

Gygax

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Game world by Luke Gygax
Tactics in *Samurai Battles*
The One Ring adventure



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EDITORIAL

Headly days, early days. Issue number two. It's such a small number, and such a big one at the same time. Any magic-user can tell you, going up a level's not such a big deal once you've been around for a while—it's the trip from level one to level two that's the *real* test. Our pilot issue came out earlier this year, and it's been gratifying to have received such a positive response from gamers young and old alike. In that time, we've learned a lot about what you want from a gaming magazine and what it takes to bring it to you. We'll continue to be a part of the community, listening to gamers online and in person, to deliver a magazine that's both useful and entertaining for gamers of all stripes, from strategists to skirmishers to storytellers.

We've got an embarrassment of riches in this second issue of *Gygax* magazine, featuring a wonderful mixture of old-school and new-school designers and authors covering a wide variety of games and topics. Take some time to read an article about a game you've never played before, and see if it inspires you to give it a go, or maybe to bring some fresh ideas into your favorite go-to games.

Our special attraction this issue is a first look at the upcoming campaign world of Okkorim by Luke Gygax. A few lucky players have had a chance to go on The Search for Darwah's Temple, Luke's limited-run tourney module set in the Blighted Lands of Okkorim. In the coming months, we will be publishing a full standalone campaign world from Luke, and this is your chance to be among the first to adventure in that desert land. We've included a special treat in the fold-out section with maps by the founder of Dwarven Forge, Stefan Pokorny.

The adventures don't stop there with this issue either. Players of *The One Ring* can seek glory and fame in the gripping storytelling of The Hare and the Hill Giant, set a few years after the Battle of Five Armies; and *Dragon World* gamers will find challenges and reward in the Lost Wonders of Caelmarath.

If head-to-head battles get your blood flowing, give *Samurai Battles* a try with Tim Kask, or let Bryan Pope show you winning strategies for *Mage Wars*.

Readers interested in the stories behind the adventure gaming hobby are in for a double dose of new knowledge as well, as Ernie Gygax takes you through the events that led Gary Gygax to go from the sand table to the dungeon, and Jon Peterson examines a mysterious manuscript that may or may not be the earliest version of *Dungeons & Dragons*.

For the polyhedral aficionados like myself who like nothing so much as a good crunchy table of combat resolutions or percentile outcomes, Len Lakofka delivers with a well-thought-out set of possibilities for the character near death. Are you *sure* you have time to hide that scroll before you lose consciousness?

And not least of all, I'd like to give a hearty welcome to one of my favorite comic artists, Aaron Williams. His creations, including *Nodwick*, *PS238*, and his daily comic *Full Frontal Nerdity*, are well-known staples in the gaming world, and it's an honor to have exclusive *Full Frontal Nerdity* installments in a format that's a new twist on this perennial favorite. Together with Rich Burlew's *Order of the Stick*, we're truly blessed to have exclusive comics on our back pages from such luminaries.

Someday we'll hopefully be looking at issues of *Gygax* magazine with big 'ol numbers on the cover, trying to remember what it was like to go from a little number like one to a little number like two. I hope that no matter how long we get to bring you this magazine, it will always be just as thrilling and rewarding to go up that one digit and put another issue of gaming content out to the community. Thanks for giving us the opportunity to bring this to you.

Jayson Elliot
Editor-in-Chief



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DON'T INTERRUPT THE GAME!

Dantès Faria

Statistics		Health	
Languages		Max HP:	21
Game:	Avalon	Current HP:	21
Gender:	M	Non-Lethal:	0
Alignment:	Lawful Neutral	Ki Pool:	
Hair Color:	Black	Rest	
		Total Level:	3

Offense		Defense	
CMB:	+2	CMD:	14
Initiative:	+2	Armour Class:	13
Base Attack:	+1	Saves	
Melee Attack:	+2	Fortitude:	+3
Range Attack:	+3	Reflex:	+3
# of Attacks:	1	Will:	+7

Armour	
Padded	
AC: +1 Dex: 8	Fail: 5%

CHARACTER FOLIO

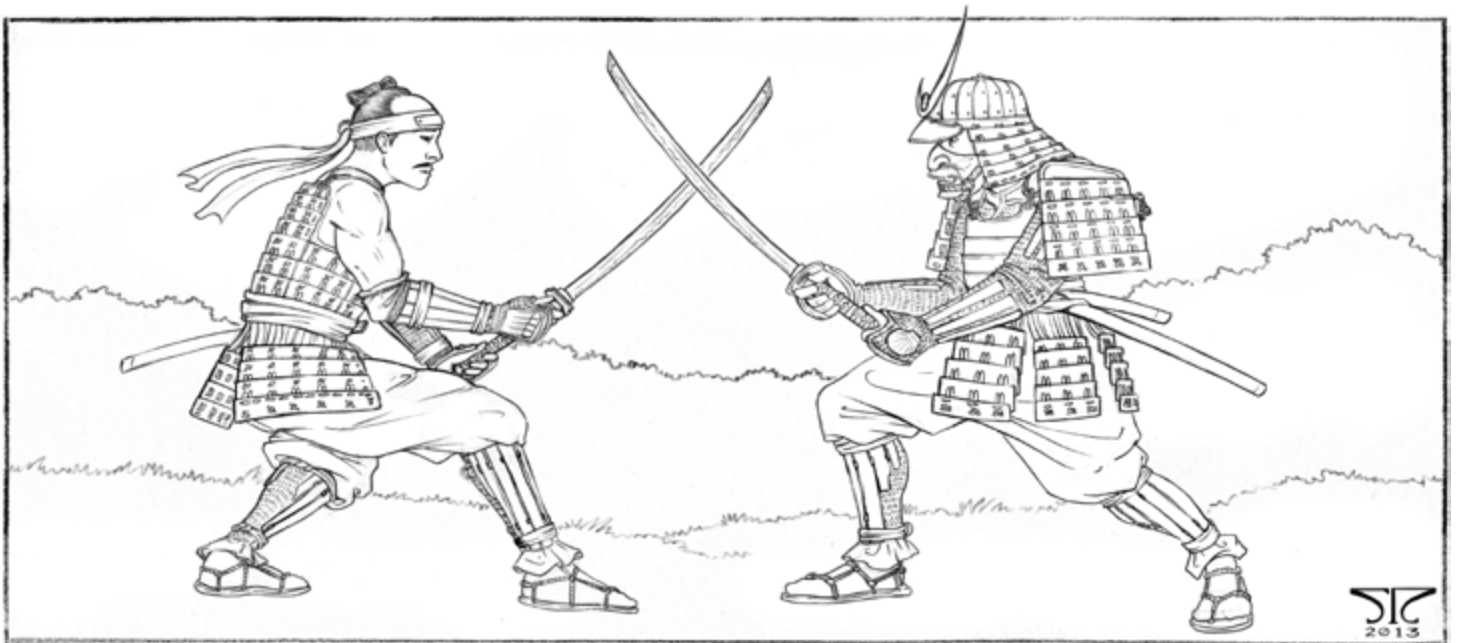
www.darktheatre.net



Detail of the land of Okkorim—see p. 40

Tactics in *Samurai Battles*

by Tim Kask



In a game like *Samurai Battles* that has a randomizing factor like *Dragon Cards*, there are no hard and fast rules for success. In playing the game for this article, we did learn a few good lessons that I am glad to pass along.

My two most important pieces of advice would be: always, always, always have a path of retreat open; and, kill the shooters.

If you are not able to retreat the number of hexes called for by combat results, for every hex you cannot retreat, you lose a figure. You might ask why I stress this so; one of the scenarios has a unit that is in a blocked position at the onset of the battle. When we played it, my wily opponent attacked the crowded wing of my army and punished the blocked unit quite harshly; he nearly got one of his five banners on the first turn!

On the other hand, as the attacker, try to sequence your various attacks with the oppo-

nent's retreat in mind. If you can force him to overload one of his sectors, you can paralyze a portion of his forces if he happens to not have any orders for that sector. You may, in another instance, be able to block a subsequent target's retreat with units already retreated that turn.

This game can be quite fluid, the sides ebbing and flowing across the board; with nowhere to retreat to, the turn ends, usually with sanguine results. In one of our early games, I was able to partially drive in parts of both of my opponent's wings, thus clogging up the center. It was brutal for him as he had no good Center Command cards; his army congealed in the center.

Banners are nearly as good as kills in regard to die-roll results. In this game, you are not really "killing" the unit; you take an enemy banner when the unit ceases to function cohesively. You, as the commanding daimyo, lose

battles when your troops lose their faith in your abilities to lead and command (represented by H&F tokens, or lack thereof). In *Samurai Battles*, you are not there to *kill* the enemy so much as you are there to *render the opposing army unable to continue*. This is a somewhat odd tenet to embrace for some wargamers; in the real thing the objective is to render the opposing forces incapable of opposing you and to occupy the ground you consider to be vital (or want).

It is imperative to try to keep a worst-case-scenario supply of H&F tokens. This is not possible at the onset of the game as most scenarios call for starting with five or six tokens. Two bad retreat results could wipe those out in a single turn. While the *Dragon Cards* are fun, I recommend that you forego picking them at the end of the turn and instead take the two H&F token option for at least a couple of turns, depending upon what is happening in those

Samurai Battles — evolution of a dual game

by Richard Borg

Samurai Battles premiered almost a year ago at the Origins game convention, in 2012. Since that date, the game has been flying under the radar of most gamers. Yet *Samurai Battles* has gained a small following of very loyal fans. I believe many of these fans have actually come from the group of players who were already familiar with one or more of the other games that use the *Commands & Colors* system: *Battle Cry*, *Memoir '44*, *Commands & Colors Ancients*, *Commands & Colors Napoleonic*, and *BattleLore*.

Personally, I always thought the historical samurai period was interesting and I had even collected a bunch of miniature figures, thinking one day I would perhaps have the time and opportunity to work on a game with samurai warriors. It was at the New York Toy Fair in February 2011 that it all started to come together.

I stopped by the Alliance booth and was talking with Michael Webb about games. Mike asked if I had seen Zvezda's new game, *World War II: Barbarossa 1941*, by Konstantin Krivenko. I had not seen the game, but I did know of Zvezda and had a number of packs of their very fine plastic 1:72 scale samurai miniatures. Mike introduced me to Konstantin, who was at the Alliance booth, showcasing his WWII game and we talked awhile about games. Returning home, I took a serious look at the Zvezda catalog and it all came together!

Zvezda was planning to release an entire new line of samurai figures, and I contacted Konstantin at Zvezda. After a few emails, we were well on our way. Konstantin had already been thinking about doing another *Art of Tactic* game, and when I suggested doing a *Com-*

mands & Colors samurai game, it seemed logical that his *Art of Tactic* and my *Commands & Colors* could in fact become one game project: *Samurai Battles* — *Art of Tactic* rules by Konstantin Krivenko and *Samurai Battles* — *Commands & Colors* rules by Richard Borg. Both rule sets would utilize the same battlefield map game board, a set of terrain tiles and the samurai miniature figures. Both rule sets, however, would feature a number of additional game components.

As I stated earlier, *Samurai Battles* seems to be flying under the radar of most gamers, yet those that have had the opportunity to play have found that its core game really does have a lot to offer. As for the *Commands & Colors* version, there are ample units in the core game to field two very competitive samurai armies. The battles, included in the scenario booklet, focus on the historical deployment of forces and the important terrain features in scale with the game system, while the Dragon Cards add an element of suspense and surprise that can bend the rules and instantly change the course of a battle. Finally, because of the length of time covered and the historical transition in warfare during this period, the possible expansion kits and additional battle scenarios for the samurai game are almost endless.

Yes, there have been a few hiccups as Zvezda gains experience and the company blends its knowledge as a manufacturer of fine scale models with the hobby game business. overall, I truly that players are a real treat, Zvezda

Yet, feel in for the *Samurai Battles* game, with two sets of rules in one game box, is sure to provide players with an entertaining, unique, and challenging gaming experience.

opening turns.

The firearms, primitive though they were by European standards of the era, were a game-changer (no pun intended) when introduced into feudal Japan by the Dutch and Portuguese. Any time you get an opportunity to attack the opponent's musketeers, take it. Their increased range and lethality can be a decisive factor in coordinating an attack. They can stop an attack in its tracks or blow open a hole to be exploited. Kill them whenever you can. If they're yours, keep them on the battlefield as long as you can; if they're his, waste 'em. Thankfully, none of the scenarios published at the time I write this calls for more than two

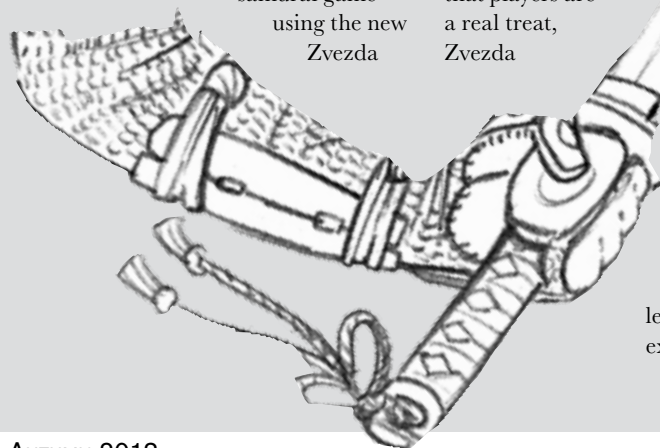
will new

such units to a side. That most certainly change as scenarios are released that are modeled on later, or larger, battles.

The utilization of your leaders can have a profound effect on tactics. How successful you are against the other side's leaders can easily determine the outcome of an otherwise close battle. First, if a leader is killed, the opponent gets to pick, at random, one of the Command cards from the owner of the dead leader's hand. This can seriously hamper your activities and severely impact your ability to fight. Second, you are denied the benefits that leader can impart to your units, and finally, each Leader carries a banner worth the same as a unit banner in terms of victory.

A curious wrinkle in the rules can be successfully used if you expect to be on the receiving end of a big attack. A leaderless unit, forced to retreat by combat results, must immediately stop if it enters a hex with an unattached leader. The unit joins the leader and may then ignore any further retreat called for that turn; they can stop a rout if used judiciously. As a result of command-radius rules, the mounted Leaders become invaluable. Detaching Leaders to a "second rank" can bolster the line.

When a unit is forced to retreat, H&F tokens are surrendered in accordance with the retreat; if the unit has a Leader attached



it loses an additional H&F token for every hex of the retreat. If you can force a Samurai unit with a Leader to retreat, it would cost a staggering three H&F tokens per hex.

There is another tactical consideration that is philosophically difficult for some to embrace; leader suicide, or seppuku. The loss of a leader can be very serious; the banner loss is bad enough, but the reduction in Command Cards held can be devastating. Rather than

risk being killed (captured) and suffering the loss of a banner, a lone leader can commit suicide. The banner is not awarded to the opponent, the Command Card is lost, but the selfless deed earns his side five H&F. While it might seem awfully cold-blooded and cynical, it could happen that a given leader's sacrificial act could conceivably enable his side to survive the battle, or perhaps even win it. On the other side of this seppuku equation is the fact that

the opponent of the self-immolating leader gets a free Dragon Card.

Use your Dragon Cards to maximum effect; one of them could turn the tide of a battle. There is no nobility in defeat if defeated whilst failing to play Dragon cards.

(That's like dying in an role-playing game with healing or curing potions undrunk.) ■



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2003

The evolution from wargaming to role-playing

by Ernest Gary Gygax Jr.

My upbringing, as well as my very existence, are proof of the unimpeded power of the imagination of one E. Gary Gygax. As Gary's first born son, I literally cut one of my first teeth on a Panzer division, on an early Avalon Hill board game. By the age of seven, I had my first command of Roman ancients, and later that year was playing WWII miniatures using *Tractics*. Around the same time, Dad and Don Kaye put together a huge table in our basement at 330 Center Street. This was to become our infamous Sand Table where wargaming reigned. Soon my play style became well established and I was nicknamed Ernie the Barbarian, for any follower who would dare to flee battle I would personally cut down and destroy!

Soon simple wargaming wasn't enough and we began to make road trips to Rockford, IL. There we met Jeff Perren who had created a wargaming set of rules called *Chainmail*. To his final day Jeff Perren considered fantasy to be a four-letter word, as he was a historical perfectionist. Yet, without Jeff agreeing to my father's addition of the Fantasy Supplement to his product *Chainmail*, *D&D* or any game even close to the original product would not have been born.

At some point in the very early '70s a play-by-mail associate and fellow wargamer, Dave Arneson, came down to Lake Geneva from the Twin Cities. He had a hot new idea to share. This concept took *Chainmail* and put it into a dungeon. Like the sand table wargaming events, it was led by a judge, but the actions in the game were up to the players. For the first time, the objectives were not imposed by a game scenario, but chosen by the participants themselves.

I remember that in the first adventure, Rob and Terry Kuntz, Gary and myself were all given the task of trying to figure out what to equip our heroes with. Dave taught us the errors of a couple of our choices. A donkey

proved to be slow, loud, and hard to control. The choice of using hundreds of feet of rope to trail behind us instead of mapping was aggressively proven to be in error when a grey pudding, the father of the *D&D* black pudding, pulled the rope from our hands as one would suck up spaghetti. When we were outside leaving Blackmoor proper, be it an alarm or just a wandering monster, a balrog flew after us with very ill intent. Our situation looked grim! Terry took out a magic arrow, our only magic weapon (the balrog needed magic weapons to harm it), and rolled his two six-sided dice—box cars, natural 12—just what was needed by a hero to send the balrog to his flaming demise.

After this adventure David and my father shared much correspondence, and the concept of *D&D*, the original brown box set, was germinated. Almost every night afterward, Dad would close the shoe repair, shut himself up in his den, and type away on his typewriter. Sadly for most of the kids and his wife, this would last generally until 3 a.m. I was welcomed in the work space as long as I would read quietly. Often, he would bounce ideas off of me, or play-test some of his most recent inventions. How I loved those closed-door moments when Dad would spin around and ask for my input or help for setting up play-test sessions. The first play-test session included my sister Elise, Rob, and myself. Though Elise dropped out, Terry, as well as other assorted gamers from the Lake Geneva and Northern Illinois areas, would later join in.

Sitting in the den with my father I always wanted to keep on gaming . . . I was addicted! At first, I would spend this gratis extra time obtaining men-at-arms and a grand total of seven henchmen. I would get in several games a week, most of which only involved myself and my cronies, or Rob, as he was becoming almost family. Unfortunately, other groups could only meet every couple of weeks due to people's schedules. This began to really cause a

gap of power and levels between Rob and me, and all the other players involved in the campaign. My father responded to this by declaring that all player actions took time in the game, so we could not be present everywhere at once. This would actually allow others a chance to play after some main character's time was up. We responded by playing some of our own lackeys, which allowed Gary to play-test areas of the dungeon which would have not been a challenge for our main characters, but also allowed those same lackeys to become nearly as powerful as the other characters of the campaign.

By this time Tenser, 12th level magic-user, had upwards of a million gold pieces. My dad decided that high-level characters needed to spend their fortune on something. He suggested we build castles. I built mine for 300,000 g.p. and stocked it with my two red dragons, as well as a black pudding and a skeleton. I would go on to spend tens of thousands more to pay and equip hundreds of human soldiers and 40 heavy boat-riding lancers. When Tenser acquired the Magic User's Crown artifact, he ceased to be neutral and had to choose between Good and Evil. This change in alignment (Tenser obviously chose Good) caused me to lose some of my forces, like the hundreds of plate-mailed orc troops I enlisted and the two dragons mentioned previously. As for henchmen, a mage and an elf left Tenser to work for Rob's character, and yet another elf also left to work in Terry's character's employ. Later, Rob's character's own change of alignment towards Evil would cause the very same elf to flee for his life. This is how my father was carefully working to even out the playing field and keep our interest for the campaign high at all times.

This overriding goal of keeping the campaign interesting was also true for our main characters when they were not adventuring in the dungeon. When I had my male red dragon,

I decided I would attempt to make an elixir with its blood. The results of my experiments were decided by a series of secret DM rolls. In this case I managed to create an elixir that gave me partial resistance to red dragon breath. When consumed it would provide +4 to the saving throw and cut all damage from that source by half. This was found to be cumulative with fire resistance, which was extremely useful when my plan to get a mate for my dragon was put finally to the test.

I created Cone of Cold in a similar fashion outside game sessions. Lightning bolts and fireballs had a propensity to blow up magic items and treasure, and even harm us. I wanted a spell that would spare our treasure and be easier on our party. Learning a new spell would take a minimum of a week to research and some random amount of wealth. My character was asked what frame of reference I wished to work from and what type of specialists I would seek to assist me. I began to work on the spell hoping to make it 3rd level. Blasting and freezing monsters meant I could just wait for the magic items and sundry treasures to thaw out. This caveat increased the difficulty of the spell and bumped it up to 4th level in the campaign. For publication, it would become 5th level. I would roll for each week of study on the spell, or could leave some sages working on it while Tenser was adventuring, so that he could come back to it later. The first week, my chances to complete the spell would be minimal, but each subsequent week my odds would increase until completion.

Instead of researching spells I could spend game time charging my magic wands or my staff of wizardry. At the time, a magic item would regenerate its first charge in a week. After that, it would be a charge per day. Recharging happened automatically without failure. Scrolls took money as well as time to transcribe, but they were valuable tools, especially for hirelings to use. New item research was expensive as well as uncertain. A few were crafted during the campaign, though most were created by Zagyg himself.

While Rob and I were partners, and adventured together for years, a competitive dimension arose during our play sessions, which Gary used to his advan-

tage, keeping us in check and testing our skill to the utmost. Rob had a near-photographic memory and used rough trail-mapping techniques to keep tabs about the dungeon, moving in one single direction to prevent doubling back on his path and help trace his return options. He was creative, eager to explore the unknown, could abandon a failed plan, and wing it to victory. I, on the other hand, was the mapper of the two who would go to great lengths to see the castle as it was actually drawn, find hidden areas in the maze, conquer its guardians, avoid its traps, and use up each area thoroughly.

