight. If you have a group that has a habit of wandering off in tangents to the plot, then put them in an environment where this is much harder to do, where the plot is more obvious and tightly focused by its very nature. Also, there is always a value in returning to the roots of a system. If you began with dungeon crawls years ago, try one again, if only for



nostalgia's sake. If you have never run through one, then remember that the system was designed with dungeons in mind, and try one, if only to see what the system, even the Third Edition system (the motto of which was, 'back to the dungeon') was designed to do.

Another advantage of the dungeon is if you are trying to introduce your players to a new campaign world. The dungeon environment means that they are restricted to only a small area, perhaps a couple of villages and a small town or city, which limits the amount of work you are required to do. This can be useful if you are working on a homebrew world, or if you are waiting on additional material for an existing campaign setting and wish to avoid entering areas not yet charted. The nature of the dungeon allows you to focus on any important aspect of the campaign world – the principal adversary can be represented, an element of the history of the world can be explored, or some of the common creatures can be encountered. Or all three. Once your players are comfortable with the campaign world, then you can venture forth into the wilderness.

Another way in which a massive dungeon complex can be useful is for conventions. Say you are in the habit of running D20 games at conventions, either local or national. Design a large dungeon crawl, taking maybe a couple of weeks, and then you will not have to do any more design work for years. Dungeon crawls can be excellent for conventions – a minimum of back story means that less time is wasted, and the themes are those that almost every D20 player will be familiar with. It should also be able to accommodate any level of party, and any party type – even druids and rangers can be catered for with a little forethought.

So, for whatever reason, you have decided to create a dungeon crawl. The first thing to decide is what scale you wish to take this to. Are you after a night's adventuring or a campaign? How much will you be using this work? It is fruitless designing a massive complex if you will only be spending four hours in it. A one level piece will soon be exhausted if you plan to set a campaign around it.

Another question that must be answered before you begin to design your dungeon is whether you wish it to be tailored to the needs of a specific party, or whether you wish to prepare it for general use. Will you be using Psionics, or accessing the other Planes of existence – will your players wish to explore these options. Are there any additional sourcebooks you wish to incorporate? All of this is good advice if you are beginning a normal campaign (I normally come up with a list of books to use and then limit myself to those specifically for that campaign), but it is especially useful in this situation.

Like a campaign world, a mega-dungeon need not be designed all at once; in fact it is probably best if it is not. It need not be a simple series of levels descending



into the ground, either – there is always room for expansion into new areas. You should, however, have some basic idea of the central levels of the complex, to enable foreshadowing of these elements in earlier levels. If the lowest level of the dungeon is a Drow city, for example, then a few Drow hunting parties might be found on the higher levels. It is even possible that the very existence of the dungeon may be discovered by following one of these parties back to their hidden lair.

At this stage, there is no need to do anything more than give one-sentence descriptions of the levels in question. 'Goblin City', 'Old Mine Workings', 'Underground Lake', are all examples of this. Try and make each level distinctive and interesting, even the upper ones. Give the PC's a reason to get interested in the dungeon. Remember that you are only describing the main levels of the dungeon; leave yourself plenty of room to work with. One idea you might consider is to have a series of smaller levels interconnecting with the main ones, to allow PC's easier access to the lower levels, once they

know of the existence of the smaller tunnels. Remember as well that not all the levels need to be in order, nor do they need to be connected by tunnels. A teleport portal could lead to a city on the Elemental Plane of Air, for example, or to one of the Outer Planes. Higher-level PC's would no doubt find such things interesting.

The next step is dependant on whether the dungeon is to be set in an established campaign world, such as Greyhawk or Kalamar, or whether you are using it to introduce a homebrew. If it is to be established in a campaign world, then you should pick a few features of the world to highlight in the dungeon. These could be features of the history of the world, or specific enemies, such as the Scarlet Brotherhood in the Greyhawk setting. They needn't even be the major elements of the dungeon, but should be introduced to give the players a sense of the setting. The same should be done in a homebrew, but obviously you have far more flexibility. Keep a note of the features you intend to introduce, but do not go over the top. Four or five features are plenty, unless your dungeon happens to be the cultural melting pot of the world.

Another point that you need to cover is the location of the dungeon in the campaign. Two factors need to be considered; the needs of the players in the campaign, and the proximity of the dungeon to civilization. The needs of the players can often be summed up with a city, which is why most of the famous dungeons are in close proximity to a city, or even underneath them. Having a dungeon so near a capital city can be a bit unrealistic, but special circumstances can always be concocted, as indeed they were for Greyhawk. Perhaps a large town, or a small border city would be sufficient. Alternatively, you could begin with a small village, of which numerous examples are available, and build it up as you go along, as is detailed in the article 'The Gold Rush' in this issue. Of course, you can use both – have a nearby small village, monastery (useful because higher-level clerical spells are likely to be available more realistically), or some other such location, and have a city further away that your players can visit as their needs increase. This is especially useful if you are designing the world from the ground up, as it means that less has to be done initially, and the city can be adapted to meet the needs of the players more easily.

Remember that your campaign will not just focus on the dungeon, but will also focus on the surface locations your players visit. This is the place where you can primarily introduce your campaign world, in small doses. This is the cultural melting pot, and you should not be afraid to introduce your players to the full range of the world. Once your players have tired of the dungeon crawl, they will still have the information they have learned about the world that can be used in their later adventures.

Another option that can be employed is to give the dungeon some connections to the surface world, in terms of the storyline. Perhaps the illithids at the bottom of the dungeon are plotting to take over the

kingdom, or perhaps the goblins that inhabit the upper level are threatening a nearby village. The connections could just as easily be the other way around – maybe a monastery has lost a scared artefact, now deep in the heart of the dungeon. This will give the PC's reasons to explore further into the depths, and to enter the dungeon in the first place. Remember that a campaign is not a static thing; keep the storyline moving based on the PC's actions. One idea is to come up with a timeline of actions that the major powers in the dungeon will follow, although it should not be followed slavishly.

Now, once you have determined all of this, it is time to start working on the dungeon. It is certainly not necessary to design the whole dungeon at once, certainly not if you are using it for a home campaign. Indeed, this is a bad idea, in that it makes it harder to adapt it for the needs of your players. This is not to say that you shouldn't have an idea of what lies ahead, but keep it pencilled in for the moment.

The entry level should be fairly easy to complete. Remember that Level 1 PCs will be exploring it, and adjust the encounters to fit. Make plenty of escape routes, and have safe areas. Perhaps the area is partially under the control of beings friendly to the PCs, perhaps a Dwarven Mine. (Remember also that this need not be the only entry point – others should be created suited to PCs of different levels, but only design these as an when you need them.) If your players are new, as well as the characters, then keep the design of the dungeon simple. No complicated corridors or slopes.

Now that the design is beginning, another point needs to be decided upon – is the dungeon natural or artificial? If it is artificial, who built it? Natural dungeons are easier to justify, deep caverns in the bowels of the earth are common enough in the real world. They are also more difficult to design, and more difficult for the players to map. An artificial dungeon is harder to justify, but easier to design and map.

A cavern system should be uneven, rugged and jagged, with large and small chambers connected by small corridors. It is fine for there to have been some work upon the caverns by the inhabitants, with the corridors made larger and the caverns made safe. An artificial dungeon system will have rooms, of various sizes, connected by wide corridors, the classic dungeon of role-playing history. Although it is harder to justify, it is possible – perhaps it was a city that fell into the earth (in which case there will be one huge level, with other small levels branching off; the city sewers beneath, and maybe carved out entry caverns above). Perhaps it was the traditional mad wizard's folly, or perhaps it was a city purposefully built underground, for a race such as the duergar or the drow.

Of course, it is not essential to rigidly stick to one of the two styles. A small dungeon in the upper levels can open into vast natural caverns beneath the earth, connected to who-knows-what. A complex of caverns can have artificial sections built off it, for various purposes

– either small sections or entire levels. It would seem to make sense that intelligent creatures would construct their own dwellings beneath the earth, instead of relying on natural formations.

The actual design of dungeon levels is covered adequately in the DM's Guide, but a few additional points need to be made. Make each level distinctive, and work for the players. If there is a Druid in the party, have a level containing an underground forest, maybe containing primeval lifeforms, for him to work his magic. If a member of the party wishes to fight dragons, then put a dragon or two in the complex – but remember that they have to travel in and out. (Of course, it is not necessary for them to enter or exit *in dragon form* – they can polymorph into humanoids to enter and exit, a tactic that would help to camouflage their activities.)



Do not fall into the trap of simply stacking levels one beneath the other. A better approach is to treat each level as a separate entity, connected to one or more other levels by some means, but it need not be direct. Mile-long tunnels are one possibility, perhaps with 'halfway houses', traps, guard points, or other impediments to travel. Other ways could be implemented. Perhaps underneath the kingdom is a vast sea, hundreds of miles across, and each 'level' is an island in that sea. *Teleport* spells are often useful, either built into a magical gateway or cast by a wizard or sorcerer. (Indeed, this could be an interesting approach to use. Instead of unlocking a door or bypassing a door, the party must work out exactly where the next level is located before they can *teleport* there.) There is no need for the dungeon to be in the same geographical location or even on the same planet – much of it could be on a moon, or even on another Plane, allowing for different creatures than might be encountered on the home planet.

A point that is often missed is that the dungeon should change over time, both as a result of the actions of the adventurers wandering through it, randomly slaying monsters that might be important in the social hierarchy of the levels they inhabit, and of the actions of the power groups within the dungeons. These should be taken account of as time progresses, and the levels modified accordingly. If the PCs should completely clear out a level, then it is likely that it will not be cleared out for long. This is the key to keeping a dungeon campaign viable for prolonged periods – keep it changing as often as you can. Make sure that the PCs don't have it easy – but allow them to create safe zones. Passage through the dungeon should have its diplomatic elements as well. Instead of slaughtering all the goblins in a tribe to make their way through, they might come to a deal with the goblin chief – which could lead to further adventures as they try to keep him in power.

Conflicts in the dungeon should not just come from the PCs. The inhabitants of the levels should interact with each other. Perhaps the Drow on the lowest level slowly work their way up, making the dungeon's upper levels more difficult to traverse as the PCs go up in levels. This may be made easier by the actions of the PCs in the upper levels.

The large dungeons that have been created over the decades have entered the games mythology. Such things are returned to again and again, and can last for years in a campaign. There is a reason for this – they can be tremendous fun. A campaign is richer for such a location, and it is well worth your while to create one.

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# The Gold Rush

## R. E. B. Tongue

It is an undisputed fact that of the people who have ever gone on the various gold rushes of history, the actual miners have been the losers. They have ventured forth to the gold fields and harvested the wealth, but the majority of them left the fields bankrupt or dead. Those who did make the money were the shopkeepers, the barkeepers, the bankers, and the governments – leeches off the backs of those who risked their lives to seek out the wealth they craved.

There seems to be an interesting parallel here. A band of brave men venturing into dangerous territory to find treasure – remind you of anyone? The brave band of heroes descending into Greyhawk Castle's deepest dungeons, or into the lower levels of Rappan Athuk? This article will provide an interesting addition to a campaign revolving around a deep dungeon, the sort of campaign that many new to role-playing will begin with, and the sort of campaign that even the most jaded of us return to from time to time.



It is likely that adventurers returning from a successful foray into a dungeon will have a large quantity of treasure, but they will also have various needs to be met. They may need magical healing, or resurrection if things went badly wrong. They will need lodgings, room to rest. Equipment will have to be repaired or replaced. Magical items must be appraised, by learned sages, and rare gems need to be converted into cash. Wandering

around town with so much money quickly becomes tiring at best, downright dangerous at worst, and so the services of a local bank would be appreciated.

If we take a fairly typical approach that the dungeon will be near a small village, or a small town (because who in their right minds would chose to live near a twenty-two level dungeon filled with dragons, demons and orc hordes), then the PCs will instantly find the local resources wanting. At best, the village may have a tavern, blacksmith, and a general store. If they are lucky there might be a small temple or a shrine for low-level healing, and maybe a low-level sage who can supply magical assistance. More likely, such services will not be present, at least at first. Such services will have to be found elsewhere – the nearest large city, which is likely to be inconveniently far away. Still, to begin with the PCs will be forced to make the trip.

I say 'to begin with' because this state of affairs will not last long. The PCs will go to this city and speak of their exploits, and the local merchants will begin to get interested. Here are a group of country folk who have descended into a dangerous dungeon and come out with thousands of gold pieces, and an urge to spend them all before returning back into the depths of the earth. The first time they head out that way, little will be thought of it. A local merchant might decide to add the village to his list of stopovers, and a bard in need of new tales might decide that the country air will do him good for a while, perhaps providing him with inspiration. The village itself is likely to do more as well. The local innkeeper may increase his supply of ale, and order in some fine wines – after all, he now has some excellent customers. The blacksmith may hire an assistant, and the local cleric may gain a level through constant use of his spells.

The second time the PCs emerge, things will be different. If they complete the trip twice, many a merchant will smell gold in the wind, and move to the village. The services the PCs need will be provided in the village, at an increased price of course, considering the additional overheads. This will have a number of interesting consequences, many of which provide possibilities for adventure.

One obvious point is that the introduction of large amounts of currency into the village's economy will cause great changes to the financial structure of the area. The local innkeeper may find himself with more money than the mayor, or even the local lord. These changes will be major, and it would not be surprising to find that those who are losing out take steps to remedy that situation. It can well be imagined that a



disgruntled lord who does not wish to lose his financial stranglehold on the village will hire a team of assassins to end those wrecking the local economy.

Over time, the village itself will expand. This expansion is likely to be rapid, and will cause upheavals. A rival tavern may set up business, trying to divert the attentions of the PCs from the original inn with better living arrangements, finer wines, better food. A minor trade war could erupt between the old and new, with the PCs unknowingly caught right in the middle.

The number of shops in the area will increase enormously, depending on the PCs special needs. Shops to sell magical components, or even deal with magic items will appear, all charging over the odds. A sage out of work, perhaps recently dismissed from his job in the Royal Court, will set up residence in the village, offering to exclusively work for the PCs – for a fee, naturally. Any guilds the PCs belong to will open up small branch offices in the village, but naturally the PC will be expected to contribute in money and time, perhaps even become a guildmaster. The tiny general shop may find itself replaced with the medieval equivalent of a superstore, offering goods *teleported* in from the farthest reaches of the kingdom, for the right fee.

On a base note, this will mean that the PCs have a use for the money they are bringing out of the dungeon – all of it will be spent on the new goods and service provided. They will be lucky if they save a penny, and will be forced to continue dungeon delving simply to maintain their standard of living.

Another interesting point is that other adventuring groups will arrive, some experienced and trained, others not so. This will provide the PCs with competition if the Brotherhood of the Shadow Knights (averaging 14<sup>th</sup> level) appear, and additional work if the 'Three Lads from Fairview' (averaging 1<sup>st</sup> level – commoners mostly) gets itself trapped by a party of goblins on the first level. No doubt at this point, the local ruler will set up some order. Either the formerly disgruntled noble will find himself raised to higher status, or he will be usurped by a more powerful and better-connected noble. Taxes will be implemented on adventuring, and 'dungeon passes' will be required to enter, with competence and alignment restrictions implemented – and tested. All for a fee, naturally.

By this time the 'small, peaceful village' will have become a bustling town, and most of the originally inhabitants will not be pleased at the transition. Most of them will have been superseded by the new businesses – the tavern driven to bankruptcy by the new inn, the blacksmith bought out by a group from the city. These will harbour resentment towards the PCs and may seek to make their resentment show some tangible form. It is usually at this point that dark cults begin, desperate people trying to get rid of the intruders by any means necessary. The PCs may begin to find that they have new problems in the village, quite apart from those of the dungeon.

They will also find admirers, groupies. As the PCs fame increases they will attract more and more attention. Bards will turn up asking for stories for 'inspiration'. People they have saved will return asking to help work off their debt; beggars will seek them out asking for a fortune, as will various institutions. 'The church of Pelor wonders if you could spare fifty gold to give a starving Orc a second chance...' This unwelcome attention will make their stays in town less and less endurable.



