



Summer 2007 • Volume 3 Issue 6

THE CRUSADER™

The Journal of the Intrepid Adventurer

How It All Happened
Gary Gygax continues his story

Historical
Footnotes:
*The Order of the
Knights of St. Mary*

NEW FEATURE

KEEPER'S NOTES

by Davis Chenault

PLUS:

*Hammer & Anvil,
Steve's Convention Blog,
Auld Wyrnish,
& more!*

NEW FEATURE

THEM'S FIGHTING WORDS

by Joseph Goodman



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How It All Happened by Gary Gygax

The Inspiration for the D&D Game, its Creation, GenCon's Founding, How TSR came into Being, and its Early Days...

Wild Bookworms

Although it seems contradictory, books and “adventures” went well together. Such exploits as we managed were certainly much enabled by the eclectic tastes in literature we enjoyed. The reading interests of my group of friends ranged widely—westerns, history, horror, nature, mysteries, science, PI fiction, humor, historical fiction, poetry—but we all were fantasy and SF buffs. When we weren’t reading there was adventure awaiting. Of course we had to make the escapades up as we went along, generally sans any prior planning. Someone would discover an opportunity and the rest would join in. Here are a few examples:

After a spring storm, I discovered pier planks scattered along the lakeshore, so Bill Fleming and I built a raft the next couple of days, others joined us in paddling around in the bay. But then the raft was purloined, so for a time we engaged in a game of recovery and counter re-taking of the prize.

Time-fusing M80’s so as to have a little fun with the local constabulary was a popular activity, the firecracker being placed on the window ledge of the Police Station or behind a drainpipe so as to make a racket.

Long walks along the lakeshore or bicycle rides into the surrounding countryside were held to be excellent substitutes for dull classroom studies. These adventures included avoiding random encounters with “patrols” and vicious farm dogs, as well as seeing to the cooking of rations for noontime meals. Later on, the skills of deception and forgery were likely needed to explain absences...

When my parents went off on trips I generally stayed home as a teenager, a friend staying with me to assist in cooking. In such case the skill of fishing provided most of the dinners, pan fried yellow perch or breaded bluegill, so that grocery funds could go for the Dwarven Ale to wash down such fare, as father kept a close eye on the wine cellar. That the fellow who usually stayed over with me, John Patrick, became a fine chef should provide the Gentle Reader with a good idea of how well we ate in such bachelor circumstances.

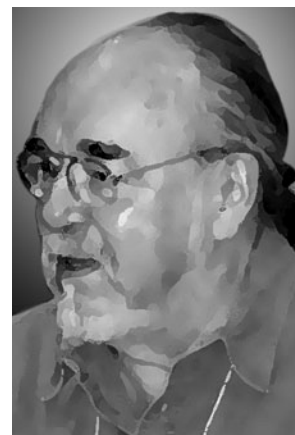
Hanging around “downtown” to pick up girls was SOP from June through August. Of course most of us were inept, but the camaraderie was

compensation enough, and every once in a while we actually managed to strike up an acquaintance that was fun. Of course we got into fights with other young males in this process. Maybe I should say “flights,” as it was usual for us to decamp hurriedly, knowing full-well the value of not being seen thereafter, until we attained the exalted age 18, drank in beer bars, where running away was no longer an option.

Perhaps the most lauded adventure was when Tom Keogh made himself up as a werewolf, donned an aged Russian bearskin coat, reversed a pair of fur-lined gloves for paws. Thus attired Terry Criner and I then led him through the back yards to the old Dodge Street Cemetery a block and a half from where I lived. Tom crouched behind a tombstone near the front where the streetlight shed a good illumination while Terry and I lurked back some distance to be unseen. When a woman came walking along, Tom emitted a low growling sound, slipped his “paws” into view atop the stone, then peered over the monument, growling louder as he stood. Our victim emitted a loud scream, dashed across the street and ran into the house there without so much as knocking. Convulsed with laughter, the three of us fled eastwards back towards my place. Sadly, I was so weak from laughter that when I attempted to vault the cyclone fence my leg caught the wire, so brand new Levi’s and leg were both torn. I felt the damage was a small price to pay for the adventure!

In bad weather we tended to gather at the YMCA or else in the attic “clubroom” at my house. At both places we played a lot of games, practiced tumbling, engaged in arm and leg wrestling. The attic was the better place, though, for we could play penny-ante poker there or darken it and have blind squirt gun or pillow fights.

So the contents of the bookcases at my house tended to encourage and enhance the adventures we had, and the few related above are only a small sampling. More will be related as this exposition continues, but some indication of the reading material found at 925 Dodge Street will surely give insights into those things I brought to the gaming hobby.



GARY GYGAX

has written and had published over 70 games, game products, and books since he began creating in the 1960s, when he founded the world-renowned GENCON gaming convention.

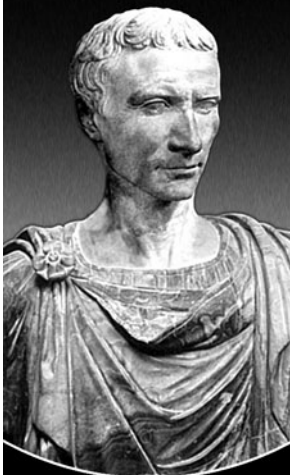
His first professional gaming work was published in 1971.

He co-founded the game publishing company Tactical Studies Rules (later TSR, Inc.) in 1973 with his longtime friend from Lake Geneva, Don Kaye.

His best known game and fiction credits include co-creating and authoring the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Role-Playing Game, creating the AD&D game, WORLD OF GREYHAWK Fantasy World Setting, and the Gord the Rogue novels. He is often referred to as the “Father of Role-Playing.”

Gary is currently living in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, his childhood home.

WHEN CAESAR
STOOD UPON THE
BANKS OF THE
RUBICON LOOKING
SOUTH TO ROME,
HE HESITATED.
BEFORE HIM STOOD
THE VAST, COMPLEX
MECHANISM OF THE
PAST, GLOWING
WITH A HOST OF
INTRICATELY WOVEN
STRATAGEMS.
WITH HIM, HE HAD
BUT ONE LEGION,
WEARY FROM EIGHT
YEARS OF BRUTAL WAR
WITH THE GAULS.
BUT WHEN CALLED
TO SURRENDER
HIMSELF TO THE
SENATE AND CERTAIN
EXILE, HE DID NOT
HESITATE.
HE CALLED HIS
LEGIONARIES TO
CROSS INTO ITALY,
TO CROSS
THE RUBICON.
AND AS HE DID SO,
HE SAID ONLY THIS:
ALEA IACTA EST!



JULIUS CAESAR

ALEA IACTA EST



"The Die is Cast" – An Editorial by Stephen Chenault

It's All in the Hunt!

PITTING CHARACTERS AGAINST TIME AND DEADLY FOES.

Upon the small outcropping of rock they met the Hermit. He was large, dressed in rags but carried a huge stone axe everywhere he went. While unraveling the mysteries of his condition, the ranger spotted a group of orcs spying upon them. The orcs, realizing their discovery vanished into the surrounding scrub and rock. The party emboldened by the strength of the axe wielding Hermit decided to pursue the orcs and surprise them in their encampment. Moving quickly down the hill and into the deep gulch they picked up the trail of the orc scouts and pursued them with gusto. The orcs trail split, the scouts joined a group heading south along the rim, but more tracks led down into the low flat country near the Mistbane River. Without hesitation they pursued the tracks to the river, ignoring the smaller band. Within moments they overran an observation post the orcs had set up. The orcs sounded the alarm and fled making three separate groups of orcs the party was moving between. Unslackened in their pace, the party plunged into the clearing where the large band of orcs had just recently occupied.


Forewarned by their observation post, the orc chief had divided his troop into two groups, hiding his archers in the scrub on the northern edge of the water-front clearing but putting his heavy troopers in the open on the southern edge. It was a cunning trap. And unbeknownst to the characters or orc chief the original scout group, 12 strong, had heard the horns of the observation post and cut across country. They were even now coming down through the woods on the party from the west. The characters were effectively hemmed in on three sides, with a river on the fourth and still the orcs from the OP scattered about and moving to the sounds of combat. The characters, without hesitation, turned south and charged the main group. The orcs behind opened up with a volley of arrows. A few of the characters hesitated, not knowing who to attack, stopped to turn at which point the orc infantry charged and the scouting party came out of the woods. The knight screamed "CHARGE" and the party plunged forward against the infantry, ignoring arrows, spears and other missile weapons. They shattered the orc infantry and slaughtered them, cutting 4 or 5 down in the first round. The orcs were suddenly dismayed and fell back, the characters pressed even as the archers and scouting party charged their rear and flanks. But before they joined the unequal contest more of the infantry were cut down and the leader wounded at which point they broke and ran.

The party turned in time to except the onslaught of the archers and scouts but these were dismayed at their chieftain's flight and hesitated. The party cut into the archers and scattered them with little effort and the scouts fled the field.

No characters had fallen. A dozen orcs were dead and an equal number wounded. The battle was hard fought and won, for the courage and decisive nature of the players and their characters overcame a very challenging scenario, one that required a great deal of juggling on the Castle Keeper's part...



“DECIDE NOW!”

ne of the most definitive statements a Castle Keeper can utter: Decide now! You know and your fellows know that time has just entered the equation. No more deliberation, no more committees, no more looking to your comrades for verbal confirmation. You have to make the decision and stick with it, no matter the consequences, because to vacillate is to invite destruction. Adding time to an adventure challenges the players, their knowledge of the game, the campaign, their character's abilities as well as the Castle Keeper's skills, his knowledge of the game, the campaign and his monster's abilities. Games that have ramifications are hard to run, hard to play, but in the end weave some of the most memorable games any of us will ever play.

The vast majority of the games we play involve carefully solving riddles, disarming traps, unraveling cryptic clues or utterances of vaguely annoying NPCs, exploring dungeons, castles and the like; in short, most of the games we play and run are more akin to Indiana Jones entering the temple to retrieve the artifact. But imagine if your games were the opposite and the adventure began with Indiana Jones leaving the temple, when the giant boulder comes crashing down the ramp. Suddenly, those careful deliberations wherein you figure out which stones do not trigger the trap, must be jettisoned in favor of mad dashes and split second decisions. These require a whole set of approaches that are different than the carefully planned or scripted adventure. The Castle Keeper must prepare himself before hand to accept a wide variety of reactions from the players and constantly adjust the script of the adventure. The situation on the ground constantly changes, what was true a moment ago, is no longer so, as all the parties involved are constantly changing direction and tactics.

I have heard and seen many Castle Keepers, Game Masters and the like remark that a good time line keeps everything under control. I find this to be a little misleading. Setting bench marks does nothing but force your actions down a path that may not be natural or helpful to you or the players. In fact, in my experience, it often has the opposite affect of what you want. The situation becomes stagnant as the Castle Keeper tries to force something on the players which they are not quite ready to do, or able to do, or even want to do, this in turn limits the ability of the Castle Keeper to maneuver and manipulate the situation. He loses control. Worse than any of that, is the manner in which it keeps the Castle Keeper's reactions restricted and 'forced.' It is far better to open up the field and play it by ear, keeping mental tracks of what is going on and who is doing what. This forces the Castle Keeper into allowing the players to call the shots, which is in the end, what they should be doing and what the Castle Keeper wants them to do.

Playing by ear can be a tricky business as it requires managing a host of different aspects of the game and being

Playing by ear can be a tricky business...

able and willing to change them at a moments notice. Scripted adventures have little to do with timed adventures, its far better to have a broad concept for how the adventure should unfold rather than a narrow concept of the course of events and pre-plan what can be pre-planned. The best weapon in the Castle Keeper's arsenal is terrain. Understanding the terrain in which the adventure takes place is essential in that it is one of the variables of which the Castle Keeper has complete control. Knowing where the trails are, where impassable terrain is, or even better, designing the terrain in such a way that it forces characters into certain choices allows the Castle Keeper to channel the characters and adventure down a limited number of paths. An example of this can be found in the adventure module Mortality of Green. When the party, in pursuit of the band of humanoids comes to a clearing, only two paths present themselves: a creek and a trail. The rest of the terrain is overgrown and filled with thick bramble, though passable it is described in such a way as to make it unappealing. The party then is channeled down the creek or down the trail. It is not complete control, nor should it be as that would be too restrictive, but it is control.

Another area of control for the Castle Keeper is the monsters that the adventure is centered around. The number and type should be geared for the type of adventure. If the adventure involves a wild hunt through the woods, pursuing the enemy then the monster party should not be one-sidedly large. On the other hand, if the monsters are pursuing the party, larger troops are useful in that they challenge the party and allow a great deal of wastage on the monster's part. Of course, to achieve this, the Castle Keeper must be willing to overcome his or her aversion to losing monsters to the swords and sorcery of the party characters. Allowing monsters to be killed off piece meal has a wonderful affect on any game as it emboldens the players who might not otherwise want to risk their precious characters and creates that feeling of accomplishment which is essential to maintaining a player's interest at the table. It is helpful to have a fixed number of monsters as this increases the risk the Castle Keeper must take in throwing monsters piece meal at a party and engenders the same feelings of risk that the players run when attacking.

Beyond these two there are few things that the Castle Keeper can control. The direction the party travels in, the clues they unravel and the way they interpret encounters, events and descriptions are wholly unknown (though they can sometimes be guessed at, Todd is always going to take a moment to gouge some dead monsters eyes out, that you can take to the bank). But not knowing the reactions of the players is the germ of the true genius of this type of game, because it turns the table on the Castle Keeper and allows him to enjoy the game as much as the players. It is no longer a simple uttering of descriptions and challenging the abilities of the characters, but rather an adventure that allows the Castle Keeper to both shape and participate in.

A cautionary note here; Castle Keepers cannot get too caught up in this approach as they must be willing and, in the end, desirous of losing both their monsters and treasure to the wild abandon and bloody blades of the characters, for that is, after all, the point of the game.

For their part, players must be willing to enter into such an environment. It is a different type of game and one which does require different skills, skills we all possess but may not commonly use. Characters have to be able to react quickly to situations. Taking a “daring do” attitude is the best, something to the affect of that crazy anti-Brooke Shields fella’s Mission Impossible movies. It requires charging forward when the circumstances call for caution, casting spells that enhance the enemy (enlarge the sub-chief of the orc tribe so that the chief is suddenly encountered with a second in command who is both stronger and bigger), and dividing the party with actual rendezvous points. The list goes on. Such actions have a host of desirable outcomes. They give players more control over the game, its development, direction and outcome. They serve to unbalance the Castle Keeper and keep him guessing as to what the characters are going to do next. I’ve always enjoyed running Mac in games as I never know what he’s going to do. One moment he’s casting grandiose spells against the evil arch-magi, and suffering the arch-magi’s spells in turn. This wonderful, mystic, epic battle between two powerful magi ended with a dagger of venom thrust into the arch-magi’s chest and sudden death. I never saw that coming, and was the shortest mage battle ever. Thinking out of the box keeps the game moving, makes it challenging for the Castle Keeper and allows players an unusual amount of control.

It is also important to note that players who engage in fast paced games of cat and mouse should condition themselves to react quickly and think less. Spending too much time trying to study the game makes it more difficult to play. Castle Keepers will make everyone aware that such lengthy pauses have ramifications as well; the enemy may be getting further away, better organized, or closer. It is helpful also, that when one player is taken by indecision, as most certainly will happen that other players seize the initiative and plunge forward. Such lost inertia can be regained by forcing the other players

to follow your lead. This fuels their ability to decide quickly and react faster as any such game will ultimately demand.