Whether we are talking about castle building, hiring and maintaining henchmen, playing them, creating spells and items, regen-

erating their powers, or testing our abilities to explore the world and keep tabs on its layout, all these elements worked towards a single end: to keep us guessing, and keep us challenged. These are but a few examples of activities that could be undertaken between and within game sessions, with a handful of players or full game groups, to keep the campaign going and all of us involved at all levels of play. These could be taken into all sorts of different directions by different DMs today, and I hope they will. It not only took one man's imagination, but the input of many, including the very players of the campaign, to make it the pleasure it really was. Who now will pick up the torch and bring about the next evolution in gaming? ■



Hitchhiking in *Doctor Who: Adventures in Time and Space*

by Jay Libby

When I think science fiction and fanfare I am always brought back to Douglas Adams. He gave us greats like *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* and classic episodes of *Doctor Who* ("Pirate Planet," "City of Death," and "Shada"). The material provided here is done as a tribute to the late great Mr. Adams using Cubicle 7's rules for *Doctor Who: Adventures in Time and Space*. What you have here are some fun Douglas Adams-style pieces that are designed to add spice to your game. Each entry was written in a classic voice to help provide texture for the reader. It's one thing to say, "This is a Pan Popper and it does this . . ." but what you really want is "Famous for their super dinner parties" as the lead in. So grab your dressing gown, peanuts, and a pint, because the galaxy is big (I mean, really, *really* big) and you don't have all day.

Creatures/Races

Pan Poppers

"Did you say dinner party?"

Famous for their super dinner parties, the Pan Poppers have made a reputation as the ultimate party hosts and caterers in the known galaxies. Their chefs can cook up the best meals based on the diet of every race in attendance. If you want people to talk about your gatherings then the Pan Poppers are a must. This race's home-world is Midgard 6. It's large and covered with lots of foliage (comparable to a Celtic Earth garden). They worship FigFog, a deity of cooking. At a young age their children are taught about alien cultures and those culture's dietary needs. By the time they become teenagers these Pan Popper youth can cook up some of the best meals and hold their own against the most staunch socialite.

Pan Poppers are humanoid in appearance, walking on two legs. Their fingers are long and slender, and their faces are stretched longer than a human's head (imagine a football turned vertical). Their skin is a light purple

hue. Almost all Pan Poppers have a stuck-up attitude that matches the races they are hosting. Even in death the Pan Popper will refuse to accept anything other than perfection. One Pan Popper host died saying, "Kill me, but don't mess up the place setting."

Pan Popper	
Strength	2
Ingenuity	4
Co-ordination	3
Awareness	4
Presence	5
Resolve	3
Traits	Alien Appearance (minor) Indomitable Code of Conduct Obligation
Skills	Knowledge 3 (+2 Cooking, +2 Etiquette, +2 Alien Culture)
Gadget	Spotchya Monocle
Story Points	2-3

Time Lice

"Oh great, we have time lice!"

These tiny little lice are considered one of the most annoying and unseen creatures in time and space. Thought to be mutations of lice found on mining ships, these little buggers live in the space between, sometimes referred to as a "Void." While almost microscopic in nature, an infestation of time lice on any time-traveling ship can mean certain doom. Why? Time lice feed on vortex energy. At first there might be a couple hiccups upon first infestation, but once they have had time to breed, the time lice can power down the most technologically advanced time vessel. Because

of their size, time lice are almost impossible to detect until it is too late. At the same time, the time lice can be dealt with usually with a little creative engineering (Difficulty 18 for a small infestation, Difficulty 21 for a full-blown one). On one time ship the cyborg crew built a small containment unit and filled it with vortex energy. They then powered down their vortex engine and ejected the unit. After about five minutes all the time lice had left the ship chasing after the carrot.

Time Lice infestation	
Strength	0
Ingenuity	5
Co-ordination	2
Awareness	2
Presence	1
Resolve	3
Traits	Alien Appearance (microscopic lice) Keen Sense (Vortex energy) Vortex Dependency (Vortex energy) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Must feed on Vortex energy or go dormant</i>• <i>Vortex feeding: 1 point per day (small infestation), 4 points per day (large infestation)</i>
Skills	Knowledge 3 (+2 Vortex) Impulsive (if they detect Vortex energy they head right for it)
Story Points	1-2

Yawn-Gawkers

"I . . . yawn . . . think . . . yawn . . . that . . . yawn . . ."

Considered the most socially boring in almost the entire galaxy, the Yawn-Gawkers of Yonnie are by far also the most annoying. Known for their big mouths and small eye, the Yawn-Gawkers always sound like they are yawning, even when speaking. Most people avoid their planet because of the high rate of space crashes in orbit and vehicle crashes on the surface. Originally, Yawn-Gawkers weren't like this and at one point dominated their solar system. But after a great war that ravished the known universe, they were punished for their crimes by having their genetic code altered to make them less aggressive. The original name of their species has long since been forgotten by most. People with time-travel technology are some of the few that know the truth behind the Yawn-Gawkers and keep the secret well hidden. The planet Yonnie is covered with once-beautiful cities, all in disarray after centuries of neglect. Debris from crashed vehicles litter the streets and the atmosphere is full of smog. The planet's air filtration systems barely work due to neglect and only when the Yawn-Gawkers are on the verge of getting smothered do they actually dedicate Yawn power to get it up and running.

Yawn-Gawkers stand about six feet tall. Their heads are large and round, with a large mouth in the middle and a small eye just above the upper lip. The skin of the Yawn-Gawker is like thick leather, capable of withstanding heavy physical damage. Most Yawn-Gawkers are procedural people who wear black robes and white wigs in their Parliament meetings. The rest are lethargic in nature, working as laborers . . . who take lots of naps.

Yawn-Gawker (basic / dark combat version)	
Strength	4
Ingenuity	2/6
Co-ordination	2/4
Awareness	2/4
Presence	2/6
Resolve	2/4
Traits	Tough (Skin offers 4 protection from energy and physical damage)
	Alien Appearance
	By the Book (Parliamentary law)
	Dark Secret
	Forgetful (caused by constant sleepiness)
Skills	Marksman 3 (+1 blaster pistol)

	Knowledge 3 (+2 alien culture)
	Technology 2
	Transport 4 (+2 starship)
Weapons	Blaster (4/L/L)
Story Points	2-4

Gadgets

Bar Towel

"When in doubt, grab the bar towel instead."

Sometimes it just isn't practical to bring a bathroom towel with you. That's where the Bar Towel comes into play. This smaller, but just as handy, towel can be used for many things like: a black jack (+1 Strength), a coaster, concealed armor (+1 armor), gas mask, and many other handy dandy uses. Best of all it can fit in your pocket or purse!

Story Points: 1

Beach Towel

"There is no such thing as overkill when it comes to your towel!"

There are going to be times when bigger and wider is better. That is where the Beach Towel has its place. Considered the BFT of towels, the Beach Towel can be used for lots of things like: a body bag (just in case your Beach Towel fails you), a long rope, a shield (+2 armor), a space suit (allowing for 1 minute of space exposure before suffering any ill effects), and a war whip (+1 Strength, +3 when wet)

Story Points: 3

Four-Ever Energy Drink

"The buzz of pure energy is enough to keep any Yawn-Gawker going!"

Produced by the Yawn-Gawkers of Yonnie, the Four-Ever Energy Drink was designed to keep members of the Yawn-Gawkers Parliament awake during governmental proceedings. This after the Prime Minister of Yonnie fell asleep during a peace vote and while having a nightmare shouted out "war!" which threw their system into galactic chaos for a hundred Earth years. The drink has adverse effects on different races, once it wears off. When someone drinks the Four-Ever Energy Drink they gain +3 to all Attributes. The drink lasts the same number of days equal to the player's Strength. When the drink wears off the player falls asleep. When the player awakes they will have a new Bad Trait (which will be randomly picked by the Game Master). The Four Ever-Energy Drink has been banned in several galaxies due to its addictive nature and severe outbreak of socially challenged individuals.

Story Points: 2 (only because the player automatically gets a Bad Trait)

Spotchya Monocle

"It's no use, you're not invited!"

The Spotchya Monocle is a handy eye-piece that can see through any disguise and perception filter. Designed by the Pan Poppers of Midgard 6, these monocles were used to spot party crashers at their fancy dinner parties. No matter how hard the Blob-Farters of Flatula 2 tried, they could never get past the host if they were wearing a Spotchya Monocle. This gadget offers +8 to all rolls involving Awareness checks to see through disguises and perception filters. It can even see ghosts!

Story Points: 2

Worm Kit

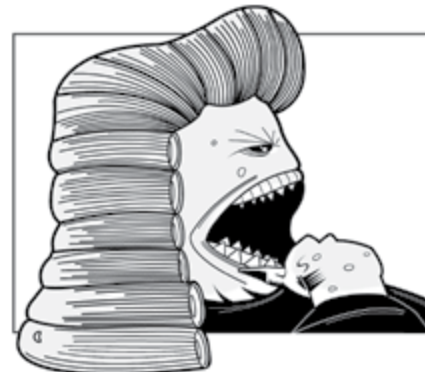
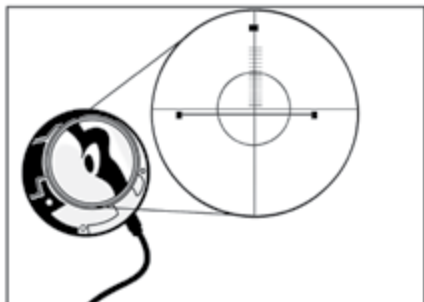
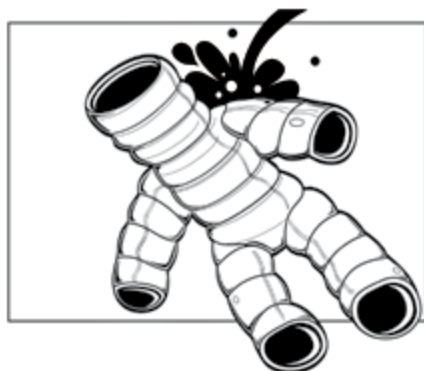
"Worms are your friends." (Taken from the Tape-Worm Conglomerate's pamphlet.)

The galaxy is a dangerous place and you just never know what might happen to you. That is where the handy Worm Kit comes into place. Grown by the Tape-Worm Conglomerate of Intenstula 3, these kits carry a multitude of worms for every situation. They even come in a very compact box that looks like an Earthman's mini tackle box. Each kit comes with four different types of worms:

Air Worm: This four-inch fat worm produces oxygen when chewed. Great for needing to breath underwater or in a hostile environment. The downside is a nasty aftertaste that has a sewer flavor and the green stains that it leaves on the user's teeth. This also explains why the ore miners of Golphbawl have green teeth.

Language Worm: When inserted into the ear, this small maggot-sized worm burrows into the eardrum and translates all sounds into something more understandable to the host. At the end of the worm's life cycle (usually about a year), it gives birth to millions of tiny worms that eat the host's brain. They are then salvaged by the Tape-Worm Conglomerate and resold—although most people are smart enough to have the Language Worm medically removed before this time.

Stitch Worm: This long dangly worm is used to reattached severed limbs, or anything organic for that matter. It works just like tape. Put the severed part back where it belongs and simply put the worm over it. From here this little fellow burrows under the skin and its secretions begin to accelerate healing (3 points per day). Once healing is complete, the Stitch Worm simply disintegrates, and is absorbed by the host's body. Unfortunately, this is part of the Stitch Worm life cycle. If the host is not treated with anti-worm medication within two days of the initial healing, their body will become infested with hungry Stitch Worms. While this is a great way to lose weight, most hosts end up as nothing more than mummy husks for the Galactic Museum of Oddities (after the Tape-Worm Conglomerate harvests the new Stitch Worms).



Way Awesome Worm: Just add water to this one-inch worm and it transforms into a handy suit big enough to cover an Earth-man's body! Water can also be defined as anything wet, including spit, tears, and urine. When wet the worm becomes active and can stretch up to ten by ten feet. The user simply climbs inside the worm's mouth and the interior provides excellent protection from most hostile environments (+8 armor versus all environmental conditions). It even recycles anything exhaled by the user and turns it into a suitably breathable substance. The worm works for about 30 minutes before it starts digesting the user (1 damage every round). Once the user is digested, the worm goes into a larval stage until it emerges as a beautiful but carnivorous Bal Butterfly of Bali 2.

Story Points (for whole kit): 3 (due to all the Bad things that can happen when you use the worms)

Wayfarer's Galactic App

"Breathe, don't hyperventilate." (The text you see while the app is loading)

The universe and all reality is big. Very big. Bigger than a pint. Bigger than a fish tank at a Chinese takeout restaurant. Bigger than the total sum of crappy memoirs written by elderly lesbians who have just come out of the closet. And even larger than the number of William Shatner fans who think he is a great singer. And because it is so big, it is almost impossible to know everything about it. That is where the Wayfarer's Galactic App comes into play. This handy cellphone app can be downloaded directly onto any communication device that has a screen. Earth-men put it on their cell-phones while the Dog-Men of Purina 3 install it on their scrotum monitors, since they spend most of their time looking down there. The app works two ways—relay and retrieve data. To use the app, one simply states the name of whatever they are looking up (or a reasonable

description) and the app provides the vital data for the user. If the item being looked up is dangerous, the phrase (flashing, in big red letters) "Breathe, don't hyperventilate" will appear first. The Wayfarer's Galactic App is far from complete, because as we said in the beginning, the universe and reality is really big. So when something eats a user of the app, their device records all the information and adds it to the database. For example: if you look up "Black Swirly" you get this response:

BREATHE, DON'T HYPERVENTILATE. BLACK SWIRLY: A LARGE BLACK SWIRLY THING IN SPACE THAT IS ABLE TO CRUSH WHOLE STARSHIPS. AS DESCRIBED BY A FREIGHTER CAPTION FROM MIDGARD 6: IT'S A BIG BLACK SWIRLY THING IN SPACE. OUR SHIELDS AREN'T HOLDING. WE ARE BEING PULLED IN. I JUST GOT TWO INCHES SHORTER. OH SMEG!

Story Points: 2



By Lenard Lakofka

I mentioned death in the last article. When I looked up the reference back to *The Dragon* #31 I realized that was not my current thinking on the topic at all. Therefore, I thought I'd update the particulars and raise some questions on how death is handled as a consequence of damage (usually in melee, from breath, spells, etc.)

Death is related to the Constitution of the person who has been knocked down to 0 hit points or lower. The higher the Constitution the longer the person might hold on before dying. The table below is the chance to be dead after taking the damage that reduces the person to the given hit point total.

Subsequent rounds will be dealt with later.

Given below is the chance to be dead—these are all percent chances of dying:

Constitution score										
Hit points	3-5	6-7	8-9	10-12	13	14	15	16	17	18
0	Alive regardless of Constitution, but check to see if figure is conscious, see below									
-1	Alive regardless of Constitution, but check to see if figure is conscious, see below									
-2	Alive regardless of Constitution, but check to see if figure is conscious, see below									
-3	Alive regardless of Constitution, but check to see if figure is conscious, see below									
-4	10%	5%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
-5	30%	20%	10%	5%	0	0	0	0	0	0
-6	55%	30%	20%	10%	5%	0	0	0	0	0
-7	85%	55%	30%	20%	15%	10%	5%	0	0	0
-8	100%	80%	50%	30%	20%	15%	10%	8%	6%	2%
-9	100%	100%	80%	60%	40%	35%	30%	20%	15%	10%
-10	100%	100%	100%	95%	85%	75%	55%	40%	30%	20%
-11	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	95%	75%	65%	45%	35%
-12	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	95%	80%	65%	45%
-13	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	95%	85%	65%
-14	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
-15	All dead									

A person who goes to zero and below may hold on to consciousness for a round or more. That chance is still related to Constitution. What that person might do while still clinging to consciousness is a matter of discussion.

Given below is the chance of losing consciousness at the end of the round that brings the figure to the hit points listed:

Constitution score										
Hit points	3-5	6-7	8-9	10-12	13	14	15	16	17	18
0	80%	60%	40%	20%	10%	0	0	0	0	0
-1	100%	95%	65%	45%	30%	20%	15%	10%	5%	2%
-2	100%	100%	95%	80%	65%	50%	30%	25%	20%	15%
-3	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	95%	85%	80%	70%	60%
-4	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	95%	90%	85%
-5	All unconscious									

So, the gist of this is that if you are knocked down to 0, -1, -2, or -3, you are not dead but might lose consciousness immediately, per the above table. The DM can optionally roll a die (or dice) to determine the number of segments that the person can stay conscious before passing out. The figure is badly wounded, so consciousness should be lost within the first 20 segments after the damage that caused the figure to reach 0 hit points or lower.



Recall that an untreated, wounded figure will lose one point per round. The DM can use the same table over again after the next point is lost.

So, let's say Fred gets on the edge of a fire ball and is damaged to -1 on segment number 4 of the round. His Constitution is 15. There is an 85% chance (100% - 15) that he will remain conscious until the end of the round. If untreated he will go to -2 on the first segment of the next round. If he was conscious on the last round, check again to see if he remains conscious in this new round. The table gives him a 70% chance (100% - 30) to remain conscious. On first segment of the next round he goes to -3. The table gives him only a 15% (100% - 85) chance to remain conscious. In any case, he will pass out at the end of segment number 4. That would be 20 segments after the damage that took him below 1 hit point.

What can the person do while clinging to consciousness?

Speaking

He or she can speak, perhaps not in commanding tones or very loudly. DM will rule.

Binding his/her own wounds

DMs could certainly rule in many ways. First of all, the person might have taken the damage from behind, precluding being able to do the binding him/herself. Secondly, the person is about to pass out from the damage. The quality of the treatment would be suspect and perhaps not as effective as if the someone else were treating the person. Therefore I think the best choice is to rule that the treatment might be faulty. This has nothing to do with any single characteristic (such as Intelligence or Constitution) and should be a die roll. 60% of the time you fail to stop the damage from occurring at the beginning of the next round, 30% of the time the person can put off 1 point of damage (he has not permanently bound his wounds however—at least not yet), and 10% of the time the person actually makes it worse.

Finally if you let the person—as disoriented as he/she might be—bind his/her own wounds, would it be a “good” job or not? Roll the next round as well. If they are still conscious and capable of binding successfully twice, then you could say the continuing damage has stopped, i.e., the wounds are “bound.”

If the binding is successful, recall that the person is still at zero or fewer points. Unconsciousness is still looming on a round-by-round basis. All that has happened is that more damage has not accrued.

Spell casting

He or she cannot cast most spells. The DM has to decide on the number of segment limits to any spell and component (somatic, physical or verbal) that might produce a spell-casting problem. My thinking is to absolutely forbid any spell that takes four or more segments to cast. The waning figure would just not be able to keep the concentration needed to cast the spell.

Segments to cast	d% roll to complete successfully	d% roll to fail	d% roll for a reduced effect
1	1-85	86-00	
2	1-65	66-80	81-00
3	1-45	46-75	76-100
4	No chance of success		
Power words	1-95	96-100	

Move

He or she can walk/stagger/crawl some distance (taking obstructions into account). Roll percentile dice to determine how well and how far the character can move:

Walk slowly	Stagger	Hobble	Crawl
1-30 1 to 20 feet	31-60 1 to 10 feet	61-90 1 to 6 feet	91-00 1 to 4 feet

That would be per round of consciousness. The person could stagger for a round, but not pass out, and then fall so that he or she would be crawling for a round.

Discharge a magical device

He or she can discharge a magical device like a wand, stave, or rod.

1-45	46-00
yes	no

Other devices can be ruled on by the DM.

Fire an arrow or crossbow

He or she can fire a single arrow.

1-30	31-70	71-90	91-00
yes	-2 to hit	-4 to hit	no

He or she can fire a loaded crossbow (cocking the crossbow is out).

1-70	71-90	91-96	97-00
yes	-2 to hit	-4 to hit	no

Throw a small item

He or she can throw a light weapon like a dart, hand ax, or dagger.

1-30	31-60	71-80	81-00
yes	-2 to hit	-4 to hit	no

(This is for one toss in that round. The weapon must be easily at hand.)

Hide something

Hide some minor object like a ring, small purse, or amulet within five feet of the current location.

(See movement above if movement is required to get to the hiding place)

1-30	31-70	71-00
yes	poorly done	drops it instead

Hidden objects can of course be found by searches. The hiding is a conversation between the DM and the person who is close to losing consciousness.

(continued on page 64)

A forgotten grimoire, and its curse

The search for the earliest version of *Dungeons & Dragons*

by Jon Peterson

My epic quest had ended in success, and I retreated to a tavern to enjoy some well-deserved libations. Yet as I lifted the first flagon of claret to my lips, I suddenly noticed the cowed figure seated opposite me. Warily, I asked his business. “Your work is not yet done,” he growled flatly. “There is another task ahead of you.” Before I could inquire further I observed the dusty book lying on the table between us. “What moldy text is this?” I demanded. “Is this your doing?” The cowed figure replied craftily, “It was I who wrought it.” As this explained little, I pressed the point: “Who are you, then?” At that, the figure coughed out a chuckle, and then a dire laugh, but as I stood to confront him he was gone, leaving only the book behind. With a sigh, I pushed the claret aside and took up this grimoire. Little did I know, as I opened it, that it was burdened with a terrible curse.

Or let me put it another way. Early in August of 2012, after roughly five years of work, I released a book about the history of gaming called *Playing at the World*. To honor the old ways, I planned to bring only 20 copies of my book along with me to Gen Con to give to persons of interest. But in the few weeks before Gen Con, my book reached a limited audience of enthusiasts who reacted quite positively to my extensive use of primary sources, many of which were previously unknown to the community.

It was from these early readers that I began to hear rumors of a mysterious anonymous document which seemed to contain an early set of rules for dungeon adventures, one closely related to the original 1974 printing of *Dungeons & Dragons*. It had been circulating for more than a decade since a fellow named Keith Dalluhn had rescued it from the garage of M.A.R. Barker, an early Twin Cities gamer—later famous as the author of *Empire of the Petal Throne*. More recently, the *Blackmoor* scholar Daniel Boggs had taken up an analysis of this mysterious document based on its corollaries to the *First Fantasy Campaign*, an anthol-

ogy of *Blackmoor*-related material released by *D&D* co-creator Dave Arneson in 1977. Boggs contended that Arneson was the author of this anonymous document, purportedly a late contribution to the *D&D* development process, which co-creator Gary Gygax either never saw or used.