Another problem will be retaliation. The mate of the dragon the PCs slew deep in the dungeon will return seeking revenge on the town, a homeless band of orcs will arrive and begin to raid the hundreds of merchant caravans in the area, bandits will descend on the region. Even the head of neighbouring kingdom may try to invade, to claim the revenue for his own coffers. All of this will need to be dealt with, and it is a chance for the PCs to get some of their money back from the jackals that have taken it from them.

Not long after that phase will come a problem. The death of the PCs would not be it – there are always replacements, and one can even imagine a 'corporate sponsored' team of adventurers being assembled and sent down into a dungeon. (Now there is an original idea for assembling a group of PCs – the unwanted lackeys of various organizations, being sent down to make money by any means necessary, with the provision that they spend it in various stores.)

No, the problem will be that the dungeon will be getting stripped bare. In Rappan Athuk, the PCs will defeat Orcus. They reach the lowest levels of Castle Greyhawk, of Blackmoor's dungeon. There is always a limit to even the largest dungeon, and the actions of not just one, but possibly a dozen groups of adventurers will empty it out completely. When that happens, the already fragile economic structure of the village collapses.

Without the sources of gold being built up by the journeys into danger, the stores, taverns, and other institutions have no basis, and must close – nothing remains to keep them open. The PCs, and other adventuring groups will leave for sunnier climes, and new quests. No doubt there would be a desperate search for new dungeons in the surrounding area, but it is unlikely that they will find anything. And so things return to the way they were. They may be some new settlers, and a lot of abandoned buildings, but most of the new arrivals will drift away. Only the memories will remain.

There are three interesting ways that this idea could be used in a campaign. The obvious one is to have the PCs playing the central role, as the original discoverers of the dungeon. In this case, they will go through the whole run of events, starting off a 'gold rush' and all the problems and advantages it causes. Another idea for an established adventuring party is that they hear of the new dungeon, and set out to investigate themselves. They might enter at any stage of the proceedings, from quiet village to large town. This would obviously inspire

resentment from the original discoverers, particularly if the PCs are superior in ability and/or status.

The second possibility is to have the PCs in a different role. They are not going into a dungeon, no sir. There is plenty of adventure to be had in the new, thriving community. Perhaps they join the town guard, to deal with the rampant lawlessness, and the invading hordes. Looking at it from the other side, they might decide to set up a thieves' guild in this area – certainly a land of gold and opportunity. Perhaps they are just merchants, trying to make a living out of the PCs. In this case, the dungeon delvers should be the 'heroes', looked up to by the populace. The PCs are not out for their fame, or danger – just hard cash.

A final possibility is for PCs come across the aftermath of a gold rush. Whether a year ago or a century ago, it could still be interesting. Perhaps the town has been totally abandoned, and the PCs can pick through the ruins for what was left behind. Perhaps something remains in the dungeon, now almost defenceless. It has to be worth a look.

Or perhaps, a century on, a new dark force is in the dungeon. Perhaps the monsters have returned, bringing their treasure with them. Perhaps the PCs will return from their expedition loaded with gold in the local tavern, asking directions to the nearest city. In which case, the innkeeper would do best to garrotte them there and then, to prevent the chaos from happening again...

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# Levelling up your Game

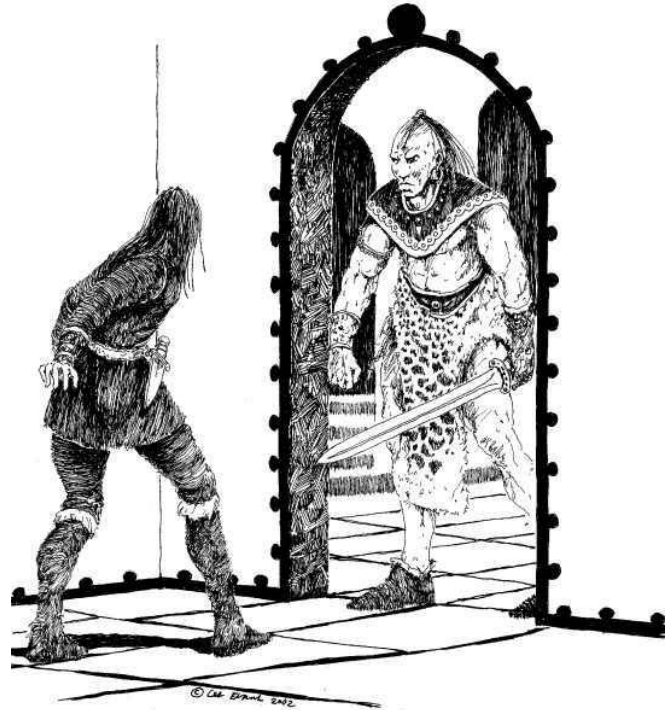
## A Column By Jason Shoemate

Fantasy role-playing has, from its earliest beginnings, been associated with the “dungeon.” Be it cavern complexes housing ancient evil civilizations, forgotten temples buried in the jungle, abandoned mines full of creeping undead, or massive mountain caves housing fire-breathing dragons, nothing else has captured the imagination of new and old gamers alike quite like the dungeon does. But how can we breathe life back into something that threatens to become a cliché as stale as meeting one’s fellow adventurers at the local tavern? The answer to that question lies in looking to the real world caverns all around us, and shifting focus to the small, forgotten details of underground exploration that are all too often glossed over in the average session of “dungeon crawling.”

To begin with, caving is serious business, even for battle-hardened adventurers. While spells (and dwarves!) might simplify things for the fantastic counterparts to real-world spelunkers, there are still hazards aplenty, and no amount of arcane knowledge will help those without the foresight to prepare appropriate spells when exploring underground. Basic necessities of life like air, food, and water can be precious commodities in the forgotten depths of the earth, and ill-prepared heroes can find themselves weeks from the surface, growing weaker by the moment as air and food become scarce. When prepping your next cave scenario, start by insisting on an accurate accounting of the group’s supplies. This doesn’t mean a ton of tedious accounting for every pound of jerky or skin of water, but a basic record of the number of days’ worth of supplies is crucial if you want to leverage a little extra tension into your adventures. The d20 rules have specific guidelines for not only what is required for sustenance, but also what effects starvation and thirst can have on a character (for details, see Core Rulebook II, Chapter 3). Once thirst and hunger set in, the resulting penalties and fatigue quickly compound into a dangerous downward spiral that can threaten the heartiest hero with an ignominious death in the deeps.

Another possible complication is light. While some races are capable of navigating in the pitch black of caverns with little trouble, most heroes are going to need some sort of assistance to get around without knocking heads into low ceilings or tripping over uneven rock underfoot. In the real world, spelunkers who remain underground for extended periods of time frequently suffer a low-grade light blindness upon returning to the brilliantly illuminated surface world. Characters who have been underground for more than a day or two are likely to be dazzled upon exposure to bright light, be it from the surface world or some magical effect. Casters might think twice about using their trusty *fireball* to dispatch enemies if it means

their allies will be reeling and unable to see properly for several rounds thereafter. Treat characters that have been underground for more than a day as dazzled when exposed to any light more powerful than a torch, including any spells with the Fire or Light descriptors.



Fire imposes yet another danger underground in addition to blinding. Except in well-ventilated caverns (rare in all but the most shallow cavern systems), fire devours valuable oxygen, creating a nasty risk of suffocation. This means cold camps are the norm for underground explorers. Also assume that any fire larger than a torch or lantern generates dangerous smoke in all adjacent map squares (for persistent fires such as campfires or burning oil) or in all squares in the area of effect (for instantaneous fire effects such as *fireball* or *flame strike*). This smoke makes breathing difficult, requiring Fortitude saves each round to avoid subdual damage (DMG, pg 89), and providing one-half concealment to all within it. Without some external means of dissipating such smoke (spells that create wind, for example), it will remain in the area for some time at the DM’s discretion. An ever-present facet of exploring natural cavern structures is water. Most natural caverns were formed by water, and evidence of these origins is plentiful. In addition to the more mundane underground lakes or streams, flooded chambers and submerged passageways are a fact of life for the serious spelunker. Added to the aforementioned difficulties of fire, this can present serious health concerns to adventurers who go leaping wily-nily into every body of water they find underground. Lack of a warm fire and any truly dry ground to make camp upon

can lead in short order to problems with exposure and hypothermia. Aside from the risk of illness, merely traversing through a submerged passageway or chamber presents a serious risk to the ill prepared. Most times, when a hero must enter such an area, there's no indication of how large an area lies ahead. The risk of running out of air and dying in a forgotten watery tomb beneath the earth is a very real one. Any hero wishing to undertake such a swim had best consider tying off a sturdy lifeline and carrying some sort of magical light source to illuminate possible air pockets and side passages, or one wrong turn could be the last mistake they ever make.

The constant damp of most caves, as well as the generally uneven footing of a natural cavern, leads to tricky footing under peaceful marching conditions. Once battle is underway, Balance checks or Reflex saves may be appropriate to prevent combatants from falling during the natural advance and retreat of swordplay. Any character looking to move more than half their normal speed over such slippery, treacherous ground is likely to incur additional checks. These conditions can make even seemingly simple encounters with lesser cave dwellers into lethal fights for survival. Creatures of less than Medium size are also likely to seek out smaller areas to lay in ambush for interlopers, using terrain to their best advantage. When the party's most powerful warriors are creeping through narrow tunnels on their hands and knees, a smaller enemy could make mincemeat of more powerful heroes.

This points to one of the most promising techniques for keeping an adventuring party on their toes – claustrophobia. Caves shouldn't come in convenient 5-foot-wide shapes, and large, spacious caverns are more likely to be exceptions than the norm. Increase the dramatic tension by decreasing the available room to manoeuvre. Vary the height of ceilings and the width of tunnels to keep the heroes constantly adjusting their manoeuvres to meet the challenge of the terrain. That way, when encounters with the underground fauna occur, the group may be in the most inconvenient position, forcing a shift away from familiar tactics and battle strategies. Size-altering spells become an important weapon in the caster's arsenal, if only for adjusting party members up or down to meet oncoming threats. Those skilled with small, easy-to-wield weapons may have a better time of it than characters that favours polearms or unwieldy bows. So now you've got supply problems, natural cavern hazards, and treacherous terrain that enemies will use to best advantage. Suddenly that ordinary-seeming cave on the outskirts of the PC's village doesn't look like such an easy place to go harvest XP awards, eh? What could make things more difficult? Easy. Shake things up – literally. Cavern complexes are frequently prone to instability, and nothing will keep a party lively like a little tremor or cave-in. Cracks opening to reveal previously hidden caverns, tunnels filling with debris until the heroes have to belly-crawl through 200 yards of dirt to find daylight again, or nasty chunks of rock

falling from the ceiling onto intrepid explorers: any of these make for a quick way to snap the group to attention if they start to get blasé about their environment. All this may seem a bit ruthless to dump on your hapless players. In a sense, it is. These suggestions are merely that – suggestions. Use a few here and a few there to keep things interesting. Slowly add elements in until you find a level of detail and danger that suits both you and your players, and when the heroes seem ready to give up on the idea of spelunking for good, back off a half-step and lure them in with tales of even bigger treasures. Cave exploration should be an endeavour undertaken with a bit of trepidation by all but the hardest heroes (or dwarves), and paying attention to these little nitpicky details of real-life caving can go a long way towards keeping your dungeons both tempting and foreboding at the same time.

For additional “window dressing” in your caves, keep in mind that such complexes are always damp, with dripping water in a majority of chambers somewhere. There's also a fairly constantly-buzzing ecosystem in underground complexes, so there's really no such thing as an empty chamber or quiet night's sleep. Every single time the group makes camp, there's bound to be a shortage of dry ground for spreading out bedrolls or tents, and as soon as the group settles down and stops making a ton of noise of their own, the scavengers and cave creatures are going to start inching ever closer, looking for crumbs of trail rations or a little warmth. This can keep a group jittery, no matter what kind of hard cases they *think* they are. All of this barely scratches the surface of what can be added to a dungeon without looking further than the natural world. Mineral springs heated by geothermal forces, crystal deposits that bend and reflect light through multiple chambers, underground waterfalls – the list is endless. A simple bit of research on the topic of spelunking or some of the larger cavern complexes of the world will yield a vast wealth of information for use in your dungeon-crawling adventures. Many of these sources include rough maps and photographs of the complexes themselves, which can be used to bring an additional level of detail and realism to your depiction of caves. The basic principle to keep in mind when attempting to heighten the tension and drama of your next dungeon crawl is that there's no such thing as a plain room or an empty cave. There are always touches of detail that can be lavished on those neglected chambers to make them memorable. Make a list of some of your favourite “dungeon dressing” elements, and use them any time you run across one of those ubiquitous “featureless chambers” in an adventure. Have the heroes making Balance checks when they fight in an underground cavern, as the mossy surface of the rock makes footing treacherous. And then, when they finally claw their way out of the caves, burdened with loot, battered, eyes burning from the sunlight and half-starving, they'll think twice before blowing off another adventure as “just another dungeon crawl.”



# Lessons from History

## The Quest for the New World

### A Column by Robert Conway

This is the first article in a planned column that will run bi-monthly in Almanac. The article will serve two purposes: to outline an historical event, and to outline how it might best be used in a campaign, or more usually to form a campaign. Future articles planned for the series are the English Civil War, the French Revolution, and Mosby's Raiders. Any ideas people have and want to see, or for that matter any submissions, are more than welcome.

The traditionally held view is that Christopher Columbus was the discoverer of the New World. The reality, however, is that he was merely its most successful publicist. Almost every other nation in the world managed to 'discover' America before Christopher Columbus – but to his credit, he was the first to successfully exploit it. This article will run chronologically through the known and suspected discoverers of America. It should be noted that some of these claims are more dubious than others, though several are undisputed. The intent of the article is not as a historical guide, more a tool for DM's, and should be treated as such. The Avalanche Press book *'Greenland Saga: The Last Norse Colony'* might be of use with this article.

You may say that of course Christopher Columbus was not the first to discover America – it was the American Indians. This, however, might not be the case. There is considerable evidence to suggest that the first inhabitants of America came from the same roots as the Australian aborigines and the Polynesian tribes – primitive explorers sailing across the Pacific around 60,000 B.C., washing ashore in what is now Peru, and making most of South America their own. Destroyed villages and bones have been found, but almost all trace of this first culture has been wiped out. The only living evidence that remains is genetic – in the inhabitants of Tierra Del Fuego, some of whom show a distinct genetic pattern.

This in itself could make an interesting campaign. The PC's as primitive explorers, perhaps an all-Barbarian party, maybe with a Sorcerer or a Druid, shipwrecked on a remote coast. Do they make the attempt to build a craft and travel across a thousand miles of dangerous ocean, or do they instead try to make the best of it? What strange surprises await them on this new continent – although historically there were no cultures waiting for them, this need not be the case in your campaign. Perhaps it is just savage wilderness, or perhaps a strange civilization of foul creatures, hitherto unknown?

What wiped these tribes away? The American Indians. As is commonly known, their ancestors swept down across the land bridge that once connected Asia and America, and slowly spread out across the entire continent, north and south. It was inevitable that they would come into conflict with the current inhabitants of America. The result would be a war, perhaps lasting for centuries, while the invaders attempted to displace the inhabitants. The invaders were successful, and aside from a few forgotten ruins, all trace of the previous culture was erased.



There are a couple of ideas here. An obvious one is to set a campaign in the war, with PC's either as the invaders or the invaded. The clash of cultures would be an interesting one – early Stone Age against late Stone Age, though for the purposes of the campaign the technologies could be advanced a little, perhaps Bronze Age vs. Stone Age. To make matters more equal, the inhabitants might have access to powerful spirit magic, or Psionic powers unknown to the Indians. Another

possibility is to play out the last days of the original culture. It is unlikely that the last survivors would sit around and wait to die – perhaps the PC's are the guardians of what remains of their race, trying to escape, either back to the lands across their ocean from whence their ancestors came, or perhaps elsewhere, maybe across the Eastern Sea, or to another plane. That might be more interesting as a mini-campaign, a short series.