In the aforementioned adventure it became necessary to balance first one group (the scouting group of 12 orcs), then three (the observation post of 3 orcs and the main band of 30 orcs), and finally a fourth group (the archers that split off from the main band) and the movements of the characters are at the same time. The time within which the whole encounter took place was short, game time, as they spotted the orcs in the late afternoon and crossed 8 miles of terrain in rapid order and attacked the main body in early evening. Though I thought they were, the orcs were never in control of the situation. When the party plunged past the OP without a note to the fleeing orcs who had just warned their comrades, I thought to myself “so passes this party,” knowing what lay ahead. But the utter decisiveness of the attack caught me off guard. As soon as they saw the first group of orcs (the infantry), they didn’t hesitate, but charged instead. When attacked in the rear, only a few party members hesitated while the rest charged. The utter reaction threw me off balance and it took me several rounds of game time to react, by which many of my best orcs were dead or horribly wounded. Further they drove straight for the leader, who I had scripted was in a tight contest with his sub-chief (leader of the scouts) for control of the band. By wounding him it threw the whole back-drop of the monsters into confusion and the only path left open to save himself and his role was to retreat, leaving those weak orcs behind to die or be lost.

In that scenario the party had control, though they did not know it. They had control because they did not waiver from their goals, nor flinch from the task that lay at hand, but rather embraced the hardship and challenge with such gusto that I could not recover the balance and arrest the situation.

Games of cat and mouse, of the hunt, whether parties are hunted or hunters are often very fun. They require that the Castle Keeper have a loose knowledge of the terrain, the monsters and the adventure in order to run, but not a reign of tight control. It also requires that players let down their hair and enjoy a reactive game that does not rely upon the constant and careful deliberations of more scripted games.



STEPHEN CHENAULT

was born into a world with a bewildering array of worthless "life choices" and meaningless "life options." As a youth, it was with great insight and eagerness he took to examining those options and pathways, promptly ridiculed them and dumped them into the wastebin that would become other's lives.

Stephen chose the path of brutal verbal assaults which, on occasion, lead to brutal physical rebuttals. Brittle teeth in hand, Stephen chose an academic path to lengthen what was about to become a shorter than average life span. He wasted years of his life pursuing a higher education in history before realizing that we all are, no matter what, doomed to repeat it.

Forsaking those noble causes rife in academia (such as bra burning, speech filtration, self-aggrandizement and longer summer breaks), Stephen foundered for mere moments before, in a dollar bill induced stupor, deciding to strike it rich by creating a company that sold games. He has since gone on to create such luminaries as the Codex of Erde and Troll Lord Game's best selling adventure module, The Lion in Ropes. He is also well known for his curt phone conversations and one word emails.

TAKING SURVIVAL INTO YOUR OWN HANDS



CASEY CANFIELD

*has been playing and
game-mastering RPGs
since 1983.*

*Casey currently plots the
deeds of nefarious characters
and creatures from his lair
just outside of Poughkeepsie,
New York.*

In a prior column, I discussed the rights and responsibilities that Castle Keepers (and, indeed, all game masters) have during a game session. I also mentioned that one of the principles I use is that the responsibility for the welfare of the characters belongs to the players. In this issue, I'd like to expand on that philosophy, because I think the application of this principle can have a large impact on any game.

I'll open by saying that I'm aware this philosophy often swims against the current. As long as there have been role-playing games, players have treated characters as metaphysical extensions of themselves, growing emotionally attached to them. Somewhere along the line, the emotional attachment of players to their characters became interpreted as an unofficial rule: referees should hesitate to let characters die. After all, the game is supposed to be fun. Having a cherished character die is not treated as fun. Therefore, character death should be avoided if possible.

I've fallen into that trap before. I've fudged dice results or altered encounter circumstances to prevent characters from perishing. Regrettably, the players that benefit the most from it inevitably expect this approach. Once this becomes a habit, players will begin to assume their characters are entitled to avoid death, and they become lax in ensuring the survival of their characters.

I'm going to attempt to reverse that pattern of thinking.

Characters Are Adventurers.

This may seem obvious, but it's such a fundamental truth that it needs to be repeated. Characters are the risk-takers of the in-game society. They venture out into wild, desolate, abandoned or cursed areas to face down foes of many types, in the hopes of reaping a massive reward for assuming that risk. The risk-averse don't raid goblin caves or venture into a haunted fortress looking for forgotten gold. They knit sweaters.

Players participate because they want their characters to undertake exciting adventures with great risks and rewards. If adventure is desired, players must be willing to accept all of the potential consequences of such a risky profession. This is to ensure the integrity and plausibility of the game or campaign.

If a player doesn't want his favorite character to die, and would become upset if that character were slain, then that player is risk-averse. Characters, by their very nature as adventurers, are not risk-averse. Therefore, the instant a character becomes a participant, a skilled player must accept the risk that the character may die, and role-play the situation accordingly. It is the responsibility of the player to keep the character alive to the best of his or her ability.

If one cannot stomach the idea of a character dying in battle during a harrowing adventure, then, quite frankly, that person probably shouldn't be playing adventure games where the possibility of character death exists.

Characters Are People Too.

Having established that characters are adventurers, and should be treated that way, it should also be established that characters should have a healthy survival instinct. While being willing to take risks is the hallmark of a good adventurer, this does not mean adventurers must be rash and foolhardy. Even

the most iconic adventure heroes in film and literature know when to run!

The biggest mistake a player can make is assuming a Castle Keeper wouldn't provide a challenge to the characters that is too deadly for them to handle. If a player is going to get attached to a character, it's not wise to assume that the Castle Keeper shares that attachment. If such a character is truly cherished, then the

player should not be complacent.

Encounters aren't always about winning fights. Sometimes they are about avoiding the fights in the first place. Stealth and silence often trump sword and sinew for getting goals accomplished, and a thoughtful Castle Keeper will remember this. Players that care about their characters would be wise to remember this, also.

Accept Bad Luck As A Risk.

Though this should be obvious, any game that involves dice is a game of chance. In C&C, and in many other RPGs, circumstances can be mitigated by cautious and clever play. However, even in the best of situations, the dice may end up betraying the PC. When undertaking an adventure, the player must accept this risk and play accordingly.

I've heard many players lament the death of characters due to one unlucky roll of the dice. The problem is not the rule that provides for only one roll in those circumstances – the problem is that the player did not fully accept the risk inherent in a game where outcomes are determined with dice. The truth is that there are a lot of game situations where a character's death might be caused with a single roll of a die. Some single out saving throws versus death as unacceptable. Why, if a character can take a mighty blow from a giant and die instantly, can a character not receive a fatal dose of poison or plummet to death in a pit? Lighten up! Remember - RPGs are games and characters are just playing pieces. New characters can be created, new avenues explored! Losing a character to death is not a tragedy. It's just another part of a larger story.



Once a player accepts the preceding principles, he or she is far more prepared to act in the interests of the character's survival in an appropriate manner. The following techniques extend from the assumptions detailed earlier.

Step Into Your Character's Boots.

Characters don't have death wishes, for the most part. While they are certainly more likely to take extraordinary risks, characters don't enjoy being wounded or knocked unconscious, and they certainly wouldn't take death lightly. Combat becomes a far more serious endeavor when approached with this attitude.

When role-playing your character, be sure to take the time to truly imagine what a living, breathing individual would do in each situation. A good role-player will take into account the pain and fear that is involved in combat, and not treat it as routine.

Adopting this simple outlook can be enough to help you make more appropriate decisions to ensure your character's survival.

Know Where You Are And What You're Doing.

Adventurers don't risk their lives without cause, whether to save someone's life or to gain a fortune in treasure. Remember the goals of your character and party, and act toward them. If an activity doesn't make sense in relation to the character or party goals, then it's possible that activity is extraneous and may be an unnecessary danger. The occasional tangent may be harmless, but it's also likely that tangents may contain challenges that serve to weaken the characters and party. This can make the main goal far more difficult to accomplish.

Similarly, it's important to be aware of the character's location at all times. Neglecting the duty of mapping or failing to remember the direction to the dungeon exit can cause characters to take unnecessary paths and perhaps encounter dangerous situations that would otherwise be avoided.

Use Divinations.

Divinations seldom get the attention that flashier and more destructive spells attract, but they are of great utility during adventures. Divinations help turn uncertainty into a clear course of action. They help parties avoid mishaps and decipher the unknown. Information is often the greatest asset in a survival situation, and divinations, like *augury*, *commune* or *clairvoyance* gather information that would be impossible to obtain by conventional methods.

Wizards and clerics alike have access to divinatory magic, and they should use it in situations where the best course of action is unclear, and the consequences of a mishap seem particularly dire. Divinations should also be used to aid in solving riddles, puzzles or to help in determining the best route to take through the caverns teeming with unknown threats, for example. Offensive magics and healing spells have their uses, to be sure, but divinations can help avoid or mitigate situations where those precious resources would be used unnecessarily.

Many published adventures assume that an adventuring party is using *all* of its resources towards the task at hand. This includes divinations. Many referees operate with the same assumption. Be prepared, and plan to have a few divinations handy.



Work On Tactics Ahead of Time.

You're careful, you scout ahead, you stay focused on your task, and you avoid a lot of fights that way. However, combat is inevitable, and eventually your character and your companions will need to work together effectively in battle.

By the time you get into a fight, though, it's often too late to coordinate. Some Castle Keepers put limitations on the amount of time that can be spent planning actions once battle begins. Even when Castle Keepers are lenient in this regard, players often have conflicting ideas about actions that should be taken. This usually leads to the party fracturing into a mass of individuals that are not as efficient as they should be.

The time to discuss tactics is before combat. While unexpected situations can always arise, it's helpful to have a basic idea what is expected of every party member in a fight. Will the fighters form a shield line? Will other characters attempt to reach enemy spellcasters as quickly as possible? Is anyone using long, reach weapons or providing missile fire? What sort of spells should be used on various opponents?

By discussing these types of topics ahead of time, the party avoids situations where, for example, every fighter decides to use missile weapons, and the enemy overruns the party. Glaring tactical weaknesses are minimized.

Also, consider your character's role as an individual. Ahead of time, think about what your character might do in certain situations, so you can be prepared to react when combat begins. Don't wait until something surprises you to try to figure out a way to defeat it. Ask yourself if your planned actions work well with those of the rest of the party, or if they may cause further problems in the long run.

Rogues and wizards that carelessly expose themselves to melee attacks are essentially wasting healing magic that could be used to keep more sturdy combatants in the fray. Remembering this can make a clear difference in survival situations.

Being a hero is admirable, but work to recognize situations where attempted heroism will simply lead to two characters needing rescuing instead of one. In most cases, your character does the party more good alive than dead!

Know What Your Spells Do.

Read your spell descriptions. Reread them. Then read them a third time. Think of situations where the various uses of the spells in question may be applicable. Ask your Castle Keeper questions if something seems vague. Your character knows the intricacies of the magic he or she wields, so why shouldn't you? It will help you make better decisions for the use of that resource.

It's frustrating to think that a certain spell has a specific effect, only to use it in a desperate situation and discover it's different than you expected. In a crucial moment, this is nothing more than a waste. Avoid this problem, make yourself more effective, and know your capabilities.

Combine magic with ordinary equipment to attain great results. A *grease* spell in front of a line of spears set to receive a charge is a potent combination. Consider how your spells

might be used in unorthodox ways to change mundane objects into far more effective tools.

Know When To Leave.

One of the often-overlooked talents of the successful adventurer is the ability to know when to seek safer ground. There are several circumstances when immediate withdrawal to a safe location is a must: when a companion is slain or mortally injured, when the party is grossly overburdened with treasure or other loads, when healing resources are nearly tapped, and when the known exit to the caverns, dungeon or other edifice becomes unusable. In these circumstances, all efforts must be placed on finding an egress and moving to safer ground to recover.

There are other situations that should instill caution. When the overall food supply of the party reaches one-half, the party should consider turning back to ensure the food lasts until safety is reached. When all usual melee combatants in the party are wounded more than 50%, the situation should be evaluated before continuing. When in doubt as to whether or not a party can defeat an encountered creature, run! Escape from it and formulate a plan so that the odds of success increase for you and your companions.

Whatever happens, do not fall for the "one more room" trap. Whenever your party is discussing whether to continue, and the consensus is "one more room, then we turn back," **TURN BACK NOW.** Do not hesitate. That room will still be there later. If your party is at the point where this needs to be debated, then the party is in a dire situation where there should be no debate at all. That next room could be empty, or it could be the death of the entire party. Do you really want to find out when your character is weakened? Remember, you're role-playing using characters that have fears and motivations. You should act accordingly.



It is not the Castle Keeper's responsibility to ensure that characters do not die. That responsibility rests entirely with the player, and the player has the potential to seriously reduce the risks of a given character dying by making wise decisions. Surviving is an accomplishment that a player can be proud of. It should not be an entitlement in a game where the premise is based on risks and corresponding awards.

Until next issue!



THEM'S FIGHTING WORDS

BY JOSEPH GOODMAN

HOW TO WRITE ADVENTURES *that don't suck*

The curse of the RPG publisher is crappy submissions. For every polished gem by the likes of Harley Strohm or Chris Doyle, dozens of malnourished proposals fall dead by the wayside. My company, Goodman Games, primarily publishes adventure modules, so most of the rejection letters I write are for crappy adventures. When Steve Chenault said I should write a column for *Crusader*, I immediately knew what the subject should be: How to Write Adventures That Don't Suck.

Consider this a public service. By spreading my purported wisdom on the subject of adventures, I hope to improve the prevailing quality of submitted material – increasing the yield for Goodman Games, Troll Lord Games, and other fine publishers. There are many mediocre adventures just a few edits away from being great, and perhaps this column will push a few over the cusp.

If you're wondering what qualifies me to give my opinion on this, I can only offer one qualification: The *Dungeon Crawl Classics* line is still going strong, and I think that's testament to my ability to pick good authors and good adventures. I've published more than 50 adventure modules, and I've read (and rejected) a lot more than that.

This, then, is a few things you can do to ensure that you write adventures that don't suck. A good adventure doesn't need to have all of these items. But most good adventures do have many of them. This list is focused on fantasy adventures, by the way.

- Convey a sense of the fantastic. Convey this through encounters, descriptions, and most importantly, magic. The fantastic is what makes D&D so much fun, and that has to come across in the adventure.
- Create memorable encounters. Avoid repetition. Consider all aspects of an encounter: tim-

ing, environment, opponents, hazards, battle conditions and so on. Think about templates, feats, equipment, magic items and spells as ways to make opponents interesting. Try to come up with ideas for rooms that players will still be talking about 20 years from now.

- Work hard. Dungeons with stirges, dark-mantles, chokers, rust monsters, orcs and other no-brainer monsters strike me as lazy. The job of a published author is to produce material that the typical Dungeon Master at home could not produce. Don't submit derivative dungeons.
- Think of new twists on old classics. Don't throw in a rust monster. Instead, make it a rust spider that climbs walls. Players will never suspect that the reddish-brown spider attacking them actually has the same stats as a rust monster. Surprise the players!
- Include "easter eggs" – at least one well-hidden room with a cool treasure of some kind, accessible only to very diligent or very lucky PCs.
- Give intelligent treasure. Why give gold when you can give art objects? The treasure should match the villains and location. Sometimes the best treasure is information, because information leads to more adventures. The classic example is a treasure map; other options include blackmail lists, diaries and journals, or spell books with new spells requiring rare adventure-worthy components.
- Include a good villain. Not every dungeon crawl needs one, but the best ones often have them. The adventure has to establish a strong emotional framework for the villain, too; it's not enough for him to just be "another evil necromancer."
- Allow sequel potential. The Dungeon Master should be able to continue the plot threads begun in this adventure to create future adventures for his campaign.