As Gen Con neared, one reader of *Playing at the World* asked my opinion on this mystery manuscript—then a second and a third. I glanced through Boggs’s research before I departed for Indianapolis and, while he had discovered a few intriguing connections, his analysis suffered for want of direct access to raw Arneson material, typed or hand-written by the man himself. This led Boggs down some wrong paths as he attempted to argue from handwriting and style analyses. Moreover, he attributed to Arneson’s views on the system of *D&D* that did not jibe with those expressed in early letters by him in my possession. I came away with the impression that Boggs couldn’t make a convincing case with the tools at his disposal.

So, on Thursday morning of Gen Con, when I first had an opportunity to thumb through this mystery document, I took it up with confident skepticism. I was certain that a casual skim would unearth some detail that would let me rule out an early date for the document. That would be very convenient for me, as it would save me the trouble of having to revise my book to take into account a new, major potential source of evidence. I was sure that the mystery document would reference something—a class, a spell, an idea—that would betray that this was created after *D&D* rather than before it. I had spent the past five years immersed in the original *D&D* text and its sources, especially Gygax’s fantasy medieval miniatures game *Chainmail* (1971) and Arneson’s *Blackmoor* notes. I would be sensitive to any misstep.

Yet as I scanned the text, I found it very different from what I expected. It was short, only 50-some pages. The charts and tables were broken out into an independent section, creating something similar to the reference sheets that shipped with original *D&D*. The sections on character creation, on the underworld and on wilderness adventures, looked like alternate versions of the corresponding text in *D&D* with some editorial and organizational differences. Large elements of the third *D&D* booklet—the dungeon exploration example, as well as the naval and aerial combat rules—were missing. The major lists of spells, magical items, and monsters were all noticeably shorter than in *D&D*, and at a first glance they looked essentially like subsets of those presented in *D&D*. But who would abridge *D&D* this way, and why?

After 10 or 15 minutes of inspection, I turned to Tavis Allison and reported simply, “I don’t know what this is—but it’s much more interesting than I thought it would be.” From that point forward, my Gen Con plans changed. Rather than walking the halls, making new friends, talking up my book, I would spend many hours in my hotel room, trying to solve the mystery of the forgotten grimoire.

Had this document come before *D&D*, or after it? We knew from the earliest accounts of Gygax and Arneson that *D&D* derived from the *Blackmoor* campaign, which was in turn based on *Chainmail*. The mystery document drew heavily from *Chainmail*, especially in its combat system and monster descriptions: it seemed to take *Chainmail* as a starting point and then elaborate from there. Broadly, this argued for an early date, as *Chainmail* quickly fell by the wayside while *D&D*’s popularity grew. More telling still were the *Blackmoor* elements, some of which Boggs had already uncovered. For example, I had reprinted in *Playing at the World* an interesting document I

found in my research: a pre-*D&D Blackmoor* character sheet. In its list of abilities, instead of “Wisdom” and “Constitution,” we see “Cunning” and “Health.” This mystery document as well had “Cunning” and “Health” as character abilities. Intriguing, but hardly conclusive.

But then I saw something that stopped me in my tracks. While I had been working on my book, I had noticed a curious turn of phrase in the original edition of *D&D*: the languages that characters or monsters could speak by virtue of their alignment (to let lawful beings recognize and not attack one another) were called either “divisional languages” or “divisional tongues.” This construction struck me as odd enough that I noted it in the book. Why “divisional”? I suppose alignment does divide the inhabitants of the fantasy setting into distinct camps, but that seemed like a bit of a stretch. As I read through the mystery manuscript, however, I saw that it didn’t contain the word “alignment” at all. The word it used instead was . . . “division.” The character creation text reads, for example, “The next major decision is the choosing of the division: Law, Chaos, or Neutral.” Suddenly that text about “divisional languages” in *D&D* had a potential explanation. As an earlier draft was updated to create the published version of *D&D*, the term “division” had been changed to “alignment,” but no one had bothered to update the languages section (the text of which in the manuscript is nearly identical to *D&D*), leaving in these dangling references to “division.” The construction of “divisional languages” in *D&D* was itself a piece of evidence that this mystery manuscript preserved a pre-publication state of the rules.

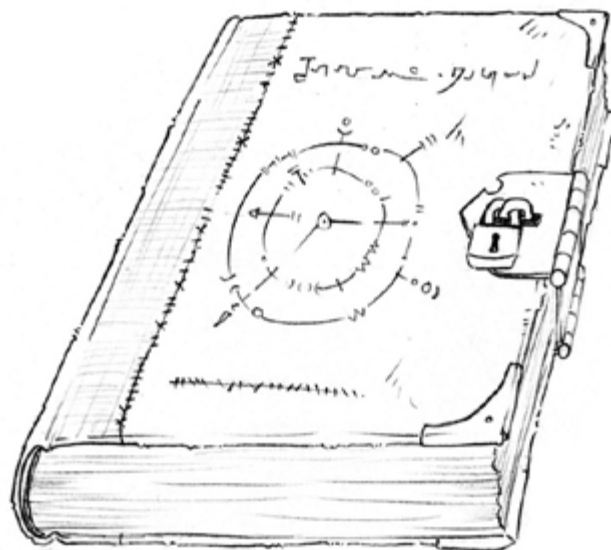
On Saturday night at Gen Con, while most attendees blissfully play games, collectors agonize over the high-ticket rarities at the finale of the yearly auction. I found Keith Dalluhn there that night, and in a few brief strokes I outlined my initial conclusions. I told him I needed a couple of weeks to study the document to be sure, but that I thought this could be the most important find related to the pre-history of *D&D* in decades. When I returned home, I plunged myself into an exhaustive study of the document. The things I would find in that second phase of investigation only corroborated what I had seen before. It wasn’t long before I returned to Dalluhn, and he graciously agreed to give me the document so that I could finish the job of determining its authenticity. In honor of his discovery and his foresight, I refer to the mystery document as the Dalluhn Manuscript.

The first thing I needed to do was to establish what the community knew about this document, and whether or not other copies of it survived somewhere. That required publicity. So I began blogging about the connections I saw between the Dalluhn Manuscript, *Chainmail*, *Blackmoor* and *D&D*. I posted on forums. I started reaching out to gamers who had

originally play-tested *D&D*, both in the Twin Cities and Lake Geneva. Of course, Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson had passed away some years ago—but Keith Dalluhn had contacted them shortly after he had found the document. In retrospect, it’s not clear if this was a blessing or a curse, though. Gygax had reviewed only a few samples of the pages, and on the basis of those he tersely replied that it “seems to be a rip-off of the *D&D* game that I’ve never seen before.” Arneson, however, had a very different take: he responded, “It might be ‘my draft.’ The one I sent Gary way back when. Or his first draft back. Either way it is *very cool*.” Clearly, neither had enough of an opportunity to study it to say anything definitive, or to turn up the sorts of connections that I was finding. Since they seemed to disagree with one another, unfortunately, this would stir up some old partisanship, as Gary and Dave had split acrimoniously in the mid-1970s and many members of the community sided passionately with one or the other. So, to authenticate the manuscript, I would have to disagree with one or other of them—or worse still, both. This curse would not be easy to dispel. Somewhere, a cowed figure cackled.

In the course of writing my book, I frequently had to trust contemporary sources over later recollections. When I had to choose between following what Dave or Gary wrote in 2002 versus what they wrote in 1972, I learned to trust the earlier sources. As the decades pass, all sorts of things can be forgotten—and eventually, we can even forget that we forgot something. If the mystery of the Dalluhn Manuscript was going to be solved, it would be solved based on hard evidence within it, not based on fading memories. It would be built on the details of how this document relates to early contemporary sources like *Chainmail*, *Blackmoor* and the earliest *D&D*. Any individual detail might not be decisive, but the details are all part of a whole, of a manuscript typed up as one body: if we can show that enough of the text must have come before *D&D*, the burden of proof shifts to any skeptic who wants to argue that any other parts might have come after *D&D*.

After detailed examination of the document, the necessary evidence came. A considerable



amount of the text is identical, or nearly so, to passages of the original *D&D* and *Chainmail*. I was able to show, for example, how the combat system in the Dalluhn Manuscript built on *Chainmail*’s man-to-man combat rules, from the “to-hit” tables to the more obscure “weapon class” usages. As in *Chainmail*, only hits with weapons dealt cumulative damage: spells like fireball and lightning bolt killed outright if their targets failed saves. There also are many respects in which Arneson’s *Blackmoor* notes, especially his Scenario 3 and Loch Gloomen notes, leave traces that remain visible in *D&D*, and the corresponding sections in the Dalluhn Manuscript—on barony investments, on specialists, on castle construction—clearly represent a stepping stone between Arneson’s original and the final published version of *D&D*. Furthermore, the Dalluhn Manuscript preserves numerous references to John Norman’s Gor fantasy setting, a favorite in Arneson’s Twin Cities circles, which would be pruned before *D&D* was published. In some of the most compelling examples, we can see how the Dalluhn Manuscript combines *Chainmail* text with surviving *Blackmoor* notes, as it does in the monster text for the roc: there it shows the direct collaboration of Gygax and Arneson. So the body of evidence grew from a handful of items to a dozen, then dozens, then scores—well more than one piece of evidence per page of the Dalluhn Manuscript. Of course, I didn’t find all of these connections myself—the material I blogged gave readers the opportunity to make discoveries of their own. Geoffrey McKinney, for example, provided a very elegant demonstration of how the magic-user spell list in the Dalluhn Manuscript must have come before the list in *D&D*. It is that type of

(continued on page 65)

From one geek to another

An etiquette guide for gamers

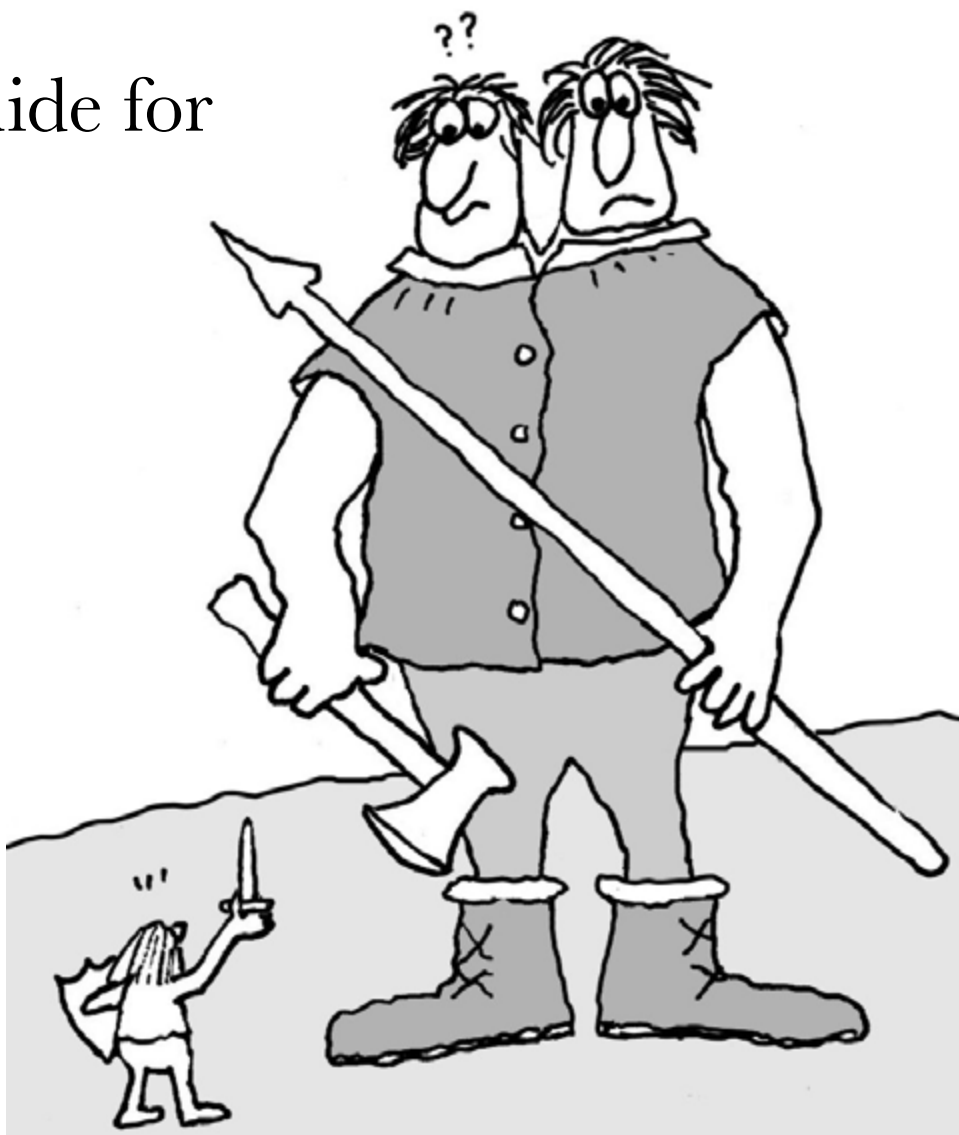
by Jess Hartley

For the last decade or more, I've been a professional writer, editor, and game developer for the tabletop RPG industry. I'm also a wife, a mom, and an avid etiquette maven. Together, we're going to tackle the trials and tribulations of social interaction, professional protocol, and relationship challenges that are uniquely geeky in nature.

Whether you're dealing with "break ups" within your gaming group, or wondering about the proper way to greet your favorite sci-fi writer, I'm here to lend my +5 Blade of Boor-slaying to your geek-etiquette battles. Sometimes we'll tackle a tough topic in an essay format; other times I'll field questions from readers about particular problems they could use a hand with. All in all, however, each column will be a little snippet of "how to make your geek life better" from One Geek to Another . . .

For our first column, the topic of introductions seemed particularly appropriate. As an extravert, and an avid "people-person," I love connecting with other geeks, and I love introducing cool people to one another. However, over the years, I've begun to suspect that, especially in the geek community, introductions are becoming a lost art form.

Once upon a time, introductions were a highly formalized ritual. In many cultures, when strangers met, there was a highly-regimented process based on age, gender, wealth, and social rank that determined how (or even if) each person spoke, reacted, and behaved. In most parts of modern society, these rigid traditions have been watered down, if not entirely abandoned. And, while the losing of restrictions and formalized taboos about members of one sex, race, or social strata talking to another is a good thing, I'm afraid the art of making an introduction—once taught as a vital skill for social interactions—is all-too-quickly following in the path to obscurity.



And that, my geeklings, is a Very Bad Thing.

Far too often these days, especially in geek circles, when a newcomer enters a conversational group (or two social circles meet in some fashion), no introductions are made. The individuals in each group who do know each other converse, leaving those who don't know each other stand awkwardly wondering if they should wander off and let those who are acquainted continue their conversation. Sometimes it's possible to jump into a conversation mid-stream without an introduction, but it can be an uncomfortable situation, rife with the possibility for faux pas. And, unfortunately, it doesn't allow everyone in the conversation to

make the most of the interaction, whether their goal is making new friends or social/professional networking.

And that's a shame, because introductions are really a simple—almost formulaic—skill that anyone can learn with minimal effort.

At its heart an introduction is a simple matter. It can be as casual as an announcement of identity or in depth as a personal or professional reference, but it consists, at least, of one member of an existing group (even if the "group" only consists of two people) acknowledging the presence of a newcomer to the rest. And that's a good thing for everyone involved.

To the newcomer, an introduction not only provides their name to the rest of those

gathered, opening the opportunity for conversation and ongoing interactions, but it also acknowledges their social right to be a part of the existing group. They've been welcomed in and don't have to worry if their presence is welcome or not. Especially in situations when someone is clearly more of a newcomer than the rest of those present (such as arriving at a party or event held by a new social group, or entering a conversation happening between established friends or authority figures), this can be incredibly reassuring.

To the original members of the conversation, being introduced to a new person is also invaluable. It not only offers them the opportunity to learn basic information about the newcomer that they might otherwise have missed, but being introduced as part of the "old guard" also reiterates their established place in the social structure. Their role as a part of the group is reaffirmed, and they've been acknowledged as someone who matters enough to have newcomers brought to them. While this might seem silly or unnecessary to verbalize, it's an unspoken part of the social dynamic of a group and one that is worth strengthening. Those who feel confident about their place in the proverbial "pack" are more likely to feel confident about welcoming newcomers into the group, which strengthens the social bonds between both established and potential new group members.

While introductions are good for the person being introduced and those they are being introduced to, they benefit the person making the introduction as well. Not only have they performed a social service for the group as a whole, and for the individuals involved, they've also gained a little social status themselves by being the social pivot point in the introduction. By giving established members of the social circle the respect of bringing a newcomer to meet them, others in the group are likely to view them as being "in the know," and the new person is likely to feel gratitude to them for smoothing over what could otherwise have been an awkward social situation. Also, connecting one friend or peer to another is not only a way to strengthen the group's social interconnectivity (or to merge two or more cliques into a more cohesive whole), but it also says something about the person doing the connection—they're a social maven, a person who "knows people," and (if the introduction is done well) a clever and charming conversation starter.

Introductions are, in short, a win-win situation for everyone involved. They reduce the chances of social faux pas, strengthen the social structure within a group, and offer a plethora of opportunities for conversation and networking. While the art of the introduction may be fading, it's not dead yet, and with a little effort it can be revived. ■

Making An Introduction

Ideally, when a new person enters a conversational setting, or if there is a social setting where not everyone knows each other (such as a gaming group, party, or even just a clump of folks gathered in the hall at a convention), someone who knows most or all of those involved will step forward and introduce each party to the rest.

This can be a simple group introduction: "Hey, everyone, this is Joe, he's my brother/boss/neighbor. Joe, this is Rob, Michelle, and Lisa. We game together on Thursdays."

Or, it can be a more detailed step-by-step process, where the newcomer is introduced individually to each individual member of the group: "Joe, this is my gaming group. Rob hosts our games, and his wife, Michelle, runs Pathfinder for us on Thursday nights. This is Lisa, who I used to game with in college. Lisa, I was telling Joe about that awesome scene where your character died saving the entire rest of the group. Joe was curious about role-play and wondered if he might sit in on a game sometime."

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Building a winning spellbook in Mage Wars

by Bryan Pope

Mage Wars was built from the ground up as a gamer's game and to appeal to players who want a deep, tactical battle. There are many tough choices to make during the course of the game, but most of the strategy and tough choices occur **before** the game begins, when you build your spell-book.

When building your spell-book, it is best to consider an overall concept and build around that particular theme. Ask yourself, "How do I intend to defeat my opponent? What strategies will I employ? Which spells, and combinations of spells, will support that strategy?"

It is more effective to build an **aggressive** spell-book, centered around how you intend to defeat the enemy Mage, than to build a defensive spell-book centered around "How can I protect myself from the enemy Mage?" With the number of spell-book points available, it is difficult to have an answer for every type of attack and strategy the enemy may employ. And, as game time progresses and more spells are released, it will be increasingly difficult to have an answer for everything. Therefore, you are better off focusing on defeating the enemy Mage and playing aggressively.

You win *Mage Wars* by destroying the enemy Mage, and that is accomplished by dealing damage to them. So, ask yourself, "How do I intend to deal damage to the enemy Mage? What is the most efficient way to accomplish that? Are there spell combinations that are more efficient (faster, and for lower overall mana cost) than others?"

Some common ways to deal damage to the enemy Mage include:

- Attack with creatures.
- Direct Assault from your Mage with weapons and/or attack spells.
- Direct Damage from enchantments and conjurations.

You could use a combination of tactics

above. However, spells work together in combinations where they gain synergy. Therefore, it is better to focus on one of these general strategies and include spells that will support that strategy. Nevertheless, having a few surprises up your sleeve certainly helps, especially if your foe builds a strong defense against your particular strategy.

Let's examine each of the general ways to deal damage, and see how a focused spell-book can be built. We'll also take a look at some good defenses to use against each tactic.

Attack with Creatures

This is a great way to deal damage, and is very mana-efficient. Unless they are destroyed, creatures can keep attacking and dealing damage round after round. The damage to mana cost-ratio is extremely high.

Single Big Creature

Some players prefer to summon one to two large creatures. They will send them toward the enemy Mage, and buff up whichever one is getting close to the enemy and has the best chance to deal damage. Enchantments like *Bear Strength*, *Cheetah Speed*, *Mongoose Agility*, *Vampirism*, and *Falcon Precision* are great for buffing them up.

Using single big creatures is very effective, because they have much higher durability than smaller creatures, making them cheap and more effective to enchant. A *Force Push* or *Teleport* spell is a great way to help them get to the enemy and surprise him with an attack one-round before it was expected. Once they are attacking the enemy, consider a *Battle Fury* incantation to get in an extra attack, or a surprise buff from *Perfect Strike*, *Precision Strike*, or the new *Power Strike*. A big creature, buffed with *Bear Strength* and a *Power Strike*, and also using a *Battle Fury*, can easily deal 18 dice of damage in one round.

If the enemy is sufficiently threatened he'll

try to control your creature, or focus all of his forces to destroy it. Protect your big creature! You have a lot invested in him with his high mana cost and stacked enchantments. Heal him with a *Heal* spell (possibly bound to a *Mage Wand*), and put a *Regrowth*, *Cobra Reflexes*, *Block*, *Nullify*, or *Rhino Hide* enchantment on him.

Stopping the Single Big Creature

If the enemy is using a single big creature against you, consider these counters: A single good Defense, which you hold and use only against the big creature that works well. Also, use a small creature to guard your Mage. A small, level one creature oftentimes survives two attacks from a big creature, and it's well worth the mana to have it absorb that big creature's attack.

Use a control spell. Once the enemy has buffed up a big creature, it becomes very mana efficient to control them with spells like *Force Hold*, *Tanglevine*, *Banish*, *Turn to Stone*, and *Sleep*. Have a few of these in your spell-book just in case.

Keep mobile, always moving away and making the enemy chase you, and use *Walls* or *Teleports* to frustrate him.

