

September 2008 Volume 4 Number 12

# THE CRUSADER™

*The Journal of the Intrepid Adventurer*

HOW IT ALL  
HAPPENED  
BY GARY GYGAX

KEEPING THE  
CASTLE  
BY STEPHEN CHENAULT

"BOGGED"  
DOWN AT  
CASTLE ZAGYG  
BY JEFFREY P. TALANIAN

HAMMER  
& ANVIL:  
THE RULES,  
PART I  
BY CASEY CANFIELD

TOWERS OF  
ADVENTURE  
BY JAMES M. WARD

CONVENTION  
BLOG:  
GEN CON  
BY STEPHEN CHENAULT

THE ANGRY  
GAMER  
BY A TROLL

MONSTERS  
OF AIHRDE  
BY STEPHEN CHENAULT



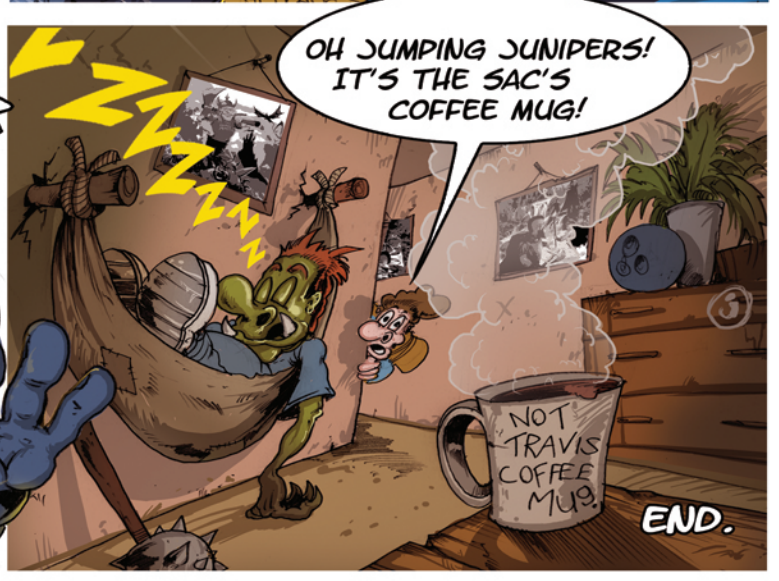
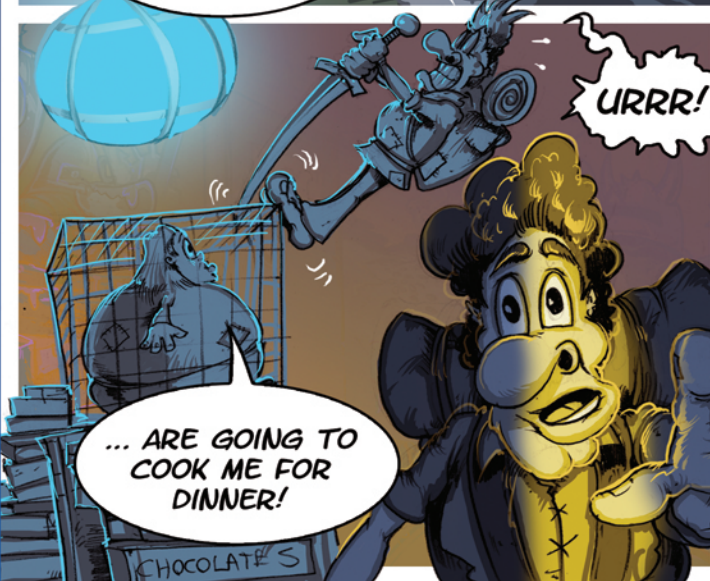
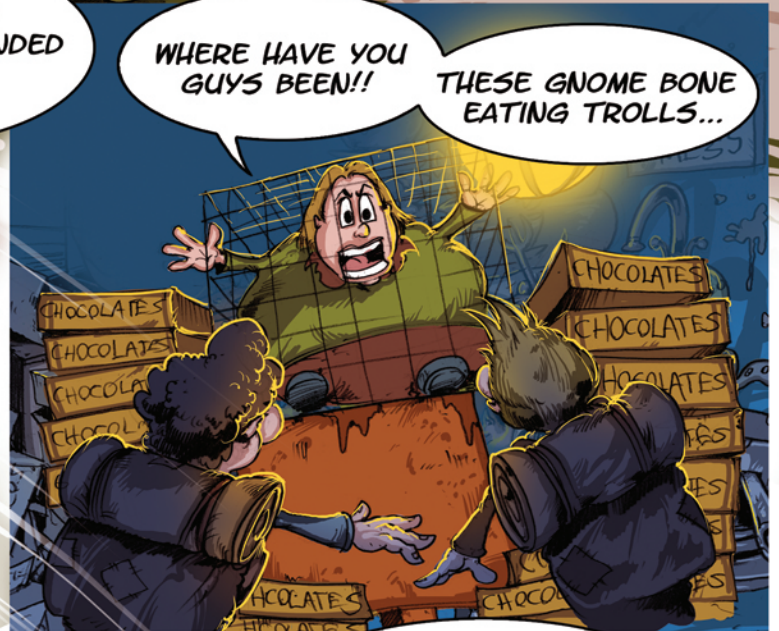
*LOTS O'  
TROLLS  
INSIDE!*

**NOW  
MONTHLY!**



# A Rosy Escapade

by Stephen Chenault Art by Jason Walton





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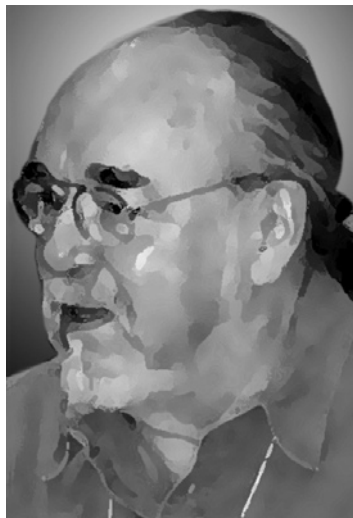
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# How It All Happened by Gary Gygax

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

## Oak Hill Sanatorium



### 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".

**T**he most adventurous place in all of Lake Geneva was the ruined red brick building that had been Oak Hill Sanatorium. I am sure that the full and correct history of the place is to be found in the local library or perhaps the historical society. We will make do with my approximations, for the gist of this has little to do with a dry historical account.

To paint the setting, step back to a time around 1880. It was about that time when a mill race was constructed beside the channel of the White River, the sole outlet of Lake Geneva. A pair of flood gates at the end of a small lagoon allowed the mill race to be filled, the water flowing along its one-block length to turn the mill. From there it was spilled off into a mill pond lying to north and east. The mill had been converted into a Wisconsin Power & Light Company power house with a pair of dynamos by the time I recall touring the place circa 1948. Those turbines went out of service soon thereafter, for reasons unknown to me. Similarly, the mill pond was drained early in 1900 to make the Hillmoor Country Club—my grandfather assisting in the architecture of the golf course—and Dunn Field. Before the mill pond was drained, the sanatorium kept a large inboard motor boat on its shore so as to be able to recapture escaped patients swimming in it.

Oak Hill Sanatorium was for the very disturbed and very wealthy mental patient. Approaching the imposing edifice along a tree-lined drive, seeing the circle it made before the building, likely reassured the families who were consigning their insane relatives to it. The place was posh, had gold-plated and solid silver plumbing and light fixtures. There was marble wainscoting and mosaic tile floors, an elevator too, in the big building. It was so designed as to be able to flood any treatment room with smoke in order to subdue a rampaging inmate. An adjacent laundry was connected by underground tunnel to the main building. The basement had large windows at ground level, with small wells for direct light. The ground floor was about eight feet above ground, and its ceiling was about 14 feet high. The first floor was also quite grand with a ceiling height of 12 feet. The second and third floors had a ceiling height of 10 feet, and the uppermost story, the fourth floor with gambrel roof and gabled windows, had a ceiling height of perhaps eight and a half feet. Thus from ground to its flat roof the Oak Hill Sanatorium rose over 60 feet where it stood on the crown of Oak Hill. At the rear center of that roof was a square bell tower some 20 feet high at its pointed top, while in the southwest front corner was a fluted hexagonal cupola whose pointed spire rose to some 30 feet above the roof.

The main division of each floor was a north to south hallway, with various rooms to either hand. Unlike the main portion of the structure that had cement floors, some on the upper floors pierced with rectangular viewing windows set in them, the back third of the place consisted of wood-floored rooms. Near the front entrance in the south was the main grand staircase. A second stairway wound up around the elevator shaft near the rear third of the facility. There were two outside porches on the west of the place, one above the other. What the many rooms in the building were for was impossible to tell then, although many were served by the three or four dumb waiters built into it.

What a sight the building was in the autumn when bare trees allowed a stark silhouette before a full moon rising behind it!

Sometime after around 1910 the doctor who owned and managed the place went insane. That ended the hospital. From that time on the woods around it grew wild, the former owner's residence began to decay, and vandals began to work their mischief on it and on the main building. Everything of value was stripped from the place, plumbing and pipes included, although much of the marble was too difficult to remove. Doors were taken away, windows, even those of glass an inch thick, were smashed, bars and wire mesh were pried from window openings. The elevator motor was stolen or destroyed, the wire mesh elevator doors removed, the elevator itself sent to ruins in the basement, radiators and other heavy things sent down the shaft to crush it flat under the rubble. Whether nature or vandals ruined the porches I cannot say. I do know they broke away most of the front stairway, as well as large sections of the wooden floor in the rear.

This place was known as "The Abandoned Insane Asylum" to tourists, the locals calling it simply "The Crazy House," or "The Old Nut House." Every adventurous boy in town loved the place, and the police seemed to enjoy coming after any that they could find there.

I was introduced to the five story red-brick ruin when I was only eight. My parents and cousins Ralph and Nova Brandsby asked for and received permission from the police to take a tour of the place. I tagged along. The experience wasn't all that thrilling, but parental admonition to never enter the place alone made it more interesting. I carried off a chunk of one inch thick broken glass and a couple of little hexagonal floor tiles as souvenirs.

A couple of years later I'd play in the woods around the "Nut House," but didn't enter the *place* as it was just a bit frightening for a small boy.



When I was around 11 years old, though, two of the guys I was with at a high school football game being played at Dunn Field pointed to the moon rising behind the ruined building, said the light was perfect for catching pigeons, and if I wasn't scared I could go with them. Me scared? Nonsense! It took a lot of pretending to hide my fear as we crossed the golf course, entered the trees that covered the steep hill at the western edge of the property, made our way to the building and entered by the front steps. As was the fashion for boys back around 1949, we each carried a penlight, so seeing inside the pitch blackness of parts of the interior was not a problem. So Carl Chrisman and Mike Keenan led the way to the elevator stairs, up we went to the fifth story, into the wooden back portion, and there was the open structure of the bell tower. Mike produced a gunny sack as Carl clambered up the beams to where the pigeons roosted. With the sack in hand, Carl bagged a half dozen birds, dropped it down to Mike, and descended. I was very glad when we left by the front drive, my two pals heading for Mike's place to put the new pigeons in his coop there, me to walk down Catholic Hill along Main Street to Broad, north on it to Dodge, then west about two blocks to home...only about 15 minutes late. I felt very brave for having dared to enter that spooky pile of bricks at night with a full moon.

The experience emboldened me, so thereafter I made a point of heading up Oak Hill with or without my BB rifle. Thanks to my friends, Carl, Mike, and Joey Krautkammer, I learned many of the secret hiding places in the "Nut House," places one needed to know about because the police would come after young trespassers with a vengeance. Of course the racket we made playing, climbing out a fifth story window to clamber up onto the roof for the thrill of it, the splendid view, made our transgression patently obvious to any observer. Had the officers of the law chosen to come afoot, they could have nabbed many of us, but they always came in a squad car, were spotted in time to run off through the woods or hide. The older and bolder guys who made the place their own would toss a cherry bomb or a brick at the police car before disappearing. "Big Mike" O'Neil dropped a brick squarely on the roof of the squad car one time, and officer Sharkey cursed him by name but didn't see him or catch him either.

There was a maze of tunnels under the old building, most accessed through small holes in the basement floor from outside wells about eight feet below ground level. Most were only about three feet wide and high, a central one was more like five feet wide and four feet high. "Big Mike" and his friends had a wide space with a crate, candle, and mattress as their special one. We could never find the big passage that ran outside the building to where the laundry had been. Although the police didn't crawl into the tunnels few of the kids hid in them during warm weather because of the spiders. Although "Big Mike" and his friends had a hidden room in the basement, the main hiding place for the "common kids" was in the front cupola.

O'Neil had created the hidden room by finding a door, putting it up again to close off a basement room, then piling a vast amount of rubble and like wreckage such as old radiators against it until it was totally obscured. The room behind the door concealed thus not only has a trap door hidden by an old rug, the space below it leading to the tunnel maze, but it was connected to the second story via a dumb waiter shaft. "Big Mike" had closed the pantry room the shaft accessed by finding and replacing a pair of pocket doors that he nailed shut, boarded over and nailed. The pantry shelves in that space were mirrored in a hallway parallel to the place, and one climbed the shelves to the tip, rolled from one set to the other, then descended. Access to the basement room was by perilous climb down the dumb waiter shaft using the 2" x 2" boards against the wall that once held the guide for the long-vanished dumb waiter. There was a small door at the bottom, so that no light from the kerosene lantern in the hidden room would be seen.

It wasn't easy to discover how one got up into the hidden cupola spaces. One had to go to the southwest corner of the fourth, not the fifth story, enter a corner closet, then reach up overhead to a pair of bare 2" x

4" rafters there, pull oneself up between them, then clamber up a inclined board wall. That put you into an L-shaped space around the south and west sides of the bottom of the structure. From there you could move over and slide down into a couple of hidey-holes that were the cupola's lowest structure. If you wanted the real deal though you got there by squeezing through a narrow space where a board had been pried off of the slanting wall. That got you into another L-shaped space about eight foot per leg. This area was just above the ceiling of the fourth story, and ankle height on the top floor. Holes poked through the plaster allowed one to look down or out through heavy wire mesh to see who was near. We watched many a time as a police officer stood motionless listening in vain for us. More fun was to startle young vacationers poking around in out fun house. They could not see you even when they heard your voice clearly.

As mentioned, the view from the roof was spectacular. Some of the real dare-devils that made the "Nut House" their playground loved to frighten locals and tourists alike with their stunts. These consisted of two main ones. One of these fearless lads would stand on the edge of the gambrel roof, purposely lose his footing, roll down and "fall" with a scream. As he came to the end of the gambrel, however, he would catch himself on the two-foot wide tin gutter there, swing from its edge in through a window to land on the fourth story. A similar stunt was pulled by sitting in the opening of the raised portion of the roof that had held the elevator machinery. This place was about five feet above the roofline, has a large opening. I have seen O'Neil, Dillenbeck, and Cervantes seemingly lose their balance while sitting in the opening, tumble backwards with a shriek, heard the sound of something heavy impacting the rubble in the bottom of the elevator shaft. The trick was they did a back flip, caught the metal I-beam about three feet down, swung on it through the opening where the elevator's cage door had been, so as to be on the fourth story, from there toss some rubble down the shaft, and step back out of sight.

One afternoon Carl Chrisman was running along the edge of the roof showing off. He actually lost his footing, rolled down the steep gambrel, and hit the tin gutter. It sagged and made a grating noise as half of his body went over the edge, but it held, and he managed to get back up to safety.

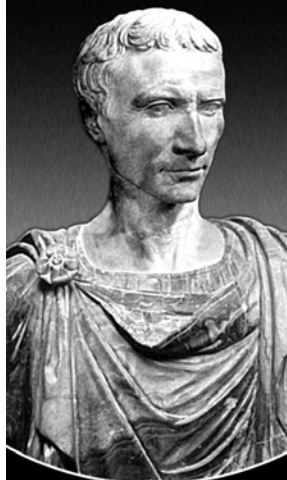
My near-fatal foolishness in the place came when one evening Dennis Connelly and I met a couple of cute young tourist girls who wanted to be shown around the "Crazy House." As I was far more familiar with the place than was Dennis, I took the lead, the party in Indian file, Dennis bringing up the rear with his penlight. When we got up to the top floor, I was leading towards the best window to use to climb out and above onto the roof. One of the girls was unsure of her footing, asked me to shine the light back. I did that, but instead of standing still I kept moving. Just ahead of me was a rectangular opening in the floor, a space about three feet wide and six feet long. Once it had had thick glass in it, as had the like space immediately below it, likely observation places in case of difficulties with patients. The space was there before my foot and into it I plunged! Fortunately I had excellent reflexes, and at the moment of falling I extended both elbows as if imitating wings. Thus I caught myself, legs swinging a back and forth a bit, then pulled myself up and back to the edge without either losing the little flashlight or cursing at she who distracted me thus. After all, it was really nobody's fault other than my own that I had nearly plunged to likely death on the concrete floor some 20 feet below. I think I managed to cover up my shaking pretty well too...