**JOSEPH
GOODMAN**

has been a gaming professional since 1994, when he self-published The Dark Library. During college, he served as Editor-in-Chief of Heartbreaker's Forge Magazine, Editor of the English edition of Target Games' Chronicles from the Warzone, and Staff Writer for Alternative Armies, all the while doing freelance writing on the side.

He's done other exciting stuff, too, like get deported from Scotland, visit the town with the longest name in the world, encounter three dead bodies on a trip to Gen Con, get elected on a platform of "I don't want to change anything; I just want power," and manage multi-million dollar receipt budgets for several major retailers. His amateur boxing record is 1-0.

THEM'S FIGHTING WORDS

- Make the levels distinctive. Each level of the dungeon should feel distinct from the ones before and after it. They shouldn't blend together.
- Create a strong narrative feel. Usually this is a buildup with a climax in a big encounter at the end, but that formula can be varied. Regardless, focus on an encounter list that forms a storyline that reads like a great adventure novel.
- Secret doors. Lots of secret doors! Every dungeon needs at least one secret door, preferably hidden in a place the PCs won't think to look. Secret doors at the bottom of pit traps, secret trap doors mounted in the ceiling above normal doors... think of ways to fool the players.
- Require thought. There should be at least one puzzle. That doesn't necessarily mean a riddle. It could be a room that's hard to figure out, or a strange new monster that can only be defeated in a special way that's alluded to elsewhere in the dungeon.
- Pace it well. Long, tiresome combats should be followed by quick rooms. Thought-provoking puzzles should be followed by bloodbaths. Slow, trap-filled hallways should be followed by a rousing fight.
- Involve the group. Meter the action so there's an even mix of involvement by all character classes.
- Include a twist, preferably at the end. Note that read-aloud text can be used against the players, primarily for this purpose. Establish PC expectations through read-aloud text, and then use those expectations against them to create plot twists.
- Subplots. Subplots vary widely, but the best ones have a few things in common. First, they involve several PCs in an ongoing drama of some kind. Second, they create mystery or intrigue. Third, they lead to potential future adventures.
- Include new monsters. A new monster that throws off the characters is good (as opposed to simply duplicating the role of an existing monster, which is a waste of space).
- But don't include too many new monsters. Players get frustrated if everything is unfamiliar. And an adventure should stand on its own two legs as an adventure, not simply as a vehicle for new crunchy bits.
- Maintain a "cut to the chase" feeling – start with a bang and get to the action fast. Don't waste time on empty rooms unless they really add something.
- Use intelligent ecology. Most monsters need to eat, sleep and drink. Dungeons should allow for this fact.
- Give a strong atmosphere. The dungeon should have a strong, cohesive vibe of some kind, whether dangerous, or evil, or disturbing, or reptilian, or whatever.

Why is this column called "Them's Fighting Words?" Because as I'd say down in Georgia, my hobbies (outside of gaming) are "reading and writing, feeding and fighting" – the latter being, more specifically, boxing. This column is my chance to match my physical sparring with some verbal sparring. Tell me what you think of the above – and next issue, I'll tell you more about great adventures.



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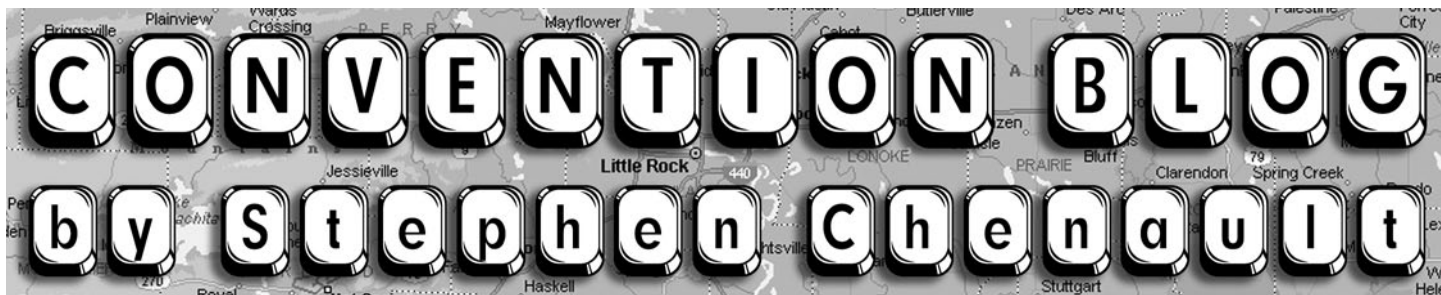
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THE WINTER DARK CONVENTION

Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, January 20-21

Since the early days of Troll Lord Games, we have run conventions. The first Troll Con was back in 2001, and we ran it here in Little Rock. We had the wonderful Ernie Gygax down for the show. Since then, and especially since Gencon has moved to Indianapolis, Gary Gygax has pushed hard for us to do a show up in his neck of the woods, Lake Geneva. We did our first Lake Geneva Gaming convention almost two years ago, in June 2005, and it was a wonderful success. We repeated it in June 2006 at Gary's urging and to fulfill my desire to take more trips to Lake Geneva—it's a wonderful town, and the cons afford me an excuse to visit Gary, Gail, Ernie and Elise (Gary's oldest daughter) and her husband, Bill. We decided to do a second convention in Lake Geneva, a Winter Con. So I talked to Gary a bit and then contacted our convention coordinators, Fred and Tami Key, to get the show rolling. I wanted it in January or February, and Tami landed us a date at the Cove for January 20–21. We would run the shorter show this first year, since I gave everyone next to no notice to get it rolling (this was October or some such). We figured a full day on Saturday and a half day on Sunday would suffice to test the frozen waters of wintry Lake Geneva.

Elise and Bill offered me a bed to crash on, and since Tami and Fred fend for themselves and no other Trolls were making it up for the con, I took them up on the offer. I booked a ticket on a Southwest flight from Little Rock to Midway in Chicago. The plan was to rent a car, meet Joe Goodman from Goodman Games for lunch and head up to the show. The flight was uneventful, and I spent most of it reading. I had forgotten to bring the second volume of Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (what I was reading) and settled on an astronomy book on the planets, which I had picked up at the bookstore. I arrived in that very laid back airport in Chicago and headed out to my rental car. I loaded up and went out to some place or the other to pick up Joe, and we headed over to some burrito place (Joe loves them burritos) and had a very relaxing lunch. I had to run a toll booth to get to him of course, because I had no change as I never carry it on planes. For this, I apologize to the great state of Illinois, and I'll make it up to you next time I pass along that lonely stretch of road. Aside from that Joe got a chuckle out of my winter garb—or lack thereof, as I had failed to bring gloves, and my jacket was jammed down in my suitcase. Apparently,

it's cold up north in the winter, and you have to bring stuff to keep warm. We're not so afflicted down here in the south. If it does get cold, some tornado will blast the cool air off east, and we'll be good in a few days or so. But I do wonder—why is Joe always laughing at me?

I got directions and headed for the highway. I thought better of my directions and decided to head due north on some misbegotten road, as I knew Lake Geneva was right above me on this big old globe of ours. I wandered for awhile until the highway ended in Fox Lake, Illinois, and I had to take a left or right. I figured left would be a good way and headed out. Soon, this highway merged with Highway 12, and I crossed the Wisconsin state line in a light snow. I stopped and gave the Gygax's a call to make sure I was pointed in the right direction, and they informed me that I was 10 minutes out and just south of the house. So off I went.

I enjoyed a pleasant afternoon with Gary and Gail. It's rare that I get to talk to either of them, so it was nice to be able to talk about various projects we are working on without interruption. We also discussed politics, the war (and America's seeming indifference to winning it no matter what it takes) and other various and sundries. He told me this great story of his childhood when he and a buddy watched the movie *The Thing* (the black-and-white version, much scarier than the remake color version) and how they had to walk home in the cold, dark snow. They were, of course, haunted by the evening's shadows, convinced that around every bush and in every doorway some misshapen monster lurked with their doom in mind. (One gets a real sense of where this whole hobby came from when talking to Gary about his youth, as it is filled with all manner of adventures, imagined and real. It is hard for us to remember the gargoyles that stalked our youth as computer games have replaced much of what our minds used to conjure with someone else's creations.)

I retired to Elise and Bill's to settle in, and then we all headed back to Gary's for some dinner. Gail had whipped up some delicious roast pork, bread and potatoes, and I ate my fill (the Gygaxs and Chenaults get along for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is their love of beer and meat is equal to if not greater than our own).

That first night, I was a bit tired and headed over to get some shut eye. Elise, Bill and I stayed awake for awhile, and I

got to take a peak at some really cool D&D memorabilia that Elise has kept to these many years. She used to work for TSR, of course, in a variety of jobs and, being the second oldest, has many memories of the lean years and the boom years. It's always great talking to her, as she has some hilarious stories to tell.

I woke up that Friday, knowing that I had to get my rental car back to Chi-town—I had only rented it for a day—and somehow get myself back up to Lake Geneva. I often do this. Plan poorly for trips, that is. Half the fun for me is getting out of sticky places, and here I knew I had a failsafe in that Fred and Tami were passing not far from the windy city that afternoon. So I staggered out of bed and began gearing up for some mad dashing about.

I found a plate of warm breakfast (compliments of Bill, who made it for me before he headed off to work). Bill had also worked out a bus schedule from Midway to Kenosha (about 20 miles from Lake Geneva) for me and called while I was eating to give me directions on where to go. This was great news, as my travel back to LG was solved. I couldn't help but chuckle as I had called the LG Chamber of Commerce earlier to ask about travel from Midway and was told there is none aside from limousine services. I talked to the lady for awhile, exploring options, and she was nice, but it had come to nothing. Honestly though, I couldn't understand half of what she was saying, and I hate the phone so much I figured I would just get up there and work it out myself. (It's all that fast talking and running words together—I'm not sure who teaches northerners to speak, probably those folks across the pond, but they need to come down here and learn how to drawl properly LOL).

Fed and travel ready, I headed over to the Gygaxs to chat and visit before my drive. Gary and I talked politics more than anything, and apparently we blathered on for awhile, as we were suddenly disturbed by Ernie when he called to tell me that he would be in Kenosha within the hour to pick me up. I told him I hadn't left Lake Geneva yet, but I would try to get down to Chicago and back up on the bus by then. Gary and Gail were both laughing at me as apparently my geography of southern Wisconsin and the Chicago area is about as good as my ability to plan for cold weather. Neither they, nor Ernie doubted I would try to make it in an hour, but they doubted my ability. And sure enough....

They were right. The drive was about an hour and a half to Midway, and I only got flipped off once, as apparently folks in Chicago have a different "finger of friendship" up there. I dropped the car off, saw the giant sign for the bus I had walked under and not read the day before, and plopped down waiting for my ride. I hitched it and made it up to Kenosha in a short while and met Gail at the bar/bus stop (Wisconsin is a

cool state). We headed over to round up some groceries for the traditional Gygax pre-con feast.

Gail and I got back to the house about 3:00 p.m., about the time Tami and Fred were beginning to set up, and since they waived off my interfering hand, I settled in for a bit of a chat with Gary. I made a run for some more drink and then stopped off at the hall to see how things were going. Tami and Fred had the place looking good, and with promises to bring the ice (which Gail had specifically made me vow to get), I headed back. Of course, I showed up with no ice, and Gail frowned at me, and then Tami and Fred showed up with no ice, and thus the reliability of the Trolls was once again proven! Mike Stewart and Liz showed up, along with Ben

Fialkow (who eventually got the ice), Elise, Bill and a few others. We all settled in for a great meal of stewed meats and some other stuff that might be organic but which I thought more of a distraction to all the fine meats Gail had cooked up for us. We all chatted and had a good time until about 10:00 or thereabouts, when

Gary retired and we headed out.

Bill and I went over to Fat Cats, where Ernie joined us with his dog. We sat around to the wee hours chatting and laughing and having a good time, as I always do at Fat Cats. Somewhere in the wee hours, we followed Ernie home and watched some movies. He was just getting going, as his work schedule keeps him up at nights, but Bill and I were pretty comatose, so we trundled off to the house.

I have no real memory of how I got to Gary's the next morning or over to the show. Probably Fred picked me up, or Bill dropped me off. At any rate, I showed up about 10:00 in the a.m., by which time the show had already kicked off. Folks were gaming, and others were arriving. I joined Gary, Frank Mentzer and Jim Ward at a table, and we shortly set up a game of Ticket to Ride Europe. I tried to get clever and lost

but did have the pleasure to see these stately gentlemen needle and jab each other for several hours. It was great, and I had a bird's-eye view into what was probably a very competitive company crew in the 1970s and 1980s. These guys love to game, and they love to win, and they love to rile each other up. And it shows. It was

great. I think Frank won, but can't remember—all I know is that I lost.

The show had a pretty good turn out, all things considered. I think it was 21, including full pass and day pass—throw in about 10 guests, as later Tom Wham, Ernie, Chris Clark and Mike Carr showed up. Frank ran some games, as did Jim and Tom. It looked as if everyone was having a good time, so I was content to settle into my own game, which had been postponed a number of times.

My C&C game was moved back to 2:00 and then to 4:00, and I at last sat down with a bunch of folks to run a game of Castles & Crusades. The whole point of the game was to run

I'm not sure who teaches northerners to speak...

The show had a pretty good turnout...

a show in the world of Winter Dark, before the overthrow of the horned one. I put them in the Gelderland, on the doorstep of the troll lords' domains. Their target was to go to the Castle of XX and retrieve the magical XX. Brian Miller and his daughter joined us, as did Mike and Liz and some other folks. The game was a riot. After some quick set up and role playing, they plunged into the wilderness with a halfling guide. They were soon accosted by some ogres who Brian blasted to smithereens with a variety of spells. The ogres were actually an advance scouting party for two troll lords whom they encountered, one at a time, shortly thereafter. The battle was hard fought and filled with some surprising descriptions (the troll lords are horribly fat creatures, with jowls that hang the lengths of their chests and pencil thin legs, and they stink, are hairy and are covered in their own filth). Brian, not wanting for courage, charged the first troll lord and gained the ground before his comrades did. He had an AC of 12, 5 hitpoints and no spells. He had only one magical item that he hoped would bind the troll. He won initiative and cast the item but missed. The troll lord proceeded to grab him with his mittens, lift him off the ground and tear his character into two pieces, upending his kicking lower torso and pouring entrails into his mouth. Brian died, but his mangled corpse provided such a distraction for the hungry troll that Mike and Brian's daughter pounded the creature to death in short order. The game went to ground after that, as I had mistakenly let Brian's daughter have a magical mace that turned her evil, and she attacked Liz, at which point all hell broke loose. The game ended on a bit of silly note, but was a fun game nonetheless. I hope that the constant laughter and relaxed table means that few will forget the description of those trolls and Brian's unfortunate demise.

This put the show pretty late, and I had had no dinner, so Tami and I went to the Olympic Diner, where we got some grub and talked about this show and about the coming Troll Con and Lake Geneva Gaming Convention III. We both agreed that, if we got this stuff more organized, attendance would be a breeze. The shows are just too fun not to go to.

When we returned, most of the games had wound down. A few brave souls still gamed on, but as most of the honored attendees had long drives to make, they had headed home. The weather was promising snow and cold, and folks needed to get where they were going. I have to say, if I have not said this before, that it is really nice of Gary Gyax, Ernie Gyax, Frank Mentzer, Tom Wham, Jim Ward and Chris Clark to take time out of their busy schedules to support these little shows. It means a lot to us and, of course, to their fans, and it's something they do out of kindness. So, my hats off to you gentlemen! We chatted for awhile and then retired to Fat Cats to meet up with Ernie.