The American Indians would have the continent to themselves for the next thirty thousand years. Their development was slow, but steady – with little to motivate their advancement, their culture would remain fairly stable, though admittedly too little is known about this period today.

One interesting possibility would be to have an expansionist, advanced tribe of American Indians begin exploring across the East, heading towards the campaign's equivalent of Europe. Turnaround could be extremely interesting.

During this period, civilizations slowly began to build in Europe and Asia, but it was not until the Egyptians that it began to touch the Americas. Although no written evidence exists of Egyptian travel to America, there is some physical evidence of travel – the existence in American of Egyptian seeds, seeds which could only have been carried across the Atlantic. It was proved that Egyptian boats could have crossed the ocean, and it seems likely that given such a capability the attempt would have been made many times, although it is impossible to know exactly when.

The Phoenicians may well also have visited the New World on occasion. Bronze plaques bearing Phoenician writing have been found in Brazil – indeed, the very name Brazil has possible origins in the Phoenician language: 'brzl' meaning land of iron. The Phoenicians were the major sea power for some time, controlling the 'Pillars of Hercules' (the Straits of Gibraltar) and preventing any other ships from leaving it. Phoenician captains kept their destinations in strict secrecy, under pain of death – but it is known that they ranged far and wide in search of cargos, up the Iberian peninsula towards Britain and Scandinavia, and down the coast of Africa – it is not unreasonable that they could have crossed the Western Ocean.

This could make an interesting start to a campaign, or even form a whole campaign itself. The PC's are hired as part of a crew to solve the mystery of the source of wealth the dominant sea power relies on. First they must find a way past the Pillars of Hercules, perhaps by rushing the blockade or perhaps overland, and then attempt the long voyage to the New World. Once there, they must explore, with no-one to turn to for help except the enemy they are there to undermine. Then they must return, perhaps with a powerful navy on their tail.

It is possible that the Chinese discovered America, also. Sculptures found in some Central American ruined

cities bear similarities to those used in the Buddhist religion, and in the oldest manuscript found in China, the *Shan Hai King* of 2250 BC, there is a description of what seems to be the Grand Canyon. The Japanese also have a claim – pottery of the type made in the Jomon region of Japan at about 3000 BC has been found in Ecuador, although this seems more likely to have been the result of an accidental shipwreck than anything else.

An interesting adventure could be run around the reverse of the traditional 'shipwreck' concept. The PC's could be representatives of a native culture, who have heard about strange beings who came from across the sea, and are making their way across the land. The PC's may be ordered to protect these beings, and bring them to their ruler, or alternatively to kill them to prevent the spread of 'evil'. In a fantasy campaign, there is little need for the beings to be of the same race – imagine a shipload of Drow landing near the Olmec Empire, or for that matter a boatload of Gnomes. Each could have far-reaching consequences, especially if only humans had previously been known.

The next incursion to America that is recorded originated in Ireland. The *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*, a tenth-century Latin manuscript, records the voyages of an Irish priest, Saint Brendan. Around 540 A.D., he set out with a party of fourteen monks to find 'The Land Promised to the Saints'. It had been thought that the manuscript was simple fiction, but over time a number of elements of the document have turned out to be accurate.

According to the document, Saint Brendan set out from Kerry in a 36-foot boat, and took a northerly course. Then found a 'floating tower of crystal', suggesting that they had passed Greenland and reached the Davis Strait, well known for its icebergs. They passed through an area of dense mist, and encountered an animal with 'big eyes, tusks, a spotted belly and a bearded jaw' (possibly a walrus), before reaching a land of 'autumn sunshine.' Later they sailed south, reaching a tropical island inhabited by beautiful birds and pygmies – possibly the Arawaks of the Bahamas. They eventually reached a land 'odorous, flower-smooth and blest', thought to be Florida. This sounds awfully far-fetched, but the departure of Saint Brendan is documented, and the Norse sagas admit that the Irish reached America first.

The tale of Saint Brendan almost sounds like the record of a campaign. The PC's could be the assistants of Saint Brendan, all with at least a level of monk, though possibly a wizard and a few fighter types to round out the party. The adventures they could have exploring the world are obvious – simply replace America with a far-off continent on your own campaign world, perhaps Polaria and the Barbarian Seameast in the Greyhawk setting. Another interesting possibility that allows a more balanced party would be following in the footsteps of Saint Brendan's party. They may have been hired by the church to find out what happened to him, by a

scholarly organization to prove or disprove his discoveries, or perhaps to obtain some rare item found on the journey. They could leave a year or a hundred years after Saint Brendan, depending on the DM's wish. (One possible idea would be to play out both campaigns, with the PC's following in the footsteps of a previous party, maybe a decade later, and having to deal with the consequences of their previous actions.) It can be assumed that Saint Brendan carried the faith with him, and attempted to convert natives where he could. If the PC's are natives of a land he touches (another interesting option, if the PC's are in an isolated area), there could be considerable resentment of this intruder, and the consequences of this would be interesting, to say the least.

We can trust the Norse sagas because they have proved to be accurate in another sense – the Vikings did reach North America, and even made some attempts to colonize it. The sagas always spoke of how Leif Ericsson, the son of the discoverer of Greenland Eric the Red, voyaged still further west to find a new and wondrous land.

To be precise, he found three lands on his journey. The first, Helluland (Flat Rock Land), was probably Baffin Island. This worthless land was quickly passed on by the explorers, though they did 'step onto the land'. They soon passed onto more fertile territory, and quickly came across Markland (Forestland), a land 'completely wooded'. (Likely Nova Scotia. Although the forests that Leif Ericsson would have known are long gone, records from the eighteenth century and earlier document the extent of the forests in that area.)

To the Vikings, such bounty of timber was a godsend. Having a source of timber for the Greenland colony closer than Scandinavia or Britain would make shipbuilding much easier, and would provide for many other needs. It is recorded that ships would make frequent trips to Markland over the next few centuries, whenever timber was sought.

The real prize of the trip, though, was Vinland. They found this land by accident, when their ship was caught in a wind, but the land proved extremely fertile. Not only could they find salmon 'larger than they had ever seen', but one of the members of the expedition managed to find grapes growing wild in the wilderness – something new to Greenlanders. Combined with the value of the soil, Vinland proved to be an excellent find, and the Vikings wintered there before returning home. It seems likely that this area was modern Newfoundland. The discovery of a Viking settlement at L'Anse D'Meadoux makes this even more likely, as well as confirming what many had believed to be pure fantasy.

It is known that the Vikings continued to visit America for centuries – indeed, until the settlement at Greenland expired for reasons still unknown. As to why they did not settle it more fully, there is little answer. Hostile encounters with the local Indian tribes are recorded, and may have deterred settlement. The area was at the furthest limit of their reach, and continuing source of supply would have been a problem. The Vikings had passed their 'Golden Age', and the impetus for increased colonization was ebbing – had Vinland been discovered in 900 instead of 1000, then the history of America might be completely different. There is some evidence that the Vikings influenced the local tribes to some extent – similarity of words, the discovery of Viking artefacts, but nothing conclusive. It seems likely that the Viking presence in America amounted to no more than a series of brief visits.

Well, the amount of adventure ideas that suggest themselves from this is phenomenal. Again, the campaign could be based around exploration, with the PC's taking the place of Leif Ericsson as leaders of an expedition into the unknown. This indeed carries on a tradition going all the way back to Module X1, 'Isle of Dread'. A campaign could be based around the PC's being forced to overwinter in the New World, through the loss of their ship or some other means, and having to hold off the natives until rescue arrived. This they might do through warfare, diplomacy, or any other means they see fit, and can be adapted to any other ideas the DM might have. Perhaps instead of American Indian analogues, the inland could be home to a decaying Empire modelled on the Roman Empire, or the evil home of foul Orcs or other terrors – the imagination is the limit here. A visit to the New World would also be an interesting feature to slot into a campaign in progress, and would not take much campaign time, maybe a few months. If the PC's are wanted for some sort of trouble back at home (not unlikely, considering the sort of activities PC's usually get up to), then a few months at sea while the heat dies down could be interesting. First there is the peril of the sea voyage, and visiting some of the isolated settlements along the way. Then there is the arrival at the New World, presumably to acquire goods for trade, which might require expeditions into the mainland, either into the wilderness or to meet with the natives – which could be extremely interesting. Finally, the PC's must get their cargo home, past pirates, sea monsters or whatever else might be lying in wait.

Hopefully, this article has shown how a historical event such as the discovery of America can spark numerous adventure ideas. Most of these would be best suited to one-shot adventures, or campaigns in their own right, but they could be of great interest in the right campaign.

# Putting SF into Fantasy

## The Race for the Moon

### A Column by R. E. B. Tongue

This is the first in an occasional series of articles covering ideas that, on first sight, might not fit in a fantasy campaign. Ideas that are more commonly found in science fiction than fantasy, but nevertheless can still be interesting. Future articles in this series will cover such topics as Alien Invasions and the use of radiation, but this piece covers a topic familiar to most of us – the race for the moon. Fantasy RPG in space is almost ‘old hat’, of course, with a tradition begun by Spelljammer and now continued with Dragonstar. This article does not deal with either of these settings, however (though certainly there will be ideas that could be lifted), but with a race to the moon in a traditional fantasy setting, such as Greyhawk, the Forgotten Realms or Kalamar.

What, you gasp. How can such an idea be placed in a fantasy setting? Part of the idea of this article series is to prove that any idea under the sun, or in this case the moon, can be fitted into a fantasy campaign. The answer in this case is to look at the idea from a different way, to not think in terms of technology, but in terms of fantasy. (One book that you might find helpful is *The Ragged Astronauts*, by Bob Shaw.)

It is usually assumed that fantasy worlds are Earth-like planets fitting in with normal cosmological theory – round balls of rock spinning round a sun, moving through the vacuum of space. None if this is necessary in a fantasy game (though 999 times out of 1,000, it will never come up.) Indeed, some interesting games can be thought of where the world is not like Earth in this manner, but for now we will deal with a specific idea – why must space be a vacuum? This would probably preclude any fantasy setting from achieving space flight (though not necessarily). Let the atmosphere be thin, and difficult to breathe without magical aid, but still breathable. This assumption will be used throughout the article.

The first question to ask is simple – why go to the moon? An airless ball of rock would be of little interest to anyone in such a setting, so what makes it distinctive? There are many possibilities. Perhaps the gods are said to inhabit the moon, or perhaps they formerly inhabited the moon, and there is a desire to poke around their artefacts. Perhaps the moon is habitable, and could be a new colony for an empire, or perhaps it contains a sapient race with which contact is desired. (Perhaps it is even suspected that one of the races of the campaign had its origins on the moon, and they wish to learn more of their past.) The object of the quest can be big or small, but it should be suited to the

amount of effort that is going to be put into the race to reach the moon. Maybe the homeworld is doomed, and a few survivors wish to escape to another planet, as in ‘*When Worlds Collide*’- this would work well with a dystopian setting such as Midnight.

The next question that must be asked is who wishes to go there. This ties into a question of the scale of the lunar race. Perhaps two vast empires are striving for the moon, each desperate to get its explorers there first, or it could be two rival wizards having a bet. One point that should be made is that the race for the moon need not be the focus of a campaign; it could instead be background detail, involving the PCs only peripherally. If the whole campaign is not to be focused on the moon race, and the largest scales of effort are used, then this is advisable. (If nothing else, it serves as an interesting and distinctive piece of detail for the campaign, and the PCs can still be involved to a lesser extent.) After all, the Grand Empire of Humanity is hardly likely to pick a band of renegade warriors who make a living disturbing tombs and killing hordes of monsters to be its explorers into the unknown. Perhaps for this reason, it is best to keep the scale small. It could be as small as a pair of high-level wizards, but perhaps more realistically it could be rival wizards guilds battling it out.

The opposition is another point that must be considered, and this does not just mean the enemy, although that is an obvious point. A huge rival empire is likely to have any manner of forces prepared to stop the launch of the expedition, and a rival wizards guild is also likely to have a few tricks up its sleeve. This should not be the only force opposing the expedition, however – maybe an order of Druids starts a ‘Keep Selune Undeified’ movement, or perhaps a thieves guild decides that such an obviously hopeless project is an excellent source of graft. This can provide an excellent series of adventures taking place before the expedition, even if it is not the PCs that will be flying in the vessel. There may even be opposition within the government – maybe the military will seek to take over the space program for its own ends.

The next point is an important one – how do they get to the moon? Why is it difficult (for if it was easy, people would have done it already)? This point is possibly best to handwave, to explain away by the use of ‘strange and ancient magics’, but there are any number of possible explanations, technological and magical. The invention of an improved form of the *fly* spell is an obvious idea, and the spell could require any number of difficult-to-



acquire components – the race element, as the PCs travel the world looking for the rare herbs and minerals that will be required to power the ship. Another possibility is the invention of a *continual fireball* spell to produce a primitive rocket engine – such a spell would certainly produce an interesting looking ship! Perhaps a hot air balloon would serve to propel the craft into the void, and it certainly has the right appearance. The important thing with the propulsion system is to be creative. Maybe the launch system is a huge catapult, or a ballista ten miles long. Maybe they are being towed by a pair of captive red dragons, or using a thousand flying carpets tied together. As long as the system has internal consistency, it will be fine. The system will be more or less important depending on the extent to which the race will be a part of the campaign – if the campaign centres around the expedition itself, then it will be less important than if the PCs have a hand in building it.

The design of the ship is an important point – it would seem unlikely that they would build a wooden rocket (although, with the *continual fireball* spell...), and a specially prepared ship is possibly the most likely, maybe with an enclosed hull to retain pressure (remember not to stick to realism too closely – allow a tightly fitted hull to retain oxygen). The ship actually need not ever land on the surface – this is the easiest problem to solve. The *teleport* spell can be used, perhaps in combination with *clairvoyance*. (Beam us up, Mr. Scott!)

Such a ship will have to be provisioned for its crew, and the size of the crew is another factor of importance. The larger the ship, the larger the crew. For a small expedition, a small ship is probably for the best, and the majority of the crew can be the PCs (unless the medieval equivalent of the Starship Enterprise is being deployed, in which case the PCs could be the landing party.) Supplies will probably be a major consideration, especially if the target moon is uninhabitable. Training for the crew is also important – if the PCs are to be the crew and will have training, it is suggested that a new, and somewhat unique skill of *spaceship handling* be employed to simulate their training up through levels, and to help employ game mechanics.

Once the ship has been constructed, and the crew are ready to launch, it is time for lift-off! Either let loose the ropes, ignite the fireball, or throw the captive eagles a mouse – the ship gets off the ground (or not, if something goes wrong...) The lift-off should be portrayed appropriate to the launch system being used. It might be simple, but if the opposition has not been sufficiently dealt with, there might be complications. Perhaps a squadron of trained griffon riders launch an attack upon the airship as it launches, or perhaps a series of huge *fireballs* are unleashed as the craft passes over enemy territory.

This brings up another small point, the armament of the vessel. Presumably the PCs will be carrying their own personal armament, although weight requirements

may have forced them to keep to the less bulky items, but the ship itself may also be equipped. Deck-mounted ballista and traditional marine weapons are possible, but so are more exotic items such as *wands of magic missile*, or similar devices. Having a spellcaster onboard with offensive magics might also be a great advantage.

So, the ship is on its way. The next item is the passage through space. For this, draw on the oldest clichés of the pulps. Have the ship enter a meteor shower, and need to desperately navigate through it – better yet, have the ship be holed, and the hoarded atmosphere leak into space (cue the cleric with *create air* spells). Maybe the PCs encounter another ship, perhaps from a lost civilization, and have a chance to board it for supplies. Maybe they see signs of another spacecraft behind them, or worse yet, in front of the, and realise that the race is still on.

Then comes the arrival at the moon. If you intend the PCs to land the ship, just have them bank in, diving towards the moon in typical flight. They may wish to look around on their way down, but they will be going too fast to see much. The other possibility is that the ship will stay in orbit, but the PCs will *teleport* down to the surface, in which case the ship must attain that orbit. Either way, the PCs will soon be on the surface. Play it out in the style of the Apollo missions, as they plant the flag of their kingdom in the fertile lunar soil, and claim it for their ruler, their master, or simply for themselves if it is their wont.