If anyone has any doubts about where much of the inspiration for castle ruins and dungeon adventures came from after reading about the Oak Hill Sanatorium, I have failed in communicating. When we resume next month I'll begin to wrap up the inspirational bases and move towards the first milestone, the founding of GenCon.

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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*

## Keeping The Castle, A Guide

### CASTLE KEEPER'S GUIDE

#### HARD BOUND BOOK

ISBN NUMBER: ISBN 1-929474-68-4

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APPROXIMATE PAGE COUNT: 280

I would like to preface this article with an over-used statement: *you aren't going to need the **Castle Keeper's Guide** to play **Castles & Crusades***. But I am going to couple that mantra with something new: *you aren't going to need the **Castle Keeper's Guide** to play **Castles & Crusades** but you are going to want to need it!* This is one ambitious book, with its eyes on a lofty target. In many respects it reminds me of the **Codex of Erde**. The Codex was a massive undertaking. A 300 page campaign setting that we launched back in 2001. It was, and is, the compilation of thousands of campaign notes and world designs. Dominated by background crunch, historical, economic, and cultural material for the game master, new racial classes, guilds, spells and racial notes for the players it became an epic book in and of itself. Coupled with a carefully articulated design concept that would make the setting palatable to gamers of any stripe and the Codex became a very unique and useful RPG book. We designed this book to be the meat and potatoes of role playing game settings. We intentionally wrote the book in such a way as to allow individual GMs room to tailor the world to their own tastes and gaming style. It was huge and required a great deal of energy, time, and effort. But it paid off in the end as to this day no book aside from the C&C **Players Handbook** has sold more copies for TLG than the Codex of Erde. Well it seems as if its 2001 all over again and I'm looking at a mountain of notes, scribbles, concepts – developed and undeveloped – that all needs to be, and will soon be, brought together into one large tightly bound, hard back book: the **Castle Keeper's Guide**!

Last year, when I first looked at Davis' outline I was overwhelmed. It was (and still is) really long. I remember scribbling notes in the margin, something to the effect that "project too long, amend, and reduce." I made these notes in the context of keeping the price of the book low, to equal the price set by the other two core books in the Castles & Crusades system. This \$19.95 price tag was a target that both Davis and Aldo Ghiozzi, a trusted friend and business partner, wanted the CKG to carry. To do that of course we have a pre-

set maximum page count. The outline made it clear that we would far exceed that page count and the book moved into the \$24.95 price range at least, but more reasonably was set for the \$29.95 price range. True to form Davis ignored my notes and kept producing the book how he envisioned it. Pricing is not his concern and he doesn't worry himself with it. Aldo and I kept bouncing ideas back and forth, trying to be creative with the cost. Peter Bradley, the TLG art man at large, promised he could make the required page count, but would probably set the font at 4.5 or some such. I told Aldo we could sell a special C&C magnifying glass and he thought the idea swimmingly stupid.

So in typical Steve-Davis approach to a problem, we set the argument aside until such time as it needed actual discussion. I promised myself that I could cut what I needed to, and he promised himself that I would once again pull a feather out of my @\$ and make the pricing work. All was normal in the Troll Dens.

When I took over the project from Davis at the beginning of this summer I was, as before, a little discomfited by the sheer size of his outline. It went on for pages and pages. Lists of subjects, great and small, lots of them, carefully laid out for me to look over. If anything there was *more* in the outline than there had been a year ago. As I came to grips with that, I thought the same thing I had a year ago: "No way. This is going to be too big. There's too much material in here. We're at the \$29.95 price tag minimum."

So I sat back with this outline and a red pen and set myself the task of editing the outline for content and looking for what I could cut (I'm well known for cutting stuff, that's why there is so much unpublished Davis Chenault adventure material, lots of it for the Blacktooth Ridge). First glance yielded nothing. So I took a more careful look. I moved some stuff around, thinking this topic better fits this subject and so on. Even after a second look I couldn't find anything really cuttable. Slowly, inexorably, my brain rolled over and coughed. This happens from time to time, and when it does it spooks everyone in the near vicinity what with the terrible noise it makes and the resulting shout of pain!

The more I looked at the CKG notes, the more I liked what I was looking at. I slowly came to realize the scope of Davis' vision, what he wanted to achieve. This isn't just a rules compendium that adds a little more depth to the already working **Players Handbook**. Davis' vision is a game book whose goal is to supply the players and **Castle Keepers** with all the mundane apparatus of running a game and running in a game.



Laid out before me was not just another book with more clarification on how to play, but a book that actually supplied the gamer material to play with. It's not a cookie cutter GM-in-the-box book, where you read and learn things you already know or have tools at hand that you already have ... It's a book that, if we manage to achieve the scope set down for it, brings a new, fresh approach to role playing, and table top role playing games.

This book can stand on its own. It does so in threes.

Davis has always enjoyed doing things in incremental numbers. His brain works that way, or doesn't work that way, however you choose to see it. The 12/18 system in the Siege Engine is a good example of that. In the early days of C&C's development it was worse and we really had to force feed things like the 13 classes offered up in the game. That bugs him to this day and he has unpleasant things to say about me and my heritage, which is odd as we share the same heritage. The CKG's number seems to be three...which might be a building block for 12/18, though I'm not sure as my accounting isn't as good as my counting.

The CKG has a fresh approach to its own subject matter. There are few hard and fast rules, but rather a set number of interchangeable approaches, creating a very unique and fluid rules set that is not set in stone. In the CKG mechanics problems in the gaming universe, or should I say universal gaming mechanic problems (UGMP...things like how to create magic items, multi-classing, skill sets, modified classes etc), are dealt with by presenting different angles of approach when looking at and solving the UGMP in question.

Each of the three angles represents a style of game: role playing, rules light, and rules engaged. The layout that the book finally assumes is being built upon these three different angles. The role playing angle is the first approach. We discuss a methodology to solve the UGMP through role play. It is not hard to do, but it is rarely done, role playing your game mechanics and creating bare knuckles mechanics for your role playing. This angle is the true spirit of Castles & Crusades. But Davis understood long ago that though simplicity is the spirit of C&C, it's not the only thing that gamers seek. Some structure is sometimes necessary. The second angle presented to the UGMP is a rules light variant. This is a down and dirty, quick rules based approach to solving the issue at hand, it requires little work and bares a minimum of disruption. The third angle is a rules engaged approach. Here are your tables and charts, all those crunchy bits that gamers seem to love, less on the imaginative creative side, more on the side of chance, but a heck of a lot of fun. So roll man, roll!!

These three stylistic angles of approach serve several purposes. The first that comes to mind is they further reinforce that the game is as simple as it is set down in the Players Handbook. To quote Christopher Walken in True Romance: "None of this is necessary." If you want to keep it simple and a game where imagination dominates here's a good way to do it.

The second thing that occurred to me is that the book, structured like it is, lends itself to your style with ease. I don't like mechanics, the Siege Engine works perfectly for me, much of what comes after I make up or allow the players to make up. I'll linger in those role playing angle sections, paying some heed to the rules light and very little to the rules engaged.

This thought leads me to the third noticeable thing about this structure of the CKG. You can mix and match the heck out of these

angles of approach. You can change them from game to game as suits your needs at the time and your desires or the particular player you're working with. I know breakdaddy likes things in stone, I can do that now, but Mac would rather I freewheel it, which I can do as well. Much like the Codex's tailored setting, I can tailor the rules presented to me to the game, the moment and the people. Even at the same table, in the same game. It's just like Jim Ward's **Towers of Adventure**. Pick that box set up and you can pick any one of 15 towers and people them with any one of 400 encounters, traps, and treasure. Nothing is written down that you don't write down. It's all interchangeable. That is what the CKG is like. It's interchangeable.

That's not to say every section of the CKG has three rules variants written up for it. It doesn't. Sections vary, and some issues/problems/subjects do not require that you have three approaches, such as the class experience point progression tables. These we deal with through a simple, linear approach. But more complex problems are dealt with by taking a more complex approach.

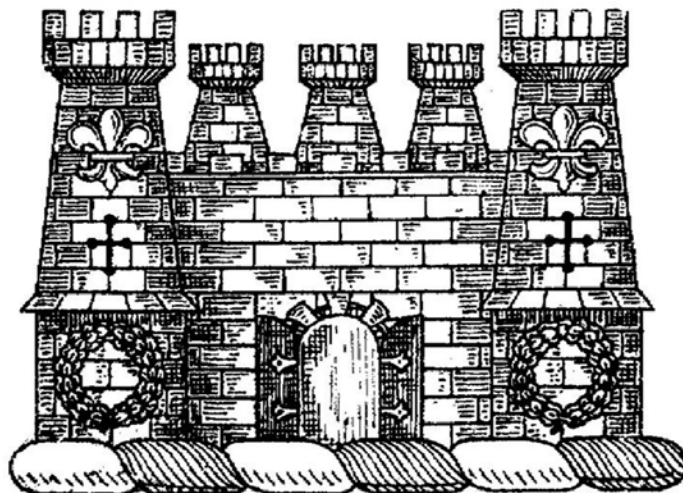
And to add to all that I sent a note to all those working on the book that I want lots of examples throughout the book, to explain any new approaches and to help any new players. Peter has been charged with tackling a very ambitious layout, and making all of this easy upon your eyes and my own, cross referenced, with different stylistic layouts that blend well enough with one another to not be distracting.

This book feels like our next Codex of Erde, ambitious in both its immediate and long term goals. If we achieve Davis' vision, or even a significant portion of it, I believe we'll have created a landmark in table top RPGs. If we achieve this it will be a landmark that other companies can look to for guidance and to follow even as many have done with the Players Handbook (yes we've noticed some very similar rules in the latest wizardly creation to our own). If we don't achieve Davis' vision, well, I guess we'll try something else.

In my next column, we'll showcase a section of the CKG that is finished. The NPC's I believe. We won't be able to get it all in, but we'll get a good sampling so you can get a taste of what's coming!

**Post Script:** I don't want to spook anyone with carrying the Codex of Erde analogy too far. I wrote and edited the vast majority of that book. And it's never a very good idea to edit your own work. But now we have a top notch editor on staff, Cory M. Caserta. This task we are setting before him and he is more than up to the challenge.

**Post Post Script:** I made much of the terminology up for this article, especially the UGMP, but don't it sound cool?







*Jeffrey Talanian hails from the woods of New Hampshire. A gamer since 1981, he is presently working as Gary Gygax's co-author of the Castle Zagyg™ Campaign Module Series, including the recently published Castle Zagyg: The East Mark Gazetteer folio, by Troll Lord Games. He is also the author of four of the Yggsburgh Town Expansion Series modules, including the recently published Yggsburgh: The Town Halls District. When not developing adventuring material with Gary, Jeff is changing diapers, bussing his 3 children about, reading old books, watching movies and TV with his lovely wife, Erica, or gaming with his stellar group of companions, The Knights of Next Tuesday.*

## Getting "Bogged Down" at Castle Zagyg

by Jeffrey Talanian

*Sluggish flows the False Urt River as it curls through the Little Hillwood and ultimately feeds the vast bog that is Greypools Mire. The broad waterway is hemmed in by vast stretches of willow trees and shrubs, its banks gripped by the gnarled roots.*

*Tonight, the wooded hills through which this river courses are alive with activity: insects buzzing, amphibians croaking, and owls hooting. A wolf howls in the distance, a carnivorous ape thrashes and roars, and somewhere in the distance an owlbear lets loose its terrible screech. Upon a bluff overlooking the False Urt River stands Castle Zagyg, the ancient fortress of the Mad Archmage.*

*The cursed fog that once gripped Castle Zagyg and thwarted those who sought it, has recoiled; hence, the seekers have begun to arrive, galvanized by tales of gold and gems, glory and derring-do -- fighters, clerics, wizards, and thieves. But adventuring folk are not the only ones to seek the fortress and its many and sundry dungeons. Humanoids arrive at a near constant rate, and learned men speculate that several of these malign creatures have enjoyed inurement to the cursed fog for quite some time, perhaps by the whim of the Mad One himself.*

*In the shadows of twisted willows, a group of leathery-skinned, amphibious humanoids emerge from the water's edge, their huge, bulbous eyes blinking. Each one grips a spear and is accoutered with small shields, and leather belts that hold knives and pouches. They are batrachianoids or, as some refer to them, "boggiwogs." The largest of their number hoists it spear, pointing it toward Castle Zagyg. It then issues a belching croak, and in a single leap it vaults up the 12-foot embankment and disappears between the willows. One by one, its brethren follow . . .*

**\*\*\* Important! The following article is intended for the eyes of the Castle Keeper alone. If you are a player in a Castle Zagyg campaign, please read no further! \*\*\***

In the *Mouths of Madness* component of Gary Gygax's *Castle Zagyg, Vol. II: The Upper Works*, there is a wilderness encounter called Fen Mound (WD-5). This encounter features the lair of a small boggiwog tribe. Additional boggiwogs might be met via the

random encounter listed in **Book 1** (*Mouths of Madness*) and **Book 5** (*The Storerooms*) of The Upper Works boxed set. What follows is a not-so-random encounter. This is an event, if you would, that begins with the color description italicized above, which may be used as read-aloud text or paraphrased in other circumstances.

This boggiwog group might be encountered by the PC party at a circumstance of the Castle Keeper's choosing. The PCs should average 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> level. Some suggestions include:



- By the river bank of the False Urt River. (They are recent arrivals.)
- Within one of the Mouths of Madness. (They are seeking ingress to the dungeons.)
- Wandering the passages of The Storerooms. (They are trying to find their way deeper down.)
- Genuflecting before the Tzzathogoye statues (see Castle Fortress #01). The discovery of these statues all but confirms (in their batrachianoid minds, at least) that their quest is true. (They were inspecting the moat, but are wise to its dangers.)

Wugloosh the Leaper is the leader of a small band of boggiwogs whose mission is to penetrate Castle Zagyg and locate the fabled Black Reservoir. In the vast and inky depths of that enormous subterranean cistern, the frog-like humanoid's shaman, Groowugga, intends to recite foul incantations that are intended rouse a batrachian demon of unspeakable Chaotic Evil to cause death and mayhem.

Wugloosh and his band are of high morale, individually chosen by their chieftain to complete this sacred quest. They often coat themselves in wet clay, and stripe their chests with blue paint when questing. They are comprised as follows:

**Batrachianoid Warriors × 3–8:** *(These chaotic evil humanoid's vital stats are HD 1d8, HP 6, AC 15, MV 20 ft., 30 ft. hop, 40 ft. swim. Their saves are physical. They attack with spears. Their special abilities include a hopping attack for double damage, though -4 to their AC, and a chameleon ability that gives them +5 to hide checks and +10 to surprise checks. Each one wears a silver arm band worth 10 gp, and it is equipped with a medium shield and a 6-inch knife. XP: 11+1)*

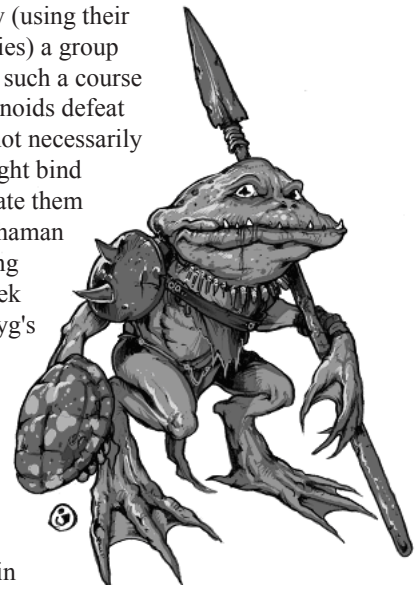
**Groowugga (Boggiwog Shaman):** *(This chaotic evil humanoid's vital stats are HD 3d8, HP 20, AC 14, MV 20 ft., 30 ft. hop, 40 ft. swim. His saves are physical. He attacks with a spear. His special abilities include a hopping attack for double damage, though -4 to his AC, and a chameleon ability that gives him +5 to hide checks and +10 to surprise checks. He wears a necklace of alligator teeth and carries an ivory tzzathogoye idol\*. He can cast the following wizard and druid spells once per day at 3rd level ability: charm person, magic missile, mirror image, obscuring mist, and barkskin. XP: 105)*

**Wugloosh the Leaper (Boggiwog Leader):** *(This chaotic evil humanoid's vital stats are HD 3d8, HP 20, AC 15, MV 20 ft., 30 ft. hop, 40 ft. swim. His saves are physical. He attacks with a +1 spear. His special abilities include a hopping attack for double damage, though -4 to his AC, and a chameleon ability that gives him +5 to hide checks and +10 to surprise checks. He wears a gold medallion worth 25 gp and is equipped with a medium shield, a 6-inch knife, and a 50-foot rope. XP: 95)*

The flexible amount of boggiwog warriors presented above is a reflection of the difficulty as selected by the Castle Keeper. A player character group that averages 2<sup>nd</sup> level might only encounter the leader, the shaman, and 3 warriors. The higher the average level of the party, the more warriors should be added.