Many hours later found me stretched out on the bed at Elise and Bills. I noticed the absolute pristine snow, every-

thing covered in a thick blanket of it. Low clouds added to the quiet feeling that one can only get in the winter time when the snow is deep. Then I noticed a movie bill on the wall. It was a poster of the D&D cartoon that came out way back when. It was announcing the debut. Elise had it framed and ready to be hung. It threw me back so many years, back to when I was 10 or 12 and all this stuff was so very new, and I thought to myself that that is the feeling TLG should strive for, that feeling of fresh excitement and young enthusiasm that only those who have become less jaded by life's missteps possess.

I drifted off to sleep with visions of sugar plumes or some such and woke up to a foot of snow on the ground and more coming. Elise and Bill took me out to breakfast at a great little bar south of town, and I filled up on grub and headed back to the show. Those two are great hosts, and I thank them warmly for their kindness and attention to this old troll. Thanks guys.

...troll lords are horribly fat creatures...

We gamed some more (another Ticket to Ride with Tom joining and correcting us on our misplaying the rules LOL, which lead to many great comments and, I think, a Jim Ward victory). We had a better then expected turnout, and folks seemed to have a good time, so when breakdown began at 2:00 p.m., we were all satisfied. I was hitching a ride with Tami and Fred, and we left for Gary's at about 2:30, just after the Super Bowl game between the Bears and Patriots began. Gary is a Bears fan, so watch out! Gail treated us to some chili and brew, and we ate and relaxed before hitting the road. Soon thereafter, Fred and Tami carted me home in a very comfortable pick up truck, and we came in about 5:00 in a.m. after an uneventful and relaxing ride. (Tami and Fred are the unsung heroes of these little cons, as they do all the work with little direction from me or Davis—or any of the trolls for that matter).

Lake Geneva is a friendly town...

Though the show had a small turnout, I was very pleased. We almost made a little money, which means that, with only a little effort, we could turn it around and make it even more fun. I had a great time and enjoyed the company of the old TSR crew tremendously. And Lake Geneva is a friendly town, with great food and beautiful weather (whether snow or sun), and one should make the trek for that if for no other reason. This convention, much like its sister con, LGGC, is the way I think conventions should be. Lots of gaming with good friends in an easy environment.

Hope to see you at LGGC III in June (we have bathrooms now!)

Steve

2-27-07



CASTLES & CRUSADES

ONE NIGHT STANDS

ADVENTURES BY BILL WEBB



BILL WEBB

*is the co-founder and
co-owner of the
award-winning
NECROMANCER GAMES.*

This is the second installment of my One Night Stands column, which provides short adventures for use in the *Castles and Crusades* system. Each is designed to provide the Castle Keeper (DM) with an adventure they can use for a single gaming session. This adventure features a three-part quest to free a genie from a curse, gaining its bottle and three wishes. This adventure is designed to test player's skill as much as combat prowess, and as usual for my writing, attention to detail and careful exploration are just as important as fighting. In fact, those who thoughtlessly blunder through the adventure will gain no reward for their efforts, as the treasure itself will attack them.

Next issue will feature an intricately trapped crypt haunted by a cat-like manticore that uses the attraction of the crypt to ambush adventurers and provide itself with regular meals. Enjoy this adventure, and may all your sessions be TPKs!



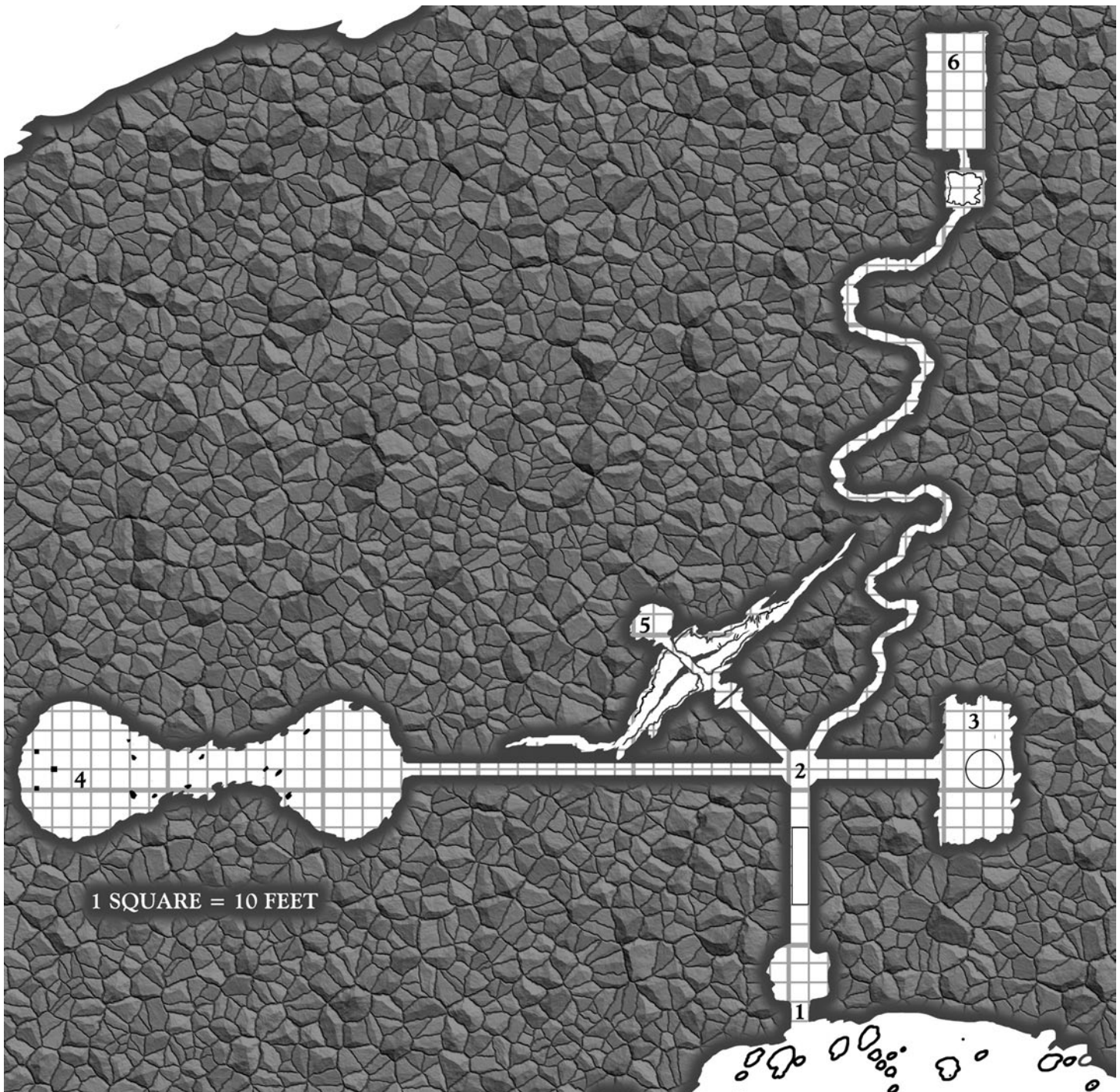
This adventure takes place in a desert land, with rolling hills of light scrub and rocks dotting the landscape, and nary a drop of water to be had anywhere. Anywhere, that is, except deep within a cavern housing a noble djinn, trapped in a bottle. The djinn was placed here by an efreeti lord as a cruel trick that would compel him to attack any that found him, unless a series of tests were passed to free him.

The adventure begins as the players find a small cave entrance along the base of a hill that eroded during the previous night's windstorm. The entrance itself is only a few inches wide, and significant excavation must be performed before the players may enter the tunnels below. It takes 4 hours for two men to clear a crawl space into the tunnel, and a full week to completely clear the entrance. A crawl space, if cleared, opens up into a larger cavern after 10 feet. Ten feet beyond the tunnel entrance, the passage opens into a large lime-

stone cavity, fully 30 feet wide and 18 feet high. Anyone crawling through must make a dexterity check (CR 4) or fall 10 feet into some fungus (damage 1d6-1 from the fall). The only trick is that a nest of asps has found its way into the cool caverns, and attack any that disturb their fungus lair. They ignore anyone who stays out of their nest. Up to 6 asps can attack one opponent, and 6 automatically attack anyone crawling through the passageway as they spill out as described above.

20 Asps

These neutral creatures' vital stats are 1 HD, HP roll 'em up!, AC 14. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a +3 poisonous bite for 1 point of damage. The poison causes the victim to lose 1d4 point of constitution. A successful save (CL 4) reduces this by half.



Area 1 — The Passage Down

Past the asp's nest is an 80-foot long limestone tunnel worn from the bedrock. The rock itself is a strange orange-tan color, with millions of shell fragments scattered throughout the rock. The floor seems strangely "flat", and any dwarves in the party will note this on an Intelligence check (CL 2). Others may notice this at a higher difficulty (CR 8). The floor of the tunnel is composed of small rock fragments and sand, and the occasional fungus patch. Careful examination of the floor reveals that only an inch of debris

covers a hard stone slab, fully 40 feet long and eight feet wide, and centered in the tunnel.

If the sand is cleared away, the stone slab is uncovered, revealing strange writings and pictograms (in the language of the Efreet). A decipher script check (CL 4) or a *comprehend languages* spell gleans the following three scripts:

- *The orb can be had by he who defeats the man of fire*
- *The cube can be found by blind faith*
- *The pyramid belongs to the balanced man*

These scripts are clues to how the genie can be freed and the curse broken (see area 3).

Area 2 — The Nexus

This passage is a five-way intersection that resides at the terminus of the 80-foot entrance tunnel. Four new tunnels lead out of the 40-foot diameter carved-stone circular cave. Careful examination of the tunnel entrances reveals a small carving above four of the tunnels (all but the entrance tunnel). In order to spot these writings, the players must actually examine the tunnel entrances. Don't "give away" this information unless the party is careful and actually takes the time to look around. Three of the tunnel exits are 5-feet in width. The fourth is 10 feet wide. The first tunnel has a symbol of a man with a dragon head and tail, with an arcane symbol (*read magic* reveals) of "fire" inscribed below it. The second tunnel has the symbol of a lidless, pupil-less eye, along with an arcane symbol of "blindness" inscribed below it. The third tunnel has a symbol of a woman holding scales and standing on a thin line above a pit of demons. The arcane symbol for "death" is inscribed below it. The final, wider, tunnel has a carved pictogram of a genie chained to a stone block, trying in vain to fly upward. This illustration has an arcane symbol of "imprisonment" scrawled in the rock below it.

Area 3 — The Trapped Genie

The ten foot tunnel leads 60 feet to an 80 foot by 40 foot cavern. In the rear of the cave is a beautifully inlaid pool of carved alabaster. The pool is 20 feet across and circular. The edge of the pool is two feet high and a foot wide, and is composed of cut stone blocks. Geometric patterns are depicted in layers of silver and gold, and semi-precious stones are set in the soft stone in regular patterns. The water in the pool is cool and drinkable, and the well itself is over 100 feet deep. Inscribed along the top of the pool edge is writing in the language of the Efreet. This can be read by a decipher script check (CL 4) or a *comprehend languages* spell. It says:

"To become the master, one must fulfill the wish of the servant."

The value of the stones and precious metals is over 2500 gp, however, anyone defacing the pool is *cursed* (-6 on Con). This curse has no saving throw, and takes effect 5 minutes after the act. A *remove curse* spell mitigates this effect. Ten minutes after the pool is defaced, the cursed djinn is freed and attacks.

Suspended from the cavern roof by a chain, hanging directly in the center of the pool, hangs a beautiful glass bottle, its stopper connected to the chain. Three thin chains, one of silver, one of gold, and one of platinum, stretch tightly from the sides of the bottle to three hooks connected to the rim of the pool. Any attempt to remove the chains or free the bottle removes the stopper. Only if the tension on the chains is removed may the bottle be freed. If the stopper is opened while the chains remain in place, the djinn is freed in a cursed state (see below). If the bottle is removed from the chains (by use of the three objects found in areas 4-6, the curse is broken and the djinn is not hostile.

Careful examination of the intricate patterns reveals that there is a clear pattern shift dividing the pool edge into three distinct parts. One third of the pool edge is composed of circles; one third is composed of triangles, and the last of squares. At the center of each section is a small indentation, one-half inch in size, in the

shape of a sphere, pyramid and cube respectively. These indentations are keys that will undo the curse on the djinn and allow the bottle to be safely freed from its chains. When the three objects are all in place, the chains slacken and the bottle can be lifted free from the top chain.

Two things can happen if the bottle is opened, freeing the trapped djinn. If the proper ritual is performed (the three objects are recovered and placed in their respective places on the pool edge), the djinn is freed from the curse and will grant three wishes to the person that placed the third object. If the stopper is removed without the proper ritual, the djinn attacks.

Noble Djinn

This chaotic good creature's vital stats are HD 20, HP 120, AC 32. Their primary attributes are physical and mental. They attack with a slam for 2d8 points of damage. They have spell like abilities and cast as an 18th level wizard. They also have air mastery, whirlwind, immunity to acid, plane shift and telepathy.

Area 4 — The Man of Fire

This five foot wide tunnel leads 200 feet into the hillside, and opens to a 200 foot long, seventy foot wide, hourglass-shaped cavern at its terminus (the narrow neck is 30 feet wide). Dwarves (CR 2 Int check) notice a distinct change in geology at the 100-foot mark in the tunnel, with the limestone giving way to a heavy iron laden magnetite rock (hard and black). This rock has the effect of *dispel magic* at 10th level (continuous effect, checks made each round). All castings and in-place effects (including potions) will likely be dispelled within a few rounds of passing this point. The DM should not tell the players that this is occurring unless it would be obvious ("Why am I not flying anymore?").

The air in the cavern becomes progressively warmer as one moves towards its back, and as the narrow spot is passed, a strange gate of glowing fire can be seen at the center rear of the cavern. This portal is an open connection to the plane of fire.

In front of the gate is a four-foot tall square pedestal holding a small gold orb (one of the keys in area 3). Unfortunately for the players, also in front of the gate is a huge fire elemental that they must defeat to take the orb. Remember, a constant *dispel magic* effect is in place in this area!

Huge Fire Elemental

This neutral creature's vital stats are HD 16, HP 89, AC 22. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a slam for 2d8 points of damage. They are able to do 1d2 points of fire damage for every 1d4 points of normal damage they inflict. They also are immune to fire and can regenerate 2 hit points a melee round.

Area 5 — A Test of Faith

This 5-foot tunnel leads 40 feet and widens into a 20-foot section of (illusory) brick wall. *Detect magic* reveals magic of illusionary nature, but attempts to disbelieve are virtually impossible (Int test at CR 12). Only by closing one's eyes and blindly walking through the wall can it be passed. Beyond the wall is a small platform with a narrow bridge leading across a deep chasm. The bridge can be crossed with ease, and leads to a five foot wide cave entrance.

Inside the mouth of this cave is a terrible thing—a greater mummy. Normally, this type of undead would simply destroy any party of adventurers of less than about 15th level, but it has one interesting feature. It is cursed to be highly susceptible to turning attempts. *Any* attempt to turn the monster will succeed, immediately turning it to dust, leaving a small platinum cube (one of the keys mentioned in Area 3) behind. If the players lack a cleric or paladin, and cannot turn undead, they will surely die. The mummy should only be worth full experience points if it is not turned. The DM should use his judgment about the award, realizing this is a puzzle-solving exercise, not a combat.