The Horde

Some Mages will prefer to send in a horde of smaller creatures. The goal is to overwhelm the enemy with too many critters to deal with at one time. Small creatures are great because they are difficult for the enemy to effectively control. The enemy simply cannot afford to pay the cost for typical control spells like *Tanglevine* or *Banish* on small creatures that cost only 5–9 mana. Small creatures easily bypass defenses and guards; the defense or guard may stop **one** of them, but then all the others get through!

The horde requires precious actions to produce. You'll have to spend several rounds using full actions in order to bring in enough



creatures to effectively overwhelm the enemy. Use a Spawnpoint to help you summon two creatures per round (one from you, and one from the Spawnpoint).

Use area-buff spells that buff up several of your creatures at once. *Marked for Death* is a great way to buff several creatures at once against an enemy target. The Beastmaster comes well-suited for this with *Call of the Wild*, *Redclaw*, *Tooth and Nail*, and *Rajan's Fury*. The new Warlord has his own built-in area-effect buffs, which he can augment to affect the entire arena via his *Horn of Gothos*.

Protect your hordes with area-wide defenses like *Mohktari*, *Group Heal*, *Sacred Ground*, and the new *Fortified Position*.

Stopping the Horde

Zone attacks are a great way to put a halt to a horde. Once the enemy sees his swarm devastated by a *Firestorm*, he'll think twice before he stacks too many critters in one zone again!

Consider using damage barriers like *Circle of Lightning*, *Demonhide Armor*, and the new *Circle of Fire*.

Other effective counters to the horde are Walls, *Poison Gas Cloud*, or spells that make the enemy pay mana for each creature, such as *Suppression Orb*, *Mordok's Obelisk*, or the upcoming *Altar of Peace*.

Direct Assault

While creature assaults are mana-efficient, attack spells are time-efficient. There is no faster way to take down the enemy than with a direct attack, such as a *Fireball* or *Lightning Bolt*. For this type of strategy you normally need to move quickly, directly towards the enemy, and start hitting them with attacks as fast and hard as possible, giving them no time to regroup or defend themselves.

Bind an attack spell, such as a *Fireball*, to an *Elemental Wand* so that you can use the attack over and over again each round. Put a *Hawkeye*

enchantment on yourself to gain the *Ranged +1* trait. Also, if you are using flame or lightning attacks, equip yourself with a *Fireshaper Ring* or *Lightning Ring* to gain another *Ranged +1* for those attacks.

Some attacks, like *Fireball* and *Hurl Boulder*, deal pure damage. Other attacks, like *Lightning Bolt*, deal damage plus effects (such as *Stun* or *Daze*). If you do not need the effects, don't use those types of attacks. You are paying a premium for effects like *Stun* and *Daze*. In most cases you may just want the pure damage.

You probably should have several backup attack spells, and a spare *Elemental Wand* on hand, in case you lose the first one! Keep a *Dissolve*, *Explode*, or *Dispel* handy, to quickly remove any kind of armor or defense the enemy tries to protect themselves with.

You may want to trap or hold the enemy in place so they cannot run out of your range. Keep a *Tanglevine*, *Force Hold*, or some Walls handy for this purpose.

Your goal is to deal at least two heavy attacks per round, for every round, and pummel your opponent to death as quickly as possible! The best way to do this is to equip yourself with a weapon to make that second attack each round.

Equip yourself with a ranged weapon like *Ivarium Longbow*. Or consider a melee weapon, and then buff yourself up with a *Bear Strength* enchantment and *Gauntlets of Strength* for a total of *Melee +3*. Use a *Nullify* on yourself to protect your weapon.

Use spells like *Perfect Strike*, *Precision Strike*, *Sniper Shot*, *Evade*, *Mongoose Agility*, and *Falcon Precision* to ensure those attacks get through every round.

Use a single archer creature like *Royal Archer* to assist you in making Ranged attacks and getting past enemy defenses, including enemy defensive spells like *Block* and *Reverse Attack*. If you have a familiar that can make ranged attacks too, such as a *Thoughtspore* or *Sersiryx*,

use them to augment your own attacks.

Countering the Direct Assault

If the enemy is coming for you right away, hitting you hard with two attacks per round, you must react quickly, or the match could be over before you realize it!

First, you need to do something to immediately protect yourself and reduce their attack effectiveness. Equip yourself with armor, such as *Rhino Hide* or *Dragonscale Hauberk*. Enchant yourself with *Divine Protection*, or a Defense like *Cobra Reflexes*. These will cut the enemy attack effectiveness by as much as 50%.

Keep yourself moving, and stay out of range. Use *Teleport*, *Force Hold*, *Tanglevine* and Walls to assist with this. If the enemy has a melee attack, summon a small creature and place them on guard to help absorb the attacks.

Block and *Reverse Attack* spells are very useful. A *Block* can stop a *Fireball* that costs twice the mana! If you can *Reverse* a single *Fireball*, you could possibly, decisively turn the tide of battle.

Use *Regrowth* or a *Regrowth Belt* to recover damage. Also, a *Heal* or *Minor Heal*, bound to a *Mage Wand*, can keep you going for a long time.

Important: You cannot win the game by running and defending yourself. You have to turn the game around. How do you do this? Put a creature or two in play, and let them start attacking the other Mage. Also, make an attack on the enemy as soon as you can afford to. Oftentimes, the enemy Mage is so focused on the assault that he has not had time or mana to defend himself in any manner. Many times they will make their assault with no armor, defenses, or creatures to guard them. In just a few rounds of attacking the defenseless enemy Mage, while you are running and defending yourself, you can oftentimes turn the tide of battle, and suddenly they are on the defensive. As soon as the enemy casts his first *Heal* spell, or pauses to put on some armor, you know you have them!

Direct Damage

The Warlock is well suited for this strategy. Just pile on those damage-dealing curses like *Ghoul Rot*, *Chains of Agony*, and *Mage Bane*. Conjure an *Idol of Pestilence*. A Warlock can use a *Moloch's Torment* to make matters worse! Now the enemy Mage is taking 4–8 points of damage per round, which is direct damage that bypasses armor.

This strategy will kill the enemy Mage automatically, but slowly over time. It is used best when combined with other types of attacks. You can sit back and watch them slowly die in a matter of rounds. But, even better, show no mercy—go in and attack them and finish them off quickly! Making him move, and cast spells, will trigger *Chains of Agony* and *Mage Bane*.

Throw in a *Poisoned Blood* or *Deathlock*, so they cannot heal or regenerate.

They may try to remove your enchantments with a *Purge Magic* or *Destroy Magic* spell. Plan ahead and use a *Nullify* on them to block the attempt! Have backup spells available to replace those that are *Dispelled*.

How to Counter Direct Damage

Keep a *Purge Magic* and a few *Dispels* on hand to remove those pesky curses. A *Minor Heal* bound to a *Mage Wand* can easily recover the damage lost each round. Regeneration from *Regrowth* or *Regrowth Belt* can recover 2 of the lost damage each round, and for less mana than the cost of *Ghoul Rot*. A *Steal Enchantment* is a great way to turn around one of these curses.

This is a slow way to damage you so you might also ignore it, and use those precious rounds and mana to employ your own strategy, which may destroy the enemy even faster.

Summary

The most important part of building your spell-books is to include the spells necessary to support your strategy for destroying the enemy Mage. Consider the strategies presented above, or come up with one on your own, and make sure you have the spells required to make it work. This may require a number of creatures, attack spells, and enchantments as noted above.

Also, consider the ways to counter the above attack strategies and include a few of those spells. But don't play too defensively. You want to try to efficiently and effectively reduce your opponent's strategy, while implementing a very strong and efficient attack strategy of your own. Include a few key cards to upset his plans, but let the bulk of your spell-book focus on offense.

Mana Acceleration is also very important. This will fuel your strategy. Gaining an early mana advantage can win the game for you, if the enemy cannot destroy you first. Note that if you are playing a Direct Assault strategy, you may not have the time to try and gain mana. You probably need to just focus on the enemy and casting those attack spells.

Creatures

Regardless of your overall strategy, it is always good to have a few creatures available. They can be used to deal a little extra damage to the enemy, or guard you and prevent some damage.

Have at least a couple low-level creatures, which can be used quickly in a pinch. Also, consider at least one larger creature that can deal some heavy damage and be a real threat to the enemy. You might consider having a Flying or Incorporeal creature, which are difficult to stop.

Attacks

Regardless of your overall strategy, include at least a couple attack spells. An attack spell can be very useful at just the right moment to finish off an enemy and bypass a guard.

Consider having at least one zone attack, which can stop an entire horde.

Incantations

Load up on key spells such as *Dispel*, *Minor Heal*, and *Dissolve*. Also consider *Explode*, *Force Push*, *Teleport*, *Seeking Dispel*, *Sleep*, and *Purge Magic*.

Equipment

Most spell-books would do well to have a *Mage Wand* and/or *Elemental Wand*. Consider a *Moonglow Amulet* for the mana advantage. Also, include some armor, a weapon, and maybe a Defense like *Deflection Bracers*.

Conjurations

If you have a Spawnpoint, include it! A *Battleforge* is very useful if you have a lot of equipment. Use *Mana Flowers* and *Mana Crystals* to gain a mana advantage. *Tanglevine* and *Walls* can be very useful to slow an enemy, or hold him in place for your own attack.

Enchantments

There are many enchantments to include in order to buff up yourself or your creatures, control or hold the enemy, and damage and cripple them through curses. Also consider using Traps, which are very mana-efficient when properly placed and triggered. *Decoys* work well when you are using a lot of enchantments to keep the enemy guessing. A *Harmonize* or two could also help improve your mana advantage.

There are so many possible strategies and combinations of spells in *Mage Wars*, that it would be difficult to provide a comprehensive spell-book building guide in a single article. Nevertheless, I hope you will find the information here useful in building that winning spell-book! ■



Heroes, kings, and champions

Ordinary characters in fantastic worlds

by Ken St. Andre



Heroes, kings, and champions. Also, heroines, queens, and amazons. We love them. They show up in fiction and gaming in numbers far out of proportion to their occurrence in the actual world.

The earliest existing literature is all about them. *The Iliad* and *Odyssey of Homer* are all about such superstars. The *Epic of Gilgamesh* is the story of kings and immortals. Arthur and his knights are all kings, princes, and champions.

Even modern literature is full of such characters. I must admit that my favorite literary characters are all extraordinary heroes of one sort or another: Tarzan, Conan, James Bond, Sherlock Holmes, Peter Pan. My favorite comics are the superhero comics, not the romance

or character-driven ones like *Gasoline Alley*. (Look it up.)

Geoffrey Chaucer was one of the first writers to buck the trend. His *Canterbury Tales* is all about ordinary people making an ordinary sort of journey. To pass the time they tell each other stories, and although some of the stories are about heroes, kings, and champions, some of them are about ordinary people doing ordinary things.

In English literature, hundreds of years pass before that kind of thing happens again. Shakespeare mostly wrote about heroes, kings, and champions, but he at least notices that more ordinary people can be important. Hamlet is Prince of Denmark, but Romeo is just a lust-struck teen in Verona. (Even so,

the families involved are nobles, not ordinary craftsmen or citizens.) It is not until 1749, when Henry Fielding publishes *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling*, that more ordinary sorts of characters become popular and take the stage. We like to read about such characters because we, for the most part, identify with them. (I realize there may be some heroes or champions reading this, but mostly I'm not talking to you—being a champion carries responsibilities of its own, and I expect you to be too busy to be wasting your time reading articles like this that talk about you.) In the modern era of heroic fantasy (that gave rise to our gaming obsessions), it was J.R.R. Tolkien who brought the common man into the story in a big way. When he started he was motivated by literature, and he produced a ton of stuff that became *The Silmarillion*, a book about heroes,

kings, and champions. It was his story of *The Hobbit* that really got him going—that is when he realized that the story doesn't have to be about the "heroes" of the world. Thorin Oakenshield is both a king and a hero. Gandalf the Grey is one of the great wizards of Middle Earth. He normally hangs around with people like Elrond and Galadriel—immortals, and lords among the immortals. There are no hobbits in *The Silmarillion*.

That brings me in a roundabout manner to the true subject of this article: the creation of role-playing games and adventures. We are all participants in a form of fiction—more akin to drama than to novels, but still fiction. As the creators of game scenarios for our players, we are like playwrights. As players we are the characters in the play. Each session of play is like one performance on stage. A long campaign is more akin to the creation of a novel.

I am more of a writer/game master than a player (though I'm quite happy to play when I get the chance). My main satisfaction in all this comes from creating a story and then watching players bring it to life. I suspect that the same is true for other notable GMs and gaming scenario writers, but I'm speaking for myself here. When I look back at all the stories I've created for *Tunnels and Trolls* (or *Stormbringer*), I realize that the majority of them were created for ordinary people and are the kind of adventures that a mere mortal could have and survive. (Not all of them, however. I told you at the beginning that I do love heroes, queens, and superstars.)

Have you ever asked yourself what you are trying to do when you role-play? Are you simply trying to solve the adventure? Are you really wargaming it (i.e., the objective is for you the player to "win")? Are you simply trying to keep your player character alive and come out of the adventure with more money than you started with? Are you trying to build the legend of your character? By gawd, you may have started as an ordinary character rolled up on 3d6, but by the time you are through, your character will be one of the most renowned adventurers anywhere (that is, you're really trying to turn Clem the farm boy into Klong the Invincible, who saved the city of Khosht from an invasion of monsters. Conversely, you might start as Nork the Ork, an ordinary minion, who somehow became the leader, led the monsters to the Sack of Khosht, and taught those pesky humans a lesson they'll never forget (every coin has two sides, and every tale has more than one version or way of experiencing it.)

And as a game designer, who are you writing for? Are you writing for the common man, or are you writing for would-be heroes? When you do the introduction, how high do you set

the stakes? Is the survival of a city or its people involved? Or is it just a personal quest for loot? Will your adventure start out as what happened when your character woke up that day? Or, is it the stuff of prophecy and fate? You can do one or the other, depending on what story is currently dominating your thoughts. You don't have to have Hollywood endings every time.

There are some writers who believe they have to top themselves with every following piece of work. They think they have to get better, to learn, to grow all the time. I don't think that way, and I doubt if I'll ever agree with those that do. I think that life and writing is a roller-coaster ride. There are high, low, and flat spots. Sometimes you are slowly climbing to a peak, sometimes you are rushing to a valley, and sometimes you are coasting on momentum. Just do the work that is in your mind at the time, and don't worry about surpassing your previous effort every time.

As a storyteller, how satisfied are you when things don't work out to the Big Finish that you originally envisioned? Is it okay for the troll or the dragon to win? Is it okay with you for the player characters to say something like "We have enough loot now. Let's turn back and get out of here before something truly hideous comes out and eats us all."

You can either be one kind of writer or both

at the same time, if you wish. I admit liking to be both. One of my earliest solo adventures for *Tunnels and Trolls* was called Deathtrap Equalizer Dungeon, and as a player you could take either the ordinary, possibly survivable challenge (the Trip of the Frog) of just going in and out to a single situation, or you could try the "heroic" version (the Trip of the Lion), where your character goes through every possible adventure in sequence. After that I wrote *Arena of Khazan*, where as a player you face the same kind of challenge—the ordinary challenge of surviving three fights in the arena, or the heroic challenge of winning ten battles in a row. You know, heroes do that kind of thing.

Think about the RPG adventures that you have participated in. Were they created with mortals in mind, or are they something only mega-character heroes could survive? Which kind do you like better? As a writer, which kind do you prefer to create? How you answer the question says a lot about your own personality.

I'll answer the question for myself. I like to think of myself as a hero, one who can rise to any occasion and triumph. As a realist, I tend to keep my head down and figure out how I'm going to survive whatever is coming up next. Honestly, I'm more of a knave than a hero, and my RPG characters reflect that. So now you know who I would be in a fantasy world. Who would you be? ■

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The old-school renaissance

by Vincent Florio

Being a person who has been playing role-playing games since the early '80s, I've been asked various times, "How do I get into old-school gaming?" or "How do I start getting into gaming, like you did as a kid?"

Well the answer is simple, and yet at the same time not so easy. Luckily, I am here to lend a helping hand for all the newer people out there wondering about the older editions of *Dungeons & Dragons*. Being that I have been playing the games for almost 30 years now, most of the people asking me these questions are playing the newer editions of role-playing games and have heard great stories from others who've played *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* first edition or Basic/Expert *D&D*, such as their parents or other family members. These conversations often come up after a family member finds out about their mutual interest in playing such games. They would sit down together and spin old campfire stories about

how exciting the games were, or rehash the controversy surrounding *D&D* when it first came out.

The recent reprints of the first edition original core books have also sparked the interest of newer players, now that the books, available on local gaming store shelves, have become easier to obtain. The newer generations of gamers are picking up these books with excitement, reading how things were done "back in the day." Most people pick up the books, get all cross-eyed at the "Gygaxian style" writing, and put them down, never to look at them again, while others soak in the wisdom that Gary Gygax left for them and feel as if their eyes have been opened. And now, I've decided to write out a reference article to help new gamers "ease into" the older games. Here are the steps:

1. First pick up *A Quick Primer for Old*

School Gaming by Matthew Finch.

This free, 13-page booklet is a quick introduction to playing original *D&D*. The author says, "This booklet is designed for the modern-style gamer who's planning on taking the old-style rules for a trial run—because open-ended rules like 0e are USED very differently than rules that are used in modern systems." The booklet goes into a lot of details, comparing the styles of running a game with examples from the newer editions versus those from the older editions. Reading this will make you understand how the older systems were played. An example of a pit trap is given in this booklet and it really shows the differences of, say, the modern style of *Pathfinder* or *D&D* 3.X/4E versus the old-school style of *AD&D* 1E, or how Basic would handle it. The modern style is shown first, with a DM talking to his player. The DM describes a ten-foot-wide corridor and how it leads to the north into complete

darkness. The player then jumps in with his rogue-like character and asks to check for traps. The DM asks for the character's target number for checking and gets an answer back of 15. The DM at this point, knowing there is a trap ahead, decides its standard and asks the player to roll a d20 and beat the difficulty class of 15. The player rolls a 16, and the DM says the character finds a pit trap ahead of him with little description. Then the player decides he wants his character to disarm it, so the DM asks for the target number again, and the player rolls over it. Then it is described that the character is able to disarm the trap with no problem and get past the encounter.

The turn is then revisited using the old-school style, with the same situation of the corridor, the pit trap, and even the same first-sentence description. This time the player says his character takes his ten-foot pole and pokes around on the ground ahead of him as they are moving forward, but realizes he has lost that item and decides to ask whether his character sees any cracks in the corridor floor in the shape of a square. The DM decides that it's a little too dark inside the corridor, and there are quite a bit of cracks in the ground, so he tells that information to the player, who comes back with a wonderful plan. The player describes that his character has taken out his water skin and let some water pour onto the floor, to see if it trickles through any of the cracks on the floor or flows a certain way. The DM then describes that the water puddles into a certain area, where the character sees a square piece of ground that is slightly higher than the rest. The player then asks a bunch of questions about disarming it, but the DM tells him there is no way to disarm it other than springing the trap. Then the player decides to look and see if his character can walk around it without falling into the trap, and the DM tells him there is a small, two-foot area that he can use to squeeze by carefully.

Looking at the two examples, what are the major differences between them? The modern style is using dice rolls to resolve all situations in the encounters, while the old-school style uses description and not one die was ever rolled. The player and the DM talked out the encounter and resolved it in a clever way. While you may think the old-school-style method is time-consuming or pointless, it allows you to role-play situations and makes you feel like you are actually standing there in front of the trap and doing these moves, instead of just using the dice as a shortcut. Now, don't get me wrong, some people enjoy the modern-style dice method, and that is fine, but the charm of the old-school style is in the description and role-play.

2. Decide if you want to go further

You can either buy a book (reprints or originals) or grab a "retro-clone" of the original books. Retro-clones are books written

to mimic the original books, but made easier to understand, and often added with various house rules to the game to clear up common issues that the retro-clone author feels need answering. These books are not 100% true to the original, but close enough if you don't want to spend any money and just want to try it out. You can download some of them for free as a PDF and, if you enjoy it, you can go pick up the actual books or inquire about having the PDFs hardbound. At this point, there are a lot of them out there, and your best bet would be to search on the web for "retro-clones," as I will name only a couple here to start you out. If you are interested in playing *AD&D* first edition, look for a game called *OSRIC* by Stuart Marshall. For *D&D* Basic edition, where a race is considered a class, look up *Labyrinth Lord* by Goblinoid Games. If you are interested in dropping a few dollars, you can usually find used copies of the original *D&D* books for around \$10.

3. Preparing Phase

After grabbing any of the books listed in this article, read it over once—maybe make a note or two of things you do not understand at the time—but read it over entirely. The reason for this is that sometimes the things that do not make sense initially may be answered later on in the book. After you are done reading it the first time, read it again; this time let it sink into your mind and see if the things you made note of earlier have been answered. After reading everything, try your hand at rolling up a character. A simple search on the web for character sheets will give you a lot of options. Pick whatever is easy for you. In addition, pencil and paper work just as well. Character creation will help you understand what you've been reading and help answer a lot of questions. If during the process something does not make sense, ask someone for help.

Asking for help could be as simple as going

to your local gaming store and talking to people who have played in the past. Searching the web for keywords such as "OSR Forums" or "*AD&D* Forums," for example, can be the quickest way to find answers to common questions. Online forums are where you'll find like-minded people who will know the answers to your questions. More than likely, if you are the one doing all this work, you will be the person running the games for your group of friends. If you are completely new at gaming, or only experienced in running newer-style games, you can find what is called a "pre-made adventure," also known as a module. There are a lot of freely made modules located on the web, or you can purchase a module made by game designers. If you do not like pre-made adventures, you can sit down and design a custom adventure for you and your friends.

4. Its game night, play the game!

Find a nice place to set up your game, decide on a starting time for all the players to meet and also an ending time. Both are very important, but the ending time is the most important. Normally, people will decide that a block of four to six hours is enough time to have fun; others will go until they can't keep their eyes open any longer. I suggest the four-to-six-hour block, because it's enough time to get into a game, have fun, and not get burned out on playing. Yes, worrying about playing too much seems like a silly thing at first, but too much at once will often turn you off of something. After the gaming session is over, you can then decide with the group on the next time to play.