These humanoids are of single purpose. They will attempt to vanquish anyone or anything that hinders their quest, but they

are crafty enough to follow (using their hide and camouflage abilities) a group of adventurers, if they feel such a course is of benefit. If these humanoids defeat a group of PCs, they will not necessarily kill them outright; they might bind them with rope to interrogate them later. The leader and the shaman both speak a crude, belching Common Tongue. They seek information on Castle Zagyg's dungeons, what to avoid, where to go, etc. The shaman will describe that which they seek: a great underground lake from which rise cyclopean pillars, for that is how the Black Reservoir is told of in their legends.



\* **Ivory Tzzathogoye Idol:** This 6-inch tall piece of ivory is crudely carved to the likeness of a thickset, frog-like demon squatting on its haunches. It has a protruding belly, bat-like wings, and broad mouth full of tiny fangs from which a long tongue lolls. This idol is imbued with dweomer of Chaotic Evil. If handled by one of Good (any) alignment, that one must save vs. magic (divine, CL 3) or become horribly ill for 3d6 turns (vomiting, nausea, headache, fever), or until remove poison is cast. Characters aligned Neutral (any) and Evil (any) gain the magical ability to jump (per the spell) 3/per day, and water breathe (per the spell) 1/per day for 6 hours duration. Possession of this item for more than 30 days will cause a gradual shift toward Chaotic Evil (if not of that alignment already).

**Final Note for the Castle Keeper:** Boggiwogs are described in *Appendix C of Castle Zagyg: The Upper Works*. The Black Reservoir is to be detailed in a future Castle Zagyg publication.

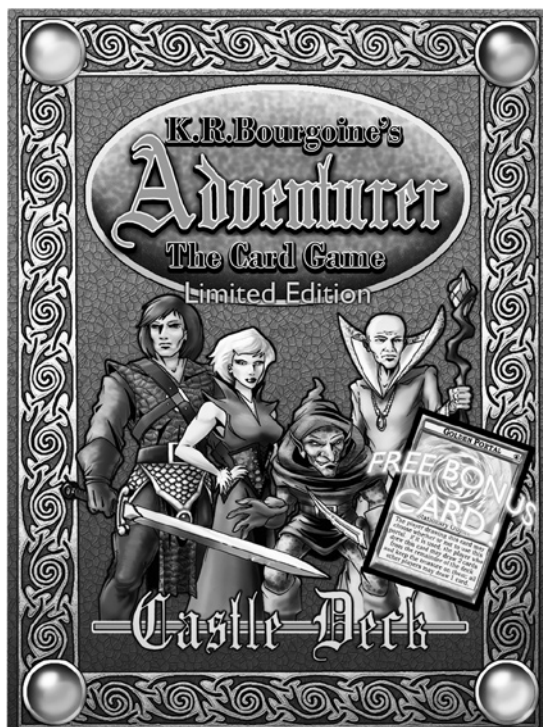
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# Adventurer™ Card Game

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**O**ne of the first things people like to learn about the **Adventure™ Card Game** right at the beginning is that it is not a collectible card game. Everything you need to play the game comes in the little box; nothing else is necessary.

Now that we know what the game isn't, here is what it is. **K.R. Bourgoine's Adventurer™ Card Game** is a new fast-paced acquisition-of-power dungeon-crawl card game with endless re-playability. It's a quick and easy game for 1-4 players, each playing a hero who battles their way through a dark castle full of traps, treasures and monsters to find the vampire lord, Count Lodrac. The first hero to find a stake and defeat him wins the game.

It only takes a round or two for new players to catch on. Each player chooses a hero and the game starts. Players take turns drawing cards from the deck to see where they are in the castle. Each card in the deck represents a room with a vicious monster and its treasure, a deadly trap, a mysterious magical portal, various obstacles, mystical stationary objects or hopefully, the highly sought unguarded treasure.

The goal is that your hero becomes powerful enough to defeat the evil count Lodrac in the Crypt. To do this, your hero collects treasure. These treasures are normally weapons that give a bonus to add to your attack roll, because in combat the higher the roll the better chances you have of winning, without some much needed weaponry odds of defeating the Count are not that good.

Your hero has to be powerful enough to fight the vampire lord and he will also need to find a stake somewhere along the way because even if you fight Count Lodrac and win without a stake, you don't win the game. The trick is that you need a stake to finish him off once you've knocked him down.

If the Count is found early on in the game which happens from time to time and is not defeated; due to a lack of a stake or being overmatched, he is shuffled back into the deck until he is drawn again. As each turn goes by and the deck is reduced in cards, the chance of drawing the Crypt card increases leading to the final battle with the vampire.

The simple and basic mechanics of Adventurer also make it a great introductory game in the realm of RPGs. At its heart the game has the basic fundamentals of RPG'ing. Children as young as seven really get into the Defeat Monster/Take Treasure/Become Tougher aspect of the game. They can't wait until the next turn to find out what else they are going to get, whether by flipping the next card they are going to be better off or perhaps by being unlucky, worse off.

The Adventurer series of games is a brand with the Card Game being the easiest, most accessible to a larger audience. The other games in the Adventurer line builds upon the mechanics of this game and becomes deeper and more involved.

## Expansions

The idea of the **Adventure™ Card Game** is that it is built on the idea of endless expansions, once the core of the game was set with the original deck of cards there is the unlimited possibility of additions to the game.

Each expansion adds greater depth to the game, making it feel more and more like a real adventure. The Portals Expansion adds new dimensions of play to the fast-paced card game that broaden the game's boundaries and add even more replayability with many new levels of player interaction. Players no longer play just against the deck of cards, but against other players as well.



Portals introduces in-game trading between players, increased strategic options with thieves for hire that can pilfer items from other players. The expansion also allows players, if they choose to, engage in combat with other players. And of course Portals also adds new and powerful treasures for the players to collect, along with strange new magical obstacles, traps, and random event cards that can affect all players at once.

The last new thing that Portals adds to Adventurer is player input into the game. The players got to choose the new hero that will be added to the game increasing the maximum number of players by one. The winner of an online auction got to choose the hero's name, special ability and have their personal likeness be that of the hero.

Following Portals is the Chaos Expansion that adds even more player choices and strategies to the game. Players now have more choice about what their heroes encounter and what risks they are willing to take for a reward.

Chaos also introduces a new way to win the game, the first player to collect 3 Chests of Power wins the game, even if the player never encountered Count Lodrac deep down in his Crypt. The expansion also adds new magical obstacles, traps, and random event cards, along with powerful treasures for the players to collect. Additionally, for increased strategic options there are now henchmen for hire that can go off and battle the heroes of other players on your behalf. Also just like in the Portals expansion this set includes one new hero, once more increasing the maximum number of players in the game.

## Guest Designer Cards

Several famous successful game designers were asked to create new cards for the game which adds even more flavor to the Adventurer™ Card Game. Each limited quantity card in this series adds a new element to the game which makes it even more riveting. This series launched with cards from notable game designers James M. Ward, Chris Clark, and the legendary creator of Dungeons and Dragons, Gary Gygax.

The Guest Designers were encouraged to create an exciting new Adventurer card of their choosing that would add a greater immersion and experience to the Adventurer™ Card Game world.

**Gary Gygax** made a very powerful new hero called *Shade the Trickster*. With this hero Gary not only increased the maximum number of players of the game again, but he also came up with a clever twist on the mechanics of combat giving the player using Shade a huge advantage when dealing with the denizens of the castle.

**James M. Ward's** mysterious and deadly Guest Designer Card is the *Warden's Pool of Darkness*. A nightmarish card for any player to draw because of its numerous ill and devastating effects that can humble any adventurer.

**Chris Clark** created a chaotic card called the *BlunderBuss*. Chris didn't know it when he made this treasure card, but the fun and flavor that the random effects of this item have were a great lead in to the Adventurer Card Game expansions. It's a quirky and exciting weapon that can win you the fight, lose you a life or even give you another turn, depending on your luck.

The next Guest Designer card is by **Tom Wham**. He also created a new hero named *Slooch the Cleric* who is so powerful in the ways of the church that he doesn't even need to use a stake to defeat Count Lodrac; all he needs is the power of his faith.

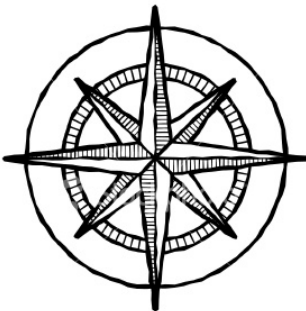
The Adventurer Card Game can be purchased at your local gaming store or online at [www.ADVENTURERGAME.com](http://www.ADVENTURERGAME.com)







**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 Endicott, New York.



## The Campaign Setting: Rules, Part I

*Most of the raw ideas about my campaign setting were developed in order to provide a solid framework for intriguing adventures. I have developed a culture, and have created towns and NPCs that reflect it. I have also developed some interesting details about the surrounding lands that help to establish potential plot hooks and places of interest as the campaign unfolds.*

*All of that work is significant, and I could stop there. I have the tools I need to create adventures for PCs, and I could keep the campaign running for some time with what I have done.*

*Sometimes a solid background and supporting details aren't enough to make a setting feel truly unique. Custom rules can distinguish a good campaign from an excellent, immersive campaign, if used with care.*

### What Do I Need to Remember?

Changing rules comes with a lot of responsibility. The rules need to be vetted. They should be play-tested or at least carefully considered. As part of this process, it's important to ensure that rule changes do not create excessive advantages or disadvantages for PCs, NPCs, or monsters.

Rule changes should add to the "feel" of the setting, satisfy some philosophy of the setting creator or CK, or fix a problem perceived by the CK or players. Rules should not be changed on an arbitrary basis just for the sake of making things "different."

Most importantly, be fair when using the new rules. Detail the changes before the campaign starts, and ensure all players understand the new rules. If a rule needs to be changed during the campaign due to unintended flaws, there should be agreement between the CK and the players as to the changes required. Whenever possible, rule changes should be applied to PCs, NPCs, and monsters alike. Finally, remember to use the new rules consistently! A group that is used to playing with the stock C&C rules may forget to apply the new rules out of habit. This is bound to happen, but make an agreement with the players to correct these mistakes. Over time, the new rules will become habitual as well.

### What Rules Are Needed?

The answer to this question depends on the needs of the campaign, the creator, and the CK. Naturally, rules that are created specifically to enhance the setting tend to make the campaign feel more unique and memorable. In my experience, house rules are easier for players to swallow if they can see a clear in-game reason for the changes. House rules created due to differences in philosophy are fine as well, but may be a difficult sell to players that have different opinions.

A good strategy is to try to blend the two. If possible, create house rules that reflect the characteristics of the campaign setting, but also satisfy philosophical ends. One example shown later in this column is the elimination of the barbarian class coupled with the alteration of the fighter class. Both changes satisfy a philosophical need while enhancing the feel of the setting.

With these considerations in mind, the first thing I need to do is make a list of rules and prioritize them. I consider this step essential because I like to tinker with rules. I always run the risk of trying to do too much. Too



many custom rules can be detrimental, either by moving the feel of the game away from what is desired, or by creating complexity where unnecessary.

I'll concentrate on the changes to character classes, leaving other custom rules for the next issue.

## Character Classes

Several factors point to the need to modify the stock character classes.

I know that I need to rethink the assassin class. One of my earliest requirements was to allow assassins of good alignment.

The theological system I have created also points to a need for a modified cleric class. I don't think the deities I have created work well with the idea of a paladin class, so I'll remove them.

The barbarian class does not fit well into my campaign environment. Where would they come from? Fighters and rangers can satisfy any need for a wilderness-warrior. I think a few tweaks to the fighter class would allow it to handle a wider range of archetypes.

I am changing the magic system, and this will affect the wizard class.

These class modifications rank at the top of my priority list. They are the first house rules that a player will encounter. They are also the rules that are likely to be used the most. Therefore, they deserve a great deal of effort and scrutiny.

## The Assassin

In this setting, the assassin is not always the killer-for-hire. While that brand of assassin certainly exists, others operate for more benevolent purposes, while possessing a similar set of skills.

*For this campaign, assassin characters may be of any evil, lawful neutral, or lawful good alignment.*

It was my intent to allow assassins to be of "good" alignment, but after consideration, I decided that allowing lawful neutral assassins made sense, as well.

Lawful good and lawful neutral assassins will probably represent Incordis, one of the Sibling deities. The lawful assassins are the enforcement arm of Incordis. Their solemn duty is to punish those that would abuse or defile the dead. Those that interfere in the workings of the afterlife are doomed. They have broken the sacred pact, and forfeit the freedom that the Siblings gave to every soul: to have a life without interference.

Lawful good assassins tend to show some compassion and mercy during enforcement. Lawful neutral assassins can be truly frightening, as they simply perform their duty without much remorse, and tend to emphasize punishment for the wrongs committed.

Naturally, assassins of these alignments present a role-playing challenge that will require skilled players and CKs to adjudicate. As with any rule, lackluster enforcement of the spirit behind it can lead to abuse.

I'm adding one more rule for assassins:

*Assassins, beginning at 4<sup>th</sup> level, can customize their abilities. Each class ability, by default, gains a +1 for each level of experience of the assassin. For example, when moving silently, an assassin adds his or her level to the attribute check. However, upon gaining 4<sup>th</sup> level and every level thereafter, an assassin can choose to apply +2 to a specified ability in exchange for no gain in a different ability. This can be done with no more than two abilities per level.*

This requires the player to keep track of the modifier for each ability, rather than simply applying the level of experience to class ability checks. However, it allows for more specialized assassins.

In all other respects, the assassin class is identical to that presented in the Castles & Crusades Players Handbook.

## The Cleric

In my view, the specialized worship of the campaign deities requires special treatment on the character sheet. Each religious order has a different emphasis, and the abilities of each cleric — this campaign's holy warrior — should be synchronized. The descriptions of the gods in *Crusader* issue #8 hinted strongly at the custom rules that will be applied here.

There are several subjects listed for each deity:

*Spheres of Influence* represent those areas in which the deity is considered to have the most power or impact. These simply inform the player and CK about the nature of the deity. Certainly, these spheres could be used to formulate more detailed rules regarding specialty clerics, but I have not done that here.

*Alignment of Worshippers* represents the typical alignment of those declaring their faith in the god or goddess. While there are exceptions to these lists, they are extremely rare, and it is expected that most faithful individuals will fit into the alignment scheme. Clerics, however, **must** have one of the listed alignments, as members of the clergy.

*Favored Weapon* describes the typical weapon used by most clerics of the deity. The weapon is often a representative of one the deity is said to wield. By wielding a similar weapon, the cleric often feels an attachment to his or her patron. If a cleric does not wish to wield the favored weapon listed, he or she must choose one of the weapons listed for the cleric class in the C&C Players Handbook. There is no bonus or penalty for either choice.

*Clerical Powers* details special abilities gained or lost through affiliation with a specific religious order.

Here are the revised cleric rules:

### Cleric of Darshai:

*Darshai's sphere of influence involves the memory of the deceased.*

*The Order of Darshai is often regarded as peaceful, but is actually quite methodical and destructive when provoked. Efforts to hide or distort the memories or histories of the dead are frowned upon quite strongly, and those persisting in efforts to do so often find themselves receiving dire warnings in the darkest night.*

**Spheres of Influence:** Death, History, Memory

**Alignment of Worshippers:** Lawful Neutral or Lawful Good

**Favored Weapon:** Ball Mace (a heavy round ball on a handle, with no protrusions, knobs, or spikes)

*Clerical Powers:* Clerics of Darshai receive a -5 penalty to attempts to turn undead, but undead turned are always destroyed. A successful turn attempt destroys the number of undead creatures that would normally be turned according to the C&C Player's Handbook (1d12 common, 1d6 extraordinary, or 1 unique undead creature).