Greater Mummy

This creature's vital stats are HD 20d12, HP 160, AC 30. His primary attributes are physical. He attacks with one slam for 1d12 points of damage. He can cause despair in victims as well as spread mummy rot upon a successful hit. He casts spells as a 20th level cleric.

Area 6 — Life Held in the Balance

This 5-foot tunnel weaves back and forth, slowly sinking into the earth for 300 feet and finally widening to a 20-foot wide tunnel. The 20 foot section is carved from smooth, almost glassy obsidian (Climb checks at CR 15), and has no floor, per se. The floor is a pool of green slime, thirty feet wide. On the far edge is a 5 foot hole set 2 feet above the pool, leading further into the caverns. Other than magical means, some creative way of bridging the pool must be made. Going outside and cutting down a large tree is perhaps the best way for this to be done. Crossing a tree or similar bridge structure requires a Dex check at CR 2. Use of a balancing pole or other creative approach should reduce the CR level.

Past the slime pit, the cave widens to a 30-foot wide, 60-foot long, roughly rectangular area. The strange thing is that the floor is composed of a series of paved stones, cut into circles, triangles and squares. Stepping on a circular stone has no effect, however, each time a triangle is stepped on, it shoots a dart (+20 to hit, damage 1d4 + poison (1d3/1d3 Dex damage, CR 4 Con check avoids) at the person stepping on it. Each time a square is stepped on, it collapses, and the person stepping so steps 2 feet into a pit full of pungi sticks (damage 1d3+1d3 temporary dexterity damage). Simply running across the room triggers 2d6-2 of each type of trap, and likely stops the person as soon as a square is hit. Only careful tip-toeing across the floor allows safe passage. Moving from circle to circle is difficult (Dex check at CR 5), but lets one

avoid all the unpleasant effects of the traps. This test must be made 3 times to cross the room, with failure resulting in a 50% chance of triggering each of the aforementioned trap effects.

At the far end of the cave is a small stone altar with a set of scales standing on it. A pool of acid 5 feet round surrounds the altar. Acid damage is 4d6 per round, for rounds contacted (+ 2d3 rounds if immersed). On one side of the scales are 13 gold coins; on the other is a silver pyramid. The scales are currently balanced. They are also coated with black lotus pollen (Con check at CR 8 to avoid 3d6/3d6 Con damage). Only the coins and the pyramid are safe to touch. Taking the coins or the pyramid can be safely done by one of two means; either both can be snatched at once (50% chance the scales are also touched, causing the poison effect), or the pyramid can be taken off, and replaced with 13 gold coins (no chance of being poisoned). Either method requires a Dex check at CR 6 to succeed without triggering the trap. Creative players will place braces below the scales to prevent movement when they remove objects from them (Dex check is reduced to CR 2).

The trap consists of volleys of poisoned darts being released once per round (each person in the cave is subjected to 1d6 dart attacks per round (at +20 to hit, and poisoned as above) for 2d6 rounds. Lying flat reduces the number of darts to 1d6-4 per round. In addition, the stone altar sinks into the acid pool in 2 rounds, dropping anyone on it into the acid as described above.



The Aihrdian Chronicles

The Vale of the Moon

Fiction by Stephen Chenault

The Elven Warlord, Meltowg-Aet-Ohd, Prince of Lothian, has wandered the world in the Shadow of the Long Days of the World. Bitter and filled with rage, his life is one of unceasing war against the tower of Aufstrag and its great horned god. Long ago his elven kin fled into the ether, leaving the world to its slow demise. It has been his quest to exonerate the name of his folk and kin in the blood of their enemies. In this unceasing war his love had died, most of his friends have fallen and he shares his hatred with all the people's of the world. Lately, Meltowg has learned of the Castle of Spires and its elven guardian and he seeks that magical place, to force his kin to return. To find it he has sought out the Fair Lady of Gilgum and come to the doorsteps of Aufstrag. Attacked and wounded, he lies in the mire of the swamps, bleeding and wondering upon his life...

Londea's plume floated, in slow turns, down the waterway and into the distance until it was lost in the bubbling turmoil of the Mistbane River. Without a glance behind him Meltowg gathered his weapons, mounted his steed and rode into the hills in search of those knights of the Princess' guard who might yet live. The Lunar Knights numbered over a thousand souls before the battle of Blue Creek, but their numbers were diminished and scattered. But Meltowg would seek them out anyway and they would carry the battle to the enemy.

In time he gathered to him a band of three score of the knights. They were well equipped and mounted on hearty steeds. Others, he knew, avoided him and hid themselves in the hills and between the mists. He could feel them; their shame was palatable. He could hear their whispers. They told themselves that they were tired, that the war was too much. That the war was too hard and hopeless, so they stayed, hidden, wrapped in the shadows of doubt and night. He cared not for them and turned his back on them for they would fade with time and leave no mark, or memory beyond the stain of their infamy and fear.

But those he did gather followed him to the banks of the Danau River on the eastern most edges of their homelands. Across the river stood the ruins of Kayomar and the great hordes of orcs that now ruled that kingdom of noble men. Beyond the river stood the heart of darkness, the fiefs of Unklar, the horned god. He spoke then, these words to those who followed him: "We have been at war for many years and it seems that the enemy is without count and that all that we do is for not and they grow stronger as we storm against them. It seems vain and pointless. The battles go on, the dead mount up and the struggle for freedom is lost in the pain of sorrow. But know that this pain of sorrow you nurse is nothing to the ignominy of weak men. Know that we were at war long before the darkness came. Know that they have hated us for years without count. Know that they have nurtured this hate, and fed it and thrived upon it long before we knew of them. They

hate us for we are what they wish to be. They hate us for we live free and all of our people live free. Know that they will never stop. They will keep coming for us, they will pursue us to the ends of the world, no matter the course we follow, for they hate us so.

"So to you brethren, a call to arms! Gird your shields, take up your spears and swords and let us bring the battle to them. No more holding our ground and waiting for them. Let us cross this river into their kingdoms and lay waste to them and all they hold dear. Let us carve upon their brows the fury of our rage. There! Across those deep waters are the sands of the enemy! Let us cross now! Bring the battle to them! Let us tear down their walls and towers and bring ruin upon them all. And let us never forget the slaughter of our kindred until our rage has washed the shores of their kingdoms clear of ignorance and spite. Vow now my lords! Vow that we will be as stout as those who came before and that we will never quit! Never yield. Never give to the enemy his respite. Vow now to wage war until victory stains our standards with the blood of those who would destroy us!"

With that they crossed the Danau River and into the northern plains of Kayomar. They numbered sixty five, knights and warriors all. They rode charges cased in barding and they carried high shields and wore plates of steel. They followed a dark road into the east, bringing the devastation of war to their unforgiving enemy.

They came first to the Castle of an orc lord named Ohm-ul-ar. With him were a great host of orcs, armed for war and lately returned from a war on the men of the Wilds. Ohm-ul-ar scoffed from his high walls when he saw the elves approach and he rode forth with his host. With him were many men who had joined the legions when Kayomar had fallen. They had with them their families and other peoples who found refuge from the war beneath the banners of the victorious orcs.

Ohm-ul-ar gathered his host of infantry in rows and they lowered their spears and pole-arms. "How now elf! Your race is degraded and gone. You haven't the stomach for war anymore. Go back to your houses and towers, write for us some pretty poetry and contemplate the world's meaning, the flowers and the pretty philosophies you cherish by the campfires. You want for understanding and you cannot find it in the blood of your demise. Quit now and we'll let you go home in peace... for a time."

The Prince Lothian smiled a grim smile. "War is a price we pay for peace!" He called to his men and they gathered themselves in one great line. The Prince took the far right flank and his cousin Sedgwick took the far left. All those who stood between them were grim and faced death with a fearless sadness. The horns sounded again and the horse of the knights leapt forward with a power that shook the earth. The orcs, filled with the lust of their masters, did not yield but stood their ground, waiting for the feast of death that would follow.

The clash of arms rang upon the field as the elven soldiery crashed into the iron clad orcs. Their glaives, bills and pikes splintered against barding chain and shields and the horses clove through their ranks, crushing them beneath iron clad hooves and crushing them against other horses. The elves rode on high and washed a path of blood and sinewy bone upon the green earth with axes and swords. They ground the enemy beneath, cutting limbs from bodies or heads from necks. Some few were overwhelmed by valiant orcs or men without recourse but these called for aid and others turned and came about. The melee was thick and the battle cried sounds amidst the clash of arms and the horrid hewing sound of flesh and bone.

But the orcs were overwhelmed and soon dismayed and the grind of the battle saw them cast upon the ground like so much refuse. The elves turned about again and washed against the walls of the castle,

slaughtering all who would stand. And the orcs, though they fought like lions cornered, died in droves and their bodies piled high upon the ground. At the last the orcs were slain and destroyed and the Castle fired and the body of Ohm-ul-ar was separated from his head and made a decoration for a pole upon the road.

The men of Kayomar who had served the orcs, threw down their arms and welcomed the elves as liberators and they fell upon their knees and asked for aid and comfort. But Meltowg saw them for what they were, fair weather friends of courage and victory, honor-less dogs who had survived the fall of their own kingdom by joining those who destroyed it. "Kill them all. Fire their homes and wagons and drive their livestock into the wilderness." So the elves fell upon the faithless men and their kin and destroyed them utterly and scattered their wealth into the wilderness.

Upon the field of slaughter were heaped over 400 orcs and some 300 humans. The elves left them where they lay. But one of their numbers had fallen and they gathered him and lay him upon a pier of wood. With prayers to Athria, they set him afire and watched as his spirit broke free from its earthly bonds. They quit the field soon thereafter, leaving the wreck and ruin of the castle and village behind them.

They named themselves anew, calling themselves the Vale Knights and they swore allegiance to their troubled Prince, for they saw in him the race of the elves as they had been in their youth, when they were unafraid of the world and not lost in the comforts of their myopic philosophies. They did not seek refuge or even hold the hopes that they would rebuild their lost realms, but rather they sought



redemption in the eyes of the world for the perfidious cowards their race had become.

And the Vale Knights revealed themselves to the people of Unklar's fiefs in a rage of battle that washed over them in blood and iron. The Vale Knights brought war to every quarter of the horned god's realm, for they did not rest, but rather pursued their tasks with grim determination. They attacked caravans on lonely roads, burned towns and villages, invested castles and plundered holds and dungeons. They struck the enemy with amazing speed. At one moment they sacked a town along the upper reaches of the Saline River, vanishing for weeks as they raced across the country to strike the enemy upon the shores of the Inner Sea. Many of their company fell, lost to the terrors of war, but others joined them. Hopeless souls, lost in a sea of their enemy who saw the Vale Knights as the heroes of a lost world.

Meltowg led this band through the Long Days of the World and in many, countless battles and the number of his victims was countless, but these did not trouble him as he carried the war of his revenge against an enemy of his honor. Men and orcs, giants and goblins, dragons and even at times elves fell to the madness of his blade. In time he grew to wonder where his people were, and he heard rumors of hidden places where elven lords watched the world unfold and kept their peace through magics and sorcery. So it was that the Castle of Spires came to his mind, but he did not know where it lay. He cast about for one who could. He scattered the company over the lands of the orc kingdoms of the Gelderland and told them to await his call.

Cloaking himself in sorcery learned of the Oanthuil* Meltowg left his armaments behind him and traveled to Frieberg where there was much magic of the old world hidden. There he found a man who claimed to lineage of great magi of the days before the Winter Dark. He asked him where he could find hidden paths to one's desire, if any lived who did not dwell at the pleasure of the dark. He was careful in his language to hide himself and his purpose. And the soothsayer cast spells upon water and called upon the bastard gods to aid him. In time, his sorcery yielded the name of the Fair Lady of Gilgum, who lived yet in the swamps around Aufstrag, the Gausumland. "Here Master is your answer. This lady, whoever she is, can lead you to the paths of your dreams, whatever they may be."

"How shall I find this Fair Lady soothsayer? Those swamps are filled with pestilence and they lay upon the knees of the enemies' thrown."

"That is not my to riddle, oh Master, but yours."

Meltowg glowered upon the man so that he withered. "So be it. In your tales of these days, leave off that I ever came here soothsayer or asked these questions of you."

The Soothsayer smiled a crafty smile. "But oh lord, who would I tell? Who would believe that I met a troubled Prince of the elves in these dark times? And if someone did believe me? What then? What recompense would I gain from my stories? What recompense indeed?"

Meltowg sneered so that his lip turned up upon itself and his white teeth shone beneath his pale skin.

"What then master? What compensation?" The soothsayer smiled a clever smile and twisted his own face to mock the diligence of his victim.

The Prince sighed. The slow exhalation of breath leaving his chest settled and his form less than it had been.

The soothsayer smiled.

With the speed of an animal Meltowg lunged and grasped the man by the throat. Lifting him off the ground he drove his horrified form against the wall and with a twist and slash opened the man the length of his sternum so that the bowels and much of his chest spilled upon the floor. "You should read the future more carefully dog."

He turned then from the habitation of the town and gathered his armaments to him. South of Frieberg he came to a small stream of clear water that followed a twisted cleft in the earth and plains. He drew his up and watched the country a great while. At last he dismounted, moved to the water and slipped his hand into the cool shallows. He spoke to the water letting the *holly* overhear him and carry the message to his people, to the Vale Knights. He called on them to travel the straights of Ursal or the Amber Sea and meet him upon the shores of Aenochia at the roots of Ineng Tree.

Meltowg lurched forward from the tree. The stink of the swamps, the smell of his own blood, the taste of thick bile all brought him back to his condition. The horrible wound in his side had stymied some, clogged with torn flesh, bits of metal and cloth. Slowly he pulled himself up and using Noxmorus, his blade, as a staff he staggered to the water's edge. There he lay and quenched his parched lips. Too, he breathed into the water, calling upon its *holly* to summon his horse.

* One of the original tribes of men, who are able to take the shapes of other men and creatures. The doppelgangers.



The Holly

At 10th level (any class) elves gain the ability to speak to the holly. This allows them to pass messages over great distances. It takes a round of concentration and the elf must be next to or in a body of moving water for success to be guaranteed. Speaking to the holly is simple and requires only that the elf whisper or think his thoughts, including the name of the recipient, into the water. The water sprites, the holly, can't help but overhear the messages and pass them along, down (and up) the stream. It takes a great deal of time for such a message to pass through the various bodies of water. The greater the distance between the elf and the recipient, the greater the amount of time it takes for the recipient to receive the message. This does not dissuade elves, as their understanding of time is far different than other peoples of the world.

The message can be as simple or complicated as the elf desires. The time for such a message to travel is entirely up to the Castle Keeper.

The elves of Aihrde are peculiar in that they came to the world upon the shattered dreams of the All Father. Early in their history Wenafar embraced them, for they came of the same thoughts as she. From her they learned of the myriad numbers of creatures and magics that the All Father had inadvertently or intentionally placed in the crust of his creation. They learned many skills from her and many tongues, not the least of which was the language of the waters, the holly. These tiny spirits occupied all the waters of Aihrde. They were free and filled with life. They did not know pain or suffering, nor did they understand desire and lust. They only knew that they lived and were free.

The greater elves learned to speak "around" them and to let the holly overhear them and in this way use them to carry messages to their kin. They did so by breathing their thoughts into any body of water, great or small and the holly, hearing the elf speak, would pass the messages on as if they were rumors heard in confidence and told in secret. In this way the elves could pass messages with one another over great distances.