Now comes an important point. What is on the moon? Is there life on the moon of some kind – primitive animal, primeval jungle, exotic civilisation? Let your imagination run wild here, but try and keep it as different from the homeworld as possible. If they come from a temperate climate, perhaps it is an endless desert with lizardman nomads, or an exotic jungle with primitive elves. Perhaps, like the moon, it is a barren wasteland – to be fair this is probably the most realistic, but allow the PCs a chance of survival. This is to be the assumption for the rest of the article, as it is impossible to cover the wide range of possibilities covered by this concept – for in effect it is the creation of a whole new fantasy world.

The PCs must now complete their mission. While it is possible that simple exploration was their goal, it is more likely that they were sent to find something, either a rare element or herb, or a specific location, perhaps the tomb of a long-dead hero. On a barren world, continually ram it home to the PCs that they are the only living beings of a high-order on the world. Throw hazards in their way, naturally, but make them natural – fissures in the ground, dust storms, and the like. The opportunity to throw undead into the mix is also present. Perhaps they come across the remains of a long-ago crashed spacecraft, whose inhabitants have now turned into powerful undead instead of passing into the next realm.

There also must be the question of their opposition. They may well have launched a spacecraft at the same time as the PCs, and will also be looking for the same material. No doubt they will come into conflict, and the situation will be resolved one way or the other. If it goes badly, the PCs may end up stranded – not bad if in a civilized environment, or one where life can be easily maintained, but on a barren, dusty ball of rock, a quite different proposition. Perhaps they will end up using their opponent's craft to get home. Possibly they may be trapped on the moon, in which case the campaign takes on a different light – survival until a rescue ship can come to pick them up.

Once the goal of the expedition has been accomplished, and the dastardly opponents defeated or captured, it is then time to head back home. Another hoary old cliché is to have some essential component run low, usually oxygen or fuel if relevant – this means a possible sacrifice of one of the crew members, or the need to rush back before the expedition is quite completed. The dash for home should be faster than the race to the moon was, if only because the players have already flown through space, and the same type of encounters are not likely to interest them to the same degree again. Of course, the opposition may make one last attempt to win the day, and any captured enemies should make an attempt to escape and take over the vessel – for a short time they might succeed. While the threats on the

outward voyage came from outside, make the threats on the return come from inside.

Either way, the PCs will re-enter the atmosphere, and make a landing presumably at their launch point. There are a couple of possibilities that can be considered at this point. If you wish to make the PCs return simple, then have a simple landing take place, with the returning PCs treated as heroes by a grateful nation. Think Charles Lindbergh, or for that matter Armstrong and Aldrin. Tickertape parades, magical demonstrations, offers of hands in marriage, all the usual rewards of heroes.

To make the return more difficult, the ship could crash, maybe hundreds of miles from home – now one last dash is required to ensure the safety of the cargo. If the GM is feeling especially cruel, perhaps the vessel crashes at sea and is unrecoverable – leaving no real proof that the PCs ever went to the moon at all. This is a good step to take if you do not wish space travel, or this flight, to have any lasting impact on the campaign world. Remember, if someone goes once, others will follow, and the campaign will never be the same.

And what is next for the PCs? Where do they go when they have reached and explored the moon? Well, there is always Mars...

# Concept Horizons

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# Hosting a Campaign Online

S. Lyle Raymond

I had not run a game since I was a college sophomore – almost ten years ago. I was itching to get things going again, but I had no idea how to recruit players; I had lost touch with all of my former gaming buddies and the few people I saw more often than once every couple of months were friends of my fiancée. What's a GM to do? My solution: play online.

Since its rise to popularity in the mid-90's, the Internet has become the definitive method of connecting with people – even complete strangers – for fun and games. For GM's like me who have no friends (Oops, I mean no *RPG-loving* friends who live nearby. Really.), this means that potential players for my campaign are lying just a few clicks of the mouse away. But to get a solid campaign rolling, would-be cyber-GM's should be prepared to deal with some of the challenges inherent in online gaming:

## **Game Mechanics**

The first question in online gaming should be fairly obvious: "How is it done?" For GM's who run dice-free campaigns with an emphasis on storytelling, the answer is simple; instant messaging (IM) clients like AOL Instant Messenger, MSN Messenger, ICQ and others include features that allow you to set up a multi-user chat room. But what about dice rolling? How do you keep it honest? And how are maps, miniatures, etc. handled?

The home fried solution is to use IM for dialogue, and post links to jpg's when you wish to display a map. The jpg's can be created any way you wish. I personally used to update maps using a mapping program like Autorealm, then take a snapshot of the maps using Paint Shop Pro, save the snapshot as a .jpg, then upload it to my personal web space and post the link in the chatroom. In this game, either all die rolls are performed by the GM with the players being asked to trust the GM's integrity, or everyone rolls dice at home and posts the results.

**Advantages** to this approach: There are likely more players using IM than there are using special gaming software. The GM, if he is so inclined, can fudge dice rolls and the players are never the wiser.

**Disadvantages:** Without seeing each other's dice rolls, cheating becomes possible. Using a roundabout method of mapping, the GM must have at least four or more applications open at the same time; once you consider

using miniatures in those maps, the process becomes even more overwhelming.

More and more players and GM's are turning to software that is created for the sole purposes of handling online gaming sessions. I've picked three favourites, each with their own pros and cons:

**WebRPG** ([www.webrpg.com](http://www.webrpg.com)): Allows GM's to display maps, miniatures. Dice rolls posted to group. Full chat capabilities including whisper, etc. Basically, this does everything a game-hosting program should. Downside: There is a subscription fee, but it isn't too expensive at around three dollars per month.

**OpenRPG** ([www.openrpg.com](http://www.openrpg.com)): Does everything WebRPG does, except it's free. Compared to WebRPG, I have a difficult time trying to come up with a downside. Perhaps there is just a bit less user support. Plus, ORPG requires the installation of the Python Runtime Environment, which you probably won't need for anything else.

**D20Map** ([groups.yahoo.com/group/d20map](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/d20map)): Not as fully-featured as the other two programs, but has a couple of goodies the others don't, like character sheets which automatically apply bonuses and penalties to d20 rolls, including range penalties for missile weapons. Those who are running D20 games are likely to be impressed with how well this program handles even the most mundane details. There's a critical hit generator, and it even tracks ammo! Downside: This seems a bit crash prone. Big Upside: The accompanying Yahoo! Group gives you direct access to the developers and they're very quick to answer questions and even run online tutorials.

GM's should try each of these three applications and see what works for them. You may decide that none of them suit your needs, in which case you will have to be creative. I haven't even mentioned so-called "play-by-email" or "play-by-post" approaches, which are *extremely* slow and inefficient, but a viable alternative for those who are unable to arrange a steady weekly session time with their fellow players.

**Recruiting is one thing – Retaining is another.**

So you've chosen how to manage the action in your game. You still can't have a game without players. So where do you find them? Each of the above web sites

contains a forum in which GM's and players can hook up. Be sure that whatever application you implement, you are checking the related message boards frequently. Not only can players be found, but also you'll be kept abreast of the latest updates and patches.

Another way of recruiting players occurred to me quite unexpectedly. One night I was hosting an OpenRPG session without a room password, so from time to time a player would step into the room and ask if we needed any players. At the time, these intrusions were annoying; but later I used that same scenario to recruit players when I needed them. On a night when I had no sessions scheduled, I created a room titled "Players Wanted." Then I just sat back and answered questions for the next couple of hours. Recruiting players through the actual gaming client is not only potentially faster than posting to message groups, but it also gives you another reason to install the software.

I would suggest beginning with a group, which usually wouldn't be large enough for a live-action campaign – about 2 to 4, players. Scale your adventures to suit the size of the group. Keep the action simple until you master the gaming interface. When you know pretty well what you can handle, add more players as you see fit.

Getting the group ready for that well-anticipated first session is a little more difficult than simply posting an ad or hanging out in chat rooms and waiting for four players to sign up. You might get your first response from an interested player on April 6<sup>th</sup>, then finally fill your last position sometime in August. By the time player D commits, your Players A and B have lost interest or moved on to another campaign. That's another reason why it's generally a good idea to start small. Get one or two players committed to a weekly time, and then start playing immediately. There's something to be said for solo adventures. Email the author at [slyraymond@charter.net](mailto:slyraymond@charter.net) for an example of a 1<sup>st</sup> level D20 fantasy solo adventure. It's short, but makes a sweet practice session if you're just getting comfortable with your chosen gaming software.

Set up a mailing list so that all correspondence regarding session dates and times is read by everyone who has indicated an interest. Double check dates by asking players to send you a confirmation message two days prior. Include yourself on the mailing list, especially if you have multiple email addresses. I must confess that I've forgotten a couple of dates; since then I've included my mobile email address in my mailing list, so whenever I remind the others of an upcoming engagement my cell phone also receives a reminder.

Speaking of missing dates, here's the rule of rules: Never, *never*, **never** no-show your players. Not only is it irresponsible, but there's a second, less obvious reason. As a GM, you will often feel as though you're on the players' backs, reminding them of session dates, moderating the chat, and generally performing other "bossy" duties you don't usually perform in a real life

campaign. In real life, getting a game together is more of a democratic process; people call each other and simply decide to drive to House X for an evening's entertainment. But online, the GM must take more of a leadership role to keep the action flowing from week-to-week. Therefore, anything the GM does which would reduce his credibility in the eyes of his players is just plain bad for the game. A strong GM image equals a strong game. Your strong image will keep players interested, even when, try as you might, you occasionally fail to provide the best roleplaying scenarios. People are generally more willing to forgive underperformance than they are to forgive unreliability.

### **The GM must be Tech-Savvy**

Well, at least *a little* tech-savvy. I'm not a computer whiz by any stretch of the imagination, but I've learned through one trial after another that GM's running online campaigns will find it beneficial to understand the following:

- *Whatever gaming software you've chosen.* If the documentation confuses you, there is plenty of support available from other users.
- *Web-hosting.* You've got to have a place to put your maps and other images. If you aren't familiar with the process of setting up web sites or downloading & uploading material to web space, visit your local bookstore.
- *HTML.* Not only is HTML used in web authoring, but it's also often used in chat. A rudimentary understanding of the various HTML tags is like being able to change your own motor oil; it's not necessary, but you can only benefit.
- *FTP.* If you understand web hosting, you understand FTP. You really can't have one without the other.
- *CAD / Paint Applications.* I prefer Campaign Cartographer II for map-making, but there's a real learning curve. Autorealm is a free mapping program that can be found with a quick Google search. Paint Shop Pro is fine for making custom miniatures. For my players' characters, I have a set of disc-shaped avatars. For monsters, I scan images from the Monster Manual, crop the images, shrink them in PSP, then save as .jpg's.

*With some ingenuity, there are other things a GM can do to "tech up" his campaign. Here are some things I've done for mine. See what else you can think of:*

- Downloaded the Excel Generator Pack from Community 3e. This and other similar products can be found online at no cost, and can really simplify the busywork involved in fleshing out a realistic campaign setting.
- Created a scaled-down version of my campaign website, then created an AvantGo Custom Channel using that site's address so I can access my campaign timeline, character sheets, and a database of NPC's from anywhere.
- Added a Bulletin Board to my campaign web page. Bulletin Boards can be gotten for free if you don't



mind a couple of popup ads (which are easily disabled by some web browsers). Your players can use a bulletin board to stay in touch in between sessions without harassing each other via email.

It also helps to have a scanner. When a character sheet or map needs to be shared *now* and there is no practical way to create or copy it electronically, it's helpful to be able to simply email a scanned image.

#### **Having a Web Site isn't necessary, but it helps.**

The importance of having some web expertise has already been mentioned. You can't share maps and other graphics online without it. Since you're probably going to have set aside some web space for the purposes of sharing maps online, why not offer your players and "lurkers" (non-player spectators) an official campaign website? A website is the twenty-first century counterpart to the campaign newsletters we had in the good old days.

When designing a campaign website, look to others for inspiration. By simply asking around in the various RPG message forums, you should be able to find the addresses for existing campaign websites with little trouble. However you decide to approach the design of the site, I suggest following these guidelines:

1. Keep it simple. Minimal graphics makes for quickly loading pages. Ask yourself, "Am I trying to score points for flashiness, or provide a reference tool for myself and my players?" Some of the most useful and interesting sites that I remember visiting contain plain text with no images.
2. Test the final product in various screen resolutions, with various different browsers (e.g., Netscape, Internet Explorer, Opera, Mozilla), if possible.
3. Make it easy for visitors to navigate the site. Use simple menus and arrange information logically. Think of your website as a reference tool, one in which you ought to be able to find any campaign-related information in seconds.

Here are some ideas for features that you may wish to include in your site:

- *A synopsis of the action.* You could summarize the plot in a few choice words, then update the story after every playing session; or you could compress the actual text from every few playing sessions into a .zip file and provide a link to the file.
- *Character Bios.* Providing a list of the current characters along with each character's biography could inspire a greater sense of pride in your players. Also, visitors to your site will be better able to take an interest in your synopsis if the characters have a little personality.
- *Maps.* This is one of the biggest reasons to have a campaign website. By posting the most commonly referenced maps in the region where your campaign takes place, you save yourself the trouble of sending the maps to each player individually. If you have a

synopsis page, create hyperlinks to your maps whenever a location is named.

- *An invitation to join.* If you're looking for players, provide a page that explains your character creation and submission guidelines, as well as any house rules you might have. Don't forget the obvious: Include a "mailto:" link to your email address so that both existing players and prospective players are better able to reach you.
- *A message board.* There are free message boards available all over the World Wide Web. Find one you like and attach it to your site. You can use it to post announcements, discuss rules and policies, schedule sessions, and even keep the action going in between sessions. For those GM's who are only able to maintain a "play-by-post" campaign, the message board can actually support the action.
- *World Descriptions.* If you use an original world, all the information that your players' characters know (but that might not be easily remembered by the players themselves) should be included somewhere on your site. By this, I mean information pertaining to commerce, geography, culture, and so on. Whatever is a matter of common knowledge for characters in the game world needs to be available to the players and easy to look up.

#### **Some final words.**

In an online game the action moves much more slowly than in real life games. Three sessions at your kitchen table might bring your adventuring party in and out of three extensive dungeon crawls; but three online sessions may only bring your party past the front door of the first dungeon. As I close this article, I'd like to share some ideas that may help you bring the pace up a bit:

Establish rules of communication that keep the action moving realistically. In real life, for example, players can tell when a GM finishes a room description. But online, the GM may wish to split his description posts into small chunks. Because the players will finish reading part one of your multi-part posts before you have a chance to finish typing part two, situations like the following may occur:

**GM:** The door swings open with little effort. You enter a room that is bare save for a brown leather sack,

**Beauregard:** I rush over to the sack and pick it up!

**GM:** ...which is surrounded by a wet looking, greyish, stony patch.

**Beauregard:** Oops, sorry. I mean, I find a pebble and toss it at the grey thing.

**GM:** Too late, roll a grapple check, Bo.

To avoid premature posts like Beauregard's, try enforcing a rule that any post ending in ellipsis ("...") is "to be continued." My players have learned to hold all comments until there is a full stop.

Tailor adventures so that they take place in a shorter period of time. Instead of setting your dungeon crawl in

an elaborate underground cave complex, how about an abandoned cathedral? Instead of a nine-story castle keep, how about a shack in the marsh? Limiting the size of the crawl not only save hours of time, but it might also inspire you to create more interesting and varied encounter settings.

Alternate slow moving sessions with sessions that cover days of game time. For example, if it took you an entire four-hour session to play out one combat encounter, see if you can have the characters travel for a few days and have some quick but interesting non-combat encounters during the next session. By varying the pace, you not only make up for nights during which the action is slow, but you also provide a sense of ongoing variety which helps keep your players interested in the game as a whole.