In C&C, by default, if a cleric is 5 levels higher than the HD of an undead creature, that creature is destroyed when turned. This change applies a -5 penalty, but undead are always destroyed. The result is a different flavor that retains the same numeric balance.

### Cleric of Incordis:

*Incordis's influence involves the prevention of, or vengeance for, any desecration of resting places or the possessions of the dead.*

*The Order of Incordis consists of a loosely affiliated group of clerics, fighters, rangers, wizards, and assassins that seek to act as extensions of Incordis himself. They patrol graveyards, crypt areas, burial sights, barrow downs, and other resting places, seeking to keep those areas free of taint. They also guard the bodies of the recently deceased until they can be sanctified and interred properly by priests of the Order of Kheloria.*



**Spheres of Influence:** Death, Honor, Protection, Retribution

**Alignment of Worshipers:** Lawful Neutral, Lawful Good, or Neutral Good

**Favored Weapon:** Any medium to long edged weapon with a single cutting surface, preferably curved.

**Clerical Powers:** With a successful roll to turn undead, Clerics of Incordis can cause fear (as the 4<sup>th</sup> level wizard spell of the same name) on intelligent mortals caught within a sanctified burial area. The number of affected mortal creatures is determined by 1d12 + cleric level + Charisma modifier. Affected creatures are allowed a Charisma save to resist. The cleric's level and Charisma modifier are added to the Challenge Level for the purposes of this saving throw.

Clerics of Incordis may not turn undead, as they are sworn to destroy such monstrosities, and could not support the potential escape of any turned undead abomination. However, clerics of Incordis always gain a +1 to hit versus undead creatures.

A helpful guideline when creating house rules is to give something and then take something away in an equal proportion. In this case, the fear effect is new, but clerics devoted to Incordis lose the ability to turn undead normally. Since the fear effect may happen only in a sanctified burial area, it may not be used very often. So, I allow these clerics a +1 bonus to hit all undead. Not only does this help to balance the change to the turning ability, but it makes sense given the role of this order in the religion.

#### **Cleric of Kheloria:**

*Kheloria's influence is the preparation and protection of the fragile vessels that once carried life.*

*The Order of Kheloria is responsible for preparing, sanctifying, and interring the bodies of the deceased. The process is a long one, taking several days of ritual and ceremony. Interruption of a consecration ceremony is greatly frowned upon except in dire emergencies. The Order of Kheloria works closely with the Order of Incordis to ensure the proper protection and escort of the deceased to and from their care. The Order of Kheloria occasionally takes an active hand in hunting and destroying those that create and manipulate undead, but often defers that task to the Order of Incordis, when it becomes necessary to take action.*

**Spheres of Influence:** Death, Honor, Heritage, Preservation

**Alignment of Worshipers:** Lawful Good, Neutral Good, or Lawful Neutral.

**Favored Weapon:** Any short weapon with a single cutting surface, preferably curved.

**Clerical Powers:** A successful roll to turn undead allows a Cleric of Kheloria to temporarily prevent corpses from being used as undead. The number of protected corpses is determined by rolling 1d12 and adding the cleric's level of experience and the cleric's Charisma modifier, if any. The protected corpses need not be in the cleric's line of sight, but must be within the normal turning range of 60 feet.

*When used on existing undead, this power will weaken them, applying a -1 penalty to all hit rolls. The number and type of affected undead is the same as a normal undead turning, documented in the C&C Player's Handbook. This power also prevents level drains or inflicted paralysis from all affected undead for the duration of the turn effect.*

*These effects may not be invoked during the same turning attempt. Each requires a separate action.*

*In all other respects, including experience tables and spell lists, the rules for the cleric class in the C&C Players Handbook apply.*

The first turning option is available through Kheloria's sphere of influence. However, the opportunity to use this power may be rare. To offset this, the second turning option is provided. The -1 penalty to hit for undead is nice, but the real feature here is the ability to block level

draining and paralysis. Also note that the options cannot be used during the same turning action. It's a good idea when creating custom rules to anticipate how players might try to "work the system" and clarify how you wish the rule to be used.

It is recommended that the following cleric variant be available to NPCs only.

#### **Cleric of Nysania (Nyaenoth):**

*Nyaenoth's worship can take many forms. The dominant form of worship of this hideous goddess is borne of subterfuge. Known as Nysania to the public and her worshippers for eons, Nyaenoth has cultivated an image of apathy and nihilism in order to make her primary influence, necromancy, more appealing. Nysania's image is of a stern, cold, and beautiful female magus. Urban women, especially, find her strength and apathy empowering.*

**Spheres of Influence:** Magic, Undead, and Death

**Alignment of Worshipers:** Any neutral or chaotic, but upper members of the hierarchy are always evil.

**Favored Weapon:** Halberd, Staff

**Clerical Powers:** Instead of the ability to turn undead, clerics of Nyaenoth may control undead with a successful turning attempt at a -5 penalty. Clerics of Nyaenoth may not cause undead to cower.

There are several considerations at work here. Typically, turning attempts by evil clerics do not destroy undead, but control them. This house rule builds upon this. Following the model used for clerics of Darshai, these clerics always control undead, but at a -5 penalty to the check. In exchange, the cleric loses the ability to make the undead cower.

Why the enhanced control? Well, not all clerics of this goddess are evil. For pragmatic neutral clerics, precise control of undead is the natural option here. These clerics would not necessarily use these undead creatures to sew death and destruction, though some of them certainly do. This refined ability allows the goddess and her true worshippers to retain her subterfuge, because this ability is useful to both neutral and horribly evil clerics.

## **The Fighter**

I want to bring some variety into the fighter class without overburdening it with options. I feel that the fighter has erroneously morphed into a class built around the concept of weapon specialization. Weapon specialization has been irritating me since about 1986. In my mind, fighters were superior combatants due to their ability to wear any armor and use any weapon. When I began to play games that included weapon



specialization, all of that changed. Gone were the fighters who always had the right weapon for the task, replaced by one-trick ponies. It's no wonder fighters are often considered boring!

The problem wasn't specialization, per se. The problem was that there was no clear reason for a fighter to do anything other than specialize. There was no advantage to be gained by spending weapon use slots on multiple weapons instead of on specialization. They'd forever be less effective in combat than fighters that specialized. Specialization should have benefits and drawbacks, as should any character creation choice. My changes to the fighter class attempt to redress that grievance.

I've also made an addition that may look familiar to veterans of older games – a weapon versus armor table. It has been dramatically simplified compared to predecessors, and contains provisions for natural armor types. It highlights that different weapons are better in different situations, and provides a benefit for those fighters that choose to take advantage of the ability to use all weapons.

Furthermore, I've never understood the need for a barbarian class. "Barbarian" is a cultural background, not an occupation. I think it's ridiculous to presume that every barbarian has the same skill set. For this reason, and for the reason that there is no appropriate barbarian region in my setting, I'm eliminating the class from my campaign. Players wishing to create barbarian characters can do so either with the more robust fighter class, or with one of the other classes coupled with a great background story.

Without further delay, here is the revised fighter:

*The following list supersedes all default class abilities of the fighter.*

**1<sup>st</sup> Level:** *Instead of Weapon Specialization, the fighter can choose one discipline from the following list:*

- **Marksmen:** *the character can throw or fire into melee without fear of striking allies, but with a -2 penalty to hit. This ability also reduces the penalties for medium range to -1 and long range to -4. It does not, however, extend the maximum range of a weapon. If also selected at 4<sup>th</sup> level, the penalty for firing into melee is reduced to zero, and the fighter gains a short range to-hit bonus of +1 for missile weapons. This also removes the medium range penalty and reduces the penalty for long range to -2.*
- **Sword and Board:** *the character is expert at using a specific weapon and shield combination. When using the specific combination, the character gains +1 to AC and the encumbrance of both weapon and shield are reduced by 1. If also selected at 4<sup>th</sup> level for the same specific combination, the character gains an additional +1 to AC, a +1 bonus to hit, and the encumbrance values for the weapon and shield are further reduced by 1.*
- **Florentine:** *the character is expert at using a second small weapon in his or her off-hand. The penalties for two-weapon fighting are reduced to -2/-5 as long as the second weapon is smaller than the first. Dexterity modifiers can then adjust the penalty further. If also selected at 4<sup>th</sup> level, the penalties for two-weapon fighting are reduced to -1/-4.*
- **Tactician:** *the character has a knack for knowing the right weapon to use at just the right time. Encumbrance for all weapons carried is reduced by 1. With one round of study and a successful Wisdom check, the fighter can learn, if applicable, what type of weapon or effect is required to harm a given target. For example, the fighter can learn that a troll regenerates, and will be able to suggest the use of fire or acid, even if the character has never faced trolls before. If also selected at 4<sup>th</sup> level, the fighter may gain knowledge of a foe as described above as well as a +2 to hit the studied foe for that particular battle. The +2 bonus applies only to the fighter; not to his companions as well.*

**4<sup>th</sup> Level:** *Instead of Combat Dominance, the fighter gains a choice of abilities. If the fighter chose Weapon Specialization at first level, the*



*fighter gains a choice of the above disciplines. If the fighter chose one of the disciplines at first level, the fighter may choose Weapon Specialization, a second discipline, or to double the already-chosen discipline. The fighter may not double-select Weapon Specialization.*

These rules provide a lot of variety in exchange for very little overhead. There are many different selections a player can make to customize the fighter, and while none are overpowering, all are useful.

**7<sup>th</sup> Level:** *The fighter gains one extra attack every other round, beginning with the second round of combat in each battle.*

**12<sup>th</sup> Level:** *The fighter can attack twice per round.*

*In all other respects, the fighter is the same as the fighter class in the C&C Players Handbook.*

Veterans of C&C's predecessors might recognize this attack progression. I feel waiting until 10<sup>th</sup> level to gain an extra attack is too long – many campaigns end before characters reach that level. This will be handy in a campaign meant to be very gritty and harmful to PC health.

## Weapons versus Armor

This table applies to all combat situations for all classes. This provides an advantage for the fighter carrying multiple weapons in preparation for different scenarios. In particular, it really highlights the effectiveness of the Tactician discipline. The table is provided here due to its relationship with the fighter class.

Armor types are listed horizontally across the top of the table; attack forms are listed down the first column. Cross-referencing an attack form with an armor type provides a bonus or penalty to be applied to the attack roll. I did not specify which weapons fall under each category. I tried to choose classifications that would leave little doubt. If there is a question about a particular weapon, the CK has the discretion to decide.

A final note on the table: it is not intended to be realistic. Feel free to change the table to suit your preferences. I decided to keep the bonuses and penalties minor rather than try to accurately portray the relative advantages and disadvantages with proportionate numbers.



## Weapons vs Armor Table

	None	Padded/Leather Coat/Hide/Tough Natural Skin	Leather Armor/ Cuirboulli	Ring Mail/ Studded Leather	Chainmail	Scale Mail/ Natural Scales	Banded/ Splint/ Exoskeleton	Plate Mail/ Tough Carapace	Full Plate
Blunt Missile	+3	0	0	0	-1	-1	-1	-2	-3
Piercing Missile	+3	+2	+2	+2	+1	0	-1	-1	-2
Blunt Melee	+3	-1	-1	0	0	0	+1	+1	+2
Piercing Melee	+3	0	0	0	0	-1	-1	-2	-2
Slashing Melee	+3	+2	+1	+1	0	-1	-1	-2	-3

### The Ranger

The ranger is largely unchanged from the class as written in the C&C Players Handbook. There are, however, three alterations of note:

- *At 6<sup>th</sup> level, rangers can choose a specific form of undead as a Favored Enemy.*
- *Instead of gaining the Favored Enemy ability at 6<sup>th</sup> level, rangers may alternately choose one discipline from the 1<sup>st</sup> level fighter list.*
- *Rangers can also choose, at character creation, to use the Combat Marauders ability against undead instead of humanoid creatures. This decision is irrevocable.*

This provides rangers with some customizability, though not as much as fighters. These options also raise the possibility that rangers may become undead hunters in service to the Siblings.

### The Rogue

Like the assassin, the rogue receives a customizing option:

*Rogues, beginning at 4<sup>th</sup> level, can customize their abilities. Each class ability, by default, gains a +1 for each level of experience of the rogue. For example, when moving silently, a rogue adds his or her level to the attribute check. However, upon gaining 4<sup>th</sup> level and every level thereafter, a rogue can choose to apply +2 to a specified ability in exchange for no gain in a different ability. This can be done with no more than three abilities per level.*

This requires the player to keep track of the modifier for each ability, rather than simply applying the level of experience to all class ability checks. However, this option allows for more specialized rogues. Note the subtle difference from the assassin ability. Rogues can customize three abilities per level, and assassins only two.

### The Wizard (Necromancer)

As discussed in prior columns, the wizard in this campaign is really a specialist necromancer. The secrets of magic, as traditionally known in C&C and similar games, have been lost. They have been supplanted by magic used in religious activities, but also with darker magic used for corrupt purposes.

Even though the class variant is a necromancer, the populace in the campaign knows them as wizards. To them, there is no difference – necromancy is the only form of wizardry known and it carries the more general name.

The loss of traditional magic naturally has a great impact on necromancers. To start, necromancers lack the traditional reliable spells often associated with the wizard class. *Magic Missile* is one of the lost secrets! The intention is that these spells can be discovered during the campaign, but the player must do without them until then. Note that this effectively

eliminates the illusionist as a beginning class for a PC. As the campaign progresses, and more secrets are uncovered, it is certainly possible that NPCs or even self-taught PCs might join the illusionist class.

These factors require extensive changes to the wizard class to make a fun and playable necromancer variant.

First, I am increasing the available spells per day. Since the list of spells to learn will be specialized, this provides necromancers with more options on a daily basis. This helps ensure that the class remains viable in more situations.

Second, I am introducing healing magic to the necromancer spell list. Arcane healing magic is simply necromancy applied in a positive, constructive manner instead of a destructive, negative manner. Arcane healing requires a component, but is more powerful than divine healing. It can also produce side effects depending on the component used.

Finally, necromancers will be allowed to use leather armor, spears, and short swords without penalty. This helps to provide some additional protection when spells run out for the day, and may keep necromancers more involved. There is an in-game rationale as well: the rigors of the study of necromancy require all necromancers to be prepared and protected, particularly from nastier forms of undead. A basic set of protective light armor and a heavier weapon make sense in this context.



Presenting a revised spell list here will require more space than I have in this column. However, to provide examples of the revised wizard spell list, and how it is constructed, I will be presenting a basic spell list for the class in the next issue.

Here are the applicable rule changes for the wizard class for the necromancer variant. Other than the changes listed, necromancers are identical to the wizard class presented in the C&C Players Handbook.

**Weapons:** Club, dagger, dart, staff, spear, short sword

**Armor:** Leather armor, leather coat, padded

Necromancer Spells per Day

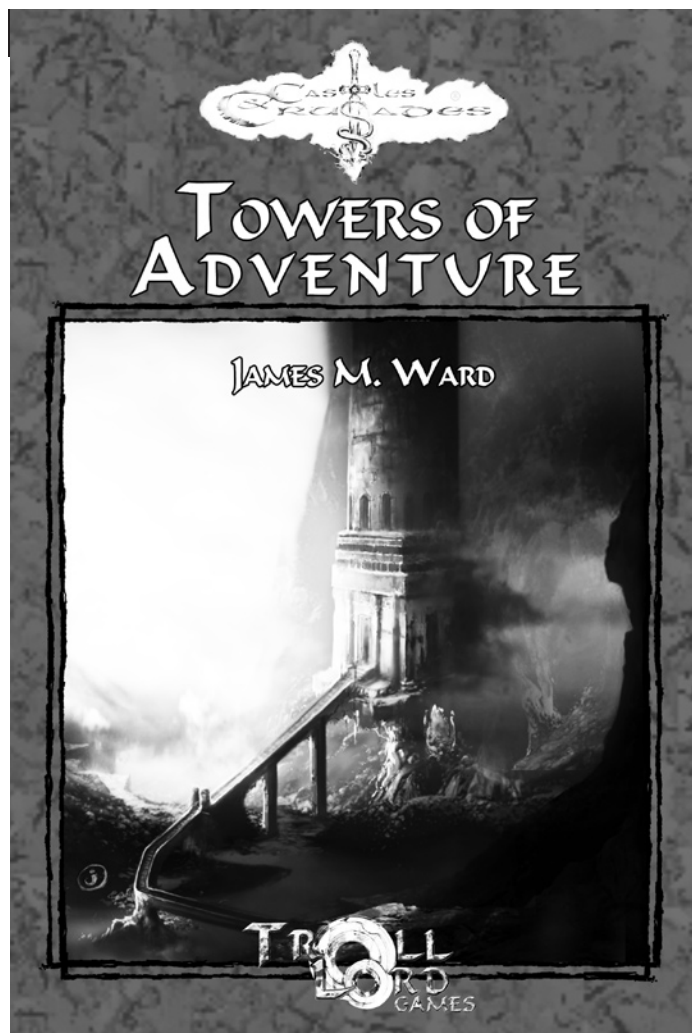
Level	0	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th
1	4	2								
2	4	3								
3	4	3	2							
4	5	4	2							
5	5	4	3	2						
6	6	5	4	2						
7	6	5	4	3	2					
8	7	6	5	4	2					
9	7	6	5	4	3	2				
10	7	7	6	5	4	2				
11	7	7	6	5	4	3	2			
12	7	7	7	6	5	4	2			
13	7	7	7	6	5	4	3	2		
14	7	7	7	7	6	5	4	2		
15	7	7	7	7	6	5	4	3	2	
16	7	7	7	7	7	6	5	4	2	
17	7	7	7	7	7	6	5	4	3	2
18	7	7	7	7	7	7	6	5	4	2
19	7	7	7	7	7	7	6	5	4	3
20	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	6	5	4

With the exception of the necromancer’s spell list, I have completed modifications to tailor the character classes to my campaign setting. I’ve added a bonus in the form of the Weapons vs. Armor table. In the next issue, I’ll present a basic necromancer spell list, with sample spells from each level.