There is a tip that I've learned in my many years of gaming: take breaks. If there is a lull in the game and players look worn out or tired, take a 10-minute break and let everyone stand up, move around, and chitchat about things. It's also a great idea to have snacks and drinks at the table for everyone, and you can do this



fairly by taking turns bringing a few bottles of soda and snacks to each game. There is also the method I've used for my group in the past, where the host of the game session provides what is needed and each player contributes a couple dollars into a community snack fund. For this method to work, everyone needs to agree upon it, and sometimes you have to understand that people get paid from their job in different ways. If somebody is short on cash, give your buddy a little slack and just throw an "IOU" slip in the pot for them. If that becomes a recurring problem, pull them aside and speak to them about it, but never embarrass your friends out in the open. Finally, sometimes during the game, things may get a little out of control, as people will argue about what has happened or won't happen. The best thing to do here is take a five-minute break, let everyone walk away from the table and then come back with a fresh outlook.

5. Remember you are playing the old-school style.

There isn't a set rule for everything. This allows the person running the game to make decisions that will keep the flow of the game going. With this style of gaming it's often said, "It's all about rulings, not rules." What that means is that the books can't cover every single possible situation that come up during gaming, and sometimes a player will want to do something with their character that is different or maybe even off-the-wall. The best advice is never say no to what a player wants to do, always try to figure out a way that it can be worked into the game. Remember, as the person running the game, you control the world and how the "reality" of the game is handled. Use a bit of common sense when making the decision, and try to picture whether it would be possible. Think about whether you've seen a similar situation in a movie or read something like it in a novel. Remember that it's fantasy, so real-world examples don't really work as a basis from which to judge these things.

As a new person running the game, or even as a veteran player, you might have some problems deciding how to handle this issue. If you cannot talk out the actions, the best

advice is to keep things fair and allow the dice to determine the fate of the action. There are a few factors to consider when doing this: first, decide which one of the character stats is relevant to this situation. For example, let's say a fighter in the group wants to leap off a wall, so that he could land behind the bad guy that his party is fighting and attack from behind. As the person running this game, you have to decide if this maneuver is possible to do during combat, and then decide what stat it falls under. In this case, it is possibly the fighter's Dexterity stat. He is wearing chain mail and the ground is covered in a bit of mud—these factors will make it harder to do the leap, as opposed to if he was wearing cloth and the ground was dry stone. Next, you would take three six-sided dice as your starting point, add two more six-sided dice for the factors involved, and ask the player to roll under the chosen stat. If the player rolls under then he

is successful, if the player rolls over, he fails and cannot do the move. You could tell him something like, "Your character looks at the wall and attempts to do the leap, but is unable to get the footing he needs to jump up the wall, and slides down to his feet." Don't punish your players for thinking of cool things to do—encourage it, and always award extra experience points for inventive ways of doing things during the game.

Well, that is all from me. So, as I always say, keep it original, keep it old school, and remember, you control the books, not the other way around!

For more information about the old-school style or old-school gaming goodness, check out the *Roll for Initiative* podcast, the original and only podcast covering *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* first edition since 2009.



Weird Vibrations

Leave the familiar realms of fantasy for strange new lands

by Jeffrey Talanian

*... Azathoth gnaws shapeless and ravenous
amidst the muffled, maddening beat of vile drums
and the thin, monotonous whine of accursed flutes.*

—H.P. Lovecraft,
The Dream Quest of Unknown Kadath

The weird tales and fantastic fiction of authors H.P. Lovecraft and Clark Ashton Smith, are, for me, an endless fount of inspiration when creating adventure and campaign materials. Reading their respective works excites my imagination and galvanizes me to jot notes on potential monsters, magic items, class alternatives, and (of course) adventure seeds. But, it's not always easy or natural to step out from the high-fantasy paradigm. It's as though we sometimes find ourselves creatively confined within the limits of Professor Tolkien's fenced-in backyard; to break free and witness the unspeakable horrors without, we can use a little help. A few years ago, such help came from my friend and colleague, illustrator Ian Baggey, who encouraged me to "retune" the bard class for the *Astonishing Swordsmen & Sorcerers of Hyperborea* RPG; to infuse it with more weird fantasy flavor. So began the path to Azathoth, so began the path to *weird vibrations*.

After my conversation with Ian, I reread "The Music of Erich Zann," by H.P. Lovecraft. It is a first-person narrative in which the viewpoint character, a university student in France, has recently rented an apartment in the city, on a street called Rue d'Auseil. The narrator explains that the street is so steep and narrow that it is closed off to vehicles. His apartment is on the fifth floor of the tallest house on the street. Above him, in a single-window garret (a small attic apartment) resides an old, German concert musician who calls himself Erich Zann. The narrator listens to Zann play his viol late into the night, the weird harmonies of which haunt him night and day; he comes to believe that Zann's music is like nothing heard before, an original genius.

Soon the narrator makes Zann's acquaintance, who proves to be an eccentric old mute. With a gesture, the old man invites the narrator to his dingy attic apartment, sparsely furnished, with sheet music piled in disarray about the floor. There he plays his

viol at length, performing interesting fugues, but never performs any of the weird, haunting pieces overheard in the night. When the narrator suggests to Zann that he play the other songs, Zann becomes upset. The narrator then whistles one of those haunting tunes, and through gestures the eccentric mute beseeches him to stop, whilst casting paranoid glances at the attic's lone, curtained window—as though expecting intrusion.

As the story progresses, the narrator seeks to visit Zann again, but each time he is rebuffed by the eccentric mute. Notwithstanding, he cannot stop thinking about the weird, haunting music produced by the old man's viol. One night the narrator creeps up to Zann's attic door and listens:

*... I heard the shrieking viol swell into
a chaotic babel of sound; a pandemonium
which would have led me to doubt my own
shaking sanity had there not come from
behind that barred portal a piteous proof
that the horror was real—the awful, inarticulate
cry which only a mute can utter,
and which rises only in moments of the most
terrible fear or anguish.*

The narrator raps on the door and, after an interminable silence, he hears the old man fumbling to close the attic window's shutter and sash; then, the narrator is admitted into the garret apartment. Zann is at once relieved to see the narrator, clutching at him, bidding him to enter. It seems the strange mute has something he wishes to get off his chest, so in his native German he begins to scrawl his terrible tale. It takes Zann nearly an hour—but then, most abruptly, the old man jumps from his chair and hearkens by the shuttered window. Then the narrator hears it, too: a strange sound emanating from beyond; a low, distant music. This sends Zann into a panic. He retrieves his viol and begins to play feverishly. As "The Music of Erich Zann" draws to its

frightful climax, the attic chamber of the old viol player turns into a whirlwind of chaos: the shutter breaks loose, the glass panes of the attic window shatter, and a chill wind blows in. As Zann continues to play his mad, horrible tune, the narrator glimpses at that which lies beyond the attic window:

*... I saw no city spread below, and no
friendly lights gleamed from remembered
streets, but only the blackness of space illimitable;
unimagined space alive with motion
and music, and having no semblance of
anything on earth.*

So, you may be wondering, how might this particular tale relate to gaming? What does it have to do with exploring labyrinthine dungeons, hoary wildernesses, and ancient crypts?

Imagine, if you will, Erich Zann, as a sort of weird fantasy bard. This bard does not stroll about the realm plucking his lute and creating magic from his music; instead, the music he produces functions as a sort of incantation—a weirding way that taps supernatural vibrations permeating the very fabric of the universe. He uses his genius talent to warp and shape these *weird vibrations* to effect his bardic sorcery. His mad instrumentation is both super-brilliant, yet terrifying to hear. It is not mundane music; rather, it is a supernatural manifestation of sound both fascinating and disturbing to attend, not unlike the weird gesticulations and sibilations effectuated by other sorcerer types.

Inspired, I began to apply this concept to my own version of the bard. Thus, the *AS&SH* bard is presented as a "mystic thief with the martial versatility of a fighter, the dweomer-craft of a sorcerer, and a plethora of strange and esoteric skills. Through song, verse, or music, the bard opens windows to other dimensions and taps weird vibrations that permeate the illimitable Black Gulf."

That much was settled, but where would this Erich Zann-type bard learn his arts in a weird



fantasy campaign setting such as Hyperborea? Not necessarily under druidical tutelage, even if the *AS&SH* bard makes use of druidic (and illusionary) spells, among a plethora of other abilities. What follows is a short treatment on how the bard in your campaign might be inculcated with the esoteric knowledge of *weird vibrations*.

Weird Fantasy Bard

The weird fantasy bard is really but a shuffle step over from the standard bard. With the exception of some slight modifications, the standard skills and abilities may still apply. It is the flavor, the mood, that is most altered. Generally speaking, the thematic components of any class are the purview of role-play, whether we are talking about a steppe barbarian horseman who hunts wild cattle and raids villages, or a frontiersman ranger who protects an outlying settlement from the savages and horrors beyond. So, consider this as a sort of thought experiment in which we take the idea of the bard class and examine it through a different lens: a weird, fantasy lens. I will be using my default Hyperborea campaign setting as the backdrop, but you can easily modify the details to suit your own campaign setting.

Most sword-and-sorcery and high-fantasy milieus will contain an arctic region, a hostile tundra where dwell all manner of beast and monster, the threat of which are surpassed only by the unforgiving elements. The Plain of Leng is one such region in Hyperborea.

Plain of Leng: This frigid tundra is considered uninhabitable by most men, except for some doughty tribal personages. Dog-sledding tribes herd reindeer and hunt mammoth on the tundra, and oft they give chase to the elusive black fox, the pelts of which fetch rich sums. No place in Hyperborea is colder than the Plain of Leng, its brutal winds relentless. This arctic wasteland is also roamed by the enigmatic men of Leng, a nomadic race of satyrs who communicate via music and empathy.

Bard's Apprentice: The weird fantasy bard begins play as a young, 0 level fighter who possesses significant musical talents. This precocious, young aspirant must seek an elder bard who has already learned the weirding way; however, to become a true bard, the young hopeful is sent on journey deep into the Plain of Leng. There, he or she must perform with panpipes a haunting melody specifically designed to garner the attention of the fabled men of Leng. The melody must be played into a blasting, arctic wind that moans like a thousand lost souls.

Men of Leng: On their leaper camels (kangaroo-like marsupials with powerful hind legs and shaggy fur) the men of Leng traverse the sheeted plains of the frozen tundra. Men of Leng stand six- to seven-feet tall, with the naked torsos of men, the hooved legs of goats, and the spiral horns of rams. Their legs and

forearms are thick with grey-white fur, and so too do their long beards grow. Their eyes are sky-blue, their ruddy faces folded with many wrinkles. If men of Leng speak, they have never revealed this to mankind, not even their most apt human pupils. Instead, they convey emotions through panpipes, their haunting melodies perhaps serving as some species of empathic language.

The men of Leng typically arrive at the last possible moment, before the aspirant succumbs to exposure. Before slipping to unconsciousness, the last thing the aspirant might recall is the terrible moan of the arctic wind developing into a discordant babel of panpipes that slowly coalesce into a spectral harmony. The nearly expired aspirant is borne away, and then later revived by a potent wine steeped in the leaves of a rare, arctic lotus.

The Weirding Ways of Leng: Next begins the true inculcation into the weirding ways of the men of Leng, as the aspirant becomes an apprentice. He or she learns that verbal speech is prohibited; formal instruction is exclusively communicated through music and so too are all the mundane aspects of daily life. Even young men of Leng are discouraged from mewling and are soon fitted with a simple flute through which they must learn to communicate their needs.

The men of Leng are always on the move. They will build igloos out on the tundra, and also huts framed by mammoth tusks, but never do they settle. The human apprentice is taken on great treks out onto the hostile tundra, riding with the men of Leng on their leaper camels, chasing aurorae, and learning the haunting harmonies—the “Song of Azathoth,” which taps the *weird vibrations* that permeate the fabric of the universe. It is both a frightening and exhilarating experience for the apprentice, for as the learning progresses, previously closed portions of the mind are opened to new vistas of consciousness and creativity.

The culmination of this learning might involve arriving at a lonely tower of basalt thrust up from the barren, frozen plain. At the top of the tower is a small window overlooking the awesome tundra shone over by multihued sheets of aurorae. Here the apprentice feverishly performs all that he or she has learned, and through the window, the apprentice is given glimpse into that which would inspire madness in ordinary men—the center of infinity, beyond time and space, where dwells the amorphous blight of bubbling chaos: Azathoth.

Weird Fantasy Bard Graduation: At length, perhaps a year or so later, the student will begin to think like a man of Leng, forgetting verbal speech and even their own humanity. It is at this juncture that the men of Leng will perform a ceremonial piece for the advanced apprentice, an entrancing tune that engenders a deep slumber. Upon awakening, the apprentice finds him- or herself on the verge of a human settlement, perhaps the one

he or she originated from. The apprentice is now considered a 1st level bard (or perhaps a fighter who must eventually transition to thief, and then bard), but now he or she must relearn his humanity, having taken to a rather strange and feral existence. As humanity is relearned, the bard's time with the men of Leng will become like some foggy dream, if not forgotten completely, but never does the “graduated” student forget the bardic secrets of the weirding ways of Leng.

As campaign play progresses and the bard becomes eligible to advance in levels of experience, he or she must seek elder bards who themselves were once tutored by the enigmatic men of Leng; bards of similar learning, as it were—perhaps even the same bard who originally sent the young aspirant out into the hoary depths of the Plain of Leng. The bard thus becomes a member of a weird fraternity, a cult or quasi-college of men and women who practice the sorcery of *weird vibrations*.

As you have no doubt deduced by now, I decided that Azathoth, “that amorphous blight of nethermost confusion which blasphemizes and bubbles at the center of all infinity,” was the source of the *weird vibrations* in my Hyperborea campaign. Azathoth, the Sultan of Chaos, whose power is invoked through the manipulation of *weird vibrations*. The idea dovetailed nicely with the weird fantasy bard concept, but why stop there?

Magic items and artifacts can also relate to *weird vibrations*; furthermore, they can enrich campaign play, providing depth and mood for all participants. Now, of course, a skilled referee can invent out of whole cloth any number of magic items and artifacts associated with the weird and terrifying, but as I alluded to at the start of this article, I enjoy reading the works of my favorite authors for inspiration. In this case, fellow gamers, I present for your consideration a fascinating tale by C.A. Smith.

“The Devotee of Evil,” by Clark Ashton Smith, presents another intriguing example of *weird vibrations*. This story is also a first-person narrative, set in Auburn, California, where Smith himself spent most of his life. The narrator is a novelist who makes the acquaintance of one Jean Averaude, a well-to-do man originally from New Orleans. Averaude, who is described by the narrator as “a sallow, saturnine Creole,” has taken residence in a house on a hill behind Auburn's Chinatown—a house with a reputation for being haunted.

The narrator first meets Averaude at the local library, where the former is reading the newspaper account of a man who murdered his family. Averaude, walking past, stops to comment on the story, revealing his thoughts on evil as a palpable entity, an ulterior force that drives people to behave so:

“What I conceive is a sort of dark vibration, the radiation of a black sun, of a center of malignant eons—a radiation that can penetrate like any other ray—and perhaps more deeply.”

The two confer briefly on the topic, and Averaud concludes the conversation by inviting the narrator to visit him some time. Intrigued, the narrator soon does just so.

Averaud’s house is in an utter state of decay, covered with mosses and lichens, surrounded by tangled vines, and overshadowed by somber trees. At the door, the narrator is greeted by Averaud’s exotic housekeeper and mistress, a mute. Soon Averaud appears, and in short order the two resume their discussion from the library, in which Averaud asserts the following:

“... I have postulated a monistic evil, which is the source of all death, deterioration, imperfection, pain, sorrow, madness, and disease.”

After further discourse, the narrator begins to surmise that Averaud may be mentally imbalanced. The eccentric man explains his belief that certain locales and buildings are more receptive to evil than other places, and likewise specific articles, such as jewels. He describes these places and things as “receivers of evil.” For me it becomes most interesting when he says this:

“By the use of some device which would create a proper field, or form a receiving station, it should be possible to evoke this absolute evil. Under such conditions, I am sure that the dark vibration would become a visible and tangible thing, comparable to light or electricity.”

In the following weeks the narrator sees Averaud about town. Averaud is always eager to discuss his morbid theories, and he informs the narrator that his invention progresses well. He invites the narrator to visit again, to see it for himself. And so the narrator returns to Averaud’s house.

This time he is admitted to a chamber he had not seen before: a windowless, triangular room, tapestried in sullen black fabric—this corroborating the queer village tales from carpenters who had been hired to build the room. The apparatus, which Averaud explains is not yet complete, is set on a low tripod of brass in the center of the room:

... (it) presented the appearance of some new, highly complicated musical instrument. I remember that there were many wires of varying thickness, stretched on a series of concave sounding-boards of some dark, unlustrous metal; and above these, there depended from three horizontal bars a number of square, circular, and triangular

gongs. Each of these appeared to be made of a different material; some were bright as gold, or translucent as jade; others were black and opaque as jet. A small hammer-like instrument hung opposite each gong, at the end of a silver wire.

Averaud goes on to explain the scientific properties of the apparatus:

“The vibrational properties of the gongs . . . were designed to neutralize with their sound—pitch all other cosmic vibrations than those of evil.”

When Averaud perceives the narrator’s growing skepticism, he offers to show an experiment. He switches on the device. The tiny hammers begin to oscillate, tapping the gongs. The narrator describes the sound like so:

... a diabolic percussion unlike anything I have ever heard, and exquisitely painful to the nerves. I felt as if a flood of finely broken glass was pouring into my ears.

The hammers beat heavier, but then, oddly, the terrifying sound fades away. Averaud explains that their sound has transitioned beyond human perception. Next, a ghostly shadow begins to fill the room, and the narrator is instilled with powerful feelings of depression and despair. He feels death, decay, malignity, and madness; the black-curtained, triangular chamber swims in these emotions, and the narrator feels as though he is descending, pressed by Satanic incubi. Eventually, Averaud switches off the machine, and now the narrator finds himself a believer. In fact, he is haunted by the experience.

When I consider the apparatus constructed by Averaud in “The Devotee of Evil,” I begin to imagine how something similar might exist in my own campaign. Perhaps it could be an invention of the Atlanteans, whose sciences have been lost to the ages in the post-plague years of Hyperborea’s history; a device that opens gates to other dimensions, where terrifying entities dwell and the laws of physics do not accord with those of our own universe.

Gong of Dark Vibrations: This apparatus is a 22-inch diameter, metal disc forged of a bronze alloy infused with the dust of crumbled star stones. The gong is suspended by a cord of sabertooth sinew that passes through two holes at the top rim. The padded head of its mallet is wrapped in aurochs skin, its handle carved of redwood. When the gong is beaten, it produces a hauntingly sonorous sound that progresses from deep and resonating on round one to shrill and earsplitting on round two, and then silence on round three, as the vibrations transition to a pitch beyond human discernment. In this moment, on round three, from the gong’s central nipple, there projects a triangular field of malign—shadowy vibrations 25 feet long

and 20 feet wide at the terminus (base). Those unfortunates who are touched by this field of weird vibrations are turned to ebony stone, unless the appropriate save is made. This musical instrument functions once per day. Each time it is used, there is a cumulative 2% chance that it cracks, never to function again, and revealing a network of silver filaments encased within the bronze.

Other weird vibrations items come to mind as well. Imagine, if you will, a tribe of Picts whose shaman has been directed by the spirits of his or her ancestors to construct a spirit drum, which, once demonstrated by the shaman, can potentially unite otherwise warring tribes of Pictdom:

Drum of Bestial Projection: This 26-inch diameter, 8-inch deep drum is notable for its mammoth-hide skin dyed with octopus ink. The drum shell is carved from the wood of a hanging tree and is stained with lamia’s blood. This instrument is useable by shamans (or druids) of 5th level or greater. It is placed between the knees and beaten with the hands. When beat to a vigorous and syncopated rhythm, weird vibrations enter the performer, who then succumbs to a deep trance. Next, his or her ghostly spirit emerges and assumes the physical form of a fearsome beast. Possibilities include ape (carnivorous), bear (cave), lizard (giant chameleon), snake (giant python), tiger (sabertooth), and wolf (dire). Users of 9th level or greater can assume the form of a saber-tooth superior (a six-legged monstrosity). Activating the drum is a 2-turn ritual, and bestial projection duration is 12 turns (2 hours) per character level. If, however, the bestial form is slain, the shaman (or druid, as the case may be) is rejected to his or her normal body. This violent return requires a trauma survival check, or death is the end result. This device can be used once per week.

Fellows, the point of this exercise is that great fiction can inspire fine campaign material. I believe some of the finest, most imaginative game referees are avid readers. But they don’t simply read tales of the weird and fantastic; they also mine them for golden nuggets or kernels, ideas that can be shaped and fitted to enrich their respective campaigns. A monster, an item, a persona, an event—you name it! Inspiration can be derived from films, too. For me, Jason and the Argonauts, Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger, Conan the Barbarian, Krull, Fire and Ice, The Thing, Frankenstein, The Wicker Man, and In the Mouth of Madness, just to name a few. I also find inspiration in the pages of National Geographic and Archaeology Magazine. Lastly, and not to be discounted, is a conversation with a friend, an exchange of ideas with a peer, such as what I had with Ian Baggey. So keep your ears attuned to all the weird vibrations out there, gentle readers, and your campaigns will ever remain fresh, exciting, and dangerous. ■

The Inkubus

A devious new monster for the Savage Worlds rule system

by Gordon Dritchilo

Seaman Wallstrom blinked his eyes and shook his head after throwing up over the side of the boat.

"You Yankees just cannot hold your liquor," Robinson drawled. "Where did you go last night, anyway?"

Wallstrom wiped his mouth with a wadded up hankie he'd pulled from his pocket. "Don't remember. Don't remember coming back to the ship. Don't even remember this."

Robinson bent over for a closer look as Wallstrom lifted his pant leg, revealing a colorful tattoo of a buxom blonde.