Keeping track of important character information, such as current hit points, total weight carried, money, special items, and ammo can be difficult when the players' copies of their record sheets are nowhere near yours. Keep an extra copy of each character sheet for yourself, and update each sheet exactly when you tell your players to update their copies. You can check your copies against one another every now and then, just to

make sure there are no discrepancies. If there are any discrepancies, the GM's decision should be final, so stay on top of things as best you can.

Because of the slower moving action in online games, you may wish to tamper with experience rewards in such a way as to permit faster level advancement. That's your prerogative. In a nutshell, whatever you feel makes up for the limitations of online play can be a good idea. Use your better judgement.

#### **About the Author:**

S. Lyle, "Sly" Raymond has been a gamer since the early 80's, when his preferences were 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Dungeons and Dragons, Marvel Super Heroes, Car Wars, and Top Secret. He now works in sales in Madison, Wisconsin and juggles his gaming interests with his professional and family responsibilities while trying to figure out what to do with his Music Theory/History degree. His 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition Dungeons and Dragons campaign website can be found at: <http://webpages.charter.net/slyraymond/4ndpages/Egaria.htm>. His non-RPG interests include poker, chess, pretending to work out regularly, and caring for his pot-bellied pig "familiar," Eleanor.

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# Extraordinary Cavalry

## Robert Sullivan

"Four legs good, two legs bad."  
—*Animal Farm*, George Orwell.

### **Cavalry to the Rescue**

Cavalry are mounted soldiers trained to fight from the back of an animal. These war animals were largely limited to horses – and elephants to a lesser extent – in the history of the real world. However, a fantasy world need have no such limitations. There is a difference between domestication and taming. Domestication means that an animal is the product of a controlled breeding program designed to promote desirable traits and to suppress objectionable ones. Taming means an individual animal has become used to humans. A tame animal may perform tasks or do tricks.

Horses (*equus caballus*) were traditionally the preferred mounts. The utility of the animal ensured their domestication early in history. While horses saw use in all manner of environments, they always performed best upon open plains or grasslands. Various ancient powers – such as the Persians and the Carthaginians – employed elephants (*ioxodonta africana*) in military action. The size of the animal allowed it to trample things that would stop a horse. However, they were never domesticated.

The numbers of species of animals domesticated is small in real history. However, the number of domesticated species is apt to be large in a fantastic world. Further, some of those animals would be extraordinary in nature.

Some might ask, "Why use such animals in a campaign?" A better question would be, "Why not use such animal in a campaign?" Why should the list of domesticated animals exclude exotic mounts in a world of fantasy, with elves, dragons, wizards and magic?

### **Suitable Mounts**

This article deals with eight such animals — bears, griffons, mammoths, moose, rhinoceroses, spider-eaters, wapiti elk and zebras — and their use in the cavalry in a fantasy setting. Such mounts are useful in at least any situation where a horse finds use. Other exotic mounts are possible, but are beyond the scope of this article.

### **Breaking the Animal**

A player character that wishes to ride one of the exotic animals described below must break that animal to the saddle to do so. This is not a requirement for a player character to ride a horse. However, it is better if a

prospective rider earns the privilege that one of these exotic mounts affords given the special nature of all of these animals. See chapter four of the *Core Rulebook I*, under the skill "handle animal" for rules on breaking animals. Note that all of the animals described here are domesticated. So to break them to a saddle would qualify as "teach an animal unusual tasks." Anyone who has not personally broken the exotic mount will always have at least a -1 penalty to all rolls involving the handling of the mount

### **The Rule of 10**

To sustain themselves most animals must eat about ten times their body weight in food in a year. They will eat more if they have exerted themselves — such as feeding after a battle. A 1,200-pound warhorse will eat about six tones of food in a year, or about 30 pounds in a day. It is important to remember that some of the mounts described below are strictly carnivorous — such as the griffon. A 750-pound griffon will eat about 3 ¾ tons of meat — preferably horse meat – in a year, or about 20 pounds a day. When it comes to the upkeep of such exotic mounts this is an important expense of which players must keep track. The cost of meat to feed carnivorous mounts is twice the cost of regular feed.

### **Lookin' Good**

Anyone mounted on and/or in control of any of the herbivores described in this article will have a circumstantial +1 bonus to their charisma, because they just look cool. Further, anyone mounted on and/or in control of any of the carnivores described in this article will have a circumstantial +2 to their charisma because in addition to looking cool, everyone seeing them will think they have a pair of brass ones.

### **Exotic Traffic Laws**

Special laws regulate the use of exotic mounts in a civilized community. This is because horses are unlikely to eat a person – but a griffon might try. At the very least, this includes a fee that those responsible for the exotic mount must pay upon entry into a city and each day their-after that the exotic mount remains in that city.

**Brown Bear:** City entry/daily fee (if allowed), 1 s.p. The larger cities are the only ones to generally allow the entrance of bears provided a muzzle is on the animal. Further, leathers straps are used to wrap their claws to limit the damage they may do (half their regular damage and it is subdual damage).

**Wapiti Elk:** City entry/daily fees, 5 s.p. Wapiti elks are skittish and react poorly when anyone aside from their

master touches them. Because of this, owners must use cloth padding to wrap their antlers to minimize the damage they may do (half their regular damage and it is subdual damage).

**Griffons:** City entry/daily fee, 1 g.p. They may enter a city if they are carefully controlled. They must wear a muzzle at all times and their claws remain bound in leather (half their regular damage and it is subdual damage). If the owner is unwilling or unable to do this, then the animal remains in an aviary. In this case, the owner must use some other transportation to get around town. It is illegal to fly directly over government buildings, military posts, homes or estates of royals and/or nobles, temples and wizards' towers.

**Mammoths:** These animals are often too wide to fit down a street, taller than many buildings, so heavy they break apart cobblestone streets and are sometimes too big to fit through the gates of walled cities. Unless it is an unusual community, it is illegal to allow a mammoth into a city — or garden, orchard or field with crops.

**Moose:** City entry/daily fee, 6 s.p. or so. Few cities have had enough experience with moose to draft laws governing them. Most city guards will improvise by

requiring the wrapping of the moose's antlers (half their regular damage and it is subdual damage).

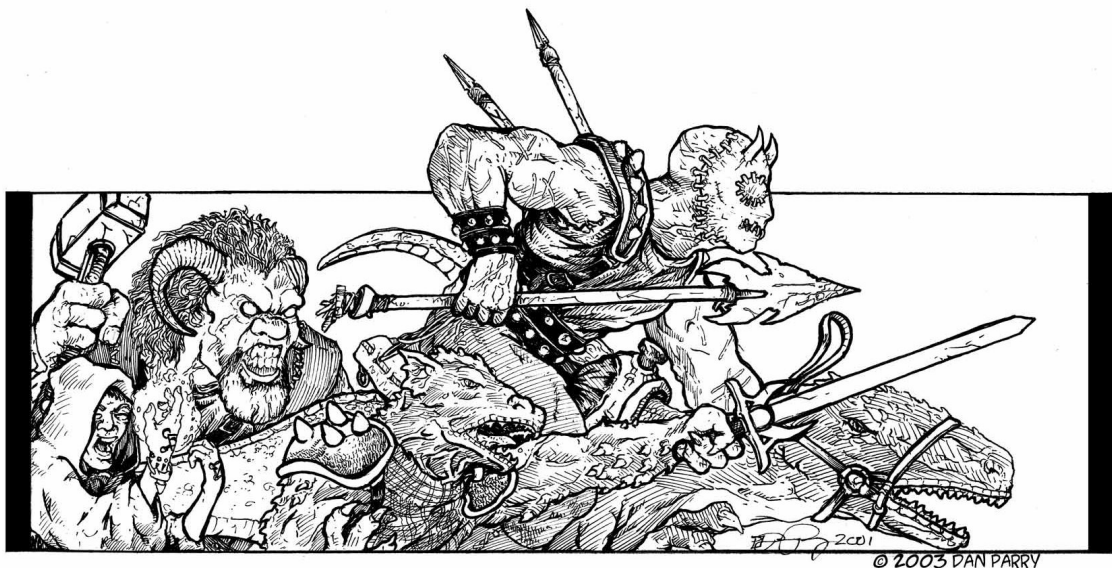
**Rhinos:** City entry/daily fee, 8 s.p. These animals are heavy enough so that they are not allowed in smaller cities — with smaller road budgets — because of the damage they do. Their horn is wrapped at all times (half their regular damage and it is subdual damage).

**Spider—Eaters:** They are flatly illegal in the majority of cities due to their tendency to eat people and inject eggs into large animals. They remain in an aviary outside of the city's walls. Their masters' are required to use other transportation while in the city.

**Zebra:** City entry/daily fee, 8 s.p. A muzzle is on the animal at all times due to their potentially violent nature.

**Saddles and Tack:** All of the animals listed here — except the zebra — require exotic saddles as listed in chapter seven of the *Core Rulebook I*, under "mounts and related gear." The standard rules for their ability to pull weight; the effects and cost of barding and armour, all hold true. For more equipment, see "Items for fantastic cavalry," below.

<b>Table 01 Exotic Mounts Costs and Weight</b>			
<b>Animal:</b>	<b>Cost:</b>	<b>Cavalry Type:</b>	<b>Weight:</b>
<b>Brown Bear</b>	500 g.p.	Heavy	1,800 pounds.
<b>Wapiti Elk</b>	450 g.p.	Medium	850 pounds.
<b>Griffons</b>	3,500 g.p. for egg/ 7,000 g.p. for live	Medium, flying	1,000 pounds.
<b>Mammoths</b>	2,500 g.p.	Special	18,000+ pounds.
<b>Moose</b>	250 g.p.	Medium	1,500 pounds.
<b>Rhinos</b>	750 g.p.	Heavy	6,000 pounds.
<b>Spider—Eater</b>	2,000 g.p. for live/ 3,000 g.p. for egg.	Medium, flying	950 pounds.
<b>Zebra</b>	125 g.p.	Light	600 pounds.





### **Brown Bear**

Brown bears (*ursus arctos horribilis*) are one of the largest bear species. They are opportunistic omnivores. Meat takes up more than three-fourths of their diet. In the wild most of the meat they eat comes from fish. However, they sometimes take down grown elk, moose and even horses. Most are solitary. The principle exception is mothers and their young. A number of bears together are a sleuth. Gnomes — with the predilections for the natural world and animals — first domesticated brown bears centuries ago. They find much use an animal companions and as mounts in gnomish communities. Bears are relatively easy to train and if well treated can even be affectionate. However, as bears are territorial creatures, they are used to form small units only — rarely more than three bears, with gnomish riders who possess 1d4 levels of ranger or fighter. Far more common is the use of bears as the mounts of solitary scouts — usually rangers — who patrol the borders of gnomish settlements. Although they find use as hunting or guard animals, the use of bears among other races is rare. The brown bear is not particularly suited to being a pack animal. Using them as such implies a -1 penalty to all rolls involving the handling of the animal. Brown bears are willing to go underground. **Source:** See *Core Rulebook III* entry for brown bear, pages 193 & 194. They cause a -1 reaction in elk, moose, horses and small animals.

### **Griffin**

Griffons (*duobestia leonaquila maiestas*) usually travel only in pairs — a male and a female, mated for life — or in small groups. They are typically closer to eagles than to lions in manner and temperament. They prefer wilderness to regions with communities of orcs, elves, humans, etc. However, some occasionally do move close to settlements where they may get at their prey of choice — horses. A number of griffons together are a volery. While griffin cavalries exist in the more powerful human societies — whom can afford them — the elves originally domesticated the magical beasts. As they possess the significant tactical advantage of flight, a griffin cavalry unit is extremely formidable in battle. A typical unit has 1d6+1 griffons with as many human or elf riders, all of whom have at least three levels in fighter or sorcerer. The griffin is not suitable as a pack animal. Using them as such implies a -1 penalty to all rolls involving the handling of the animal. Griffons are unwilling to go underground. **Source:** *Core Rulebook III*, pg. 113. They cause a negative -1 reaction in horses, mules, donkeys and zebra.

### **Mammoth**

These huge animals are a relative of the elephant and are similar to that animal in shape. Adult males mammoths (*elephas mammothus primigenius*) standing about 15 feet high at the shoulder while the average adult male elephant stands about 10 feet high at the shoulder. Mammoths have long, curved tusks that may reach a length of about 10 feet. The woolly mammoth lives in cold climates and possesses a shaggy covering of long, thick hair. Mammoths favour wooded and meadow-like habitats. They roam in pods — the same

term used to describe a number of whales — dominated by large and strong bulls. Mammoths are the preferred mounts of hill and stone giants. They are also the only mounts these giants can ride. While a “cavalry” of giants on mammoths is usually few in number — 1d4+1 mammoths and the giant riders — they are a fearsome force once in motion. Dwarves use mammoths — often 1d4+3 dwarves, each with four levels in fighter or cleric — with a platform mounted on the mammoths back as a mobile “tower” from which they attack enemies. Regular elephants see similar use among humans. The mammoth finds much use as a pack animal without any penalties to the handling of the animal. Mammoths usually cannot go underground given their size and that of most underground passages. **Source:** Use the elephant statistics on *Core Rulebook III*, pgs. 196 & 197.

### **Moose**

Moose (*cervidae alces alces*) are large animals. Males stand up to more than six feet at the shoulder. A prominent feature of bulls is their enormous antlers. These can exceed 60 inches in width and 50 pounds in weight. Although they may band in small groups of up to a dozen or more during the breeding season, moose generally are solitary animals. A number of moose together — like wapiti elk — are a gang. Moose are a mount granted to barbarian societies by their gods. Such societies are often technologically unsophisticated; they usually do not have the ability to make iron. However — with the moose — they possess some of the best medium cavalry in existence. The moose is not suitable as a pack animal. Using them as such implies a -1 penalty to all rolls involving the handling of the animal. Moose are unwilling to go underground. **Source:** Use the statistics for light warhorse on *Core Rulebook III*, pg. 197, with addition that moose prefer to trample medium or smaller sized targets and 1d4 gore damage.

### **Rhinoceros**

Rhinoceroses (*ceratotherium simum cottoni*) are solitary animals that may also form small herds when living in grassland areas. This animal grows to a shoulder height of five to six feet and a length of 11 to 14 feet. Rhinoceroses have a reputation for being dangerous. However, in general they are peaceful and even timid except when threatened. A charging rhinoceros is quite dangerous. The recommended mount is the white rhino as it possesses the best temperament. A number of rhinoceroses together are a crash. Magic has allowed human societies native to regions with rhinoceros to domesticate the animal. Dwarves native to those regions accomplished the same due to their patience. Rhinoceroses see use as the ultimate heavy cavalry in both human and dwarf societies. They move faster and eat less than mammoths, are stronger than horses or elk, tougher than nearly any other war animal and with their horn, more dangerous. A unit is made of 1d10+5 rhinoceroses with as many riders, human or dwarf, all of whom have at least three levels in cleric, fighter or ranger. The rhinoceros finds use as a pack animal without any penalties to the handling of the animal. Rhinos are willing to go underground, but their size may present problems. **Source:** See the *Core Rulebook III*, pgs. 200.

### **Spider-Eater**

Spider-eaters (*tribistia sphenoaester glutto*) are typically solitary animals. They only rarely congregate in any region. There are far fewer males than females. Both genders hunt and feed alone and are nominally territorial. The males never help — or even associate much with — females who have laid eggs. Females are always intensely protective of the animals carrying their eggs, until the eggs hatch. Males will occasionally eat their young. A number of spider-eaters together are a grist. Only the use of magic allowed the domestication of spider-eaters. Even so, they are fierce predators. Spider-eaters are extremely dangerous in battle. After a victorious battle — as a way of offsetting the costs of feeding the rapacious beasts — the riders of spider-eaters regularly feed them slain and captured foes. A typical unit has 1d6+1 spider-eaters with as many human riders, all of whom have at least three levels in fighter or wizard. A spider-eater is not suitable as a pack animal. Using them as such implies a -1 penalty to all rolls involving the handling of the animal. Spider-eaters are willing to go underground, but their size can be a problem. **Source:** See the *Core Rulebook III*, pg. 186. They cause a -2 reaction in all other animals of large size or smaller.