Until next issue, happy designing!







**C&C: Towers of Adventure**

**Product Type:** Adventure Set

**Format/Price:** 6" x 9" Box Set, 3 books, 36 pages a book; \$29.95

**Written By:** James M. Ward

**Ordering Info:** TLG 8313, 978-1-929474-19-6

**Release Date:** Gen Con 2008

**Product Description:** Towers of Adventure is the ultimate adventure on the go box set. Designed by James M. Ward for the Castles & Crusades Role Playing Game, Tower Adventures offers the Castle Keeper a marvelous set of interchangeable tower levels, rooms, monsters, NPCs, traps and treasures. This box set allows you to make literally millions of exciting towers for your players to explore. Treasures, tower inhabitants, and tower maps are at your fingers and so easy to use you can put together a complex adventure in five minutes or less.

# TOWERS OF ADVENTURE

BY JAMES M. WARD

Steve and I were just talking about possible product that I could design for C&C. I have been gaming on both sides of the castle keeper screen for many years. In my games, I have run quite a few players through several different towers with each tower having a different theme. In a certain magical tower a good half of the players didn't make it through the front door before they were chopped up into little pieces or turned into frogs. I told Steve of Troll Lords about an idea I had in the back of my mind to do a series of towers where castle keepers could take an empty tower and come up with a theme and then fill that tower with creatures, traps, and treasures to fit the theme. For instance if a castle keeper wanted a fighter tower it might look like this:

## Level One

7) **Peter Bowstring** (neutral), 2<sup>nd</sup> level fighter: HP 12, AC 13, primary attributes: strength, dexterity, constitution, laminar leather and long bow (1d6) with broad sword (2d4).

Peter attacks with his bow for as long as he can and then enters battle with his sword.

11) **Men-at-arms x5** (neutral), 3<sup>rd</sup> level fighter: HP 20 x5, AC 15, primary attribute: physical, uses a chain shirt and shield, a morningstar (2d4) and a dagger (1d4).

Men-at-arms work cheap if they are fed and have beds every day.

93) **Diamond "the hammer" Sandstone** (lawful neutral), 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> level fighter/rogue: HP 37, AC 20, primary attributes: strength, dexterity. He uses +3 splint mail, shield, a +1/+3 vs. orcs battle axe (1d8 +1/+3), four throwing axes (1d6).

Diamond is an amazing climber, and several times has climbed a cliff to attack a group from the rear.

## Level Two

25) **Orvil 'o the Heights** (neutral), 3<sup>rd</sup> level wizard: HP 8, AC 13, primary attributes: intelligence, wisdom, dexterity. He uses a staff (1d6) and has a +3 ring of protection. He has the following wizard spells: 0-4, 1<sup>st</sup>-3, 2<sup>nd</sup>-1.

Orvil is a great horseman and is able to scout with unusual skill for a wizard.

32) **John 'o the Hammer** (chaotic good), HD 3d12, HP 30, AC 17, primary attributes: constitution, intelligence, charisma. John wears a breastplate and uses a famous hammer called the Bolt (1d10 +4). When John is driven to less than nine hit points, the hammer starts casting lightning bolts doing an additional ten points of damage per successful strike.

#### 299) Rolling with the Punches

The characters have defeated the living guards and they hear an odd rumbling noise. Suddenly a head-sized ball of stone flies out of the wall and shoots across the chamber to a hole on the wall. Then there are several of these stones shooting from other holes and traveling through the chamber. Roll a d6 and give a number to each character and they must make a save vs. their dexterity or be struck by a 3d6 sphere of stone. The stones continuing shooting until six characters are struck in the chamber.

197) **Generous Fighter Treasure:** There are five used saddlebags in a pile. One of them will jingle with coins if it is picked up. Inside there are 40 gold coins and 3 rough-cut gems at 50-gold each: yellow citrine, black peridot, and a small pearl. Stuck in the bag is a finely made, +1 dagger with gold and green turquoise worked into the pommel.



### Level Three

71) **John Swordson** (lawful good), 14th level fighter: HP 76, AC 25, primary attributes: strength, dexterity, intelligence. He uses finely crafted enchanted +3 plate mail, with a +3 shield and a +3 long sword (1d8).

John trains fighters and at any given time has a group of 2d4 middle level fighters around him at all times. When he knows he's going to fight monsters he drops his shield and pulls out a +4 battle axe (1d12) he's unusually fond of. In his quarters, John has the mounted head of a red dragon he killed with his axe.

139) **Massive Guard Dog** (neutral), HD 3d8, HP 24, AC 15, PA 1 bite (2d6 +3).

The dog follows its training and can sense invisible beings. It howls a warning before it attacks a foe. This dog has a heavy spiked collar making it impossible for other creatures to wound it in the neck.

198) **Sizeable Fighter Treasure:** There are four large vases filled with olive oil. Inside the back, one is another type of treasure under the olive oil. The vase holds: 210 loose gold pieces, 4 gems: moonstone topaz 50 gp, green jade 100 gp, red jade 100 gp, and a white topaz 1,000 gp. Also, there is a matched set of three +1 throwing axes made of hardened silver, and an amulet of +2 armor.

#### 329) Unusually Good Guards

You have killed all the guards in the chamber. While looking around all those dead guards rise up as zombies and attack again. They have half their hit points and they always attack last in the round. They are incapable of moving out of the chamber they started from.

### What does all of this mean?

The adventure set has three books. *Book one* is a series of great tower illustrations and the graphic map of those towers with a series of numbers. The castle keeper picks a tower and then thinks of a theme. He reaches for *book two* and looks over the creatures of that book. When he sees creatures or people that fit his theme, he writes down their unique numbers on the graphic diagram of the levels. #7 Peter Bowstring is placed on level one and when his players come into the tower they will meet all the people on level one and the castle keeper has notes on those people and their abilities. In this case we have a fighter tower, so I selected some characters that would be living in a fighter tower as well as traps and treasures consistent with that type of tower. *Book three* is filled with themed treasures and traps that have unique numbers. You can see that in just a few minutes you could fill up a tower with creatures, treasures, and traps and be ready to give your players a lot of fun with hardly any effort at all.





# notes from the managing editor



## James M. Ward

*was born in 1951. Living a pleasantly long time, he has been happily married 38 years thanks to the patience of his wife, Janean. He has three equally charming sons, Breck, James, and Theon. They in turn have given him five startlingly charming grandchildren: Keely, Miriam, Sophia, Preston, and Teagan. Working here and there, he's managed to write the first science fiction RPG, METAMORPHOSIS ALPHA, several best selling CCGs including SPELLFIRE and DRAGON BALL Z, and a few novels including HALCYON BLITHE MIDSHIPWIZARD and HALCYON BLITHE DRAGONFRIGATE WIZARD. He likes to fence, the 'sword' type, not the 'put up' type. He spends a great deal of time looking for work. He reads science fiction and fantasy novels and occasionally something else when the cover looks interesting. Recently, he designed and tricked a company into producing his DRAGON LAIRDS board game and he's very happy with the results. If possible, he'd like to end up as the Captain of the starship Enterprise, but that job keeps getting taken before he can get his resume into the proper time stream.*

**W**hen Steve asked me to help with the **CRUSADER** magazine, I was happy to give it a try. I've worked with lots of successful magazines in the past, in my many positions at TSR and Fast Forward. **DRAGON** and **DUNGEON** magazine were huge operations and I didn't have any problem growing the subscription base, off the shelf sales numbers, and increasing their revenue. Really, the only thing I was concerned about when I started working on **CRUSADER** was pleasing Steve. The magazine was his baby and I could tell he really loved writing articles for the publication.

For those of you who don't know me, let me present a little bit about myself. I met Gary Gygax in 1974 and I had the pleasure of having him teach me how to play D&D. I've always been a huge fantasy and science fiction reader and during one of the D&D gaming sessions I suggested to Gary that he create a science fiction version of his game. He very kindly said, "Why don't you try and write it, Jim." I got right on it and **METAMORPHOSIS ALPHA** was designed and became the first science fiction RPG. That game has seen four different versions and is currently available at your favorite hobby shop as a hardbound book. From then on, I was hooked and started writing for TSR. In 1980 I was hired and I started in the sales division, but moved around a lot. There were many high and low points to working at TSR. Eventually I became the Vice President of Production. I wrote a lot of popular product for the company including the Greyhawk Hardbound, the Spellfire card game, and reams of articles for **DRAGON**, **DUNGEON**, and the

**POLYHEDRON**. I left TSR just before it was sold to Wizards of the Coast. I've been working as a writer and game consultant ever since. This year I designed two different games. **DRAGON LAIRDS** is a board game I'm extremely proud of that has each player become a dragon king or queen. The object of the game is to collect the most Royals to win the game. **MY PRECIOUS PRESENT** is a card game due to come out in the late fall. In that game you are trying to steal presents from your friends. If I'm not writing novels, I'm working on some type of game. I recently submitted what I thought was an amazing pirate dice game to Milton Bradley, but they rejected it. As an author or a game designer, you learn to live with lots of rejections. The early history of **MONOPOLY** and **TRIVIAL PURSUIT** are filled with lots of rejections from game companies. Since I have huge hits like the **DRAGON BALL Z CCG** under my belt, I'm fairly sure I have a few more success stories still in me.

Starting with issue eight of **CRUSADER** I started making a few changes. I have excellent help in the typesetting department as well as the article writing area. I have no end of interesting pieces to put into the Crusader issues. Those authors speak for themselves in the way they write. I hardly have to touch any of their pieces. I was also able to use my knowledge of what worked and didn't work in the magazines I previously worked on to help with the changes. **DRAGON** used to place its article titles all over the cover of the magazine and that seemed cluttered to the many readers of the magazine. **CRUSADER** changed that style with a banner at the left of the cover. Lucky for

me **CRUSADER** was already doing a bunch of things exactly right. The magazine has a great cartoon, there are regular writers who know just what the public is looking for, and the artwork is great.

What would an aspiring author look to write to appeal to the hard-boiled managing editor of **CRUSADER** magazine? That's an excellent question with lots of answers. The magazine has an 800 word per page format. It is monthly now. Quarter page illustrations take up 200 words and the half page illustrations take up 400 words. At present, we don't want anything longer than three pages. The magazine is slowly adding extra features. In the role-playing area, we want to use the **Castles & Crusades** gaming system. We have started doing new monsters for C&C. We have started doing game reviews of all types of board games and card games. We are looking to appeal first to the role-playing gamer and then to the gamer in general.

The magazine doesn't need ten more features on beginning role-playing campaigns. We've run these and now we are looking for other interesting features. The magazine can always use one page features on dungeon tricks, cavern traps, or fun new magic items. It's almost impossible to get too many of these unique features.

I've never been able to nail down exactly what an "old school" role-player is. It could just be a matter of being old, but I think there is a certain "flavor" to such a player. I know I'm constantly being called "old school" even when I design product that have never been seen before in all of role-playing. This means articles with that "old school" flavor, whatever that is, are going to have a greater chance of being used than those of a different stripe. There is lots of room for science fiction **StarSiege** role-playing articles when that game is released to the public. At this moment, generic science fiction RPG articles would be interesting.

Maybe I should also mention that I am the original Monty Haul. I enjoy big, powerful creature encounters. Along with the encounters, I enjoy huge, wondrous treasure piles. As I was designing the **TOWER OF ADVENTURES** boxed set, I had page 94 of the **MONSTERS & TREASURE** book taped to the bottom of my computer. I didn't want to present too much treasure in my many examples, but I did want to go to the limit of what C&C considered proper treasure gifting.

As I look at things, I'm always considering how to "increase my percentage chance of success." The production of **CRUSADER** magazine is one of those things. I want to interest more readers. In order to do that I have to have a product that will interest the widest possible audience without being so general that no one wants to read it. Added to this consideration is my "Angry Mother Rule." I developed the Angry Mother Rule while being a manager

at TSR. The idea behind this concept is that we never want a mother to read over the shoulder of her son at one of our products and become angry at its content. I can remember one time at TSR I was reading through the galley's of a product and noticed that one of the altars in the adventure was made of baby skulls. I gathered the people responsible for this concept together in my office, spending quite a bit of time informing them that such ideas were not part of what TSR stood for and would not be happening again. Let me also say here, now that I'm way off the point, that I had an amazingly talented group of editors and designers at TSR. I often joked that I was the ranger that kept the hobbits (editors and designers) safe from the cruel ravages of the world. The hobbits didn't like the analogy, but it was more truth than fiction.

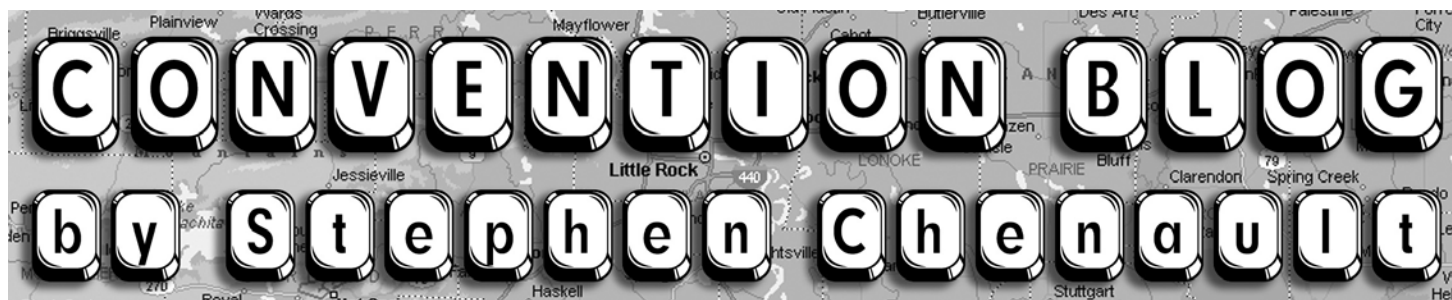
Pulling myself back hard toward the point of this piece, as the managing editor of the magazine I'm looking for clever, well-written gaming pieces that will entertain the readers of **CRUSADER**. Very soon, after the printing of this magazine, we will be going to 36 pages instead of 32 and I will need lots more content. I know from experience that putting a magazine writing credit on your resume makes you look better in the cold, cruel eyes of HR staff.

If you want to increase your percentage chance of getting an article of yours in the magazine do the following:

- 1) Think of a great idea and summarize it in two sentences. If you can't summarize the idea, work on your writing skills for a few years until you can.
- 2) Email me with that idea at [sirjmw@aol.com](mailto:sirjmw@aol.com) and title your email **CRUSADER IDEA**. That way I won't reject the idea and email out of hand.
- 3) Don't attach the finished concept in your email. There is more than a 50% chance that I won't want it.
- 4) You will get a reply one way or another within a week or two (probably the next day, but we editors like to give ourselves some time to be extra brilliant in our replies.)
- 5) Do not worry about your precious idea being stolen. There is a 96.2% chance your idea has been thought of by three other not so bright people. Realize that you are presenting your idea for thousands of people to read.
- 6) Your article should be viewed as a foot in the door at Troll Lords. Ed Greenwood, James M. Ward (that's me), and literally thousands of others wrote articles in magazines to get their start in the gaming business.