"Well, hello," Robinson said with a smile. "Is this anyone in particular?"

"Yeah. Your mom."

Robinson tried to decide between a retort and a smack when Ensign Morris yelled at them to get back to work. Wallstrom's hangover steadily faded as the USS Bardwell made its way out to sea.

* * * *

"I don't know what it is, Doc," Wallstrom said, "but I ain't had any zip since we put out from Port Stephens."

The ship's doctor looked Wallstrom over, stopping at his tattoo. "Where did you get this done?" he asked.

"Heck if I know, Doc," the ailing seaman replied. "Weird thing is I swear it's gotten bigger."

"Bigger?"

"Yeah, it wasn't halfway up my leg from my ankle when I got back from shore leave. Look at it now."

The doctor furrowed his brow as he looked at Wallstrom's face, trying to decide if the story was the result of an active imagination or some sort of dementia. "I've seen a lot of you guys come back with tattoos that get infected, so I'm giving you a shot," he finally said. "Try to get some rest. No more shooting dice in the boiler room."

"Aye-aye, Doc."

* * * *

Wallstrom lay in sick bay, his eyes half-closed, glazed over, hair and uniform drenched in sweat. He hadn't moved or made a sound, save for a low pitiful groan, in hours.

"It's not behaving like any infection I've seen," the doctor told the XO. "I thought it must have been caused by a dirty needle from when he got that new tattoo, but, if that were the case, there should be redness, swelling, pus. There's no identifiable cause for this."

"Is it likely to be contagious?" asked the XO.

"There haven't been any complaints from the other men, but I think it would be prudent to examine at least the ones he's had the closest contact with . . ." An ear-splitting scream drowned out the doctor's recommendation, as Wallstrom sat straight up. A moment later the afflicted sailor passed out as his flesh ripped and sinews popped. The doctor froze. The XO retched.

* * * *

The USS Bardwell drifted as the PT boat pulled up alongside. Grappling hooks attached the two ships and men began wriggling up the side.

"Remember, Captain, none of your men are to board under any circumstances, and nobody from the Bardwell is allowed off without my express orders," Major Kane told the skipper. "If my team doesn't check back in four hours, cast off and radio Admiral Christenson with the code word 'Jubilee.'"

The skipper nodded.

"This is OSI's show, Major," Kane said. "I don't want to be in this any more than I gotta." Kane clambered over the side of the PT boat. On the deck of the Bardwell, Sgt. Duffy started unpacking and checking the scuttling charges. Stilwell assembled a small metal cage. Bryce and Higglesworth scanned the deck with flashlights. The Gurmha they knew only as "Bob" sniffed the air.

"Any surviving crewmen are going to be jumpy, so announce yourselves early and often," Kane said. "Command wants us to catch this thing, but I'm not going to lose any

sleep if we have to kill it."

There were four dead bodies on the bridge, each in a helmet and flak jacket. Kane noted that the CO's sidearm was in his holster and his throat ripped open. The other two men had wounds as if a small animal had attacked them. The third held a knife and had a long, wide gash along his arm. Kane's team had been told in the briefing that the final transmission from the Bardwell was cut off by what sounded like an attack on the bridge. At least now they could confirm that much. Stepping around the bodies, he picked up the ship's log.

"It started with an attack in sick bay that killed a crewman, the ship's doctor and the XO," Kane said. "It started picking off random crewmen after that. Nobody goes anywhere alone."

"Don't plan to, Sir," replied Duffy.

Bryce moved around the cabin sweeping his flashlight. "Everything is intact—the navigational equipment, the radio, all of it," he said. "It went after people, but didn't bother with equipment. Animal intelligence, I'd say."

Kane didn't look up from the log book. "Unless its mission was to kill the crew so the ship could be salvaged," Kane said. "Then it would want to leave the equipment alone."

Bryce shrugged.

Duffy nudged Kane and pointed his flashlight to a blood trail leading to a ventilation hatch. "I nominate Bob," he said.

Kane checked his watch. "The last transmission was 32 hours ago," he said. "It could have gotten anywhere between then and now. Let's check the corridors and cabins before we start crawling around in the ducts."

Below decks, there was a knocking on the far side of a closed hatch. Bob pointed a submachine gun at the hatch while Stilwell took up a position next to it. "Marines," Stilwell said. "Who's in there?"

"Ensign Morris, William J.," a voice said from inside. "I've got two dozen men in here. Be careful. There's something on board."

"That's why we're here," Stilwell replied. "Open the hatch, Ensign."

It swung open. A young face, spattered with blood, poked out.

"It's good to—" Morris didn't finish before one of the men behind him doubled over and screamed. Suddenly, a short, bloody form scrambled up the stricken man's back. The other sailors charged out of the room amid panicked cries. Stillwell and Bob tried to shove them aside and get a clear shot at the creature. Stillwell was knocked to the ground. Bob took careful aim and fired off several rounds.

"Ensign, get these men above decks and tell the folks you find up there where we are," Stillwell barked.

Bob reloaded. "Winged it," he said.

Duffy escorted the rescued crewmen above

decks and Kane led the rest of the team into the room. They found a blood trail and followed it to some piping. The creature—Kane would have called it an animate doll—dropped from the ceiling and wrapped itself around Stillwell's head, clawing at his face. The rest of the team trained their guns on Stillwell, but they didn't dare shoot. Stillwell's back slammed against the bulkhead as he struggled to pry off the hissing form. Bob drew a giant knife and slashed down its back. It fell to the ground and the rest of the team emptied their guns at it.

Bryce let out a long breath. "That's that, then," he said.

"You're assuming there's just the one," Kane

replied. "We're scuttling this ship. It's the only way to be sure."

As they turned to go, they didn't see the tiny form slithering along the floor and onto Bryce's boot.

The surviving crew of the Bardwell watched from the departing PT boat as their ship sank. Kane rehearsed his report and recommendations for the survivors. That Ensign that had kept a number of his men alive might be worth recruiting, he mulled to himself.

Bryce did not know it yet, but on the back of his calf, where he wouldn't see it easily, he now had a colorful tattoo of a buxom blonde woman. ■

The Inkubus

An inkubus is a malevolent spirit that attaches itself to a human host and drains its life. They evade notice by appearing on the body as tattoos. They might be beautiful women, dogs, sharks (reports vary as to whether these crawl along the ground or fly as if swimming through the air), snakes, or winged skulls. The smallest are a few inches in size, but they can grow up to two feet with enough time on a human host. They prefer to attach and detach from a host when no one is looking, but will do what they must and, while detached, attack anyone they see as a threat.

Where two sets of statistics are presented, the lower value represents a smaller Inkubus.

Area Appearing: *Any*

Attributes:

Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d4 to d6, Vigor d6 to d8

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d6, Notice d8, Stealth d10

Pace: 6 **Parry:** 5 **Toughness:** 3 to 5

Size -2: The largest Inkubi are not much larger than a small dog or large cat.

Regeneration: Automatically heals any wounds by attaching to a new host.

Teeth/Claws: Strength +d4 damage

Infection: The Inkubus will make an opposed agility roll to attach itself to a host. If the creature gets a raise, it is attached. If the victim gets a raise, it is shaken off.

While the Inkubus is attached, any successful attack on it is also a successful attack on the host. Removing an Inkubus is a tricky proposition. A properly equipped medic can make a healing roll to cut one free. The roll is opposed by the creature's Spirit.

If the medic wins, the creature is cut loose and will try to scurry away in search of a new host. The victim is shaken. If the Inkubus rolls higher, it will rip itself free, doing Spirit + 1d6+4 damage.

A character with no medical training may attempt to cut the Inkubus away with whatever sharp object is handy. Treat it as if the character is attacking the victim while he has "The Drop" on him, thus doing +4 damage.

Each day that the Inkubus is attached, it makes opposed Spirit rolls with the host. If it wins the host gains a level of fatigue.

Weakness: Each day it is not attached to a host, it must make a Vigor check. If it fails, it takes a level of fatigue.



The Blighted Lands

Adventuring in the lands of Okkorim

by Luke Gygax

Welcome gentle readers to the lands of Okkorim (*Oh-kor-em*) a new fantasy setting I am developing. You may be asking yourself, “What is Okkorim?” and “Why, Luke, are you developing yet another world?” Don’t worry my fellow Game Masters, my goal is to make this a supplement to your existing campaign. The lands of Okkorim are designed to provide a change that will help you rekindle the novelty of the game and keep your players guessing, as they encounter new fantastic creatures and well-known foes with a new twist.

There are endless ways to entice your players to travel to Okkorim. They hear legends, fables and rumors all indicating that Okkorim is filled with fabulous treasures—both monetary and magical. I am sure that you know best how to motivate your players. The journey across the Sea of Najur to the shores of Okkorim should be an arduous venture in and of itself that terminates in an exotic land, where the language, customs, culture, and creatures are unknown. My intent is to facilitate the GM’s ability to reinvigorate a sense of mystique and arouse the players’ interest in all facets of the game, from combat to logistics.

The lands of Okkorim draw inspiration from Arabic and ancient Middle-Eastern cultures, folklore, fiction, and my imagination. The environmental challenges are directly inspired by personal experience and that of my brothers and sisters in arms. The desert is a miserable place to wear armor, carry heavy burdens, and try to fight. As the GM it is interesting to present these mundane obstacles in a way that provides an unexpected challenge for your group, especially at the low- to mid-level range. Suddenly the “boring” game logistics like food, water, and navigation become the focus. Players will learn how to improvise, adapt, and overcome the environmental challenges or suffer penalties (e.g., temporary attribute point-loss, damage, etc.) as a consequence. I hope that you enjoy this introduction to Okkorim and that you decide to have your players explore the Blighted Lands.

Descriptions of the city of Chentoufi and the continent of Okkorim are presented on the gatefold, next to their respective maps. -ed.

Introductory Adventure

I recommend that you bring an already established group of characters to Okkorim and not simply draft up a new set of characters for the adventure. I believe that the players will get more challenge and enjoyment if they have a character that they have invested some blood, sweat, and tears into building. Allowing Joe Schmo the fighter to die of heatstroke in the Blighted Lands is not the same as having the magic-user that you have played for months face an ignoble demise at the hands of the environment. It will encourage foresight, planning, and field-expedient solutions by the characters.

Adventure Hook:

The characters are exploring the city of Chentoufi in the afternoon hours, walking through one of the many bazaars in Merchant Quarter. They will witness the killing (assassination?) of one man and have the opportunity to take a job that was his . . .

“You pause and take a moment to breathe in the fresh air blowing from the south as you pass through the great iron valves of the Merchant’s Gate. The air is hot and dry but it serves to drive the cloying amalgamation of scents that is uniquely that of the ancient city of Chentoufi. You had crossed the waters of the Sea of Najur, to explore the ruins of the ancient Ydrissid Empire for lost treasure and magic items, and arrived at the docks outside Chentoufi only a short time ago. The tales you heard of the size and beauty of its skyline were not an exaggeration. Once you pass through the gates into the city, your senses are bedazzled by the strange sights, sounds, and odors that waft through the crowded streets.

Your group continues exploring the strange sights and sounds as you shoulder your way through the masses, dodging robed women bearing large earthen jugs on their heads, fishermen hawking the morning catch, various humanoids bearing the iron collars of slaves who are walking briskly on errands for their masters, men pushing carts and avoiding ragged beggars that jabber at you in the strange, lilting tongue that is native to this land. All the while the furnace-like heat of the sun beats down from above while the heat absorbed by the stone street below reflects back upward and amplifies the discomfort.

You all decide to pause and assuage your parched throats with a glass of freshly squeezed fruit juice, when the relative calm of the bazaar is broken by a shriek of pain off to the left. The crowd of people clear away from the source of the cry, giving you a view of a man dressed in dark blue pantaloons, white shirt and blue vest sprawled out on the ground with the hilt of a dagger protruding from his abdomen. The crowd remains generally still, waiting for any further excitement. When nothing happens for about 30 seconds or so, they continue on about their business, leaving the cooling corpse lying undisturbed.

The poor fellow lying dead on the ground is Eshur, a ruffian and sometimes adventurer. He was slain in the street for failing to pay a gambling debt he owed to a criminal organization—The Brotherhood of the Hooded Serpent, or The Fangs as they are commonly known. The players will not be able to ascertain who killed Eshur or where they might have fled to after the attack. Examination of the body will yield the following information/items:

A short sword, dagger, small belt pouch (purse) with 12 p.p., 6 g.p., and a large pouch containing a vial of scented oil, a small

ceramic pipe in the shape of a scorpion, a set of four dice and a folded vellum map. The scented oil is for cosmetic use only. The ceramic pipe is used to smoke “Sting,” an illegal narcotic derived from fire-scorpion poison. The dice are a pair of standard dice and a pair of loaded dice for cheating at gambling. The map details a route from Chentoufi east to the edge of the Burning Hills and along its southern edge (about 70 miles), and then south-east (about 20 miles) into the edge of Blighted Lands to a spot marked with three, red concentric rings. The rings mark a nesting spot for fire scorpions.

No one will disturb the players as they examine Eshur’s body for about five minutes, after which a man (named Farnoosh) will approach them and ask what happened. Farnoosh is a portly, middle-aged man wearing local garb (colorful turban, robes, and curly-toed slippers). He is a local alchemist that ekes a humble living making tonics and elixirs for sale in various bazaars and markets. He will tell the players that the slain man, Eshur, was supposed to be bringing him some rare ingredients from the Blighted Lands. Farnoosh will tell the party that he was commissioned to concoct a love philter for a very important city official, and that he fears severe punishment for failing to make the potion on time. He will ask the players to help him get the needed ingredients by venturing into the Blighted Lands. He will offer them 2,500 g.p. for a fire-scorpion tail (adjust the reward as needed to fit your campaign). He needs the items in seven days to give him enough time to produce the philter. Note that the party will need to be mounted in order to have a chance of traveling that distance and back in seven days time.

But Farnoosh is not actually making a love philter at all. He is making an illegal narcotic for sale on the black market. His daughter has contracted a disease and he needs to make enough money to pay for a cure disease spell from the temple. This a dangerous decision as the City Watch will arrest anyone involved with making the illegal substances and The Fangs swiftly (and gruesomely) eliminate anyone that transgresses into their business. However, his daughter’s condition is worsening and he needs to act quickly. The assassin that killed Eshur is observing Farnoosh’s interaction with the players from his vantage point at a nearby café. The Fangs will be watching Farnoosh, and this may well get the players involved with the Brotherhood if they (unwittingly) assist Farnoosh in creating “Sting” for sale on “their” streets.

The players are curious as to what Eshur’s map has marked out in the Blighted Lands and Farnoosh’s offer of some gold to bring back a few items should be carrot enough to motivate them to explore. The environmental condi-

Special rules for traveling in the desert and Blighted Lands			
	Human/Demi-human	Horse	Camel
Desert	4 qt. water/day	5 gallons/day	30 days w/o water
Blight	6 qt. water/day	8 gallons/day	10 days w/o water

Notes:

a. Traveling at night will halve the water requirements. It is much more difficult to navigate in the dark (for humans anyway), and the rate of movement is also halved.

b. Wearing metal armor (chain, scale, banded, ring) adds an additional quart of water.

c. Wearing metal armor in the desert causes 1d6 points of damage if in the sunlight from 10 a.m.–2 p.m.; Blight causes 2 points of damage per hour from 10 a.m.–3 p.m.

tions are very harsh, and you should remind them a few times about the hot, dry conditions even in the city of Chentoufi. Once they head out into the desert, water and food need to be carefully monitored and accounted for.

The environment

The land immediately adjacent to Chentoufi is well-irrigated and fertile. As the party travels inland, and away from the city, the terrain becomes dry grazing land for sheep. Continuing further it turns into scrub brush and rocks, then eventually to desert after a half-day’s of mounted travel. Desert makes up much of the terrain on this portion of the Okkorim. The temperature fluctuates between scorching highs of 120 degrees to lows of 60 degrees for most of the year. The brief winter period is marked by decreased temperatures and flash floods producing rainfall. The desert is typical of most dry deserts: yellow sand that is soft and difficult to travel through. The wind blows the sand and can easily change topography, erase tracks, or be stirred into clouds of stinging projectiles depending on the strength of the wind.

The Blight is more difficult to categorize as the terrain varies in some places and is not completely desolate. The Blight consists primarily of black sands and dark-colored, stony outcroppings. Little vegetation grows in the Blight and few natural creatures inhabit it. Temperatures reach an incredible 140 degrees on a regular basis and plunge into the 50s at night. Little information exists on the Blight other than what can be gained from short forays into the black sands. Most that delve far into its depths rarely return.

The impact of these factors on the heroes’ traveling is that they need to have increased water supplies for themselves and their animals or they will suffer. This is normally a logistics function of the game that is not a vital factor. In this scenario, the players must attend to hydration or be impaired. The effects of the

heat and sun will be increased if the PCs are not acclimated to the environment.

Lack of water in the desert

Half ration of water (50–99% of required): Can’t recover health points naturally. Roll against Constitution to avoid suffering a temporary loss of 1 point to physical attributes (i.e., Strength, Constitution, and Dexterity). The effects are cumulative and must be checked every day while on half water rations. The temporary attribute losses are regained at 1 point per day of full ration and 1d3 points per day with full water ration and complete rest.

No water (49% or less of required): Can’t recover hit points naturally. Everyone must roll a Constitution attribute check with a -4 modifier to avoid suffering a temporary loss 1 point to Strength, Constitution, Dexterity and taking 1 point of damage (x2 cumulative). For example, if a character with no water fails their Constitution check over 3 days, they lose 3 points in all physical attributes and take 7 points of damage (1 hp; 1x2 hp; 2x2=7). The temporary attribute losses are regained at 1 point per day of full ration and 1d3 points per day with full water ration and complete rest.

Additionally, magic-users must make a Constitution attribute check in order to successfully study/retain/employ spells that day, until they have opportunity to rest and study again.

Lack of water in The Blighted Lands

Half ration of water: Same as desert with no water.

No water: Can’t heal naturally. Everyone takes 2d4 damage to health and must roll a Constitution check with a -4 modifier to avoid suffering a temporary loss of 1 point to physical attributes (Strength, Constitution, and Dexterity) and taking an additional 1d4 hit points of damage. Note all subsequent failures result in +1d4 damage to hit points (e.g., first failure is 2d4+1d4, second failure is 2d4+2d4,

third failure is 2d4+3d4, etc). Magic-users are unable to relearn spells but may employ any unexpended spells.

Movement speeds and navigation

Navigation/Getting Lost: Standard wilderness exploration rules apply to most terrains. In the desert and the Blight there is a 40% chance of being lost and traveling off course. If the party references the map given to them regularly, or explains how they are going to keep their bearings, reduce the chance to 20%. If they have a ranger with them, reduce the chance of getting lost by 10%.

If the party becomes lost, roll a d4 to determine which direction they travel that day. Result of a 1 means they travel 1 hex facing left of the intended route of march; a 2 means 2 hex facings left of the intended route; a 3 means 1 hex facing right of the intended route; 4 is 2 hex facings right of the intended route.

Movement rates are affected by the harsh conditions encountered in the desert and the Blight.

	Road	Desert/Blight
Foot	20 miles/day	10 miles/day
Horse	50 miles/day	25 miles/day
Camel	30 miles/day	20 miles/day

Encounter en route to the fire scorpion's nesting grounds:

1. Musri Raiders Ambush.

"Your journey out of the city has been uneventful thus far. You have traveled along the wide stone-paved caravan road, first east toward a mountain range that can be seen in the distance. The worn stone-road takes you east for a few miles before bending east southeast. At that point the terrain quickly transitions from the dull greens of the scrubland, with its squat trees and low-lying brush, to barren rock and sand. The heat rises up creating waves in the distance as the dust and grit blows in your face, causing an annoying sensation in your mouth. Thankfully you spy a small rivulet of water running perpendicular to the road in the distance. You will have an opportunity to rinse the grit from your teeth and wash your faces in the cool waters."

This will set off all kinds of alarms in the players' minds. Let them be paranoid about the descriptions. Nothing is waiting for them at the rivulet but allow them to take elaborate pre-

cautions if they desire.

"Much refreshed from your stop at the rivulet, however brief, you continue to press on into the increasingly unforgiving desert terrain. The sweat quickly begins pouring down your faces again, stinging your eyes. You are thankful for the opportunity that allowed to fill your water skins. But the gods know that you've barely slaked your thirst even after gulping down half a water skin. The road continues on eastward into the distance bearing toward the southern edge of the hills ahead. The sun rays beat down on you like an ogre's club as the wind whips tiny particles of sand in your face. You lift your arm to wipe the sweat from your brow and alleviate the stinging in your eyes. You hear an odd humming and catch a slight movement from the corner of your eye."

Roll surprise. Give the PCs a -1 modifier (1-3 is surprise, with 2 and 3 being total surprise) if they were bored and inattentive during the lengthy descriptions. It is hot and dull riding through the desert. You must focus and stay vigilant or pay the price! The enemy is lying in wait and can see the party from a distance.

20 x Musri (AC 5, HD: 2, HP 11, composite bow (2xrd) 1-6 points and khopesh sickle sword 2-7, MR: 10%, Size M 6'9"). Items (each): composite bows, 20 arrows, khopesh, dagger, 6 s.p., 3 g.p., Musri clothing, lizard-skin boots, 2 quart water skins.

1 x Musri beagh (*baayg*) (chieftain) Fighter Level 5. AC 2, HD: 5, HP 34, composite bow (2xrd) 1-6 and khopesh sickle sword +1, damage 3-8+1 STR Bonus, MR: 25%, Size M). Magical Tattoos: a) Armor Class, b) MR 25%, c) Ogre Strength (1-2 rounds/once per day) +3 to hit, +6 on damage). Items: khopesh +1, composite bow, 20 arrows, potion of Diminution, 12 s.p., 20 g.p., 8 p.p., 2 turquoise gems (100 g.p., 150 g.p.).

1 x Giant-lizard mount (AC 5, HD: 3+1, HP: 18, Bite 1-8, natural 20 equals 2-16 damage, Size L 15' long).