### **Wapiti Elk**

Wapiti elk (*cervidae cervus canadensis*) have dark brown fur on their heads and neck with creamy grey fur on their back and flanks. A full-grown stag stands up to five feet high at the shoulder. The antlers are smooth and attain a great size, averaging more than four feet in length. Stags live alone or in small groups apart from the main female herd during most of the year. They join the female gang during the mating season. After griffons, wapiti elk are the favoured mount of elf cavalry. Mixed gender wapiti elk cavalries exist. However, the moon cavalry — a unit, 1d6+6 elk with as many female elf riders, each at least a fourth level fighter or ranger — is legendary. The wapiti elk is not suitable as a pack animal. Using them as such implies a -1 penalty to all rolls involving the handling of the animal. Elk are unwilling to go underground. **Source:** Use the light horse statistics on *Core Rulebook III* pg. 197 with modifications; -1 from strength, -1 from constitution, +1 to dexterity and add gore damage for 1d4+1.



### **Zebra**

This is a mammal smaller than the horse and resembling a wild burrow in behaviour and shape. It best known for its vertical black and white stripes. The zebra (*equus zebra zebra*) prefers warm and subtropical plains where they roam in large herds. The largest species stands about five feet at the shoulders. Its stripes are narrow and numerous. Halflings living on those warm plains domesticated the species with magic. Like horses, a number of zebra together is a herd. Humans have yet to be able to successfully domesticate the species without the use of magic. Gnomes and halflings seem to prefer the small and “spirited” zebra. The animals are good size for these two races. Zebra also fight hard, long and dirty. Halflings and gnomes from regions where zebras live frequently use the animal for their cavalry. Such cavalry units are 1d6+6 zebras, with as many gnome or halflings, riders, all of who have three levels in cleric, fighter, rogue or sorcerer. The zebra is not particularly suited to being a pack animal— Using them as such implies a -1 penalty to a rolls involving the handling of the animal. Zebra are unwilling to go underground. **Source:** Use the statistics for donkey on *Core Rulebook III*, pg. 196, with the addition that they bite (1d4) and do not let go, unless commanded to do so by their rider.

Table 02:

Exotic Mounts Movement and Sp

Animal:	Native Terrain:	Movement:	Hourly Range:	Daily Range:	N.T. Trackless Movement:
<b>Brown Bear</b>	forest, hills, mountains	40 ft.	3 miles	24 miles	x3/4
<b>Wapiti Elk</b>	forest, hills, mountains	60 ft.	4 miles	32 miles	x3/4
<b>Griffon</b>	temperate, hills, mountains	30 ft.	80 ft flying	3 miles/8 miles	24 miles/48 miles
<b>Mammoth*</b>	temperate, cold, forests, plains	40 ft.	4 miles	32 miles	x1
<b>Moose**</b>	cold marshes, forests	60 ft.	4 miles	32 miles	x3/4
<b>Rhinos***</b>	warm plains	30 ft.	3 miles	24 miles	x1
<b>Spider—Eaters</b>	temperate,	30 ft./60 ft flying	3 miles/6 miles	24 miles/32 miles	x1
<b>Zebra Warm</b>	Plains	30 ft.	3 miles	24 miles	x1

\*Mammoths we not hindered by undergrowth or poor surface conditions. In mountains, its movement rate is never better than x1/2. In warm climates, the woolly mammoth's base fortitude DC is 15.

\*\*In warm climates, the moose's base fortitude DC is 15.

\*\*\*A rhino is not hindered by undergrowth. In cold climates, the rhino's base fortitude DC is

### Items for Fantastic Cavalry

Here am three items especially deigned for exotic mounts.

#### Boots

These minor magical items protect the soft feet of elephants, mammoths and rhinoceros in the same way that horseshoes protect horse hooves. With thick, hard and enchanted leather on the bottom and softer leather up the side that synch up the back, these boots are designed to fit the animal's feet. The boots offers +2 to save against injury to the animal's feet by anything they step on. **Caster Level:** 4th. Prerequisites: craft rank 6, Extend spell, Craft Wondrous Item, endurance. **Cost:** 200 g.p. per boot for rhinos, 400 g.p. per boot for elephants, 600 g.p. per boot for mammoths. **Weight:** 4 pounds per boot for rhinos, 8 pounds per boot for elephants, 12 pounds per boot for mammoths.

#### Trunk Blade

This is a large scythe-like blade temporarily fitted to the end of a mammoth or elephant's trunk for combat purposes. The use of one requires special training for the animal. Each is about five to seven feet long. The mammoth or elephant swings the sword back and forth with great force and speed. This counts as a "slam" attack. **Cost:** 10 sp. **Damage:** 2d8 + strength bonus. A critical hit that kills will cut a target in half. **Weight:** 14 pounds.

### Muzzle

A muzzle is a cage-like harness that fits over an animal's mouth. This utterly prevents it from making any kind of bite attack. Most muzzles allow an animal to feed, if the feed comes in pieces no larger than a persons thumb. They allow the use of bit and bridles. **Cost:** 2 gp **Weight:** 1 pounds.

### Adventure Hooks

Here are three adventure hooks that may allow a game master to include exotic mounts in an existing campaign.

**Mammoth Rustlers:** Some thieves stole several mammoths. This includes a prize breeding bull. The thieves are riding their huge prizes hell-bent for broke into the wilderness. The characters must stop the thieves and retrieve the mammoths.

**The Gift:** A member of the PCs' party is given an exotic special mount as a reward after saving the life of someone wealthy, important or both. The character now must learn how to handle the special mount.

**Beast Traders:** Exotic mounts are sold and traded in the same parts of the market as are the more traditional horns, mules, donkeys and cattle. Beast traders are every bit as savvy as horse merchants and are always willing to try to sell an animal for more than it is worth. A more exotic animal breaks free and gains the characters attention while they dicker with a trader over the price of a horse.

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# The Lost Alley

## James Carter



This article describes an area that can be added to any old city, any place that has been in existence for centuries. The Lost Alley is a narrow street, with a few shops, tenements, and a tavern, but there is something not so usual about it – it only appears for an hour every ten years, in the heart of the worst portion of the city. Those who stray within, and linger past the hour, are cursed to remain forever, hence the alley is a mish-mash of the different cultures that have inhabited the world over the past thousand years.

The alley can serve many purposes. The PC's might stumble in and out, and the place could be used simply as a part of the city – though with the odd elements described in this article. The PC's might deliberately seek this location out, perhaps to learn its secrets or to find an item that legend has it can be found within. Maybe the PC's are stranded in the Alley, caught after the hour. Possibly the PC's will be drawn forward ten years, or possibly more, or they may learn the dark secret of the Alley and end the curse, both on its inhabitants and themselves.

This can be an interesting element to use if the DM wishes to advance the campaign setting by a time, perhaps to learn the result of actions they have just made – how the young squire they saved from a dragon could end up ruling a dark empire stretching from coast to coast. Other ways of travelling in time are available, and finding them could make an epic quest indeed. (The supplement *Chronomancy* from Mongoose Publishing may be useful for this purpose, as might the adventure *The Tide of Years* from Atlas Games).

This article will first look at the history and background of the alley, and then will detail its inhabitants. The mechanics of the situation will then be examined, followed by the way the PC's can escape from the Alley. A number of different options will be presented to allow the PC's either to survive unchanged the ten years required, or to escape. Although a number of inhabitants will be presented in this article, these represent only the original inhabitants of this alley. The DM should add a number of other NPC's to the environment, suitable to the history of his home campaign. If some ancient empire or domain is



important to the campaign, then this is an ideal opportunity for the PC's to interact with representatives of that culture. The city or any nations are not given names, to allow the DM to fit this location into any campaign.

### **History**

The city was in its early years, and barely covered a third of its present extents. It was a dark time for the lands, as tribes of barbarian orcs roamed the land, looking for pillage and slaughter. Such a tribe had laid siege to the city, and it looked hopeless. Despite the best efforts of the city clerics, food was running low and disease was running rife. Everyone in the city was praying for a miracle, but one man was preying to a different master than the others.

Ulfred, owner of the Long Tooth Tavern, had long worshipped the dark powers. Instead of looking to the Gods of Good, he worshipped evil masters. It was to them he prayed for guidance, and it was they who answered him, dispatching a lackey, a Hamatula (p49, MM). Ulfred had simply prayed for himself, and those he cared about to be saved from the fate that was to overwhelm the city, and this prayer was duly answered. The alley and everyone in it was swept out of time leaving a deserted copy of itself behind. The inhabitants of the city wondered what had happened, but amidst the plague and famine, a few more disappearances were not noticed. They had further cause to forget soon after, when a relief force arrived and dispersed the orcs.

Inside the alley, time passed at an increased rate. A grey mist surrounded the alley, blocking all exits and leaving the place in perpetual twilight. The cleric at the local shrine found that he was still able to create sufficient food to keep the few inhabitants alive, and water was still available somehow from the fountain. Ulfred did not explain what had happened, for fear of reprisals – even back then, the cure seemed worse than the disease. The Hamatula took up position in the tavern's cellar, in front of the crude pentagram it had appeared from. After a year of this nightmare, the alley reappeared in the city.

Outside, a decade had passed. The city had rebuilt itself, although the section where the alley once lay had been worst hit, and had now been written off to the thieves and beggars. They, then, were the only ones astonished by the reappearance of the alley. A few brave souls ventured in, and the inhabitants of the alley tried to leave – but failed. Try as they might, they simply could not pass into the main street. After only an hour of sunlight, the alley faded out again, taking those who had lingered with it.

This has happened every decade for the last four hundred years. Forty years have passed within, although time seems to be strangely affected within the alley – the passage of years is having little effect on anyone, and every day seems the same as the next. Over time, most adapted to the new conditions. A few went insane, and others plot escape secretly – but those

who do are often found mysteriously killed. For the dark powers have decreed that no one should escape the Lost Alley.

### **Entering the Alley**

The PCs will likely first enter the alley as part of a run through the city, possibly as part of an ongoing adventure. (As the alley is likely to take up a considerable amount of game time, it is not recommended that they be on any sort of urgent quest, unless the DM wishes to highlight to the PCs the result of their failure.) If they spend little time in the alley, then they may never notice what is going on. Many methods can be used to delay the PCs if the DM wishes to keep them in the Alley – perhaps they are being chased by a gang who seems reluctant to pursue them, or perhaps one of the inhabitants keeps them talking. It is also possible that the PCs are looking for something in the Alley, that they have heard about its magics and wish to learn – but they will learn that curiosity can do great harm to the cat.

A group of PCs entering the alley will first be struck by the difference in architecture between the alley and the rest of the city – everything is far more archaic, out of date. Many of the buildings seem to be shabbily maintained, and the people in the alley look as bad as the buildings. No-one will talk to them until they themselves have become a part of the alley, they will notice that few of the inhabitants of the city seem to be entering the alley, with a couple of notable exceptions. Sharp-eyed characters will notice a group of children daring each other to enter the alley – but within a few minutes a group of adults, presumably their parents, will drag them away at the run. They will also see a small group of suspicious types that they may recognize as members of the Thieves Guild, creeping into the alley and approaching a well. If they are on good terms with the PCs, then they will warn them to get away from the alley as soon as possible, preferably with them. (Another possibility is that the PCs have offended the Thieves Guild in the past, in which they may be tricked or forced into staying in the alley – removing a problem the Guild does not want to face. This could be any organization that the PCs have fought in the past, of course.)

Once the hour has passed, the PC's will see the grey mist descending over the alley, blocking out the sunlight. This will be an obvious hint that something has happened.

## **Locations**

### **Long Tooth Tavern**

The Long Tooth Tavern is so named for the pair of magnificent mammoth tusks, hung above the entrance. As with the rest of the alley, the tavern is poorly maintained – the equipment simply not being available. Although it long since ran out of liquor, it is still a central location where most of the inhabitants of the alley come to spend their time. Most of the NPC's spend

their time here – with the exception of Thrask, Argron and Sir Yintos, who religiously avoid the place.

The tavern is of simple design, only two stories. The ground floor is one large room, containing half a dozen tables in various stages of disrepair. The remains of two other tables are leaning against the side wall. The table by the window is the only one occupied a regular basis, with a group of four carpenters who spend all their time gambling. As they have no money, the game is played on pieces of paper, keeping track of the money they owe each other – the game lost all meaning many years ago. If any of the PC's expresses interest, they will be invited into the game, which can be recognized as an early form of a popular card game on the campaign world. (Any game in the world that is analogous to poker will suffice.) The PC will notice that the games have almost become stylised, as the players all know every move the others will make.

Most of the regular patrons gather by the bar, drinking water delivered from the well. At any time, a dozen or more people can be found here, sitting around – the DM should fit in here any NPC's he has created for his own campaign. It should be remembered that everybody in the alley knows everyone else extremely well, and that any new face will be extremely popular.

The upper floor is accessed through a staircase at the rear of the bar, leading up to a central corridor. The top floor is divided into three rooms – one occupying the left side of the floor, the other two taking up the right half equally. The largest room is the master bedroom, with an ornate bed, chest of draws, chair, desk and mirror, with a boarded-up window. (This used to look out into the next street – now it just looks out into the grey fog.)

The first room on the left used to be for storage, but now is empty aside from a few empty boxes. If asked, Ulfred will be pleased to allow the PCs the use of the room, but it is rather small for a large party. The second room is locked tight, and barred. It used to be Orphei's room, and contains his bed, a chair, a shelf of books on lesser magics, and various other appropriate magical equipment. Ulfred will fight to prevent anyone entering this room.

There is a large basement in the Tavern, but this is described later on, as it is of special importance to the adventure.

### **The Shrine**

At the end of the alley is a small shrine to Pelor, a boxlike building with a large radiant sun over the door. It was never well patronized, but is kept in meticulous order by Argron. The shrine simply contains an altar, with the same radiant sun upon it. There once were a series of benches for the faithful to sit, but those have found other purposes over the long years. Argron spends all his time here, except to sleep in his room at the tenement. It is rare that any inhabitants of the alley enter this building, as they long ago accepted that the gods had forsaken them. While Argron creates the food

required to keep the inhabitants of the alley alive in this shrine, he takes it over to the tavern for distribution, or occasionally to the Tenement.

### **Reynard's Herbal Brews**

Once, this shop prepared herbal brews, but Reynard ran out of ingredients some time ago. This shop is usually empty, and locked up – PC's who break in will find a fairly typical shop front, with the shelves mostly empty. There is a counter by the far wall, and under it are two locked compartments – one containing a bag with three hundred archaic gold pieces, the other with fifty vials of various potions. These can be of any sort the DM feels is appropriate, but among them should be sufficient 'Temporal Stasis' potions to serve the needs of the party. (See sidebar). There is an unlocked room in the back, containing only a bed and a desk – Reynard long ago moved into the Tenement, taking everything small enough to move with him.

#### **Potion of Temporal Stasis**

This potion, once imbibed, slows the body functions down to an absolute minimum. To outward appearances, the user enters a coma, but he requires neither food nor water whilst under the effects of the potion. The duration of the coma is determined by the creator. The drinker will not age while under the potion's effects, but is completely defenceless.

### **The Tenement**

The Tenement is the home of most of the population of the alley, those who haven't driven themselves insane at some point over the endless years. It is a three-storey building, with thirty small rooms, fifteen each on the top floors. The lower floor is a reception area in the front, and the rear is the personal quarters of the owner, now empty. The owner of the tenement was not present when the alley was lost, and the building was commandeered by Sir Yintos while he was still respected by the citizens of the alley. Any of the campaign-specific PCs created for the alley will live here, and there is ample space for the PCs. The rooms are small, containing only a bed and a chest for possessions.