# CONVENTION BLOG

by Stephen Chenault

**A**h, Gen Con. The Mecca of gaming conventions... well aside from Troll Con and Lake Geneva Gaming Convention... Gen Con is always a fast moving, roller coaster ride for the Trolls and the Dens. The last easy Gen Con was the 2003 I think, this was before we began to get our convention sea legs. After that, each convention has been busier and busier. I vaguely remember our first Gen Con; Mac, Davis, and myself were sitting in a lounge area talking to a drunken distributor who informed us that he knew who would make it and who would not among the gaming companies. He said to us, "For instance, there's a company called Troll Lord Games, they won't make it two years!" We smiled and nodded as we do to most distributors. But those cons were gentle on the old soul and body, and those days are long gone. The company has grown since 2003 and we like our place and growth in the hobby industry with our **Castles & Crusades** property. But I suppose it's best to be as busy as you want to be, and not as busy as you would like to be. At Gen Con, this year it was busy.

But before I tackle Gen Con, let me run over the running-up-to the convention. Getting ready for the convention is far harder than the convention is. We set our sights on having three to six releases at Gen Con, three big ones and three small ones. These were Gary Gyax's **Castle Zagyg Upper Works** (the last, new work that Gary contributed to whilst on this world), James M. Ward's **Towers of Adventure**, Josh Chewning's **StarSiege Event Horizon**, **Crusader 11**, **Shades of Mist** and **Shattered Horn**. These first three are boxed sets, hard to assemble and with lots of component parts. The first of the manuscripts for them began arriving on my desk around July 1, 2008. From there they go to Cory Caserta the editor and then over to Peter for art direction and layout. About July 1<sup>st</sup> things began to pick up speed as the writers on the projects, the editor, layout and the artists such as Jason Walton, direction (your truly) and Mark the printer all began to pick up speed. After Troll Con, it seemed to hit break neck speed as we all start putting in 60-hour weeks, working nights, early mornings with few breaks and no lunch. A huge amount of energy permeates everyone here as we move back and forth, fixing, solving, repairing, adding, revising and so forth. It is all a blistering haze of four weeks of "I need this", "I need that", "We have to do this" and so on until we are all punch drunk with concern and lack thereof.

But suddenly it's the day before departure date and the Gen Con crew starts showing to help load and organize. Its time for Gen Con 2008.

We've learned that a good sales crew is the most important thing to a successful convention. We've tried all manner of things at these conventions, from fliers, to bag stuffers to criers and booth babes and all have an effect, but there is nothing

like having an enthusiastic troop of folks who love what they are selling and what they are doing and most importantly are having fun doing it. Over the years we've stumbled on what has become a really good Gen Con Crew and here they be: Me, Davis Chenault, Mark Sandy, Todd Gray, Jason Alexander, Richard McBain, James Mishlar, Ashley McKenney and the latest addition Kim Hartsfield... Kim is a dude by the by, and as southern as fried chicken... All these folks work hard at the booth. They've been on board for the past two years and we've had some of our best shows to date (it doesn't hurt that we are timing new releases with the show and putting them out at GenCon, but I don't mind being nice to these slack jawed hill-billies from time to time. Credit where credit is due and all that! So hats off to the crew.

Kim and Jason arrived first to help load. Mark continued slaving over the presses and Kim began packing game boxes, **StarSiege** first, then **Upper Works** and lastly **Towers of Adventure**. This is a time-consuming and tedious task and I avoided it entirely as I was doing inventory on what goods we were hauling off to the show. Jason helped load some boxes, later McBain came by, and he and I cataloged and packed booth supplies, sales receipts, fliers, cash boxes and the like. Lots of coming and going characterized the afternoon and early evening. Around 10 p.m. we gathered and loaded the trucks, Davis arrived and became tie down man as he always is. By 11:26 we were on the road. Kim's van hit it faster; he, McBain, and Jason pulling out and not stopping for nothing until they got to Kentucky. My truck, with Davis, Mark and myself in it (Todd had to bail on this year) moved a bit slower as we stopped 47 times before we got to Tennessee about two hours from Little Rock. We tend to act like old men and frequently stop to shop at gas stations, a favorite pastime of mine. We had a picnic on the hood of the truck in Memphis about 2 a.m. or so.

The ride was fairly uneventful. Kim and crew made it to Indy in about nine and a half hours. It took the truck about 12 due to our frequent stops we got hung up in a chemical spill in Kentucky... that's the first time Kim stopped for a "rest"... and sat on the highway for over an hour. It was all right, as we got to hop and stretch our legs for a bit. At last we arrived; the van was empty and the guys waiting. We promptly ran into Chris Clark from Hekaforge, a friend of mine. We chatted it up awhile and had a good time waiting to marshal out so we could unload. That afternoon blurs into a motion of movement and counter movement as we hustled to and fro, unloading the truck, setting up the booth (McBain and Davis), checking into the hotel, getting badges, and parking trucks. By early evening we had all reconvened where work on the booth continued as Pit Boss Davis bossed us around and McBain struggled with my shifting demands on the video monitor. Peter Bradley showed up and joined us in the booth and it was soon a family affair!

Video??? Yes indeed. TLG debuted its first video installment, a wonderful piece of CGI and live action put together by Goblin Engineered for the show. This is followed by a section of an interview in which I talk about C&C and my friendship with Gary Gygax.

Once it was all set up we staggered back to the rooms and settled in. Mark and Davis collapsed pretty quickly, while I visited next door and spent a raucous hour cracking jokes with Jason, McBain and crew. James arrived at some point in all this and upon discovery that I had no badge for him was quite irritated with the old Troll. He promised to wake me up promptly at 7 a.m. to get him a badge as he had C&C games to run. I promised to ignore him to the best of my ability. Late we trekked out to get supplies and settled in for a pre-convention good nights rest...the last one I would have for almost a week.

James had me up as promised and I was too groggy to resist so I joined him for breakfast...Good eats...and we trekked over to the show, got badges, and wandered around a bit. After a spell he headed off to his game and I to the show to join the rest of the gathering crew. McBain was hard at work moving the monitor



There's never a Troll around when you need one!"

for the third time (at my request) and the rest of the crew was making fun of him...I think Jason might have been helping him but who knows, that boy moves so fast I can't keep up with him.

The show opened at 10 on Thursday and was immediately chaotic, but happily it was all a controlled chaos. Lots of folks coming and going picking up the many new releases we had. **Upper Works** stole the first part of the show, but **StarSieve** ranged close behind as many people have been anxiously awaiting that one. **Towers** and **Crusader** moved and much of the on sale d20 material. Thursday was by far the best day. The crew was top notch and people kept arriving and poking around. We focused our energies on Upper Works, Towers, and SS and it showed as all those titles moved off the shelves. The day is a blur and was punctuated by the arrival of Jeffrey Talanian, Aldo Ghiozzi, and Ashley McKenney who joined the crew to help folks in and out of the booth. It was a good day all in all.



The illustrious Tim Kask giving Peter Bradley some art tips: "Don't listen to Steve!"

The day ended with the 23<sup>rd</sup> annual (just joking, I think its 5<sup>th</sup> or some such) Beer Fest sponsored by Goodman Games, and for the past 2 years in conjunction with Troll Lord Games. We gathered at the Slippery Noodle and had a grand old time. Joe Goodman and all his crew as well as the host of trolls were there. Jolly Blackburn and Steve Johnson from Kenzer showed up as well as Joe and Suzi from Expeditionary Retreat Press. It was a lot of shouting, fun, and campfire songs. I really enjoy hanging out with Goodman, Aldo, and crew, as they are all good folk. Jolly and Steve kept me in stitches as did the bar manager, Marty, who kept calling Security on us (a GIGANTIC man) as a joke. The service was crazy good and we got dollar smokes from the Marlboro people. What can be better? Good times were had by all.

Friday was a harder working day and really merges with Saturday so far as sales are concerned. These days, people are coming by who have heard of you or are only vaguely interested in what is going on. So it's lots of talking and reasoning and



None from this angle either!



explaining new things to people who have pretty much seen it all. Marcus King, a retail giant from Titan Games stopped by and chatted me up for awhile. I love that old boy and he had some really humorous observations to make about various and sundry Troll Lords. The hall was very crowded with a continuous flow of people coming and going. It was a solid day with only one important thing learned: Josh Chewning cannot sell his own game. He pitched people on **StarSiege** all morning and finally quit at which point we promptly sold three copies.

On Friday afternoon, I had lunch with an old friend of mine, Phil Reed, from Steve Jackson Games and Ronin Arts fame. He's a good guy and showed me the coolest RPG ever made. Its on card stock about the size of a CD wrapper opens up into a full three-panel screen and has all the rules you need to play. I was VERY impressed! Phil expressed interest in writing for C&C in the **Crusader** and I jumped at the chance. So in coming issues look for magic items and the like by Mr. Phil Reed (Jim this is a good time to let you know we have a new column for **Crusader**).

(STEVE, THIS IS A GOOD TIME TO SAY YOU ARE SHOVING 5 POUNDS OF MATERIAL INTO A TWO POUND MAGAZINE! WE ARE GOING TO HAVE TO EXPAND, WE'LL TALK LATER—JMW)

Saturday and Friday were solid sales days and ended with Jeffrey Talanian's best quip of the show (well second best but I can't print the other one) when he said to me, "Steve I've been working under this video of you for two days now and if I hear you say one more thing I'm going to smash your face in!" I fell over laughing and apologized to him as we had a sales meeting right after the show and he had to listen to me drone on for a great long while.

Friday night Captain Luke Gygax joined the fray. He's a great guy and he and I go way back to the Gaxmoor days when the **Codex of Erde** was released in conjunction with his and Ernie's **Gaxmoor**. Aldo and I joined him and Luke's army buddy Brenan (?) at some restaurant and from there we wandered about until we ended up at the WB. There Josh and his crew joined us and we had a good time. I remember how the evening ended, but it involved my boots not working correctly and Aldo and Josh dragging me back to the hotel room to fix 'em up. Saturday evening began with a room sales meeting and a screening of "**The Gamers, Dorkness Rising**" a film by Dead Gentleman products. It is HILARIOUS. Check it out, buy it, and enjoy! Late Saturday was a repeat performance of Friday with the added bonus of running into Derek Landwehr (Omoté on the boards) and tipping a few back with him!

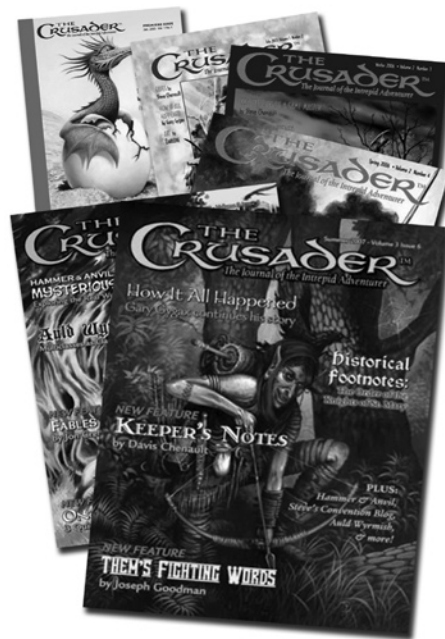
Good times were had by all.

Sunday kick-started a good day. The sales meeting from the night before yielded some good stuff and we retooled our focus off the main releases and worked the C&C line over. We moved the PH and MT very well and jump-started the response to **Crusader**. This ended with a solid fourth sales day for us with many new adherent to the system.

Sunday's sales followed a fevered pitch of a break down as we tore the booth to pieces, packed it up, and loaded it in the trucks.

Kim's van left first, about an hour before the truck did as McBain had to get back pretty quick. As they left us in the dust we slowed a bit and loaded leisurely, swapping jokes with Goodman and Titan Games. Once everything was belted down, much lighter on the going than the coming, we squared in and set off. I drove first as Davis and I had some stuff to discuss. Mark stretched out in the back seat (the truck is a crew cab) and was promptly sleeping away, nursing his twisted ankle. As Davis and I discussed various and sundries I noticed a sign that said St. Louis and I headed in that direction. After a short spell I noticed a sign that said "Illinois". My brain registered something about Kentucky and our route march but immediately discarded it as we were headed into the setting sun, west, and as Arkansas is west of Indiana I didn't think of it a bit. Much later I realized I had taken the northern route through Illinois and not gone south through the Dark and Bloody Grounds (Kentucky) and Tennessee!

Ah well. No worries I thought and we trundled on west and south until we staggered into Little Rock just before the early lights of dawn stole the last vestiges of Gen Con 2008 away.



# Danovar's Desire

## An Adventure for Castles & Crusades

### By John William Wright

*John Wright originally entered this world right about the same time Neil Armstrong was taking a little step somewhere in the night sky. Raised in north Georgia, he grew up in a home dedicated to sci-fi and fantasy, from Tolkein to Heinlein. Introduced to Basic and Expert D&D around 1980, John gave up RPGing for some time to work and obtain a number of degrees which allow him to pretend to know what he's doing teaching theatre, but caught the gaming bug again around 2000 and has become a devotee of C&C ever since. John lives with his wife Mona in NE Wisconsin.*

### Introduction

The adventure you hold in your hands is intended either as a stand-alone one-shot or as material that could be incorporated into a larger game or campaign. "Danovar's Desire" is meant to be played with the **Castles & Crusades**® RPG as published by Troll Lord Games. It is intended for player characters of 1st–2nd levels, and as such is meant as an introductory or low-level adventure encounter for a party of 4–6 characters.

### Background

Nearly a century ago, the quiet town of Raenthorne awoke to the arrival of a stranger. This hooded man brought with him much wealth, and soon had purchased a sizeable plot of land in the hills north of town. The man introduced himself as Danovar Delmari the Mage to the townsfolk. He spun stories of his great days as an adventurer and convinced the mayor and the local constable that he only sought to find a "peaceful corner of the world" to retire to. At first the town welcomed Danovar as he spread his wealth amongst various artisans to build his retirement villa. Danovar was quite specific on the spot he wished to build on, and indeed he spent a premium price to purchase the specific locale—30 acres some three miles north of the town on a low ridge overlooking rather unspectacular grasslands, unremarkable except that it belonged to a particularly miserly local baron.

Even as construction proceeded, however, the locals became wary—for in addition to the artisans hired from Raenthorne there came a contingent of dark-looking Dwarves, who secluded to their own camp near the villa and only worked at night. Whatever they were working on, however, remained out of sight. This led the town's preeminent cleric, Cecil, to suggest that Danovar was a danger, sowing sinister plots against the people of the area. Cecil was soon found deceased, and although many suspected evil in his passing no evidence could be found. Danovar finished his villa, the dark Dwarves departed, and for a time things seemed normal again, although the town remained wary of the mysterious mage.

A decade later Danovar removed completely from contact with the town, sending only one of his three apprentices on errands beyond his "retirement" home. Soon all contact was lost, even with the apprentices. For decades the villa stood, obviously not abandoned (as light could be seen), but silently apart from the town. Then, 20 years ago, the townsfolk awoke to a tremendous sound—the night sky filled with magical fire, billowing upwards from the exploding villa. When the smoke cleared all that remained were ruined foundation stones and the collapsed cellar. cursory explorations revealed no sign of Danovar or his apprentices. Life continued in the town, but parents began to tell tales of "the crazy mage" to scare their children straight, pointing to the scarred and burned hilltop as a warning—"better behave or Danovar will come for you!"

Four months ago, several farmers reported seeing strange lights above the ruins one night. This event was soon followed by an increase in strange thefts and raids on area farmers and ranchers. Attacks on animals became common, and the current town leaders set about to finally deal with what must have been some slumbering remnant of Danovar's presence, a presence now disturbing the peace of the quiet town.

With this resolve, Mayor Wilhelm Whitfinger has put out a call for adventurers of stout heart to solve the mystery of Danovar's villa!

### For the Castle Keeper

Danovar did not choose the location for his "retirement" with peace and quiet in mind. For many years he had sought, through adventuring, to acquire the secret of immortality. Over the course of many years, his quest led him to obtain a set of artifacts—three focusing crystals that would allow him to harness planar energies to rejuvenate his youth. All he needed was a location suitable to opening a minor rift with other planes, and one that would be relatively safe from prying eyes of others. He learned of a series of caves near Raenthorne, and so began his work.

Within several years he had completed his "Caves of Immortality," adapting the underground caverns beneath his villa to function as a conduit of the regenerative power. He adopted three apprentices, Jarven, Derak and Clotharis, but he jealously



guarded the power of youth he had found. The years went by, and Jarven became impatient with his master. He sowed discord between Derak and Clotharis, creating a confrontation that erupted into a magical fight in the villa one night. As Danovar moved to intervene, Jarven attempted to steal into the caverns and remove the focusing crystals. But Danovar was cunning, and had set traps to alert him to just such mischief. Jarven was startled to hear the first focusing stone shrieking an alarm as he pulled it from its holding-stone. He attempted to flee, but was stopped by Danovar in the villa. Derak and Clotharis, angered at Jarven's deception, attacked him with lightning spells before Danovar could stop them. Unfortunately, the single crystal Jarven still had contained a very potent charge of planar energy. The lightning connected with the crystal even as it killed Jarven. Danovar and the other two died seconds later, as the crystal exploded in an other-worldly burst of magical energy that eradicated everything in the villa.