Tactics: Eight Musri raiders will shoot arrows at the party from cover, while 12 others with their leader will charge forward mounted on camels or a giant lizard. This small band of raiders is looking for a soft target. If they suffer 20% casualties they will seek to break contact and retreat.

The Musri are not evil in alignment and if captured they will treat with the party fairly—they will give information for their release. The Musri will lead the party past the small

town of Yazeen and continue on for another 30 miles east skirting the Burning Hills. They will help guide the party to "The Camels Humps," a bluff on the southern edge of the Burning Hills. They will point them due south from the landmark and tell them to go 10 miles to the spot marked on the map. This grants them a +25% modifier to navigation across the Blight to the fire scorpion nesting area.

Note that traveling to this area is dangerous and it is possible to encounter "wandering monsters." The area has mountain lions, snakes (regular and giant-sized), giant spiders, giant lizards, ogres, bandits, griffons, and the occasional manticores. Feel free to add an encounter to the adventure if needed.

Once the party heads into the desert's interior and approaches the edge of the Blighted Lands, the terrain changes significantly. The sand takes on a black color and is mixed with rocky outcropping and black, glass-like surfaces in some areas. The temperature also increases dramatically, causing additional discomfort and damage to those wearing metal armor.

Fire scorpion nesting area:

"Your group trudges wearily up yet another gray-and-black sand dune, with the oppressive heat a constant weight pressing on your shoulders and the dark sands resisting each step as you plod relentlessly forward. As you crest the dune, you blink and rub your eyes to make sure you aren't seeing a mirage. No, you aren't—there is some vegetation at the bottom of this dune and what appears to be a gleam of a small pool of water."

The wind whips through the area and you shield your eyes as you head toward the little oasis. You wipe the sweat from your eyes and begin heading in the direction of the water. As you navigate around a large mass of smooth, black glass-like rock, you notice that the space behind it drops off into a small depression. A splash of color against the black sand catches your eye. Two, reddish-yellow arthropods that are 10 feet long and as tall as a pony are in the shaded depression. They are about 25-feet away from you and standing completely motionless."

The fire scorpions can leap up to 45 feet, aided by wing-like pieces on their carapace. They will leap on anyone in range. Such attacks will achieve surprise on a 1-4 for any-

(continued on page 62)



Musri

Frequency: *Uncommon*
 No. appearing: 5–20 or raiders 20–80
 Armor class: 4 (*special abilities*)
 Move: 12"
 Hit dice: 2 (*or special*)
 % in lair: 25%
 Treasure type: L, M, C (*magic only*)
 Number of attacks: 1
 Damage/attack: *By weapon type*
 Special attacks: *See below*
 Special defenses: *See below*
 Magical resistance: 10%
 Intelligence: *Normal and up*
 Size: M (6'6"–7")
 Psionic ability: *Nil*

Musri appear to be exceptionally tall and lanky humans with pale skin and large orbs with bright, golden irises. They have sharp facial features with high cheek bones, long noses, small ears set low on their heads, and long thin hair usually of a light color. The average Musri stands close to seven-feet tall with lanky frames and weigh no more than 200 pounds. They dress in flowing robes of a thin but strong material, much valued by other occupants of Okkorim. The fabric provides protection from the sun's rays but is light and breathable. The Musri wrap their entire head in long, colorful scarves of blue, yellow, or red. Little is known of the Musri culture as they are somewhat xenophobic and live a nomadic life on the edges of the Blight. They range from good to evil individually, but tend toward the chaotic. They engage in trade with others in Okkorim from time to time, exchanging camels and clothing, and on rare occasions Ydrisid artifacts, for weapons, wine, slaves and foodstuffs. They occasionally form raiding parties that use lizards or fire scorpions as mounts, as well as camels and horses. All Musri are excellent archers and can fire on the move while mounted. They favor khopesh swords,

composite bows and long spears. The Musri all undergo ritual scarring and tattooing when they reach the age of maturity. These blue designs often cover portions of the face and hands and are the source of their moniker as the Blue Men of Okkorim. The ritual body art provides magical protection similar to chain-mail armor, as well as a low level of magic resistance. There are rumors that thanes and shamans have tattoos that engender other benefits as well.

When a raiding party is encountered, there will always be a leader of at least 4th level fighter ability (minimum) as well as a shaman of 3rd level clerical ability (minimum). The raiding party will usually be mounted on horses and camels, though it is possible to encounter giant lizards (25% of the time) and some raiders that include one or more fire scorpions (10% chance).

Fire scorpion

Frequency: Rare
 No. Appearing: 1–4
 Armor class: 3
 Move: 15" (leaping)
 Hit dice: 7
 % in lair: 20%
 Treasure type: ???
 Number of attacks: 3 (2x claws, sting)
 Damage/attack: 1–10/1–10/1–4 plus poison (*see below*)
 Special attacks: Wing buffet (*see below*)
 Special defenses: N/A
 Magical resistance: N/A
 Intelligence: Low
 Size: M (6'6"–7")
 Psionic ability: Nil

The fire scorpion is a large arthropod ranging from seven to 12 feet in length and standing two- to five-feet tall. Their segmented bodies are reddish-yellow with a black bordering on each segment, and they have two front claws that are a red/black. The creatures' legs are a translucent yellow color with short, hair-like antennae near the foot of each appendage. The fire scorpion has the capability to leap into the air and spread membrane-like wings that are on their back. The creature can leap and glide up to 60 feet. Anyone unfamiliar with the leaping attack will be surprised on a roll of 1–4 (d6) and lose a full melee round to the scorpion. The fire scorpions use their red/black tail with poisonous sting to great effect when combined with the leaping attack. Once engaged in melee the fire scorpion will attempt to unbalance its prey by using its wings (Dexterity check or -2 on attacks, and any spell being cast is disrupted as well). Their poison causes an excruciating, burning pain to course through the victim's bloodstream, causing damage for 5 rounds (1d4 on round one, 2d4 on round two, 3d4 on round three, 4d4 on round four, and 5d4 on round five). Application of a negate poison will stop the effects immediately, sparing the increase of poison damage.

The fire scorpions have the ability to sense vibrations via sensory pits in their head and the sensitive hairs on their legs. It is difficult to surprise the creature (1 on a d8), and it will almost always be waiting to attack an approaching foe.

Careful harvesting of the venom from a dead scorpion yields 2–12 applications of the venom, although it has a lessened effect and short period of effectiveness once the creature perishes. Poison adds 2d4 damage (poison check negates) per application. Duration lasts for five days after the creature dies. Some purport that there are powerful narcotic effects to smoking fire-scorpion venom.

THE BLIGHTED LANDS

SPECIAL INSERT:

Chentoufi and Okorrim

The following two spreads are available in the print edition of *Gygax* magazine as a fold-out spread for ease of use. In this digital edition, they are located in the regular flow of the PDF. Readers may wish to print the maps on tabloid (11" x 17") paper in order to view them as originally intended.

City of Chentoufi (*SHEN-Two-Fee*)

An ancient city designed by the Ydrissid people and built using arcane knowledge long lost to the inhabitants of Okkorim today. The architecture is an eclectic mix of majestic Ydrissid works and the humbler style of the current people. Marvelous towers with onion-shaped domes ascend high in the sky with adobe-like, mud-brick structures in their shadows. The streets mimic this mixture of the magnificent and mundane. The major arteries are paved in the strong resilient material that composes the towers and many other Ydrissid structures, while the side streets, alleys, and walkways are winding, asymmetrical mazes that were constructed with whatever material was at hand. These smaller routes twist, turn, and narrow to a foot or two wide, and dead-end with little or no predictability, making navigation very difficult for one unfamiliar with that quarter.

The city of Chentoufi is home to hundreds of thousands of denizens (above and below ground). The city is ruled by a man known as the Wazir, His Most Benevolent Guardian Wudlaharumm IV. The Wazir rules the city and lands surrounding it through a well-developed bureaucratic system. There are many ministries and offices that regulate and collect appropriate tariffs of course. Key to the survival of the city and maintenance of its ruling elite is its source of fresh water which is carefully guarded (and taxed) by the Wazir.

The city's skyline is a marvel to behold with dozens of tall, onion-topped towers jutting up into it. Many towers are vibrantly decorated with colorfully striped domes, iridescent surfaces, or clad in metal at the top. These wonders of a past age serve as homes to assorted important or powerful personages, such as reclusive conjurers, mighty warriors, strange cults, sages, political leaders, and the like. The city is host to many dangerous entities besides the Wazir's ministers, including the Thieves' Guilds, Assassins' Guilds, and Merchants' Guilds, as well as slavers, various temples and cults, an eccentric archmage or two, and a myriad of scam artists, cut throats, and charlatans.

The city of Chentoufi's port is the source of much of its prosperity. The port is a bustling hub of activity every day. Fishermen in crafts both small and large reap the sea's bounty to provide much of the sustenance for the city's populace. Merchants trade spices, slaves, precious metal, gemstones, foodstuffs and more on its busy wharves and piers. The Wazir's ministers are an ever-present feature of the port collecting tariffs, taxes, and fees. Of course, the hours of darkness are filled with enterprising merchants and captains attempting to smuggle items into or out of the city.

The cost of living in Chentoufi is quite high compared to most other places in the world. Think of it as an island of habitable land in what is mostly scrub or desert terrain. The city relies on magical water generation and importing goods to sustain its population. The cost of most items is three to five times higher in Chentoufi than normal.

Shown at right: A small section of the city of Chentoufi is depicted here, encompassing the Foreign Quarter, the Old Merchant Quarter, and The Narrows. This is a preview of the complete city which will be included with the upcoming TSR adventure module **BL1 The Blighted Lands** by Luke Gyga. Map of Chentoufi created by Stefan Pokorny.



Sages claim that the lands of Okkorim were once fertile and verdant, crisscrossed with waterways and with a surfeit of various fauna. The land was rich with resources and well-suited for providing sustenance to its inhabitants. One group of people flourished, conquering their neighbors and incorporating them into their realm. Thus was how the Ydrissid (Ee-driss-id) Empire was built eons ago.

across all the known lands and into many other planes of existence. At the height of their Empire a cataclysm struck Okkorim. Somehow a powerful elemental force was unleashed in the heart of the Ydrissid civilization. The devastation that resulted is known simply as The Wrath.

majority of what was once the Ydrissid Empire.

what happened is long forgotten, lost in the blowing sands that comprise the Blighted Lands. That is the name for the

Blighted Lands lie the treasures of the ancient Ydrissid waiting to be discovered.

The Hare and the Hill Giant

A Dale-lands adventure for The One Ring: Adventures Over the Edge of the Wild

by Shane Ivey

When: This adventure is set a few years after the Battle of Five Armies.

Where: A fortified village somewhere east of the Long Lake.

What: A hill-troll moves back to a hill that his people once occupied before the coming of Smaug, and demands tribute from a village that has sprung up nearby. When the heroes slay the troll or drive him off, the troll's mother and brothers come demanding revenge or payment of weregild. Meanwhile, the villagers are in conflict over whether to pay the tribute, put up a fight, or wait for help to come from afar.

Why: Glory! Fame! A village is threatened and the companions are there to protect it! If that's not good enough, there's a chance they will come into a troll-hoard worth of treasure.

Who: The companions meet the leaders of the village and, eventually, the captains from Dale and the Lonely Mountain.

Adventuring Phase

The adventure is presented in three parts that cover the course of four or five days.

Part 1: Stony Hill and fields of green

The companions are guests in a little town called Greenfield, 20 miles east of the Long Lake. They've come in time for a hare hunt that ranges in the fields around a tall hill that's known for its ancient, enormous ruins. In the night, following the hunt, a straggler says that, after the others went back to the village to celebrate, he was accosted by a giant on the hill.

Part 2: To the ruins and back

The village leaders ask the companions to accompany their constable to investigate the rumor of a giant on Stony Hill. There, the companions encounter a hill-troll who demands tribute and boasts that his family will join him soon. Back in town, there is tense debate as to how to proceed with the demands.

Part 3: Kith and kin

The trolls' kin arrive and demand ever greater tribute—but help comes from Dale and Erebor, and, with the companions' example, they might defeat these fearsome invaders.

Part 1: Stony Hill and fields of green

DAY 1. The companions visit a little walled farming village called Greenfield, about 20 miles east of the Long Lake and 40 miles from Dale. (If you prefer to place Greenfield and Stony Hill farther out, adjust the travel times for messengers and soldiers.)

Named for the grassy slopes and downs that border the village and surrounding farms, Greenfield is a new village of recently built farms, all of which sprang up in the last few years to support the rapid growth of Dale and Laketown.

The reason for the visit is up to the LM. Maybe the companions have been asked by a patron to visit the farming villages and see if all is well. Or maybe they've heard there are strange ruins near Greenfield and came to see for themselves. Greenfield is famous—at least locally—for those ruins, which sit atop Stony Hill, several miles from the village.

Greenfield is a small place, maybe a dozen buildings and huts to facilitate trade among the farmers. It includes the constable's house and an armory, a wide granary, and a hall that serves as a tavern and meeting-place. A crenelated stone wall about 12-feet tall surrounds the village, with a catwalk running the length of the wall for bowmen to shoot down invaders. The wall, built from rocks brought from Stony Hill, is the pride of Greenfield. Very few villages have such protection.

Greenfield is run by an elected master, Conrad, following the old traditions of Laketown. An elected constable, Reinn, leads the militia: 24 bowmen from the village and the surrounding farms.

Before the hare hunt the companions are greeted by these town leaders and have a chance to talk with them about the village.

Master Conrad and Arnora

The village's master is Conrad, a 45-year-old trader and farm-owner. He is cousin to the Master of Laketown, who so infamously abandoned his people after the fall of Smaug and perished in the wastes with stolen gold. Conrad is eager to redeem and protect his family's reputation. The villagers and farmers deem him diligent and earnest almost to a fault. They sometimes make him the butt of jokes that are more well-meaning than the master thinks.

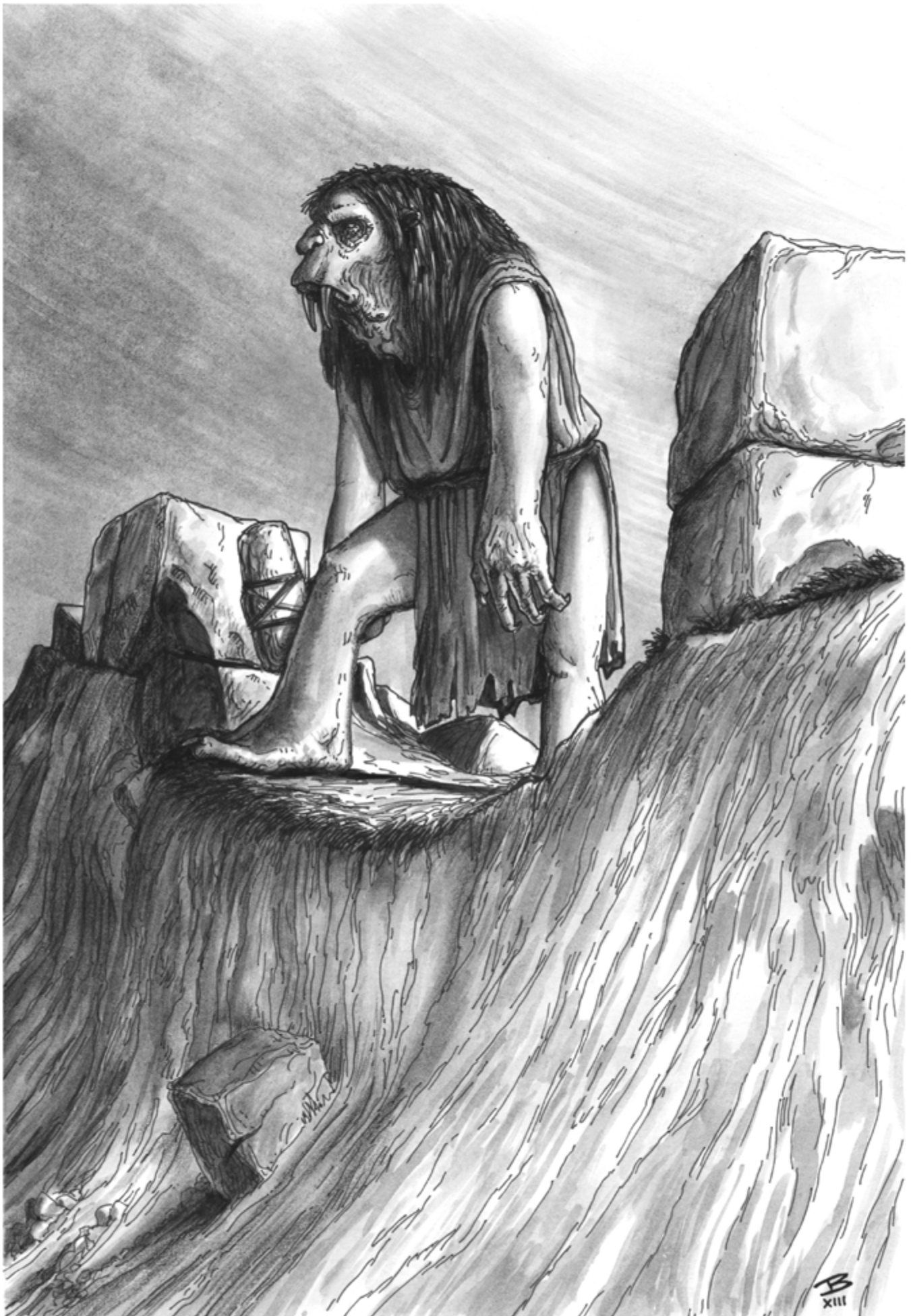
Conrad's wife, Arnora, about 40 years old, perceives the respect that the people have for her husband. She treasures it, but status for its own sake is not very important to her. She comes from a high family with ties to King Bard and the line of Girion, and she has the calm confidence of the well-born. The villagers and farmers love her.

Conrad enthusiastically greets Bardings with high standing but has little time for adventurers. In an encounter he values wisdom.

Arnora is more impressed with valor, whatever the culture. She is quiet and loves peace, but knows that there would be no peace had the brave not fought and died to earn it.

Constable Reinn and Ginna

The village constable, Reinn, a sturdy 55 year old, is captain of the 24-man village militia and a Bowman and Hunter of good but unexceptional reputation. He is best known for having been in the company of archers that stood by King Bard in the last defense of Laketown, under the ravages of Smaug, and to have then fought among the bowmen in the Battle of Five Armies. Unlike many of those bowmen



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he did not go on to serve in Dale. After the terrors of Smaug and war he was content to help his family rebuild the farmlands of Greenfield, and three years ago he married Conrad's older sister Ginna.

Ginna, age 50, has little of her husband's patience or her sister-in-law's insight, but has much of her brother's ambition. Prone to gossip, she loves to bask in reflected glory.

While the townsfolk and farmers revere and love Arnora for her high-bred background, they have more in common with Ginna. They often act on Ginna's advice while nodding at the wisdom of Arnora's. Alienating Ginna earns the companions the enmity of the common people of Greenfield.

Reinn was happy with the long peace that Laketown enjoyed before the dragon rose up, and he is happy to have it back now that the dragon is dead. Valor does not impress him as much as the understanding of wisdom.

Ginna values valor because it implies obtaining the standing and wealth that she most adores.

Greenfield and its leaders

The day before the hunt, the leaders of Greenfield introduce the little village and some of the farming families to the companions. The companions may take this chance to impress the village leaders and thus gain the goodwill of the farmers and villagers.

Companions who don't get on the good side of the village leaders are escorted about with courtesy but without much real friendliness. This may make things more difficult for the companions later.

Impressing Master Conrad or Constable Reinn calls for an encounter with tolerance based on wisdom. Impressing Arnora or Ginna calls for an encounter with tolerance based on valor. With Ginna, add +1 for each companion with a standard of living at prosperous or rich, and -1 for each below prosperous.

Each companion may attempt to impress one leader. Multiple companions may impress the same leader if they wish.

Success gives the companion a trait called "Friend of _____" (using the name of the leader). It comes into play in the usual way of traits, based on the personality and reputation of the particular leader. The trait is permanent unless the LM at some point decides the companion has done something to alienate that leader.

A companion who becomes a friend of one of the town leaders is looked on favorably by the commoners. They are especially friendly to one who befriends Ginna. A companion who doesn't befriend any leader is tolerated with courtesy but not much genuine goodwill.

The Hare Hunt

As it happens, the company's visit coincides with a day-long hunt for hares in the woods and fields around Stony Hill. The village lead-

ers invite the companions to participate.

The master invites companions who have particularly impressed him or Arnora to join his own party. Others are invited to accompany Reinn and a few of his bowmen.

The hunting party is mostly men and boys, though there are a few women and girls who have also come along. Arnora and Ginna remain in town overseeing preparations for that night's party.

The hunters spread out in small groups of three or four, except for the master's larger party.

The hares nest in blackberry patches, tall grass, and weedy tumbles of rocks or ruins. Most hunters stalk them with hunting bows (not the great bows of the militia and the army), wearing leather for protection from brambles and thorns.

Companions who go about armored and armed for battle earn gentle mockery behind their backs and risk embarrassing their hosts—any who gained the Friend of _____ trait must roll for courtesy to keep it.

Unlike the other hunters, the village master has a pack of trained hunting hounds to flush hares out of cover. The hares easily outdistance the dogs, but a hare would usually pause and circle back to its territory, where hunters can catch it.

Without dogs, Reinn shows the best way to scare a hare out of hiding is with a peculiar way of stalking it: go to a likely spot, walk for 10 paces and then wait 30 seconds before moving again. Partners should stand about 50-feet apart, alternating movement. With luck, a hiding hare would hear the sudden halt in movement, think it has been spotted, and bolt from cover, looking for a better place to hide.

Once per hour (or twice in Conrad's party with the help of dogs), each companion may attempt a hunting roll at TN 14 to flush a hare out.

Usually the hare can be seen for only an instant, so hitting it requires a bow attack. (Spears are too slow, but rocks or heavy sticks thrown with the dagger skill can serve.) The TN depends on the Hunting roll: 16 for an ordinary success; 14 for a great success; or 12 for an extraordinary success.

During the hunt the companions can get to know their hosts better.