### **The Guardhouse**

The Guardhouse was a small garrison, originally designed to hold a dozen guardsmen. At the time of the siege, most of the guards were on watch, except for Sergeant Burdoyne and Corporal Thrask. Thrask can usually be found here, maintaining the weapons and cleaning the walls. The building itself has three stories, each a single room. The lower is a training hall, and a weapons' store. Only four longswords remain in racks once meant for twenty – Thrask will explain that the rest were being used in the siege. The second floor is barracks, and contains twelve neatly made beds, each with a name at the bottom. There is a chance that Burdoyne will be asleep in one of these beds, not necessarily his own – Thrask always sleeps in his own bed. Each of the beds has a small chest at the bottom, containing the personal effects of the soldier who once lived here – if any of the chests are tampered with,

Thrask will abandon the guardhouse and seek out the violator. The top floor was a storage area, but is now empty. If the PC's ask, especially if they have any standing in the local militia, Thrask will be only too happy to let the PC's stay in this top room.

### **The Well**

Another important feature of the alley is the well next to the tavern. It has provided water constantly over the decades, although no-one knows how. The well itself is rectangular in shape, about three by six feet, and is about thirty feet down. The secret is that the alley does not move in space, only in time. The water source below is still supplied with water, although it does not come from within the field. (Yes, this is a possible escape route should the PCs work it out.) If the PCs explore the well, they will find a small hollow carved out about ten feet down. Inside is a chest containing various gems, jewels and artefacts, which have been hidden by the local Thieves' Guild. All of these gems are stolen, and have been left in the alley until the heat dies off – they will be recovered the next time the alley appears in the city. The activities of the Thieves Guild is one of the reasons the existence of the alley is not widely known – they have actively 'discouraged' anyone outside the guild from learning of this valuable secret.

### **NPC's**

Ulfred, the innkeeper: Com9; CR 9; Size M (5 ft., 8 in. tall); HD 10d6-10; hp 37; Init +4 (+4 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+4 Dex); Attack +9/+4 melee, or +11/+6 ranged; SV Fort +2, Ref +7, Will +9; AL LE; Str 14, Dex 19, Con 9, Int 16, Wis 15, Cha 15.

*Languages Spoken:* Abyssal, Common, Gnome, Ignan.

*Skills and feats:* Alchemy +16, Climb +6, Craft +16, Escape artist +6.5, Gather information +16, Hide +4, Intuit direction +15, Knowledge +18, Knowledge (arcana) +16, Knowledge (religion) +5, Listen +4, Move silently +4, Pick pocket +7, Read lips +15, Ride +12, Spot +4, Use magic device +14; Alertness, Skill focus (gather information), Skill focus (climb), Skill focus (ride), Skill focus (knowledge).

Ulfred had lived in the city for all his life – born into the innkeeping business, but not at his present location. He first began to worship the Dark Lords when his father was killed in a plague, a Priest of Pelor having been unable to cure him. Ever since then, he has slid down the path of corruption, dragging all those he knows with him.

Reynard, the apothecary: Adu12/Wiz2; CR 13; Size M (6 ft., 6 in. tall); HD 12d6+24 + 2d4+4; hp 75; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Attack +4/-1 melee, or +8/+3 ranged; SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +15; AL LN; Str 5, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 16, Wis 19, Cha 16.

*Languages Spoken:* Common, Ignan, Terran, Undercommon.

*Skills and feats:* Concentration +16, Craft +6, Handle animal +15, Hide +1, Knowledge +18, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (nature) +8, Listen +4, Move silently +1, Profession +6, Scry +15, Search +5, Spellcraft +19, Spot +4, Wilderness lore +16; Brew Potion, Craft wondrous item, Maximize spell, Run, Scribe scroll, Skill focus (wilderness lore).

*Adept Spells Per Day:* 3/4/4/3/1.

*Wizard Spells Known (4/3):* 0th -- Arcane Mark, Dancing Lights, Daze, Detect Magic, Detect Poison, Disrupt Undead, Flare, Ghost Sound, Light, Mage Hand, Mending, Open/Close, Prestidigitation, Ray of Frost, Read Magic, Resistance. 1st -- Color Spray, Mage Armor, Magic Missile, Protection from Law, Shield, Sleep.

*Background:* Reynard was one of the more experienced apothecaries of the city, who had set up his shop in the alley because it was quiet and out of the way, and he did not wish to be disturbed. His special expertise is the creation of magical potions, and many examples can be found in his shop, including his Potion of Temporal Stasis, an invention born of necessity. He ran out of materials years ago, however, and since then has found himself with little to do – most of his time is now spent in the tenement. He is a mine of information on his chosen field, and will willingly talk to the PCs for hours on the creation of magical items. He would be willing to take on an apprentice, if one of the PCs was interested – he had taught Orphei before his insanity.

Argron, the Priest of Pelor: Clr7; CR 7; Size M (5 ft., 4 in. tall); HD 7d8+28; hp 72; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Attack +8 melee, or +6 ranged; SV Fort +9, Ref +3, Will +9; AL LG; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 18, Int 13, Wis 18, Cha 10.

*Languages Spoken:* Auran, Common.

*Skills and feats:* Concentration +14, Craft +10, Diplomacy +10, Hide +1, Knowledge (nature) +6, Listen +4, Move silently +1, Scry +7, Spot +4; Blind-fight, Scribe scroll, Skill focus (craft), Weapon focus (mace, heavy).

*Cleric Domains:* Law, Strength.

*Cleric Spells Per Day:* 6/5+1/4+1/3+1/2+1.

Argron has been a loyal priest since his induction into the faith. Since the cessation of time, he has desperately tried to talk with his god, to find some reason for what has happened – but he has found no answers, and is consequently growing more and more bitter as the years progress.

Burdoyne, Sergeant of the Guard: War9; CR 9; Size M (5 ft., 8 in. tall); HD 10d8+20; hp 82; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Attack +12/+7 melee, or +11/+6 ranged; SV Fort +9, Ref +6, Will +4; AL N; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 7.

*Languages Spoken:* Common.

*Skills and feats:* Bluff +2, Climb +9, Handle animal +5, Hide +1, Intimidate +4, Jump +10, Listen +1, Move silently +1, Ride +6, Spot +1; Leadership, Lightning reflexes, Toughness, Weapon focus (hammer, light), Weapon focus (longsword).

Burdoyne is a wreck. Formerly a Sergeant in the Guard, he will tell anyone who cares to ask him that he has 'resigned from the service'. He only became a Sergeant through seniority – he had previously held the dubious honour of being the oldest Trooper and Corporal in the Guard. Ill equipped for the job, he was posted to internal defence even during the greatest peril facing the city, the Siege. Even then he had consigned himself to drink – now denied even this, he sits by himself in the bar ignoring the world.

Thrask, Corporal of the Guard: Ftr4; CR 4; Size M (5 ft., 2 in. tall); HD 5d8+5; hp 26; Init +4 (+4 Improved initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Attack +8 melee, or +5 ranged; SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +0; AL LN; Str 17, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 9, Cha 13.

*Languages Spoken:* Common, Elven.

*Skills and feats:* Climb +11, Hide +0, Intimidate +9, Listen +0, Move silently +0, Search +1, Spot +0; Improved initiative, Power attack.

Background: Thrask was a junior member of the guard, one who had much expected of him. At the height of the siege, however, he committed a serious crime – being drunk on duty. As a result of this has was restricted to barracks in the alley, and so was trapped when the change took place. He has an intense feeling of guilt for his actions, as well as loyalty to the ideals represented by the guard in his day. Duty is everything to him, and he will follow it to the death, and attack anyone who he feels has committed a crime. He keeps himself to himself, remaining alone in the barracks most of the time, felling nothing but contempt for his nominal superior, Burdoyne.

Ilyyanda, Ulfred's wife: Com2; CR 2; Size M (5 ft., 5 in. tall); HD 3d4-6; hp 5; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Attack +3 melee, or +1 ranged; SV Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +1; AL LN; Str 15, Dex 11, Con 7, Int 16, Wis 10, Cha 10.

*Languages Spoken:* Common, Giant, Goblin, Terran.

*Skills and feats:* Balance +2, Forgery +6, Handle animal +5, Hide +0, Intimidate +2, Knowledge (religion) +5, Listen +6, Move silently +0, Ride +6, Spot +2, Tumble +2.5; Alertness, Great fortitude, Lightning reflexes.

Ilyyanda was a simple woman, born in the city. She has a sense of what is right in the world, but has the capacity to ignore most of what she sees around her. Her natural intelligence is often hidden under a bushel, as she knows it infuriates Ulfred. A lifelong worshipper of Oildammara, she briefly considered joining the clergy, but showed no vocation and preferred the life of a simple tavernkeeper's wife. She has tried to put Orphei out of her mind for the sake of her own sanity, but does not always succeed.

Orphei, Ulfred's son (mad): Sor6; CR 6; Size M (5 ft., 10 in. tall); HD 6d4+6; hp 21; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Attack +2 melee, or +3 ranged; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +5; AL CN; Str 9, Dex 11, Con 13, Int 13, Wis 11, Cha 15.

*Languages Spoken:* Auran, Common.

*Skills and feats:* Alchemy +10, Concentration +8, Craft +10, Hide +0, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Listen +0, Move silently +0, Scry +10, Spot +0; Heighten spell, Skill focus (craft), Spell penetration, Still spell.



Background: Orphei was apprenticed to a sorcerer in the city, and picked up much of the magical arts before being stranded in the alley. He was effected strongly by the imprisonment, and quickly lapsed into insanity. Unlike most of the other madmen, he is quite vocal with periods of lucidity, and is best used to provide the PCs with occasional snippets of information.

*Sorcerer Spells Known (6/7/6/3):* 0th -- Daze, Detect Magic, Ghost Sound, Light, Mage Hand, Prestidigitation, Read Magic. 1st -- Identify, Mage Armor, Magic Missile, Summon Monster I. 2nd -- Daylight, Web. 3rd -- Flame Arrow.



Sir Yintos, Paladin: Pal8; CR 8; Size M (5 ft., 7 in. tall); HD 8d10+24; hp 80; Init +2 (+2 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (+2 Dex); Attack +9/+4 melee, or +10/+5 ranged; SV Fort +12, Ref +7, Will +6; AL LG; Str 13, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 17.

*Languages Spoken:* Common.

*Skills and feats:* Concentration +10, Craft +8, Handle animal +13, Hide +2, Listen +1, Move silently +2, Profession +10, Spot +1; Blind-fight, Improved critical (greatsword), Improved critical (greatclub), Leadership.



*Background:* Sir Yintos was the youngest son of a noble house, who owned a small keep on the outskirts of the city. Like many youngest sons, he was sent into the clergy – to follow Saint Cuthbert. However, he displayed a martial talent that could not be ignored, and decided to serve his god as a Paladin. He quickly became a senior officer in the city guard, and at the time of the siege was on a morale-boosting tour, visiting several local inns and taverns.

He has since felt extremely guilty over what he sees as his abandonment of his duties, being trapped in the alley. This faded out when he learned of the successful end to the siege – now his primary goal is to find a way to free the imprisoned people of the alley. He has had suspicions of Ulfred for some time, but has been unable to pursue them without inflaming the opinions of the locals – this he did once, and it led to him being put into Coventry for six months, an experience which terrified

the naturally gregarious Sir Yintos. Since then he has waiting for outside help, and the PC's might be just what he has been waiting for.

### **The Way Out**

After the PC's have wandered around the alley for a sufficiently long period it is to be expected that they will tire of the situation and seek to escape. There are three ways of getting out of the alley, two of them suitable for low-level characters and the third only suitable for those strong enough to take on a demon.

The first avenue of escape is to simply wait out the time until they can make their departure from the alley. They are not tied to the original curse, and can leave when the alley re-enters the city. Three problems arise with this. The first, passing a year of game time, can be solved through the use of Reynard's 'Temporal Stasis' Potions – the PCs will need a place to hide for the time their bodies will be vulnerable. Argron will allow them to remain in the Temple if they request, as will Thrask in the Guardhouse. Thrask is probably safer – he will stand armed guard over the PCs, and hasn't left the guardhouse in years. The second problem is the inhabitants of the alley, who will try to prevent the PCs from leaving. They will first state that it is impossible – true for the original inhabitants, but not for the others, and later will use force. The reason for this is simple – the desire for company, and the use of the PCs skills. Another Cleric or a Sorcerer would especially be appreciated. The final problem is that ten years will have passed in the outside world while the PCs are trapped in the alley, and it will be necessary for the DM to work out the events that have passed during this time – though it can be the excuse for much roleplaying, and finding a way back into the past can make for an interesting adventure.

The second way out is through the well. It has continued to supply water throughout the strange events that have taken place, and creative PCs might work out that the water must enter the alley somehow. Another clue might be obtained through investigation of the Thieves Guild activities in relation to the alley. In fact, the well leads down to a natural underground pool, which connects to the city sewers. Time is only affected in the well itself – if the PCs simply drop down it, then they will fall out of the field and escape. This will, however, place them in a enclosed space of water, with only a few cramped and submerged exits. They will have to swim underwater for almost a quarter of a mile before they surface in the city sewers, to a smelly reunion with their time. A pair of skeletons resting on the bottom of the pool illustrate that they will need some magical means of breathing water; unfortunately there are none in the alley. Possibly the PCs will themselves be able to supply the means. If they escape, they will emerge at the same time as they left – the alley does not creep forward in time, but jumps forward at the end of the year in limbo. It is possible to re-enter the alley in the same way, so PCs may wish to try and free the population, either immediately or at a later date. If they try to approach the city authorities about

the alley, the Thieves Guild, who have kept the existence of the alley as a profitable secret for centuries, will use its contacts to try and have them killed, or at least to throw them out of the city.



The final way out is a way out for everyone – defeating the Hamatula and destroying the pentagram, which can be done with holy water (available from the church). The Hamatula has established himself in the basement of the tavern, although entry will be difficult – Ulfred long ago bricked over the door, saying that the room was no longer needed. Breaking in will be noisy, and will alert the demon and Ulfred, who will try and rouse the inhabitants of the alley to fight the PCs. The result is likely to be a holding action against the inhabitants of the alley while the stronger fighters attack the demon itself. Once the demon is killed, then the alley begins to disappear, slowly fading out, and the PCs find themselves in the middle of the city. The alley, and all of its inhabitants, have returned to their proper place in time. To everyone except the PCs, it will be like nothing ever happened – but a few things will have changed. Sir Yintos is now a hero of the city, having killed a red dragon that, in the old timeline, was a menace to the city for nearly half a century, and General Thrask is remembered as the man who instituted the purges that destroyed the Thieves Guild, many centuries ago, and instituting the legal reforms that have kept it from remerging. As for the alley, it too has changed, in that it now resembles the rest of the city in appearance, although many of the buildings remain the same.

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# LEMURIAN DREAMS ZERO

A Preview of Lemurian Dreams.....

# The Exile

## Christopher Scaturro

Sufferance Leafgreen was born the third son of a minor noble house in Gartenia. His oldest brother was groomed to take over the political aspect of the house, and his second brother entered the clergy of the elven gods. This left Sufferance with only one path to take as a vocation: Magic. It seemed like a natural fit, for Sufferance was awfully bright, excelling in alchemy, identification of glyphs, and other scholarly subjects - but the formal magic training refused to take. He was able to conjure fire and wind, but never the way his instructors wanted. Unlike his classmates, Sufferance's magic was not learned: it was natural. He didn't need the power stored in books and words to conjure and control the elements; he merely needed the power stored in his spirit. Sufferance's failures with structured magic led to his frustration and his successes seemed to insult the learned mages of Gartenia. He was expelled from formal training for insufficient progress and a detrimental attitude after a mere seven years. With no prospects Sufferance turned to the only profession open to anyone, the army. Not allowed to enter as an "official" mage, he was forced to train as a grunt. He used his magical abilities to compensate for his weak stature and his superiors quickly noticed that he had a knack for organization, tactics, and logistics. After three years, Sufferance was promoted to Corporal and became the right hand elf of his commanding officer (and third cousin) Eliza Leafgreen. Eliza even sponsored Sufferance for training in the elite air guard of Gartenia, the Griffon Riders.