The "presence" that has recently returned to the caves is actually several troops of Hobgoblins whose shaman discovered the ruins and Danovar's hidden entrance in the collapsed basement. This troop was homeless, having been expelled from a larger tribe.

The chief of the Hobgoblins is one Buthok the Mighty, as he styles himself. Altogether there are two troops of males, around five females, and only a dozen or so youngsters—these troops having been driven from their original tribe when Buthok attempted to seize leadership. Their flight left them shorthanded in terms of females and youngsters, and Buthok at first was simply looking for a good lair to regroup and raid from.

Having inhabited Danovar's caves for several months, Buthok's two lieutenants and his shaman, Brakka, have carefully devised raids on the nearby town. Brakka, meanwhile, discovered writings of Danovar's in his former sanctuary, and used a comprehend language spell to discover Danovar's secret of immortality. Needless to say, Buthok was delighted to find his simple lair might provide such power. The entrance to the actual focusing room (#12) with the still-open planar rift, however, was buried and Buthok's tribe has not discovered it. Brakka is convinced that the chasm in **Area 5** is the center of this magic, and as the party encounters this adventure Buthok is becoming more and more frustrated with his shaman's inability to "give him the magic of the dark below." The males of the clan are also restless—Buthok had promised them they would find more females, and that this lair would only be a temporary home. There is rumbling amongst one of the two troops (festered by its lieutenant) that they should kill Buthok and Brakka and return to their original tribe.

## The Villa Ruins

Very little remains of what was once Danovar's villa. The ridge that the grounds occupied is scarred black and only the most noxious of plants grows there now. A few patches of fungi and some very coarse brown grass lead up the hill to an area of about 50' × 120', bounded by blackened foundation stones that reveal the lower floor plan of the now incinerated villa. In the middle, near what was obviously the kitchen (some broken

remains of a fireplace lay here in their crumbled state), there is a gaping hole that drops into what remains of the villa's main cellar. It should take the party only a few minutes of searching to find this particular hole, although any sign of the original entrance and stairs has been obliterated or caved-in. A more extensive search (CL1) will reveal, after perhaps 30 minutes of sifting through old rubble, a small, broken shard of what looks like black quartz or perhaps volcanic glass. It is what remains of the focusing crystal whose power set off the devastating explosion that killed Danovar. It is quite useless now, and has no value other than perhaps as a pocket piece.

On inspection, the party will discover that a shaky and crude wooden ladder has been erected from the cellar to the surface. Checking to listen (CL0) reveals the sounds of two Hobgoblin guards muttering below. Anyone who can translate Hobgoblin will hear them arguing whether Buthok has lost his mind or not, and how they should just be taking what they need from the pathetic town humans rather than squatting and hiding in "this pit of putrid dank."

**Note:** If the party comes to the site during the day, they will not encounter Hobgoblins above ground because Buthok currently has ordered only night-time raids by small groups of 3–4 only. If the party is present in the villa ruins at night, there is a 10% chance each hour that the returning raid party will encounter the group for each hour the group is present.

The standard Hobgoblin stats for raiders, guards, and male soldiers encountered here are:

*(HD: 1d10) HP range: 5, 7–9 AC: 15 Wearing heavy chain armor, and wielding either a two-handed battle-axe or large hammer. Each Hobgoblin will also have a crude belt and pouch which will contain 1d10+2 copper pieces and 1d4–1 silver pieces.*

If the party encounters and engages a raiding party, then one guard from the cellar will descend to the caves to alert Buthok and the rest of the group. If this occurs then any chance of entering the caverns stealthily will be nearly impossible. In addition, three Hobgoblins will be sent to set up an ambush at **Area 2** of the hidden stairwell leading from the cellar to the caves.

There is no real way to enter the cellar without being clearly visible to the Hobgoblin guards, even if a skirmish with the raiding party hasn't occurred. There is the possibility the party can contrive a means to lure them out, or simply get into the cellar to engage before the duo can warn the others below.

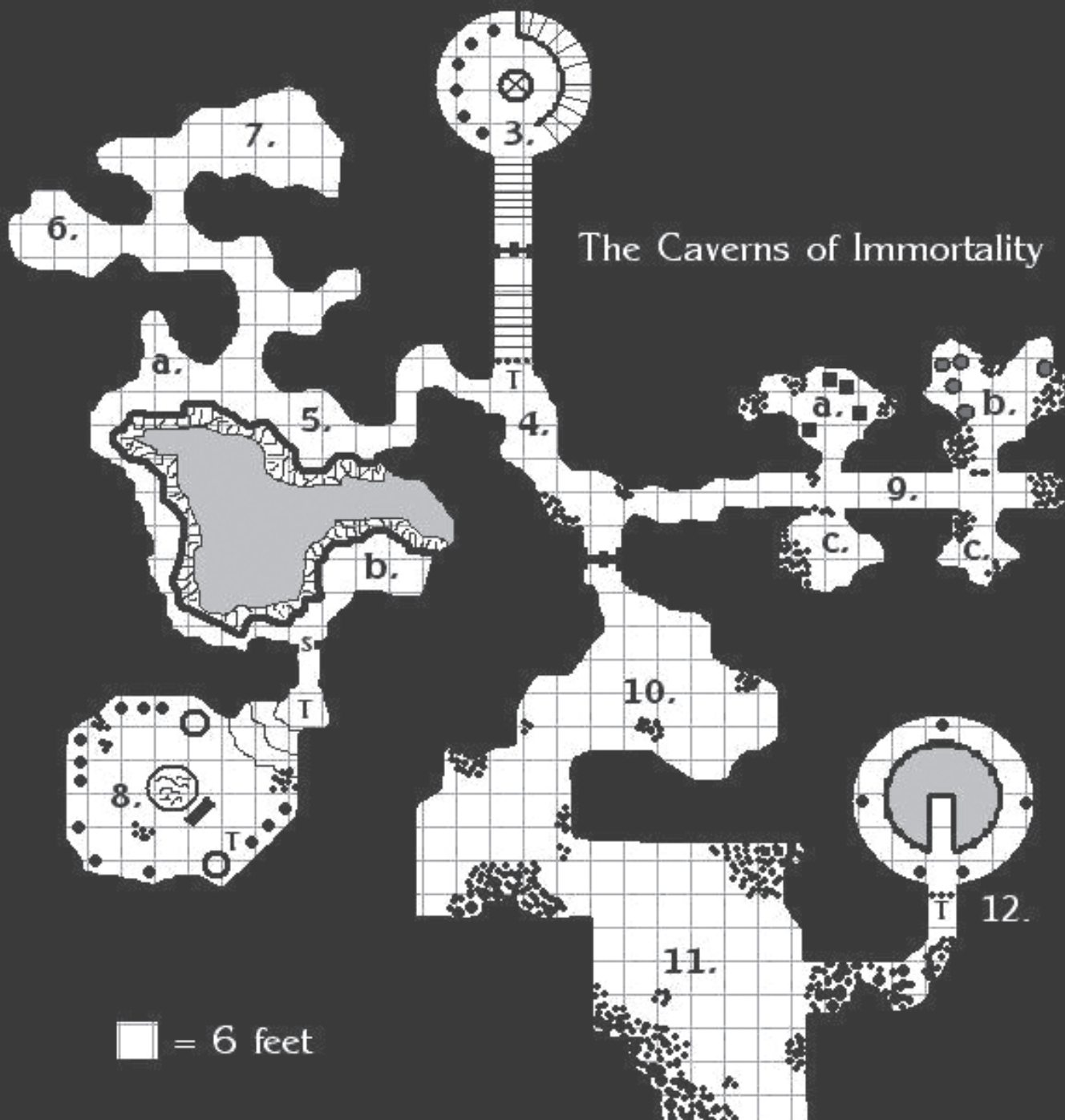
Most of the cellar has been ruined, with nearly half collapsed in on itself. The northern end, which once held the real exit stairs is a mass of rock and dirt. Sodden remnants of wine racks sag or lay in mildewing piles. There are shards of broken bottles and a foul smell permeates the whole room. A successful search (CL0) will locate a single intact bottle of red wine, now vintage, buried in one of the piles.

The entrance to the hidden staircase is through a door that was disguised very cleverly as part of the foundation wall. The Hobgoblins keep it slightly ajar now, so there is no need to find it if the alarm has not been sounded. If the guards were alerted, then it is closed and will take either a decent search or the senses

# *Danovar's Desire*



Hidden Stairwell Levels 1 & 2





of certain races to detect. The door opens onto the landing at the top of the stairs in **Area 1**.

## The Hidden Stairwell

The top two areas of the stairwell are one open room with two levels. The lowest area is separated by the floor of **Area 2**.

**1. Upper Stairs**— The circular stairs are made of stone and wind down clockwise from the entrance. There is no railing, and if the alarm has been set then three Hobgoblins armed with battle-axes and crossbows will be set up in here. If present, they will first take shots with the crossbows, then one will charge up to block the party's decent while the other two continue to fire. Once their comrade is defeated, the other two will switch to melee.

**2. Level 2 of Stairs**— The stairwell does not continue unbroken, but hits this landing area. As above, the Hobgoblins use this area to ambush if warned. If no alarm was given, then both initial areas are clear.

**3. The Ante-Room**— The bottom of the stairs end in what was a reflection of Danovar's vanity. A statue of the mage himself stands still in the middle of the room, and on the west curve are six pedestals, each adorned with a bust representing friends and fellow adventurers from Danovar's past, their names now lost to time. The images are likewise no longer clear, as the Hobgoblins have defaced each bust with a crude mosaic of blood and feces. The statue of Danovar, however, appears to have been cleaned after originally being smeared with the foul graffiti as well. (Buthok ordered the cleaning for fear of angering the mage's spirit after deciding to seek his secret of immortality). The gems that made the original eyes, however, are missing.

Broad stairs lead down to a heavy iron and wood door of sturdy dwarven make. The door is ajar if no warning was given. Otherwise, it is closed and locked, and the trap at **Area 4** will be set, as well as a further ambush at that location. The lock is a very sturdy mechanical type, also of dwarven design. It has a CL2 to open, or should be treated as having AC 16 with 38 HPs to hack through with weapons.

A search of the ante-room (CL1) will discover a small secret chamber, about 6×6 inches, in the base of the Danovar statue. Inside is a small sack with a spare replacement gem for the statue's eyes (20 g.p. value), as well as a key to the door leading to **Area 10**.



## The Caverns of Immortality

**4. Central Passage**— Stairs continue down from the door to this passage. The trap at the base of the stairs was not part of the original dungeon design, but is a Hobgoblin addition and is only set if the alarm has been raised. It is a crude trip-wire set to release a scythe blade that swings down and through the passage. CL0 to find, CL1 to disarm, dexterity check to save for half-damage, 1d6+4 damage to person tripping the wire. Two Hobgoblins will move from **Areas 6 or 7** to ambush from the west hallway, one with a battle-axe and one with a war hammer. Two additional will join the melee from the south, after locking the door to **10**.

**5. The Endless Pit**— This section of the original caverns was left by Danovar because of its beauty. Crystalline stalactites hang from the ceiling, formed centuries ago by mineral-rich water flows that passed through the caves. The shiny, reflective stones studded throughout the stalactites are quite pretty, but there is no value beyond the sparkle they add to the room. Regardless of whether the party has sounded the alarm or not, 3 Hobgoblins including Buthok's first lieutenant Drogg (AC 16, HP 13, Chainmail, Battle Axe).

**5a. Alcove**— Stashed in this alcove is a large sack containing: 39 g.p., 72 s.p., 2 gems (25, 30 g.p. value), and a ring (cursed ring of bad luck, -2 to ALL rolls, removable only by remove curse spell).

The winding, narrow ledge leading from a. to area b. below is only 1 1/2 ft. wide in two spots. All passing will have to make a dexterity check (CL2) to navigate the crumbling ledge. If they fall, there is a slight broken slope around the rim that a further check can be made against to see if the individual grabs hold of or falls into the bottomless pit. If a PC does go into the darkness, it is fruitless to even describe what happens when that character ultimately hits bottom - the imagination should provide a pretty clear mental image.

**5b. Brakka**— Working on the south ledge is Brakka. He has pulled a wooden table from **Area 10** to work here, and has Danovar's diary open on the table. He has been casting spells into the pit vainly trying to "activate" the energy (he is still unaware the real chamber is buried at **Area 12**).

Brakka's stats are: AC 13, HP 20; Spells known and usable: *Create Water*, *Cure Light Wounds*, *Command*, *Sound Burst*, *Dancing Lights*, *Burning Hands*. **Tactics:** As Drogg and the Hobgoblins above engage the party, Brakka will hold action to see how the first round goes, then cast his *Sound Burst* across the cavern at the party. He'll next use *command* to try and move a PC into danger along the edge. If the party or any PCs begin to come around the ledge, Brakka will turn to his *Create Water* or *Dancing Lights* spells to increase the possibility of party members falling at the narrow spots (the CK should add appropriate CL ratings depending on the circumstances).

Brakka is wearing leather armor, has a holy symbol of whatever god/faith is appropriate for the game (should be an evil god of fate) at hand. He has a pouch with 20 g.p., 10 s.p., a scroll of *Resist Elements*, a study black cloak, and a bronze dagger

with a jewel in its hilt (worth 50 g.p.), a gift from Buthok for his loyalty over the years.

Danovar's diary contains most of the information detailed in the "for the CK" portion to start the adventure, and the CK can disclose the true history of Danovar's desire at this point. The passage that the book is open to describes the following:

*When I stand on the precipice above the darkness, the energy of the crystals draws the power of the rift I have opened (unseen) below...I stand for but a few minutes and the energy of the planes restores me, years for each minute.*

This side of the stalactites shows definite char marks from magic missiles...obviously Brakka has confused the shiny reflective quartz of this chamber with the focusing crystals. When a PC searches through the diary, there are two other passages of note:

*I have found that I must take only a few years at a time, for to greedily try for decades of new youth in one session can cause damage to my mind... I must not gain immortality only to have no way of remembering forever!*

and,

*My novices have shown more ambition of late—I must protect my chamber from the possibility one or more may betray me. I set my trap, and must remember the clue—what multiplies my life must always follow the patience of my desire, tempered between by the cunning of my thought.*

The Hobgoblins have not discovered the secret door, well-hidden in the rock on the south side of the ledge. CL3 to discover, or CL1 if sensed by a party member passing by it.

**6. Buthok's Store Room**—The Hobgoblins have cleared **Areas 6 and 7** for Buthok. This alcove is where his principal guards and stores are. Normally there are four Hobgoblins on duty here, but one will have been sent to **4** if the alarm had been given, and the rest will have moved to **7**. In any situation to protect Buthok. In this alcove stands a rack with: a battle-axe, 2 spears, a long-sword and a short-sword. There are two barrels, one containing rather foul and putrid water (tasty to Buthok, unpalatable to most), the other is half full with very, very cheap wine. There is also a chest, which contains assorted stuff: sack with 18 g.p., 2 p.p.; a second sack with 77 c.p.; 2 daggers; a flask of oil; a bolas; 33' of rope (the rest having been chopped off); and, a ring, which Buthok tossed in thinking it was just a simple signet ring (it is a *Ring of Feather Falling*).

**7. Buthok's Lair**—Buthok (AC 16, HP 23, Heavy Chain, Battle-Axe) and 3 Hobgoblin Guards are set in his lair, piled with furs and flanked by two large torch-stands. By this point, there is no way Buthok will not be ready and aware of the party coming. If, however, the PCs have spent too much time in **Area 8** (below) before coming up the passage to **7**, then the CK may determine that Buthok and his guards may have attempted to move (20% chance under these conditions). If so, they will now be at **Area 10**. The party will find nothing else of value in the bedding or room, but Buthok has on him a pouch with 12 p.p., 17 g.p., a diamond (75 g.p.), and the two gems from the Danovar statue (flawless emeralds worth 100 g.p. each).

**8. Danovar's Secret Arboretum**—Danovar constructed this secret room as his private meditation chamber, filled with an enchanted well in the center, various plants and flowers, as well as pedestals containing other exotic plants. Above, a crystal was embedded which gives off the soft glow of false daylight (should the PCs try to pry this from the roof, it will immediately lose its enchantment and turn into nothing more than a gem worth 5 g.p.).