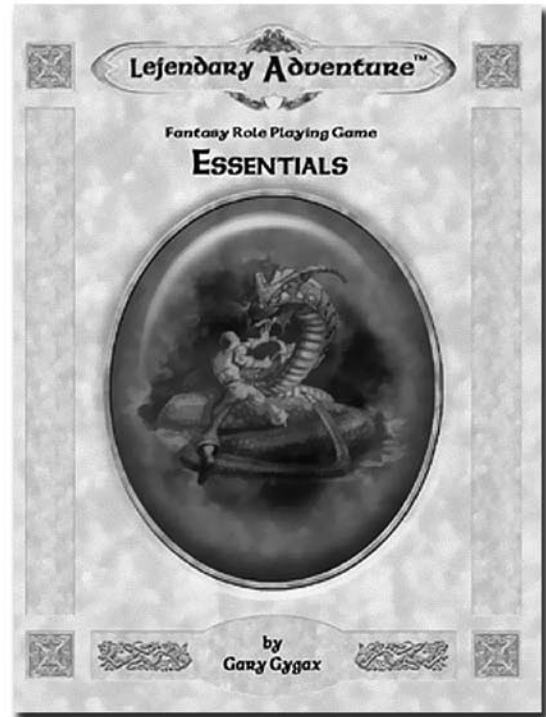
Of course it takes time for a message to travel. Whispered thoughts into a creek pass up that creek and down it to the river, which that creek joins, and from the river to the lake and the lake to the sea and beyond up other creeks and rivers. Thus the constant babbling of waterways is often the thoughts of elves cast into the holly. Further, elves listen and when they hear their name called out by one of the holly they must go to that water and listen to the message for the holly will not tell them the secret and they must overhear.

It is a powerful magic and only the learned or experienced elves can master it.



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Historical Footnotes

by Mike Stewart



MIKE STEWART

became interested in roleplaying games in 1978, and has never looked back.

He is currently a post-graduate student of medieval history at the University of North Texas.

The Order of the Knights of St. Mary

The Order of the Knights of St. Mary, commonly referred to as the "Teutonic Knights" were formed in the Holy Land at the beginning of the Fourth Crusade in 1189. Many of the Knights of this army were from the western German lands of the Holy Roman Empire and brought a unique perspective to the Crusaders of the era. During the siege of Acre they created a hospital to succor their wounded, constructed on a plot near the Saint Nicholas gate from the timbers and sails of the ships that had transported the knights to Palestine. In their enthusiasm for restoring Christian rule to the Holy Land, the knights adopted the city of Acre for their Hospital in emulation of the order of St. John (Knights Hospitaller), and they took St. Mary as their patron saint. The order was given their initial legitimacy when granted confirmation on November 19, 1190 by Duke Frederick of Swabia, one of the major German leaders of the Crusade. After the capture of Acre by the Crusaders, the hospital was given a permanent site within the city's environs.

Formally confirmed as a religious order by Pope Clement III and bestowed the honor of a "Fraternal Ecclesiastical Order of the Blessed Saint Mary" by a Papal Bull of 1191, the hospital soon grew into a military order similar to the Knights of St. John and operated nominally under their authority. The Pope and the German prelates decided that the Teutonic Order would follow the hospice rule of the Knights of St. John and the military rule of the Knights of the Temple. Indeed, the tabard of the Order was a black cross upon a white field; markedly similar to the tabards of the Templars, which bore a red cross upon a white field. The distinct German character of this new Hospitaller Order and the protection given to it by the Holy Roman Emperor and German rulers enabled it to gradually assert a de facto independence from the Order of Saint John.

The knights of the new confraternity had to be of German birth (although this rule was occasionally overlooked), which was unusual for knights of the military orders. Additionally, the order required that members be of noble or knightly lineage, although exceptions were allowed until the creation of more stringent codes in the 16th century. With Papal and Imperial support, the Order began to gain respect on the front lines of Christendom. "Their blue mantle, charged with a black cross, was worn over a white tunic, a uniform recognized by the Patriarch of Jerusalem and confirmed by the Pope in 1211" (Sainty, pg 3). Subsequent Germans entering Acre in the wake of the Fourth Crusade gave increased prominence to the Order as recruits and benefactors. However, despite such support the Order was never as large or as influential as either the Templars or the Hospitallers.

The first Master of the Order, Heinrich von Walpot (d. 1200) commanded the knights in their first years of existence and codified the rules of the Order in 1199. Innocent III confirmed these rules in the Bull Sacrosancta Romana of February 19, 1199. The Order became a dualistic society; the knights were warriors who adhered to the monastic vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. The second group consisted of actual priests, who saw to the spiritual needs of the knights and administered the Catholic Mass. Unlike the knights, the priests were not originally held to the rule of providing proof of noble lineage. The Priest-Brothers of the Order were to emphasize the spiritual aspect of the knights and thus could not become Masters, Commanders or even Vice-Commanders in either Lithuania or Prussia since these were viewed as primarily military functions. However, this limitation was not enforced within the German commanderies (Plum, p 14).

The conduct of the Order bore some similarity to the Knights of St. John and the Knights Templar. Their commandery was both monastery and castle, as it housed the knights and gave them a base of operations against their foes. Heavily fortified, the commanderies acted as both military and administrative posts in the regions the Order conquered. Within these bastions the knights lived communally, sleeping in dormitories on simple beds, eating together in a refectory. Their clothes and armor were simple in form and practicality was stressed. Knights trained constantly for battle, maintaining their equipment and working with their horses in mounted combat drills.

As with the Hospitallers, the Teutonic Order elected their local Masters and the Order's Grand Master for life. Only a knight could advance to these exalted positions; these and the other great offices were forbidden to both the priests and Graumtilers (non-knightly ranks). The Grand Commander acted as the Master's direct deputy and normally commanded the priest-brothers of the order, although he ruled the commandery in the Master's absence. The Grand Marshall was also a direct deputy of the Master and commanded the knights in the field, insured their proper training, and handled field logistics. Other officers were the Grand Hospitaller, who cared for the sick; the Drapier, who acted as chief quartermaster and insured the commandery was stocked and supplied; and the Treasurer, who administered the finances of the commandery. All these lower offices were elective and rotated annually. The Order was originally designated specifically for the Holy Land; therefore, as commanderies spread across Europe, Masters were appointed for each region and officers for each commandery selected (Sainty).

While the Order's early Masters aided its ascension in status, none compare to the fourth Master. From 1209 to 1239, Herman von Salza of near Meissen enhanced the prestige of the Order through his own efforts as a diplomat and negotiator. By interceding in the conflicts between the Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor he earned the good will of both and further increased the Order's already expanding wealth and possessions. During his tenure, the Order received no less than thirty-two Papal confirmations or grants of privileges as well as thirteen Imperial confirmations.

"By the middle of Salza's Magistracy the Orders properties extended from Slovenia (then Styria), through Saxony (Thuringia), Hesse, Franconia, Bavaria and the Tyrol, with houses in Prague and Vienna. There were also outposts in the outer reaches of the Byzantine Empire, notably Greece and what is now Romania" (Barnes, 110).

As with the Templars, the spread of the Teutonic order throughout Central and Eastern Europe allowed their local commanderies to have significant political influence within their regions. They were not hampered by their limitation of Germanic membership, as the spread of Imperial influence in Italy, Spain, and other areas allowed their convents to reach throughout Western Europe and the Balkans. The Teutonic Knights received more Imperial grants of Sicilian property between 1190 and 1220 than either the Templars or the Hospitallers (Sainty, pg. 12). In addition, when Frederick II gained his majority he secured to the Order the favor of Pope Honorius III, who granted them numerous privileges confirming their equality with the other two great Crusader orders; the Templars and the Hospitallers.

By the beginning of the thirteenth century, the Teutonic Order started to set its sights to conquests and Catholic conversions closer to the Holy Roman Empire. Transferring much of their forces from the Holy Land, the Order moved first to support the pleas of King Andrew of Hungary, who invited the knights to establish an outpost on the frontier of Transylvania. Andrew needed to secure Hungary's borders against the pillaging of the Cumans, a nomadic people from the steppes of Russia. This move to aid Catholic Hungary also went to the aid of neighboring Orthodox Byzantium, since the Cuman were plaguing the Byzantine Empire as well. King Andrew granted the Order considerable autonomy over the lands they captured, and charged them with converting the inhabitants to the Roman Catholic faith. However, the demands of the Order grew too great for Andrew and so he released them from service in 1225.

This only freed the Order for their greatest endeavor. In 1217, Pope Honorius III declared a Crusade against the pagan Prussians who had invaded the lands of Duke Conrad of Massovia. In 1225, the Duke asked the Teutonic Knights for assistance. As incentive, he offered Salza possession of the lands of Culm and Dobrzin. Salza accepted, with the provision that the knights could retain any Prussian territories that the Order captured. After 1226/27, when the Emperor granted the Master princely rank, the Teutonic Knights were able to claim sovereign rights to any lands they seized with the Pope's "Golden Bull" of Rimini as direct Imperial fiefs. The Church hoped to use this Order as a martial protector of the Prussian missions, in the same manner that the Bishop of Riga had used the German Order of the Brethren of the Sword in Livonia (Horstmann).





With assurance granted that the Order would have independent authority in the region, "the Teutonic Knights established themselves in the castle of Nessau on the left bank of the Vistula, crossing the river in the spring of 1231 with the intention of conquering the Kulmerland from the heathen Prussians" (ibid).

In the space of two years, the Prussians were forced out of their strongholds in the southwestern half of the Kuhn-land by the knights of the Order, who built two significant commanderies at Thorn and Ulm, respectively.

Reinforced by Burgrave Burchard of Magdeburg, the Christian army of the Order advanced during that same year down the Vistula into the Prussian district of Pomesania, founding Marienburg. Flush with success from their first triumphs, the Teutonic Order prepared for renewed campaigns. A second crusade followed immediately, with the assistance of leading Polish dukes and princes of Pomerellia. The western half of Pomesania was occupied, with German knights immediately settled as vassals to hold the territory.

With financial aid from German nobles, the Order continued their advance to Lake Drausen, and in the following year beyond this to the Half. On the river Elbing, which connects Lake Drausen and the Half, the castle and town of Eibing were founded near an old trading settlement, where men from the cities of Meissen and Lubeck joined to open the connection with the Baltic Sea. Now the Order was no longer exclusively dependent on the overland route through Poland for military reinforcements and re-supply; Prussia could also be reached by sea from Lubeck.

From vantage points on the waterways, the Germans invaded the interior of Prussia and firmly established themselves in Pogesania, Warmien and Barten. Negotiations were taken up with the city of Lubeck, dealing with an attack on the Samland, and the foundation of a settlement at Konigsburg. After Konigsburg was made secure, Prussia was finally subdued.

Over the next century, the Teutonic Order experienced several reverses in Palestine and Eastern Europe. The arrival of the Mongols in the late thirteenth century across the Ural Mountains created havoc among the eastern states of Christendom. In 1240, the Golden Horde attacked and destroyed the city of Kiev and subsequently turned on the Catholic states of Poland and Hungary. The Teutonic Knights recognized the danger of the Horde, and in 1260 formed an alliance with the Russian Grand Duke Alexander Nevsky against the Mongols. However, every time the Teutonic Knights tried to preach crusade against the Mongols and create an expedition, they were faced with rebellion in their own territories and harassment from the still-pagan Lithuanians.

The news from Palestine was no better. Attempting to stem the Muslim advance against Jerusalem and Acre, the Order suffered massive losses at the battle of Sephet in 1265, putting them on the defensive in their great castle of Montfort (Wise). Despite reaching a rapprochement with the Order's two greatest rivals, the Templars and the Hospitallers, the Holy Land was lost. Retreating first to Cyprus and then to Venice, they recruited a small group of Italian knights at their commandery and made Venice their principal Chapterhouse in the Mediterranean.

The personal ambitions of local princes, most notably the King of Poland, compromised the crusade to convert Eastern Europe. Fearing the growing strength of the Teutonic Order, the Polish king allied himself with the pagan Grand Duke Guedemine of Lithuania. This did not last, and the Poles and the Teutonic Order were reconciled in 1343. Using this opening, the Teutonic Order moved into Lithuania to finish off any remaining pagan resistance. The Grand Duke and seventy thousand of his troops were engaged by the Order at the Battle of Rudau in Sambia, on February 17, 1370. The Grand Duke lost over eleven thousand men in addition to his standard, while the Order lost twenty-six commanders, two hundred knights, and several thousand soldiers (Sainty).

Fearing additional encroachment by the Order, the pagan Grand Duke of Lithuania Jogaila decided to take advantage of political opportunity and wed the heiress of Poland, the Virgin Queen Jadwiga. To denote his new title, he took the name Wladislav and officially converted himself and his realm to Christianity. This united Lithuania with the Kingdom of Poland in 1386, bringing Poland to the zenith of its power. This union also posed a lethal threat to the Teutonic Order's existence in the Baltic region (Johnson, pg. 50).

Following the union of Lithuania and Poland, the Teutonic knights found themselves on the defensive on a variety of fronts. The church, as well as neighboring princes, denied their support to the Order due to conflicts with the Archbishop of Riga, and these divisions were only exacerbated by the Order's crusading mission being reduced to insuring the conversion of the pagan populations already under the Christian faith. However, the conversion of Lithuania's rulers gained the latter the support of the Papacy who commanded the Teutonic Order to reach an accord with the Polish-Lithuanian state (Sainty).

Disputes between the Knights and the new Polish-Lithuanian alliance nonetheless increased, and the knights found themselves at a disadvantage. "The Order now ruled a vast area with two million one hundred and forty thousand inhabitants of Prussia alone but was resented by much of the native population and feared by its neighbors" (Plum, pg 170).

The united Poland-Lithuania prepared for a reckoning with the Order. Despite various attempts at mediation, Jadwiga and Wladislav were able to amass a vast force of about 160,000 soldiers recruited from Poles, Lithuanians, Russians and Hungarian mercenaries, among others. Against them, the Teutonic Knights could only field about 83,000 troops, many of whom were unwilling conscripts.

Despite this, however, the outcome of the conflict was by no means certain. At the field of Tannenburg, where the armies met on January 15, 1410, the Knights of the Order drove in the right flank of the Polish-Lithuanian force. However, they soon recovered and beat back the Order's attempts to exploit the breach. When the Grandmaster of the Order, Ulrich von Jungingen, was slain, the Order's ranks broke and the battle was lost. In addition to their leader, the Order lost two hundred knights and forty thousand soldiers. Among these were the Grand Commander, the Marshal and many other officers and commanders of the Order (Barnes).

After this defeat, negotiations between the Order and the new Polish state failed, despite even an attempt in 1411 by the Pope to mediate the conflict. Poland wanted to neutralize permanently the Order's threat to their northern borders. A hostile peace lasted until 1454. During these forty-three years, Poland's power grew while that of the Order waned. The King of Poland was at this time also the King of Hungary and had the additional support of his relative the King of Bohemia; conversely, the Order had lost both territory and influence in the Baltic area.

Finally, by the treaty of Thorn of October 19, 1466 between the Order and Poland, the knights agreed to surrender Culm, their first Prussian possession, along with East Prussia, Michalow, Pomerania, Danzig and the Order's headquarters at the fortress of Marienburg. The Order did manage to retain some sixty towns and castles, but the Grandmaster of the Prussian Order was forced to pay homage to the King of Poland as his new liege lord. This was done without consulting the Holy Roman Emperor, who had been the liege lord of the Grandmaster since the early thirteenth century. In return, the Grand Master was recognized as a Prince and councilor of the Crown of Poland. Although the Grandmaster nominally recognized the suzerainty of the Pope in spiritual matters, he accepted that the treaty could not be overturned by Papal order and by doing so violated the Order's contract with the Pope. As a military/religious order, the Teutonic Knights were obligated to recognize the Holy See as their liege lord even above the Holy Roman Emperor. By instead accepting the overlordship of the Polish crown, the Order was in violation of this Papal Bull that created them almost three centuries prior.