Before his training was complete, disaster struck. On a routine patrol, Sufferance's mountain patrol came upon a pack of humans, many in heavy armour. The patrol's "official" mage deduced that the humans were a threat to the elven community and immediately threw a lightning bolt (a spell that Sufferance refuses to cast or learn now) without consulting the others. The lightning bolt, however, did not have the desired effect. Instead of ripping through the human party it was deflected back at the elves. Sufferance was lucky enough to avoid the bolt but the patrol leader, Eliza, was not. She was knocked unconscious by the blast, as were four other elves. The trigger-happy elven mage, now in command due to Eliza's incapacitation, called for the remaining elves to attack. Sufferance thought this was a peculiar order and paused in his action. During his pause he noticed that the humans were not preparing for an attack, but attempting to parlay. The elven mage either misinterpreted the actions or ignored them and again ordered the attack.



Sufferance attempted to explain the human actions to his mage leader but they fell on deaf ears. The elven wizard unleashed a flurry of magic missiles on the humans but they too were deflected back, knocking down another elven trooper, and injuring Sufferance. Again, he tried to stop the mage. By now, the two remaining elves had put their bows away. They sensed the mistake and while Sufferance argued with the wizard they tended to their fallen captain and fellow soldiers. The elven wizard, in between barking orders, cast another spell at the humans, who still had done nothing to attack the elves, which Sufferance identified as Charm Person. Sufferance thought that all those years of training did mean something at least. The



Charm Person was again deflected, affecting one of the two remaining elves. That elf stopped tending his fallen comrades and started firing arrows into the human group. The humans at this point could take no more and unleashed a volley of crossbow bolts, while beginning their advance.

Sufferance could take no more of this inept leadership. Instead of attacking the humans he unleashed a gush of air that knocked the elven wizard over. As the wizard fell, he hit his head against a large boulder and did not get up. Sufferance quickly brokered a truce with the humans and tended to his fallen elves. With his magic he managed to revive all of them, except the mage. His magical power was exhausted by the time he attended the aggressive magic user and the wizard remained unconscious.

With Eliza now back in charge, order was restored and the group headed back to the city. Although Sufferance believed he had not done any wrong, an investigation found differently. Although he was found correct in his assessment of the situation, he was found guilty of attacking a fellow elf. This crime was normally punished by imprisonment. The jury of elves passed on that sentence and offered Sufferance a choice in his punishment: forego the use of his "bastard" magic and remain in the Gartenian army or be banished from Gartenia for a period of no less than 70 years. Sufferance chose the latter.

During the trial, Sufferance's family turned a blind eye to his troubles. His father and older brothers saw the trial and conviction as damaging to their own political and religious goals. The only elf to stand by him was his cousin and former patrol leader, Eliza Leafgreen. She regretted, but respected, Sufferance's decision and gave him some new armour and weapons to better protect him in his travels. On the day of his banishment, Sufferance headed west. He stopped in some small human towns along the way but found most dirty and filled with simpletons. Eventually, he decided the best place for him to go was the metropolis of Robrinx. There he believed he might find a place that had similar comforts to his former elven home.

Not willing to make the long trip alone, he signed on as a caravan guard to a spice merchant travelling through the Troll Fields. Sufferance, being from the mountains, was unfamiliar with this barren wasteland. It did not take him long to realize that trolls were probably the only creatures who would want to live there. The caravan consisted of three wagons, loaded with goods, and one carriage that contained two members of the merchant's family. It seemed the ironic that these scraggly humans considered themselves nobles. He couldn't believe that any civilized race's elite would spit tobacco juice out a moving vehicle. The tobacco juice is what did for the caravan, as the smell attracted the denizens of the dry waste. As the sun set on the second day, Sufferance noticed a shape in the distance with his

keen elven eyesight. Sufferance informed the human "Captain" (another title that Sufferance found humour in) and the human guards prepared themselves with oil pots and a hodgepodge of ragtag weapons. Sufferance drew his bow and the special acid tipped arrows his cousin Eliza had given him. The shape was indeed a troll. Its attack was slow and deliberate; throwing rocks from more than 40 feet as the humans ineffectively threw their pots of oil and fire. After the humans had exhausted their supply of prepared firebombs, the troll charged in. Sufferance recognized the tactic, and the rudimentary logic behind it, and immediately looked for other trolls. He quickly realized these creatures were not mindless animals. If it hadn't been for his warning shout, the humans preparing more oil pots would have been completely surprised, and probably slaughtered, by the troll sneaking around their rear.

At this point Sufferance recognized he was going to have to do more than watch. He quickly assessed that the more seasoned warriors were engaging the first troll, albeit without a tremendous effect as they had no access to fire or acid. He decided to help the rear guard. His first arrow shot sailed between the larger of the two trolls and one of the human guards, no doubt because the human was giving the troll cover. Sufferance deduced he was going to need the help of his magic. He quickly cast a spell that covered his arrows with the sheer power of magical energy. While not actually conjuring fire or heat, the arrows did appear covered in a crackling red fire. Then he readied his bow and waited for the perfect moment to fire his acid tipped arrow at the troll. It didn't take long for the troll to drop one of the younger warriors and Sufferance seized the moment. His arrow shot was true and plunked the troll right near his heart. The troll cried out in pain and immediately retreated as acid exploded into his chest. The other troll seemed to notice as well and its morale immediately dropped. Sufferance could sense that the troll had no desire to combat foes with weapons that had both fire and acid. Sufferance fired his last acid tipped arrow at the remaining troll but missed. The mere sight of acid exploding on the ground was enough for this monster, and he ran away seconds later.

After tending to the fallen human, the caravan guards peppered Sufferance with questions about his "magic, acid, flame arrows of troll killing". He was shocked that the humans were so impressed with such as simple alchemical process used to augment weapons. He attempted to explain it to them, but the procedures were beyond their comprehension. The rest of the trip was uneventful, but filled with questions from the humans about just about everything magical they had ever seen. Sufferance had to strain very hard to remain polite.

Upon arriving in Robrinx, Sufferance relaxed. He has taken to spending his days in elven bars and awaits the start of the only career available to an elf in a strange land, without a home, family or friend: Adventuring.

# The Exile : Notes

Christopher Scaturro

## Setting Information

### Gardenia (Large City)

Population: 14,000 (98% grey elves, 1.5% high elves, .5% half-elves)

Government: Republic

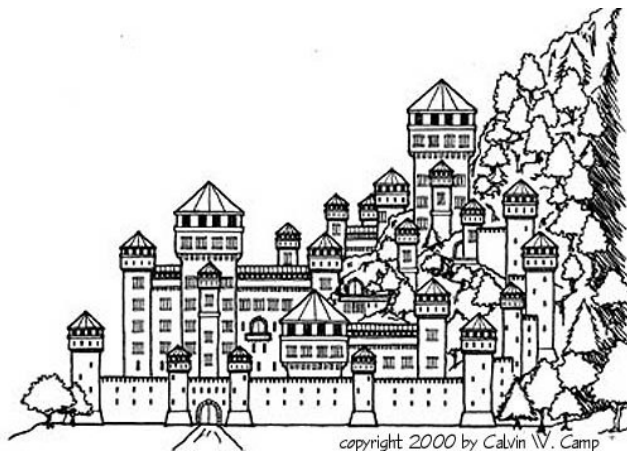
Religions: All Elven gods

Imports: None

Exports: None

Alignments: LN, N, LG, CG, and LE

Gardenia lies secluded, high in a mountain chain. The grey elves maximize the arable land by building terraces. Their terrace system of farming provides them with fresh food and workable wood for tools and weapons. The elves also have a lucrative mine that yields silver, iron, and mithril. Between the mining and farming, the grey elves of Gardenia are nearly self-sufficient. The elves are fiercely private, bordering on xenophobic. They regularly patrol a 25-mile wide zone around their city stopping all who venture near. It is not uncommon for adventuring parties, religious delegations, or other travellers merely passing through the area to be fired upon with arrows and spells by a patrol that got answers they did not approve of. The elves of Gardenia also protect their airspace. An elite group of elven warriors are trained to ride griffons. These griffon riders are all seasoned veterans that are equipped with magic. More than one innocent (and some not so innocent) mage has learned a painful lesson from the grey elf griffon riders.



### Grey Elves

The grey elves believe they are the direct descendents of the elven gods. Their line is true and undiluted by other lesser races. They tend to be nobles in elven society and have an unmistakable aristocratic air to them. They are aloof and considered arrogant and unfriendly by other races. They excel in architecture, engineering, politics, alchemy, and metalworking (especially mithril). Their personal equipment is nearly always masterwork, if not magical. They would

not dare wear armour, or wield swords not crafted by a master elven smith. Grey elves can normally be found intermingled with high elves wherever there is a large community of elves. They can often be found in positions of high authority, as guildmasters, religious leaders, or political figures. Their only location of concentration is in Gardenia, a large secluded city in the mountains. Their love of order leads them towards rigid magical discipline – sorcerers are looked down upon as inferior spellcasters, and the practice of sorcery is discouraged.

## NPC's

### Sufferance Leafgreen

Male Grey Elf, 3<sup>rd</sup>-level Sorcerer

Strength	8(-1)	Fortitude Save	+1
Dexterity	14(+2)	Reflex Save	+3
Constitution	9(-1)	Will Save	+4
Intelligence	18(+4)	Alignment	CG
Wisdom	12(+1)	Speed	20 ft
Charisma	16(+3)	Size	5' 4"
Armour Class	12	Melee Attack	0
Hit Points	8	Ranged Attack	+3

*Skills:* Alchemy +6, Concentration +6, Knowledge(arcana) +6, Scry +6, Spellcraft +6, Ride(Griffon) +1, Diplomacy +3

*Feats:* Extend Spell, Quick Learner\*

*Spells:* (6/5) 0<sup>th</sup>: Daze, Light, Dancing Lights, Read Magic, Detect Magic; 1<sup>st</sup>: Mage Armour, Magic Missile, Magic Weapon

*Languages:* Elven, Common, Sylvan, Draconic, Gnome

*Possessions:* Masterwork Longsword, Masterwork Longbow, Waterskin, Bed roll, Sack, Whetstone, Fleet and Steel, 3 pints of Oil, Spell Component Pouch, Potions of Cure Light Wounds x3, Vision, Jump and Levitation, Scrolls of Web, Knock, Message and Erase

*Background:* See 'The Exile'

\*This feat is from the Fantasy Flight Games product *Path of Magic*

### Eliza Leafgreen

Female Grey Elf, 2<sup>nd</sup>-level Aristocrat/4<sup>th</sup>-level Fighter

Strength	12(+1)	Fortitude Save	+4
Dexterity	16(+3)	Reflex Save	+4
Constitution	11(0)	Will Save	+5
Intelligence	14(+2)	Alignment	CG
Wisdom	13(+1)	Speed	30 ft.
Charisma	16(+3)	Size	5' 5"
Armour Class	19	Melee Attack	+6
Hit Points	38	Ranged Attack	+8

*Skills:* Bluff +3, Diplomacy +3, Gather Information +4, Knowledge(Gardenia) +4, Knowledge (Gardenian

Law) +4, Ride(Griffon) +4, Sense Motive +4, Listen +14, Wilderness Lore +4, Spot +4, Search +2

*Feats:* Weapon Focus(Longsword), Expertise, Leadership, Track

*Languages:* Elven, Common, Ancient Elven, Sylvan, Gnome

*Possessions:* Masterwork Longsword +1 frost, Masterwork Longbow, Masterwork Shortsword, Mithril Chain Shirt, Mithril Small Shield +1, Waterskin, Bedroll, Sack, Whetstone, Flint and Steel, 3 pints of Oil, *Potions of Cure Light Wounds* x3, *Cat's Grace* x2, *Aid*

*Background:* Eliza Leafgreen is considered a disappointment in the grey elf community. She was groomed to be a politician and had a real knack for both the law and people. The system, however, was not to her liking. After a bitter political defeat when the greater good was clearly not served she retired from politics and joined the Gardenia city patrol. Most elves thought of the army as a last chance; home to failures, the overly aggressive, and the incompetent. Eliza was none of these and quickly rose through the ranks. Her aristocratic knowledge of swordplay and superior equipment allowed her to hold her own against stronger opponents until her skills developed. Her quick mind and ability to lead did not go unnoticed and she became a patrol leader in only twenty short years. Since becoming a patrol captain, Eliza has also trained with the elite griffon riders, the air cavalry of the city. It was during her training with the griffon riders that she gained citywide renown when she rescued a priest from the clutches of a marauding ettin. For the bravery she showed in attacking the ettin alone, she was rewarded with the frost enchantment on her magical longsword. Although she enjoyed working with the griffon riders, she longed for the command of her own unit. To get it, she transferred back to the ground patrol, and found that her new unit had her cousin Sufferance. Eliza took Sufferance under her wing and taught him the art of diplomacy. Sufferance was amazed on how Eliza could ascertain the true intentions of the lesser humanoids that ranged to close to the secluded elven city. Eliza always seemed to be able to solve problems with words instead of swords, until one fateful day...

#### Hil'el Mithravel

Male Grey Elf, 5<sup>th</sup>-level Evoker

Strength	12(+1)	Fortitude Save	+3
Dexterity	16(+3)	Reflex Save	+6
Constitution	11(0)	Will Save	+3
Intelligence	18(+4)	Alignment	LE
Wisdom	11(0)	Speed	30 ft.
Charisma	12(+1)	Size	5' 7"
Armour Class	17	Melee Attack	+3
Hit Points	16	Ranged Attack	+5

*Skills:* Diplomacy +2, Concentration +8, Knowledge(arcana) +8, Spellcraft +8, Scry +8, Sense Motive +2, Listen +2, Innuendo +2, Forgery +2

*Feats:* Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (Evocation), Combat Casting, Shield Proficiency

*Spells:* (5/5/4/3) 0<sup>th</sup>: Light x2\*, Read Magic, Detect Magic, Arcane Mark; 1<sup>st</sup>: Magic Missile\*, Shield, Charm Person, Message, Erase; 2<sup>nd</sup>: Daylight \*, Locate Object, Mirror Image, Detect Thought; 3<sup>rd</sup>: Lightning Bolt x2\*, Clairaudience/Clairvoyance

*Languages:* Elven, Common, Sylvan, Ancient Elven, Gnome

*Possessions:* Masterwork Longsword, Masterwork Dagger, Mithril Buckler +3, Waterskin, Bedroll, Sack, Spell Component Pouch, 10 Candles, Scroll Tube, Parchment, Ink and Pen, *Potions of Cure Light Wounds* x3, *Fly and Invisibility*, *Scrolls of Gaseous Form and Erase*, *Ring of Misdirection*, *Bracers of Amour* +1, *Cloak of Resistance* +2

*Background:* Hil'el Mithravel is a proud member of the house of Mithravel, the wealthiest family in Gardenia. The Mithravel's own the mine north of the city that produces most of the city's raw ore. Hil'el is in the inner circle of the family and knows it's deepest secret; the mine is drying up. The patriarch of the Mithravel family, Hil'el's uncle, predicts it will be mined out in 15 years. Hil'el, like the few other family members in his uncle's trust, is on a mission to find a new lode. Hil'el uses his position in his patrol unit to scan the earth (especially natural caves) using his Locate Object spell for metal ore. He then reports back to his uncle using the Message spell. If something of interest is found he will often employ a courier with a note that bears hidden messages thanks to his Secret Page spell. The plan was working until Hil'el's unit ran into a group of humans a few months ago. Hil'el spotted the group and quickly cast Detect Thought. He deduced that a human priest of the earth god led the group and that they were on a surveying expedition. He also picked up on some mining talk. Not wanting another group (especially humans) to find the hidden vein, Hil'el opened fire but his spells were turned back on him and his group. He commanded his patrol to attack the humans but one of the underlings disobeyed him and attacked HIM. Hil'el was caught off guard and rendered unconscious by some sort of demon magic. When revived, some difficult questions were raised. Hil'el was able to lie his way out of trouble (with help from his uncle) and managed to get the upstart Sufferance Leafgreen banished. However, two new problems have surfaced for Hil'el and the Mithravels. One, his actions will be watched more closely by the patrol leaders, specifically Captain Eliza Leafgreen, Aunt of the banished Sufferance. And two, there is a group of humans out there with the same goal as his family.

\*Spells are in the Evocation school.

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