Just inside the doorway and before the shelf-steps that lead into the arboretum, one of Danovar's original traps remains active. It is a pressure plate (CL 1 to find, CL 2 to disarm) that releases a sleep gas (treat as spell if not avoided by dexterity check CL 1) from several holes along the passage wall.

The room is now very overgrown, tangled with vegetation and moss. The fountain in the center is now a stagnant pool. The only resident in the room is a Homunculus, once constructed by Danovar, now alone and bitter. It will watch a party carefully, and will take immediate interest in any wizard in the group, but attacking as soon as it realizes with certainty that it is not Danovar returning. This happens 1d4 turns after the PCs have entered the room (or at once if no wizard is present in the group at all). The Homunculus's stats are: AC 14, HP 13, Bite (Special Poison as in M&T p. 49). A search of the room will reveal no valuables of any sort beyond the day-gem.

**9. Storerooms**—This area of the caves were once circular storerooms for Danovar. The explosion that destroyed the villa above also set off cave-ins and ceiling collapses in several areas, including these rooms. The end of the corridor heading E is also collapsed, although if the CK wishes this could potentially lead to larger unexplored subterranean caverns (if the CK wishes to expand from this adventure), and these could be alluded to in Danovar's diary. The doors that once gave entrance are now smashed bits strewn along the floor. Any searches in this area have a 20% chance of triggering a further collapse, 1d6+2 damage unless saved against (CK discretion).

**9a. Rotted Boxes**—This room once was storage for various artwork, books, manuscripts and the like that Danovar wanted to keep safer below. Most are ruined and indecipherable. A search (CL 1), however, will reveal a *Scroll of Sleep* and fairly intact painting worth 18-24 g.p.

**9b. Potions & Barrels**—This storeroom once contained a number of barrels of potions and draughts for Danovar. Most are ruined, putrid, or even evaporated. A successful search will discover one small cask with some *Heal Light Wounds* potion (enough for 2 doses).

**9c. Empty Storerooms**—Nothing of note remains in these chambers other than the chance (20% as above) of a further cave-in if the PCs attempt to move a lot of rubble to search, however Buthok's second lieutenant Morg is meeting in one of these rooms to discuss leaving or revolting against Buthok. If any in the party speak Hobgoblin and overhear this, they may be able to bribe and convince Morg to attack from within (if the party hasn't already dealt with Buthok themselves). If they've killed Buthok, Morg will move to go get the females and youngsters and leave (if the party has killed any of these, Morg will fight, as he will if no communication occurs). Morg: AC



16, HP 12, War Hammer; 4 Hobgoblins (HPs 4, 6, 6, 8; Battle Axes). Morg has a pouch with 7 g.p. and 10 s.p. If they do attack Buthok at 5, 6 and 7, they will be defeated, but at least three of the other Hobgoblins there will be dead or injured.

**10. The Library**— This room once held Danovar's books, scrolls and other arcane valuables. It is now the main dormitory for the Hobgoblin females and youngsters in Buthok's small tribe. Most of the bookcases and other furnishings have been destroyed, either by previous ceiling collapses or by the Hobgoblins themselves. Except for the diary that Brakka took, the rest of the books and scrolls were ripped and destroyed, used as detritus on top of which foul-smelling beds for the tribe were made. The door is locked, and made of strong steel and hardened wood. It opens easily if the PCs have found the key in Area 3, otherwise it's a CL 3 to open, or treated as AC 15 with HPs of 28 to bash through.

Unless Buthok and his 3 guards have come here from **Area 7**, there are 4 Hobgoblins (6 if two had not gone to **Area 4** to ambush the party) guards protecting the half-dozen or so females and dozen or so youngsters. If the Hobgoblins are defeated, the females and children will cower—either presenting easy prey for less scrupulous parties or fleeing if the PCs allow them. There is nothing of value in this room now.

**11. Danovar's Old Chambers**— This was Danovar's personal inner sanctum of old, and the rotting canopy and frame of what was once a luxurious bed still are visible in the center of the room. The collapses here were great, and the Hobgoblins really only used this room as trash heap for rotting food and waste. It is nasty and smells disgusting. A search, however, will find a buried chest under one portion of waste and rock - containing 15 p.p., 48 g.p., a *Potion of Bless*, and a silver-encrusted dagger (+1 against undead). There is, however, one problem—A small area of the SW near where the chest is located now appears to be infested with purplish mushrooms. In actuality a small Violet Fungus has begun to take root, although luckily it has only grown to about 1/3 its potency. Stats: AC 13, HP 8, Attacks w/ Tentacles (See **special** as per **M&T** pg. 35).

The passage leading to the Chamber of Immortality (**Area 12**) is so completely collapsed it will take some searching (CL 1) to even identify it, then 4–8 hours of labor to clear.

**12. The Chamber of Immortality**— In this circular room Danovar used the three focusing crystals to open a slight rift between planes, and harnessed the energy of the rift to rejuvenate his life force. There is no door, however as the PCs come towards the room they will see the floor is broken into a 6x6 ft. section with pressure plates like a tic-tac-toe box. In each of the twelve boxes are images of animals as follows (from nearest to room toward the PCs):

Raven	Horse	Rabbit
Snake	Fox	Eagle
Fish	Turtle	Rat

This is the riddle trap set by Danovar (only Jarven ever got a look at his diary so as to steal into the chamber previously). The answer to the riddle is to step in succession across from Turtle

(patience) to Fox (cunning) to Rabbit (multiplication of life). Stepping on the wrong plate or moving out of sequence sets the trap off, and the person is hit with 5 *magic missiles* (5×1d4+3). Trying to jump across breaks the plane of the magical enchantment and results in the same. The ONLY way through for a party of this level would be to solve the riddle. Once inside the chamber, the PCs will encounter the two remaining crystals (in the north and west pedestals) arching chaotically with purplish lightning that seems drawn from the rift below. Indeed, because the chamber has stood unused for decades and because one of the crystals was removed, the focusing balance has been thrown off and the remaining crystals have been building dangerous charges for years. In fact, they are within weeks of a fairly cataclysmic explosion that will widen the rift and rip open something of a hell-mouth into the material world. If PCs attempt to cross out to the precipice and receive energy, they will instead be hit with the now-corrupted electrical charge, sizzling them for 1d6+2 HPs of damage for each turn they stay in the center of the room.

To take care of the chamber, both the remaining focusing crystals must be removed, then thrown into the rift (an intelligence check by any user of magic in the party, CL 2, would hint at this), thereby sealing the breach between planes. If this is done, then the dangerous ramifications of Danovar's long-dead desire will finally be put to rest.

Once the rift is disposed of, a search of the room's ledge will reveal (CL2) a locked secret vault in one wall (CL 2 to open), the contents of which are: 4 gems (25, 50, 50, 100 g.p.), a stack of 10 p.p., a necklace (75 g.p.), a *Wand of Magic Missiles* (with 4 missile charges left), and two scrolls, one of *Mirror Image* and one of *Open/Close*.

## Notes on the Town:

Obviously the Mayor and the town will be quite grateful if the adventure is completed. The CK should feel free to use the gratitude of the townsfolk as a springboard to other adventures or a larger campaign.

Although the town is not essential to the playing of this mini-module, the CK should use it as a base for the low-level party to operate from, and the CK can expand any details on Raenthorne as necessary to make it fit in a larger campaign.

The town, at the least, should feature: a general store, a blacksmith (armorer), an apothecary/theurgic chancelry, and a small tavern/inn.





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# The Angry Gamer

by Some Angry Troll Dude

## GAMING AT THE TROLL DENS

**CK:** "Okay, last week's game ended poorly. We were all pretty disappointed in the direction the game was going and the sudden, catastrophic death of the party by that pissed off leprechaun was perhaps over the top on my part. So let's start fresh this week. We all discussed this via e-mail..."

**Mark:** "I don't have e-mail."

**Todd:** "Is that what all those e-mails you were writing were about? All I read was Mac blathering on about how bums wear pizza boxes for hats or some crap and Davis' story about how he lived in a pizza box out in Utah!"

**CK:** "Yeah, well, amongst that jibber was some other jabber about the game..."

**Chris:** "Those bum jokes were morally offensive."

Raucous laughter from Mac, coffee spews on the new character sheet. More laughter follows, coupled with shouts from Todd along the lines of "You did it again!!!" This to mark the tradition Mac has of spewing liquid on his new character sheet.

**Chris:** "What, they were pretty tasteless."

**Davis to Mark:** "Hey that pizza box served me well while climbing Mt. Watchyamcallit. It was raining so hard I couldn't see, so I turned the box around, used the top as a flap, cut eye holes in it and moved on! Saved my life."

**Mark to Chris:** "This from the man that perpetuated the Frog Atrocity of '04 on Steve's character?!?"

**CK:** "BUM Jokes, coffee, and pizza boxes aside..."

**Mac:** "Those bum jokes are funny. I saw a bum using a pizza slice for a tie!"

**Chris:** "Hey, Steve fell on his hands and knees! Targets of opportunity!"

**CK:** "ALRIGHT! All that aside. Tonight we'll start a new game, with new characters and explore a different part of Aihrde. This will give us a fresh start."

**Chris (evil grin):** "Those bum jokes are pretty funny."

**Davis:** "Did I mention that there was some pizza cheese stuck to the bottom so I could eat and walk at the same time. All I had to do was lick the box."

**Todd to Davis:** "Did I mention you're an idiot!"

**Mark:** "I could go for some pizza right now. Little Caesar's is like five and a quarter for a whole pizza."

**Mac:** "I saw a bum using hollowed-out bread loaves as shoes."

**Chris:** "Hey that reminds me, I mentioned in one of my e-mails that I wanted my character to have a deep seated psychological reaction to halfling footwear!"

**Todd:** "Halflings don't have footwear!"

**Davis to Mark:** "Pizza makes me ill. I don't want any, I'll raid Todd's beautiful cupboards."

**Todd spins fast to Davis:** "What ..."

**Chris to Todd:** "YEAH but your momma does!"

**Todd:** "What?"

**Mark:** "You don't eat pizza? And you call yourself an American."

**Mac:** "I saw a bum using a shrimp for a blue tooth."

**Davis to Mark:** "I call myself hungry and Todd's house is a treasure trove."

**CK:** "Dude, Todd's cupboards are like paradise on earth. I could curl up in those shelves and sleep in the beautiful order of things."

**Todd:** "You're like a rat, you can sleep anywhere."

**CK:** "Dude that reminds me! I bagged that rat the other day, literally in a kitchen sack and I had to take a hammer..."

**Davis to Mark:** "Where are you going?"

**Chris:** "You're lucky Sarah isn't here, she would kick your @\$!"

**Todd to Davis:** "CLOSE THE BAG!"

**Mark over his shoulder:** "To get Davis a new hat at Little Caesars!"

**Mac:** "I saw a bum using green beans as q-tips."

# MONSTERS OF AIHRDE

BY STEPHEN CHENAULT

*The world of Aihrde spins upon an earth-like axis of ancient civilizations where good and evil have struggled for countless years. It is a world bearing the markings of its past; where ancient evils slumber, stained with the power of eldritch wizardry; where gods dwell in bejeweled halls of wonderment, worshiped by men and women of all creeds; where dragons live in great dens of heaped treasure; where the new stands upon the ruins of the old in beds of ancient glory. Here, kingdoms have risen and fallen, ground to dust by war, famine, plague or time. Aihrde is a world reborn, and in the After Winter Dark heroes tread in iron, shod boots and wizards lean on crooked staffs to plunder the buried wealth and power of the ages. Here, the eternal struggle goes on, age after age, for Aihrde is a world of adventure, of undaunted heroes, untainted by the decadent philosophies of those meek who suffer in the shadows of lesser men. For here, the stone columns of history are wiped clean, awaiting the bold to carve their mark and gain entry to the halls of immortality.*

## **Io-topek (Ape-Men)**

**NO. APPEARING:** 4-80

**SIZE:** Large

**HD:** 5(d12)

**MOVE:** 30 ft., 20 ft. (climb)

**AC:** 16

**ATTACKS:** 2 Claw (1d8 each), or weapon (2d8), Bite (1d12)

**SPECIAL:** Blood Frenzy, Leap, Rend, Scent, Twilight Vision

**SAVES:** Physical

**INT:** Superior

**ALIGNMENT:** Neutral Evil

**TYPE:** Humanoid

**TREASURE:** 6

**XP:** 380+5

In the deep jungles of the south lie wondrous cities now in ruins, victims of time and nature. Little remains where once stood mighty ramparts, domed buildings decked with gold and other splendors. The walls are in ruins, vines cover the gates, trees split the cobbled ways and the domes are in splinters. Here, amidst all this forgotten splendor dwell the last of a dying race, the io-topek. The io-topek are ape-like creatures who resemble ape-men. They stand about five feet tall, are thick of chest with long arms and shorter legs. They are powerful creatures, with thick muscles of corded iron. They walk with a rambling gait, moving slowly and awkwardly. When they run they are very fast, for they shift their weight forward using their arms as much as their legs. Their bodies are covered in a thick layer of dark hair and the skin beneath is thick, more like the hide of a beast than the skin of a man. The heads of the bulls are strangely devoid of hair, their scalps a pale gray color. The cows have longer hair, with a generous amount on their heads. The bulls are always larger than the cows, thicker in chest and arms, though the cows are more nimble and move far quicker than their rambling mates do.

The io-topek has long fangs, often ringed with bands of iron, gold, silver, or some other precious metal. Though once they

mastered the use of metal working they have long since lost it and pilfer the dead for what they wear. They deck themselves in arm bands, rings, and studs. They sometimes carry shields, but rarely as these tend to interfere with their movement.

For weapons they use iron studded clubs, stone axes or other weapons they have stolen or inherited over the years. They have a very good mastery of ropes, vines and the like and often use these in combat to immobilize their foe. Though intelligent, they are not very industrious living in the ruins of their ancestors, embedded in the squalor of a past they cannot remember.

They live in small bands, usually but not always near the ruins of their ancestors. Some of the bands have digressed into such a primitive state they hardly resemble their kin. These bands are led either by the largest bull, a Warlord, or by a Shaman, an io-topek of greater intelligence who is able to conjure minor spells. Warlords possess maximum hit points with an AC of 20. They are able to do an extra 1d4 points of damage on any attack. Shamans act as a normal io-topek but are able to cast druid spells as a 5th level druid. The bands consist of about 50% male and female with 10% of the band being young adults or babies.

The io-topek worships the moon of Aihrde, but not the true moon. The moon they call the Eye of Orx, a shortened name of the god Thorax. They worship this long fallen deity, making grim sacrifices to him whenever they can. Their temples are wooded areas, at the heart of which is a hollowed stump that has been fashioned into a drum. Upon the full moon they gather here, wildly beating upon the drum, eating, dancing, and making sacrifices when they can.

**Combat:** The io-topek are ferocious in battle. They are quick to anger and attack most anything that displeases them. Always in the backs of their minds are latent feelings of superiority and the desire to destroy anything that may cause envy. If a warlord or shaman is present they can act in concert when attacking. The troop, male and female, surrounds the enemy and falls upon them from all sides. The io-topek will attempt to capture some of their victims and keep them for sacrifices.

**Blood Frenzy:** When an io-topek is reduced to 50% of its hit points it automatically enters a frenzy the following round. A frenzied io-topek claws and bites madly until either it or its opponent are dead. It gains a +2 bonus on all attack rolls, +2



damage, and a +2 bonus on its saves; it suffers a -2 penalty to AC. An io-topek cannot end its frenzy voluntarily.

**Leap:** The io-topek is a powerfully built humanoid whose legs are short but powerful. If they are already charging they are able to leap huge distances, covering 40ft. in one large jump. They are able to do this and attack with claws and their bite attack in the same round.

**Rend:** Io-topek's are able to rend for 3d4 points of extra damage if both claws hit.



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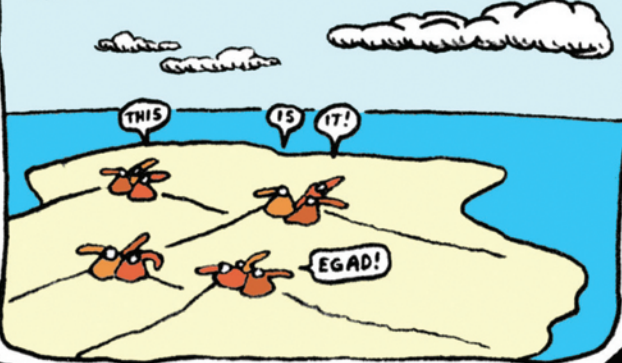
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