By the end of the seventeenth century the Teutonic Order ceased to be anything other than a purely monastic order on the Catholic side, and purely secular nobility on the Protestant side in Prussia and Lithuania. The events of the Reformation created a crisis point in which the Teutonic Order was divested of its military side and instead turned its attention increasingly to spiritual matters. The secular Prussia was able to maintain itself on the Baltic coast and emerge from the Reformation as the aggressive militaristic state that would be one of the primary bulwarks against Napoleon Bonaparte and eventually unite Germany in 1872.

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KEEPER'S NOTES

BY DAVIS CHENAULT



DAVIS CHENAULT

was born way back during the 1960s, when free love and happiness reigned in a world seemingly without consequence. A product of a military upbringing he managed to jettison all the cultural baggage that bogged down the whole host of anyone who lived in that era. He wandered the trackless wastes of life spending precious hours trying to decide what to do with his precious hours, until he at last found a home amongst the dead, digging up the debris of other, long dead, people's lives and examining and comparing their relative value to his own world. "Archeology," Davis is known to have claimed, "is the well-spring of all my knowledge of social-drinking houses!"

After a decade of cultural anthropology, Davis gave up the good life for gardening, in between which he designs and writes games for Troll Lord Games. His most notable achievements: Castles & Crusades and a cast iron out-door stove, acquired from his neighbor.

MALIGNMENT

It may come as no shock to many of you who are familiar with my gaming philosophy that I am not fond of alignment. I simply find little space for it at my gaming table. I generally could give two plug nickels for what a player decides a character's alignment is going to be because, and for what its worth, in my 30 years of gaming I have found that almost all players ignore alignment, interpret alignment in a manner befitting their immediate desires, use their personal beliefs to guide in-game alignment or any combination of the previous. In reality, most players' characters fundamentally play the same alignment – Kill Loot.

As an enticement to continue reading what could be a rather droll article on the academic, spiritual, religious, ethical or philosophical debate, discussion, argument or examination of evil, good, order, chaos, free will, social mores, ethics or cultural relativity, I am going to examine what character's actually do and explain why I don't feel alignment is necessary. I will follow up with commentary on what I believe is the next best alternative – Kill Loot.

So what do most characters actually do? They kill things. Lots of things. Mostly characters kill monsters. This is done without remorse or second thought. The enemy is easily discerned by its skin color, skin texture, hair shape, body shape or the number of tentacles it has flowing from its brow ridge. Many creatures are killed, slain, slaughtered and left wounded, maimed, de-limbed and dying on the field of battle. Many, many creatures are killed. I would like to emphasize that many are killed. Each character is like a miniature nuclear bomb. The gaming universe is like a Kansas slaughterhouse.

This is, of course, the nature of the game. Who would want to play an accountant, sales representative, IRS agent or convenience store clerk? We can do that type of stuff in real life and most have no desire to lead a game life full of empty space. In

the gaming universe we can be heroes. And any proper hero worth his salt kills things; lots of things.

After killing comes the looting. Characters comb over the corpses of the dead like flies on rotted meat, picking them clean of any object of value no matter how paltry. They rifle pouches and backpacks, look in shoes, take rings off fingers and rip ornaments from the dead like a thief in a jewelry store. In the desperate search for valuables some creatures are eviscerated to see if any items of value are to be found in their belly. Then, characters rifle through boxes, crates, chests, jars, vases or any container nearby in the hope of finding more loot. Loot, loot, loot.

Finding a treasure is often the end all be all of many characters and adventures. Locating treasure is, simply put, an adventurer's job. It is their income, their savings, their social security. Without the loot most characters would wither and die of starvation (unless they started eating what they killed). These mounds of treasure are then used to buy mounds of weaponry and spells used for killing even more efficiently and in larger numbers. Occasionally characters build fortresses to defend their accumulated treasure and hire guards to help them defend their gains.

Kill Loot.

Now, there are some adventures and adventurers for whom the killing and looting may seem to be secondary to the goal or ancillary to the plot but they are there none-the-less. Sit back for a second and think about it. All classes are involved in this process and all alignments enjoin it as justified in some manner or the other. Ultimately killing and looting are equally justified by all characters whether chaotic evil, lawful good or any alignments combination one can think of. This, in fact, is the commonality all adventures have. The seeming goal of defeating evil (or good) or solving this, that or the other all have two things in common – killing and looting.

So why even bother with alignment? Before getting defensive, I know all the arguments for alignment and many are compelling, some are even logical and not a few can almost convince me of its need. Almost convince me, but not quite. The primary reason why I am not convinced is that every player comes up with some justification for the actions they take which may be questionable for that alignment (from my perspective). When the person running the game decides an action may be out of alignment, argument is often enjoined and disagreements over alignment and activities justified by that alignment abound.

As a test, I once played a paladin in a game. We adventured for a bit and the paladin slew some orcs and goblins. I never detected evil, engaged the orcs or goblins in conversation, pressed charges or bothered arresting them. I slew them out of hand. Why? It's because orcs are evil. It is their nature. So, when the paladin and crew went to town, he did a *detect evil* on the street, discovered a few evil people and slew them out of hand. The reasoning being, they were evil like the orcs and goblins and needed killing like the orcs and goblins. It was their nature. The paladin was going to clean up that town by killing every evil person in it and then all their enablers.

Oh my. The fits at the table by other players and the person running the game were a sight to behold. Luckily for me, everyone at the table was a friend (and still remain friends – I think). In any respect, I was told such actions were out of my alignment. Trials, judges, juries, charges, proof and a host of other things were thrown at me as the proper way to clean up a town. Why, I argued, would such be necessary? My *detect evil* ability was infallible. And so the argument descended into what I would call a mess. I even went so far as to justify killing other lawful good characters as enablers of evil if they did not do the same as I. Further, in my defense, I claimed that killing orcs and goblins because of their essential evilness was justified, so why would not killing a few humans not be justified along the same grounds.

"Those were orcs, these are humans!"

"Racist!" I cried.

As you might guess, one can go a long way to justify any action and almost any decision a character makes. And almost every time the person running a game makes a ruling regarding an action's relation to alignment that decision can eventually or somehow be turned back on itself and used to crush another position. The reason is that with alignment, the real world collides in an unseemly manner with the game world. Unlike physical actions which can be managed with game mechanics (however loosely), spiritual or ethical determinations can not be mechanically managed (at least to my knowledge). This is because essentially, spiritual and ethical

questions can barely be managed, or even understood, in the real world and are not cause and effect thingamajigs.

Now, I am not going to go into the obvious rebuttals such as orcs are evil so killing them is good, the treasures from monsters are ill gotten so it is right to take them, etc. I also do not care to discuss character's ultimate goals and the banishment of evil etc.

All that I am saying is that no matter how that cake is cut, it comes down to killing and looting and justifications for it.

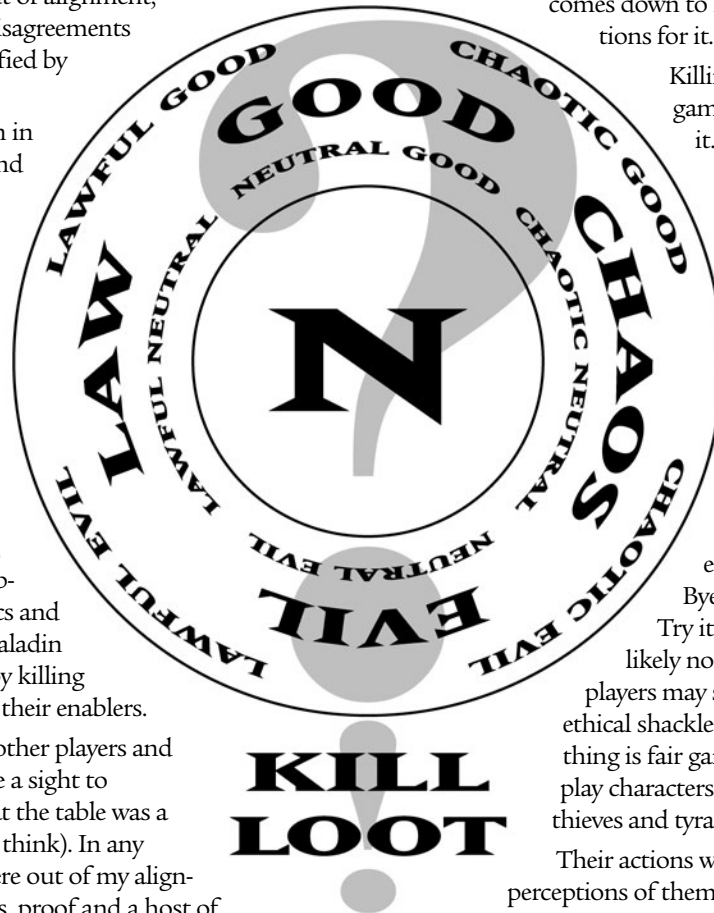
Killing and looting! This is part of the game. I have no problem with it. I like it. It is fun as both a player and Castle Keeper. What I do not like is trying to make judgments of an actions ethical or moral nature and then decide how it might impact the character in the game. Its not that I don't or can't, I just don't like to do it. Ultimately, what we are left with is killing and looting.

So here is my suggestion to overcome alignment issues. Dispense with alignment altogether. Just drop it. Get rid of it. Gone. Bye bye. Toodles. Let the fat lady sing. Try it and see what happens. More than likely nothing will change. But it may. The players may suddenly feel as if the oppressive ethical shackles are off and everyone and everything is fair game. So be it. If the players want to play characters who are sniveling cowards, petty thieves and tyrants, allow them.

Their actions will effect all non-player character perceptions of them (or should). So, a character beats up a peasant and takes his potatoes. Well, after a while, the authorities will come a looking. All the actions the characters take will determine who they are. The players will eventually force a code upon their own characters and likely build more complex and interesting characters as a result thereof.

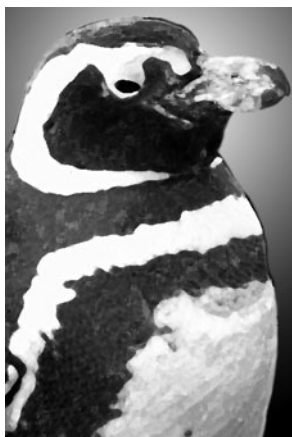
One might ask what about paladins and other characters bound by codes of conduct. Hmmm. No matter what the alignment was/is/could be, one would still have to write up the code and the paladin or knight or ranger will have to abide by it. Otherwise, why would they be that character? And if they do not follow the code, they should be kicked from the organization (they will be in an organization) and for the paladin, their deity may be up their in clouds saying, "What is this guy doing? I told him to do X and he is doing Y. Well, SMITE."

But more than likely, none of this will ever become an issue because the characters will be too busy killing and looting to worry about it and those of you running the game will be too busy creating things to be killed and looted to worry about it either. So let us just stick with Kill Loot and let the rest go. Give it a try, you might like it. Mikey did.



Auld Wyrnish

Wisdom from an Old Master by The Penguin



THE PENGUIN

is a flightless, aquatic bird of the family Spheniscidae, having webbed feet and wings reduced to flippers.

This has caused some resentment among many penguins, who regard their flying cousins as over-privileged wussies.

Contrary to popular myth, there are no penguins at the North Pole. They reside only in the Southern Hemisphere.

..... "The Little Things"

MORE CANTRIPS

for Castles & Crusades

While in our opinion Castles & Crusades (C&C) does a magnificent job of recreating that classic old-school fantasy RPG feel, one thing that's frankly a bit disappointing is the Magic User's (a term to encompass both Wizards and Illusionists) 0-level spell list; often called Cantrips. There's a few old goodies there such as Ghost Sound and Mage Hand, but many others were left out – no doubt due to space considerations. This is a pity, for we believe that many of the more traditional Cantrips not only provide more flexibility to the Magic Using classes, but can also provide interesting game situations and roleplaying opportunities to the C&C players and Castle Keeper alike.

"But hold on!" we hear you say. "Can't the Prestidigitation cantrip be used for any and all of the below cantrips?" Yes it can, but in our opinion the use of the Prestidigitation cantrip is in itself at odds with the Vance-ian "cast & forget" spell system endemic to C&C. The prestidigitation cantrip was created as a catch-all in lieu of having a cantrip list ... but by that logic one could create a "Clericist" spell that one can memorize, but use at will to replicate any 0 level cleric spell. Or 1st level and so on. By following that logic, the very concept of preparing most spells becomes moot, and a Magic User would simply cast a generic 1st level spell, and retroactively define its resultant effect on an as needed basis. An interesting concept, but NOT "Old School," not Vance-ian, and subsequently not appropriate to Castles and Crusades! At least, not for a couple of old dragons like us! <grin>

So, without further dissembling, let us present our home game C&C expanded Cantrip list...

The Cantrip is a tiny spell created by practicing students of the magical arts during their apprenticeship and while a minor dweomer they still have some uses to the adventuring Magic-User. Generally, Demi-humans do not obtain cantrips at first level as they don't usually learn such rather prankster-ish tricks in their youth, though a friendly Magic User may teach them at a later date.

A 1st level Magic User starts out with 1d4 + Intelligence modifier of cantrips known and written in their spell book. Others may be obtained during adventures just as any other spell. The above number supersedes the one in the spell charts in the C&C Players Handbook as the increased number of Cantrips requires a slight addition to known 0-level spells.

CANTRIPS LIST

1. Anatomics
2. Bugs
3. Cleansing
4. Enrich
5. Eradicate
6. Eavesdrop
7. Firelight
8. Furry
9. Legerdemain
10. Order
11. Temperature
12. Transmogrify

Anatomics (Evocation)

Level: 0
 Components: S
 Area of Effect: One person
 Duration: 1 action
 Saving Throw: None
 Reversible: No

When this cantrip is cast, the subject will involuntarily emit a body noise or reaction of the caster's choosing. Such simple reactions can be a belch, blink, nod, twitch, yawn, etc; but nothing sophisticated. The somatic component for the cantrip is the caster's finger making a small poking (or twitch, etc.) at the target creature whom the invoker wishes to react to the spell.

Bugs (Summoning)

Level: 0
 Components: V
 Area of Effect: 10 feet
 Duration: Permanent
 Saving Throw: None
 Reversible: Yes

When this cantrip is used, the caster summons one insect for each level of the caster (at least 1) from some other location or planar dimension. The bugs will materialize in whatever location the caster wishes (in line of sight), up to a 30 foot distance from the caster. The bugs are angry when summoned, and will attack the nearest creature with their normal attack/bite/sting. These will be painful to the recipient, but not actual (hit points) damage will be inflicted.

The reverse of this cantrip, Shoo, will drive an equal number of insects away and cause double the number of insects still remaining in the area to become docile and unthreatening.

The verbal component of this spell is the uttering of a "bzzz" noise by the caster, or "shoo" for its reverse.

Cleaning (Abjuration)

Level: 0
 Components: S
 Area of Effect: 4 sq. yards
 Duration: Permanent
 Saving Throw: None
 Reversible: Yes

This cantrip enables the caster to remove soil or stains from bodies, clothing, equipment, and other small gear within a 10 foot radius. The reverse of this cantrip, Befoul, causes any such locations or objects within the same range to become dirty, smelly, stained, and otherwise dirty.

The somatic component of this spell is a dusting motion with a hand in the direction of the area to be cleaned.

Enrich (Enchantment)

Level: 0
 Components: V, S
 Area of Effect: One object
 Duration: up to 6 turns
 Saving Throw: None

Reversible: Yes

This cantrip enables the caster to grant one item or object a superior, richer or otherwise better aspect of itself to the senses; be it sight, smell, sound, touch or taste. Thus, mush can be made to taste as if it were fine steak, but the dweomer will not actually affect nutrition or quality. The dweomer can also be used to restore faded hues or to tinge those already colored with a different hue. A rough burlap tunic can be made to have the texture of fine silk or soft cotton. A rotting haunch of meat can be made to smell like roses and an annoying noise can be made to sound like a beautiful melody. But the spell may only affect one sense at any time; so to change both taste and texture the caster would need to use two such cantrips. Needless to say, pleasant things can be made unpleasant as well by the application of this spell.

The somatic and verbal components of this cantrip are to gesture over the item to be enriched and to say "It needs a touch of..." followed by the goal of the enriching state.

Eradicate (Abjuration)

Level: 0
 Components: V, S
 Area of Effect: One small creature
 Duration: Permanent
 Saving Throw: None
 Reversible: No

When this cantrip is invoked, it may be used to kill any creature of less than 1 hit point, a number of creatures equal to the casters level (at least 1). If the creatures are truly small such as ants or crickets (Castle Keeper's discretion) an area of 1 cubic foot may be affected for each level of the caster.

The somatic component of this spell is to point in the general area where the pests are lurking with an extended forefinger and the thumb held vertically with the other fingers curled into the palm. The cantrip is invoked when the thumb is brought down to lie upon the forefinger in a quick motion and the verbal component "zap!" is uttered.

Eavesdrop (Divination)

Level: 0
 Components: V, S
 Area of Effect: One small creature
 Duration: 1 round/level to a maximum of 10 rounds.
 Saving Throw: None
 Reversible: Yes

This cantrip enables the user to hear the conversation of any small group of individuals gathered within a five-foot square area in the caster's line of sight. Casting is done by gazing at the individuals to be spied upon while gently tugging at an earlobe and whispering the word "Hist!" The duration is one round per level of the caster, to a maximum of 10 rounds.

The reverse of this cantrip, Hush, keeps a conversation from being overheard by passers by with the invocation of the command word "Nunya." Anyone wishing to overhear a conversation protected by the Hush cantrip must make a successful Wisdom attribute check to overhear the talk, failure of the roll means that the exchange was too garbled to make out sufficiently.

Firelight (Alteration)

Level: 0
 Components: S
 Area of Effect: 1/3' line
 Duration: 1 round
 Saving Throw: None
 Reversible: Yes

The firelight cantrip enables the caster to invoke a small tongue of flame from their finger of up to 4 inches in length. While small, the flame is quite hot and can ignite combustibles as if a flaming taper were in contact with the items.

The reverse of this Cantrip, Snuff, snuffs out a small flame of equal size to the firelight; usually a lantern or candlelight.

The gesture used to invoke this cantrip is a snapping motion with the finger to be lit and thumb.

Furry (Alteration)

Level: 0
 Components: V
 Area of Effect: One creature
 Duration: permanent
 Saving Throw: none
 Reversible: Yes

This cantrip, originally created by apprentices looking to pull pranks on each other (and occasionally their Masters) it has nonetheless been found to have some useful applications. As the name implies, the spell causes a creature's (or object's) hair to grow and thicken. Thus a beard can be grown in an instant, hair lengthened to desired length, a bear skin rug made to become a mat of shag of up to a foot in length! Its more practical use is in its reverse, Trim, in which hair can be reduced or removed at the same 1 foot rate.

The somatic invocation of this cantrip is for the caster to point at the area to be affected and make either a slowly raising finger to initiate growth or a sweeping away gesture (for the reverse).

Legerdemain (Illusion)

Level: 0
 Components: S
 Area of Effect: One small item
 Duration: 1 round
 Saving Throw: none

This cantrip enables the caster to secret or cause to appear a small object in his hand without seeming to do so. The item created to appear from nowhere is illusory, and will disappear in 1 round.

The gesticulations of bringing forth or casting away the item are all the somatic gestures necessary for this cantrip.

Order (Abjuration)

Level: 0
 Components: S
 Area of Effect: 1' cube
 Duration: special
 Saving Throw: none
 Reversible: Yes

By use of this cantrip, the caster can cause any small assembly of items to automatically order themselves into neat piles, rows or other such collections as desired. Examples of such would be a small pile of different nails, a few dozen coins of different make/metal, and such like. The reverse of this spell, "Chaos," causes an already ordered set of variable items to become hopelessly enmeshed or mixed. This cantrip may also be cast on most any set of ordered items such as threads, wool fibers, herbs in a pouch or any such similar material.

The somatic invocation for this spell is the gesture of the caster's hand in a smooth horizontal motion with palm flat and facing down (for Order) or wiggled back and forth with fingers curled (for Chaos).

Temperature (Evocation)

Level: 0
 Components: V, S
 Area of Effect: 1' cube
 Duration: special
 Saving Throw: none
 Reversible: Yes

A cantrip of this nature allows the caster to cause non-living liquid or solid material to change its ambient temperature up to 60 degrees F. warmer or cooler than it was originally, with freezing being the maximum lower limit possible. The temperature change lasts only one round, but the item so affected will take time to return to its original (or room) temperature. Thus mugs of beer can be chilled, food can be warmed, etc. at the invocation of the cantrip.

The components to perform this dweomer are to wave the casters hand at the item to be ensorcelled and to say "Hot" or "Chill," or "Warm" as desired.

Transmogrify (Alteration)

Level: 0
 Components: V
 Area of Effect: One creature/item
 Duration: 1 turn/level
 Saving Throw: none
 Reversible: Yes

By means of a transmogrify cantrip, the caster alters the substance of one small organic object or creature to another item, though they must be of similar natures. That is, a feather can be changed to a bird, a bird to a flying squirrel, a rose to a daffodil, etc. Each form alteration requires a separate casting of the transmogrify cantrip. The cantrip will not cause more than a 50% increase or decrease in size or mass and the effect will last for a time period of 1 turn per caster level. Depending on the radical nature of the change invoked, the Castle Keeper may reduce the spell duration appropriately; or even allow the object/creature a saving throw.

Another casting of this cantrip will return the object or creature to their natural state before the duration has expired.

The gesticulation to transmogrify an item is to simply wave the casters hand at the item to be ensorcelled and to call out the name of the item it is to become.





The Ultimate CK

Alright, so the other night I found myself sprawled across my couch watching funny shapes and pretty colors on the motion picture box ... you know, that box that has all those stage monkeys in tights who think they have valid opinions about world events that none of us give a blessed corn cob pipe about?... and on comes an episode of one of my favorite tv shows: Star Trek. Star Trek is cool, it falls right behind such favorites as Three's Company and WKRP in Cincinnati. Notice that I said Star Trek, not Star Trek the Next Generation or Star Trek Voyager or Star Trek Soon-to-be-Canceled [insert title that tries to be original]. This was THE Star Trek with Captain James T. Kirk, Spock, Bones McCoy and the Enterprise! So I settled my meat-stick of a brain into neutral and cruised down the story book lane that is ultra-cool!

I watched for awhile. Kirk was yelling something at somebody, Spock was hanging out talking and Bones was concerned, and all this was done to keep their favorite lady safe somehow: the Enterprise. Kirk was constantly threatening violence or over-reacting. It was classic cool.

Then a commercial came on and my brain seized up, sending signals to my hand which dutifully stood watch on the remote and I instinctively turned the channel. Not more than a few channels away I stumbled on an episode of, you guessed it, Star Trek The Next Generation. I never watched the series, I didn't have a tv when it aired and rarely watch it in reruns. Not too interesting to me, too much talk, not enough scantily clad chicks and people punching other people. But I watched for a few minutes and what do I see, but old man Picard in his conference room with some good looking chick (the psychic?), the Klingon guy, Warf and WTF??? A Native American??? I watched in awe for a moment. My brain began racing around the room, stretching its stem to the max trying to grasp the concept. Why was a Native American on the Enterprise in deep space wearing 18th century Native American Headdress, shirt and breeks! Where the *\$%&^@_ did this dude find a deer in outer space? And why does he look like he stepped out of a John Wayne movie ... couldn't the Native Americans have ever evolved beyond wood sticks and animal skins? But as my mind was staggering around those concepts I realized that they were talking ... at least there were no war ponies, circled star cruisers and the like ... they were talking and talking. Some kind of treaty or something or the other. Probably a timely episode making some

hypercritical judgement of the treatment of Native American in the United States or thereabouts. But as I watched this seemingly endless blather (one of my teeth fell out) I thought what in sam's hill am I watching? This is like that endless comedy show that runs in New York ... what's it called ... you know, where all the stage monkeys get up, waste the world's resources by pounding them against the granite of time ... oh yeah, the UN General Assembly ... this show was like that. People talking and talking and talking.

Good lord, Picard! He killed a deer somewhere on your deck and made pants out of it! Punch him in the head!

I flipped back to Kirk. It was too much. I needed some good old fashioned ass whooping or something. Kirk was sweet talking some chick with giant silver hair and he was wearing some halter or something, I can't remember. But as he's kissing this hot chick I'm thinking 'Damn. Kirk is the man. He punches everyone, listens impassively to Bone's constantly saying "He's dead Jim" and makes out with lots of hot chicks.' There's that hot blonde on deck, a hippy chick, this girl with giant hair, and a green chick that he kissed and she tried to knife him, some Egyptian looking chick. Heck he even kissed Joan Collins!! And as I researched this article I find he's even kissing some Native American Chick. No telling how many I'm missing.

I drift off as Kirk sweet talks this chick and I snap back in time to see him in some kind of ruckus or the other. He was liberating some slaves or something? I can't remember. I only half watch the tv anymore, its filled with so much gobble de goop, love and talking (where are *\$%&#* are the explosions?) and other agendist crap that's supposed to numb the minds of our children and make it easier for the barbarians at the gate to plunder our wealth. Evolution my foot. With each raw emotion we abandon and animal instinct we surrender to the torpid mind numbing reality that is humanism we get further and further away from our evolutionary track ... ahh, but that's another rant.

I flipped back to the Next Generation to see what Picard was up to now, but the show was over and some truly meaningless claptrap was flying through the airwaves, but as I returned to the adventures of Captain James T. Kirk I couldn't help but think that Picard was a very frustrated man. He wanted to be on that wall. He needed to be on that wall. He wanted to cross that wall and punch that Klingon in the head, take the

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Romulans' ship and shout "phasers on KILL" countless times! But he couldn't, hamstrung by some foolish clap trap designed by some bureaucrats called the "Prime Directive." You know when he sat down in that Captains chair on the bridge of the Enterprise he looked back in time to the adventures of his predecessor, Captain Kirk, and thought to himself: ahh, those were the days, when the prime directive wasn't a law, but a mere suggestion and good Captains had the letters "PR-IME D-I-R-E-C-T-I-V-E" tattooed on their fists (they had to double up on some letters) and could punch their way through any problem and always got the girl in the end.

So you're wondering about now, what in the heck I'm babbling about? Well I'll tell you and I'm not going to sing it like the soon to be married son of that lord in the Lancelot tale in the Holy Grail! Sitting at the table playing C&C should not be like sitting on Picard's Enterprise! It should not be an endless string of blathering, cheese eating, wine sipping, riddle solving hippie love-in crap! Sitting at the table should be a wild experience of heart stopping abandon with little knowledge of consequence or primary directives! So all CKs LET YOUR INNER PICARD DIE!! When your CKing, let your inner Picard go, release it and let out the bombastic, take charge, hard hitting, lady heart killer that is the Captain Kirk in all of us! FREE PICARD and become Captain Kirk... the ultimate CK because Captain Kirk is the ultimate CK!

Now, turn on your computer (as if you ever turn it off), dim the lights, sit back in your easy chair and take a ride on the wild side:

<http://youtube.com/watch?v=mOldq2QjhbY>



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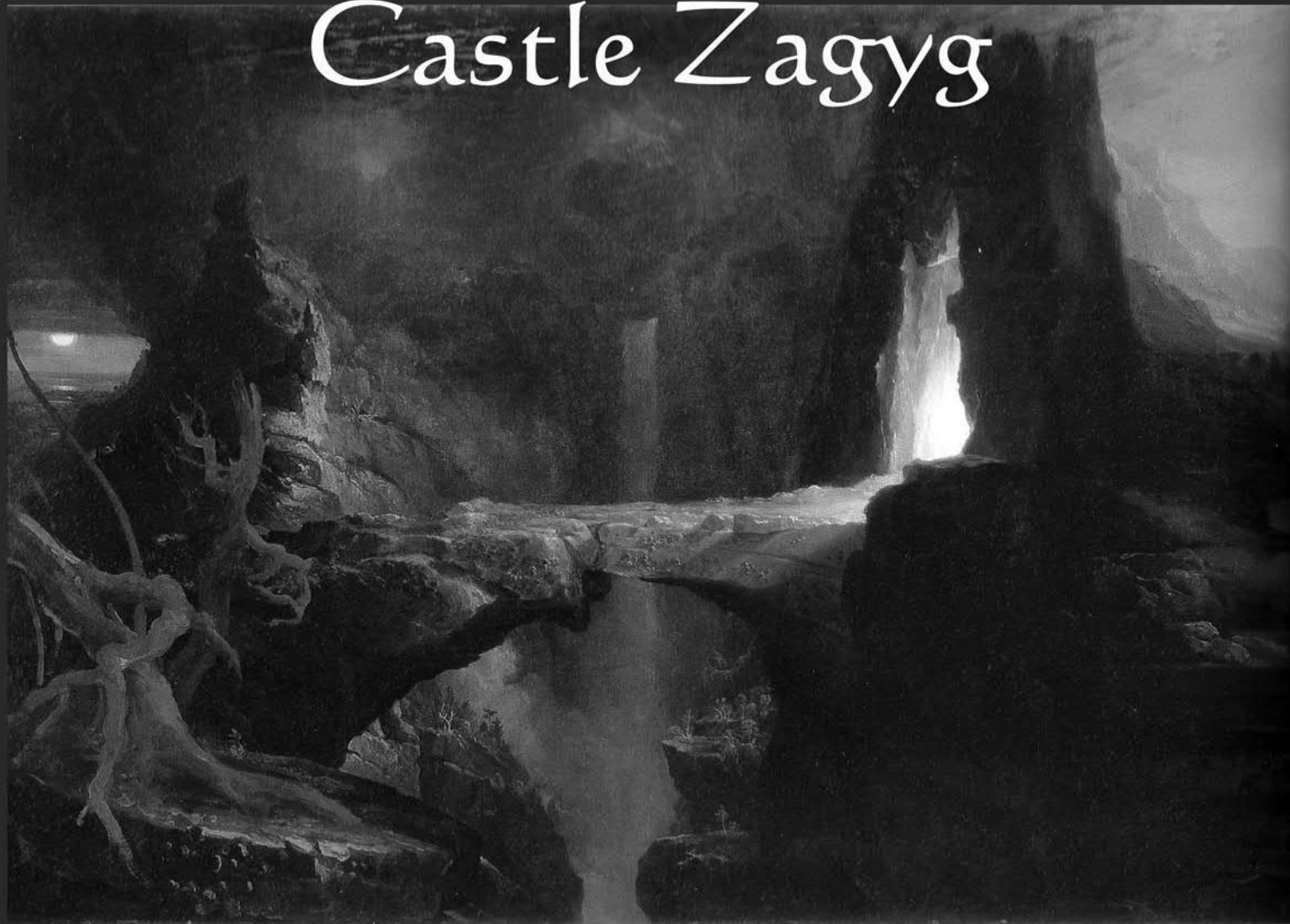
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