Conrad, if any companions accompany him, strikes them as proud of his position but silently quite aware of the failings of his cousin, the disgraced master of Laketown. He is determined not to let his own people down when a crisis comes.

Reinn does not volunteer stories of his heroic night beside King Bard, as they fought the dragon while Laketown burned, nor of the Battle of Five Armies when he stood with the bowmen against the goblin horde. However, he is willing to tell the tales when asked about them. He's told the stories many times over the past few years and is proud that the villagers

take such pride in them. But he also makes a point of saying that he's glad the days of dragons and wars remain behind them all. He's happy to help his town thrive and has no desire to see anything more of goblins and howling wargs.

The hare hunt lasts six hours, encompassing the tall grass on slopes near the farms that surround the village to blackberry brambles and trees around Stony Hill, to the great, old blocky ruins that mark the steep side of the hill and its crown.

If the companions are split up, have those in the first party roll for four hours hunting the tall grasses and those from the other party roll four hours for the woods and brambles; then let them meet and both roll for two hours hunting at the ruins. Then it would be late afternoon and time to head back to the village to cook their catch.

Bringing in at least one hare in the hunt earns a companion an advancement point in hunting. Bringing in four or more is worth a bonus experience point as well.

Upon the high hill

The ruins on the hilltop are remarkable. They surely weren't fashioned or erected by the hands of men, elves, or dwarves. Enormous, uneven blocks of rough-hewn hard stone lie in rough patterns—some still stand where they were stacked into walls 20-feet high, while others have tumbled down in disarray. The main ruin is at the crown of the hill with smaller ruins of the same daunting scale around it at seemingly random arrangement.

The ruins are a mystery to lore tests, folklore-related traits, and even the memory of elves and dwarves, who were too far away to know about it when the builders did their work.

The villagers say giants lived in the old blocks years ago, but abandoned it long before the coming of the dragon. That was centuries before the new village sprung up to house the farmers who support burgeoning Laketown. It's all speculation and tale-spinning.

As the hare hunt winds down upon the rubble-strewn hill, hunters compare stories and trade draughts of wine as they wait for latecomers to straggle in. After a while, Master Conrad pronounces the hunt a success and announces it's time to head back home, and anyone else who lingers can walk back alone as the price for tardiness.

Rude awakening

The hunters all return to the village, where their wives and children who did not go on the hunt have been stewing vegetables and socializing. They cook their catch and celebrate the hunt with wine, beer, stories, and song.

This might be a good opportunity for companions to impress their new friends and maybe pick up advancement points with good song or riddle rolls, particularly when traits

drive them.

For the LM, it's a good time to demonstrate the personalities of the village's key figures if any hadn't come forward before.

A few hours into the party, everyone is surprised by the appearance of a bedraggled-looking hunter who comes in very, very late. His name is Havard. Everyone assumed he'd gotten an early start on the drinking and had gone to sleep on Stony Hill.

In fact that's exactly what happened. But Havard, white-faced and shaky from fright despite his long walk to the village, says that was just the beginning.

"A giant woke me up," he says, fighting down fear.

That raises raucous laughter.

He frowns and yells that it's no story. He insists that a great, tall thing with a broad head, huge teeth, and an awful smell picked him up by his feet and talked to him.

"What's this?" He says the giant asked. "Food for the larder! Left itself on my doorstep!"

Havard says he explained that he wasn't food and didn't know it was anybody's doorstep, that he had been drinking wine and just wanted to get back to the village.

The giant made Havard give over his wine bottle and every hare in his bag—the brute seemed to smell them—and as the giant gulped down the hares it told Havard to go to the village and deliver a message.

"Tribute!" Havard tells the villagers. "'Gold,' the giant said. And baubles and food and wine, and plenty of all, or else he'll come smash the village and the farms alike and eat us all!"

There's more laughter. Some of the villagers are starting to take Havard seriously but others think he's making up tales to explain his failure at the hunt.

An insight roll at TN 14 (12 for Bardings) indicates that Havard is being truthful.

If the companions think to look (and persuade Havard with a courtesy roll to hike up his trousers), Havard's feet and legs are still bruised from where the "giant" picked him up.

Havard insists that the danger is real, and soon there's conflict among the villagers as to how to proceed. Many scoff at even looking into Havard's crazy story and say he's just covering up for losing his hares while he was in his cups.

Reinn thinks it's worth walking back to the hill in the morning, though his wife Ginna laughs Havard's story away. Her brother Conrad is skeptical but says the return of the dragon taught them that there's sometimes unwelcome truth in tall tales.

Arnora is quiet and seems perturbed. She sees no lie in Havard's eyes.

Reinn invites the companions to accompany him back to the hill. They are under no obligation to go, but he says he'd be glad for the company since his militiamen will have gone



back to their farms.

Part 2: To the ruins and back

DAT 2. It's a bright day as Reinn guides the company—assuming they go—back to Stony Hill. As they reach the hill he takes a long circuit around it, watching and listening. At this stage, with an awareness roll at TN 16 a companion hears a strange rumbling from higher up among the ruins. It goes on for a few seconds, then there's silence for a few seconds before another few seconds more of rumbling.

The companions will all hear the rumbling distinctly if they climb the hill. Near the top an awareness roll at TN 12 identifies it as the snoring of a huge sleeper.

The companions might try to climb in secrecy, making stealth rolls. If any fail with the Eye of Sauron, that companion makes such a racket that the sleeper wakes early.

Otherwise they creep to the edge of the huge blocks and see the creature sleeping inside.

Havard's giant is, in fact, a hill-troll, a hunched creature that might be 12-feet tall if he stood straight, with scraggly black hair, great tusk-like fangs, and crooked claws. He wears a filthy tunic tied together from stolen bolts of cloth and has a huge hammer nearby to crush the bones of prey for his meals.

At that point any talk or noise that's not covered by a stealth roll at TN 16 wakes the troll. Getting close enough to the troll to do him harm takes a stealth roll at TN 20. In this case calling on a trait will not grant an automatic success.

When he wakes, the troll looks around for a moment and then smiles hideously in grim satisfaction upon seeing his visitors.

"Ho!" he says in a loud and stony voice. "Tribute from the little village. Come show us what treats and trinkets ye've brought!"

The companions have a few different ways to approach the situation.

The troll isn't yet looking for a fight so they have a chance to question him; but he quickly becomes impatient if they don't offer points of treasure in the form of gold and jewelry.

He is no mere hill-troll. His kind came from Dol Guldur years ago and can withstand the light of the Sun, though they prefer the dark of night. Unlike many hill-trolls in the mountains of Mordor, he speaks the Westron tongue.

If they ask his name, the troll seems pleased—he's proud of his name—and says it's Hark. (If at any point they make fun of his name—with jokes about deafness, for instance—he quite suddenly loses his temper and lumbers up to crush them to powder and jelly. If they quickly try to cover up and claim they weren't really making fun, that takes riddle at TN 18, persuade at TN 16 or courtesy at TN 14.)

The companions might try to placate the troll and mollify him. That calls for the encounter rules. It needs a courtesy roll to play to his pride or a riddle roll to amuse him. Tolerance is based on wisdom—not that the troll is impressed with it, but patience and subtlety might forestall his innate irritability. Asking his name first (and not making fun of it) grants +1 tolerance. Every 5 points of treasure they offer in tribute adds +1 tolerance. Each elf and dwarf in the company incurs a -1 tolerance penalty—the troll hates them unreasoningly.

If the companions succeed, Hark lets them go back to the village to discuss what kind of tribute to bring. But he warns them to bring the tribute back that night or else he'll come for it himself.

If the companions quiz Hark on his plans, he gets a little cagey. A riddle roll might trip him up enough to reveal that he's waiting for his mother and brothers to join him. They were with him a few days ago but stopped to cook some sheep they caught thirty leagues to the southeast.

If the companions fail to mollify him, he loses patience and decides to smash one or two of them. After the first two rounds of fighting he gets lazy and tells them he'll let them run if they wish. As they flee he commands them to remember to come back with tribute that night or he'll come claim it himself.

If the companions kill Hark in their first meeting, he dies only after gasping out in fury that his kin will come and avenge him.

If they wound Hark or inflict more than half his endurance in damage, he tries to retreat. As he flees he shouts that they'll be sorry when his mother and brothers show up.

The master's decision

Whether the companions return to Greenfield in triumph having slain the "giant," or with warnings that Hark is real and demands tribute, their news fills the village with foreboding.

With Hark slain

If the troll is slain, most of the villagers—including Conrad and most vocally his sister Ginna—celebrate his defeat and say that's an end to it. They don't believe Hark's warning of his kin coming. They reason that if a tribe of giants were rampaging about the countryside the village surely would have heard about it before now.

Arnora wonders whether others of Hark's kind are indeed nearby and may follow. After all, there are distant lonely farmsteads, outside of regular contact with Greenfield and its neighbors, that might be vulnerable to hungry monsters.

She encourages the master and the constable to send half the militiamen out to the farms to see that all is well and to place the rest on the village walls on alert; and after the bowmen return from the farms to send a messenger riding to Dale and Laketown with a report.

Conrad is not inclined to put his people on guard and risk spreading fear based on a rumor from a dying brute. If the companions speak in Arnora's support, though, Conrad might listen. Convincing him to act requires an encounter with tolerance based on wisdom. If there is no Barding among the companions the tolerance is one lower. Persuade is the skill they need.

If they persuade Conrad, he sends militiamen to the farms the next morning. They return that evening having found no sign of trolls or giants, which leaves Conrad smug and Ginna insufferable in her gloating. But it gives the distant farmers warning which may serve them well in a night or two.

If the companions fail to persuade Conrad to listen to his wife, his sister Ginna speaks up in his defense and chastises Arnora and her friends for their fretfulness and worry. Conrad steels himself against taking further action for now. His people have had enough of a fright; they don't need another one when there's no good reason to think it is real.

With Hark living

If the companions left Hark alive at the ruins awaiting tribute, many in town (farmers who stand to lose much with a troll on the loose) press to pay the tribute but also to send word to Esgaroth and Dale for aid—perhaps a company of bowmen with a troop of doughty dwarves.

Others—Ginna most vocally—agree to sending for aid but see no need to pay anything to the troll while the town walls still stand; the farmers' families can come to the village and wait in safety. This doesn't sit well with the farmers, who don't expect that their herds or crops can join them in the village.

Arnora and Reinn side with the farmers. They believe those in the town ought to look out for those in the fields, whether that requires swords or silver.

Conrad is loath to give up anything to the

great brigand. He's convinced that the troll will wander off with their treasure as soon as they pay, and then they'll surely never see a copper penny of it again even if the King's men track the beast down.

Eventually, one of the farmers asks the companions—adventurers and heroes from afar who might know something of the ways of trolls and giants—for their opinion. The master frowns at that and a few villagers grumble that the companions are guests and have nothing at stake in the matter, but they do not interrupt.

If the companions seem amenable toward trying to slay the troll, Arnora encourages it. She won't be the one to bring it up and she won't volunteer them for it, but if they say it's a possibility she compliments them on their courage. Conrad dislikes the notion of spurring the troll to something awful, Ginna scoffs at the whole affair, and Reinn hopes to avoid battle until help arrives, but Arnora says ensuring peace sometime needs dangerous deeds.

If the companions side with the farmers, or if they propose attacking, killing, or driving off the troll themselves, they must succeed at an encounter to win the master over. It needs a successful persuade roll at TN 18. Courtesy, inspire and battle rolls at TN 14 can be used to bolster the persuade attempt (+1 from a success, +2 from a great success, +3 from an extraordinary success) but failure at each of those counts toward failure at the overall encounter. Tolerance is based on Wisdom. If there is no Barding among the companions, the master's patience is less and tolerance is one lower. If the companions have gained the "Friend of _____" trait with Conrad, Reinn, Ginna, and/or Arnora, it can't be used for an automatic success, but tolerance is +1 for each of them.

If they succeed, the master agrees to their suggestion, whether to pay the tribute or to try to kill or drive off the troll.

If the companions side with the master, or fail to persuade him, that ends the debate. Arnora is unhappy with it and many of the farmers are disgruntled, but Conrad says he has decided on the village's best course and the time has come to follow it. He asks the farmers to bring their families and treasures to the village for safety and tells a rider to make ready to ride to Dale to call for aid.

Dale is half a day's-ride away. (If it's farther or nearer in your game, adjust accordingly.) Conrad's messenger leaves the next morning (Day 3) at dawn and reaches Dale about noon. It will take the rest of the day to gather warriors. They will depart Dale the morning after that (Day 4) and reach Greenfield that night.

Preparing for battle

The companions might set out to prepare the Greenfield militia for battle over the next few days. If they do, allow each companion a

skill roll as appropriate at TN 14. Sharpening arrows and swords or repairing helmets calls for craft; building up their courage and morale calls for inspire; training them to work in unison and obey orders promptly calls for battle; and so on. Treat a success like a "free" successful battle roll in the next battle.

Part 3: Kith and kin

DAYS 3 THROUGH 5. If the companions set out to slay Hark, Reinn accompanies them again as guide unless they say they know the way and would rather he remain in town to command his men. Play out the encounter much as before, but this time Hark comes out swinging as soon as he realizes the companions brought no gold.

If they don't slay the troll, Hark comes to Greenfield the next night, the end of Day 3.

If the village has not prepared its offering, Hark is not happy. He takes his hammer and pounds on the gate in rage. Reinn has the militia arrayed on the walls and orders them to shoot. Those who aren't shaken with fear pepper a few arrows down on the troll. The companions may launch two rounds of ranged attacks from the wall.

That persuades the troll (assuming the companions don't kill him in those two rounds) to withdraw. He roars curses and says he'll be back with his family and then the little village will beg to hand over its gold. Hark goes back to Stony Hill but takes a detour to destroy a farm on the way. If the farmers were gathered to the town for protection, he slays only cows and chickens.

If the village has gathered wealth to offer in tribute, it amounts to 10 treasures in silver and wrought gold. Hark paws through it admiringly, and then insists that it's not enough.

The companions can attempt to talk him into accepting the treasure. That's an encounter with tolerance based on valor. Courtesy is a prime candidate for buttering him up with compliments; riddle and persuade might work to make the treasure look more valuable. Failure (or not making the attempt) means Hark demands twice as much tribute. Conrad, with the troll close enough to hear and smell, agrees to pay it.

If the companions attempt to persuade Hark and fail, the troll will also demand whatever item looks most valuable that he can see on each of the companions. If any of them balk, the troll begins working himself up into a killing rage. Panic starts in the master and quickly spreads to the waiting, watching villagers, who plead with the companions to cooperate.

If worse comes to worst and Hark attacks, it's up to the companions to fight him. The villagers were convinced they could buy him off and are horrified that it's become a battle with a creature more dangerous than any they have ever seen, save for Smaug himself.

If they persuade Hark that the initial tribute is sufficient or hand over what he demands, he

also demands a wagon to carry it in and an ox. The animal won't willingly go with the troll, but Hark doesn't need it for help; he breaks its neck, dumps it in the wagon along with the loot, and hauls it all the way back to Stony Hill for his supper.

Mother and sons

The night after that encounter (Day 4), before the warriors arrive from Dale, the troll's mother and two brothers come calling at the village gates, with Hark in tow if he still lives.

The troll family assails a farm on the way. If warning went out to the farmers or if the farmers are already gathered in Greenfield's walls, only cattle are harmed. If the trolls catch a farmer family at home, the family is doomed.

The troll mother's name is Jool, but the other trolls call her Ma. She speaks for all the trolls, including Hark, her oldest. She sent him ahead to ready their "old house" for them while she and the others finished devouring a shepherd's flock (and family) 80 miles or so to the southeast. The other trolls are Horst and Gorst.

Jool demands silver, gold, and "jools"—pretties to decorate their "old house" on the hill. When asked how much, she says to start piling the pretties on a wagon and she'll say when it's enough.

The villagers start collecting their wealth. When they reach about 5 treasure's worth and Jool shows no sign of being satisfied, the master and the villagers and farmers begin to look afraid.

When they reach 10 treasure she says that's a good start and the villagers are groaning.

At 20 treasure she says they're about halfway there. The villagers weep.

When they reach 50 treasure, Jool smiles around her broken, sharp tusks and says that'll do for tonight, and if they're smart they'll bring another batch in a few days. If they're not smart, she says, her boys will come take that and plenty of blood and tasty little babies besides.

The master and the villagers blanch. What they've already given over is a size-able part of their life's wealth.

"An' walk a cow or a few sheep out to the house tonight," Jool demands. "And the same tomorrow. And every night till I say otherwise. If we have to walk to a farm for food, it'll be farmers that we eat!"

The companions can attempt to talk Jool into accepting less treasure from the farmers. Use the encounter rules for talking Hark's tribute down, described earlier. If they succeed she stops at 30 treasure. The villagers are grateful in the abstract but are too shocked by their loss to really show it.

Bardings and dwarves

Late in the night of Day 4, a runner comes to tell the village that a company of warriors has come and will arrive soon. King Bard

has sent 25 bowmen and 25 spearmen; Dáin Ironfoot has sent 25 mail-clad dwarves with swords, axes, and stout shields.

(The timeline here assumes the village is about 20 miles from Laketown. If you wish to place it farther out, add a few days for help to arrive.)

The bowmen and spearmen are led by Hengist son of Hedinn, a dour King's Man with a black beard. Each Bowman bears a great bow, a quiver of long arrows, a buckler and a sword, and wears a mail shirt and a cap of iron and leather. Each spearman bears a spear, a sword and a shield, and wears a mail shirt and a cap of iron and leather.

The 25 dwarves are led by Gundin Redbeard (whose beard, as it happens, is pale yellow; the long scar across his cheek, lips, and chin explains the name), an uncle of the dwarf Balin who befriended Bilbo Baggins. Each dwarf bears an axe, a short sword, and a shield and wears a mail hauberk and a cap of iron and leather.

Gundin has agreed to act as lieutenant with Hengist as captain, since they are here to defend King Bard's people.

As the warriors encamp in the village (possibly very crowded now), Hengist and Gundin meet with the master, the constable, and the companions to learn what they may of the threat that faces Greenfield.

If the companions offer to stand with them against the monsters, Hengist is inclined to seek out the trolls in their home and destroy them there, where they can do no further harm to the farms and people of Greenfield.

Gundin, on the other hand, counsels that they should take advantage of the walls of the village—they are not strong as dwarves would build them, but they'll slow down trolls. Especially with dwarven axes and swords to stab and hew climbing fingers and strong bowmen's darts to prick the trolls' eyes and faces. They can harry and harm the villains and then pursue and slay them when they take flight. And they can send another messenger to warn the kings that they face not just one but a clan of the creatures; more stout warriors can come in a day or two.

If any of the companions is a Barding, Hengist asks the companions' thoughts and heeds them. Otherwise he listens courteously but acts on their advice only if it is very compelling. That may call for an encounter with Hengist, with valor setting the tolerance.

If Jool and her sons have already come and gone with the tribute, then Reinn points out (if the companions don't) that they might not be expected to come back to the village for several days at least, and might prey on defenseless farms in the meantime. That is likely to push Hengist to commit to seeking the trolls out at their lair.

The battle of Greenfield (or Stony Hill)

If the battle takes place in the village proper,

only warriors and companions who have ranged attacks can attack from the village walls. All on the walls are in Rearward stance. The usual restriction on the number that can be in Rearward does not apply as long as the gates hold, since the trolls aren't able to bring the companions to close combat.

In combat, allied individual NPCs such as Hengist and Gundin act at the end of the players' turn, after all companions have acted.

Massed attacks

In addition, the Bardings and dwarves may attack en masse. For each group of up to about 25 Bardings or dwarves attacking a single troll, make a single attack roll at the standard weapon skill for that type of warrior. See below for the results.

These massed attacks occur at the very end of the players' turn in each round, after the companions have acted. Have the players roll for these massed NPC attacks and narrate their successes.

The TN for a mass attack is always 12 plus the troll's parry rating.

These modifiers apply:

Ranged attacks in the open (not inside the walls of Greenfield or on Stony Hill)	-2 TN
This group of warriors is fighting two trolls	+2 TN
This group of warriors is fighting three or four trolls	+4 TN
Only 17 to 21 warriors in this group	+2 TN
Only 12 to 16 warriors in this group	+3 TN

If there are fewer than a dozen Bardings or dwarves in the group, that group is too scattered to attack effectively.

An ordinary success inflicts 1d6 hits at the usual weapon damage for each hit. That's 7 endurance per hit for great bows or 5 per hit for short swords, spears, or axes. (The troll may use its hideous toughness ability to reduce this harm.)

A great success inflicts a wound—and the troll may not resist it with a protection roll. With a massed NPC attack roll, a high roll on the feat die (or even the Gandalf rune, although it still indicates an automatic success) does not indicate a potential wound; only a great success will do it.

An extraordinary success fells a troll.

A companion who gained a bonus die from a battle roll at the beginning of combat may grant it to any NPC group's attack, just as he or she could add it to another companion's attack.

Option: using these rules for other creatures and warriors

This abstract system is based on the hill-trolls' great size ability and very large endurance scores, and the typical weapons of the Bardings and dwarves. It could be adapted to other great creatures and to large groups of more heavily armed warriors.

If the creature lacks the great size ability, then either a great or extraordinary success on the group's massed attack roll will fell it.

If the creature has 4d in armor, add +2 to the TN for attacking it. If it has 5d in armor, add +4 to the TN.

If the attackers' standard weapon has an injury rating of 18 or better, reduce the TN by an amount equal to 12 minus the Edge rating (with the Gandalf rune counting as Edge 12): -1 for Edge 11, -2 for Edge 10, -3 for Edge 9, and so on.

Taking command

Any companion may opt to command a group of NPC warriors directly rather than attacking for him- or herself.

The companion must declare this at the beginning of the combat round when the players are declaring stances. Treat this as its own special combat stance called "leadership."

The TN to hit a companion in the leadership stance is 12 + his or her parry.

Companions in the leadership stance always act last in turns, after all other companions have acted but before the players roll for allied NPCs.

Taking command of a group calls for an awe or inspire roll to seize the warriors' attention and lead them. A given companion gets only one chance at taking command of a group; if this fails, that group of warriors will not heed that companion in this round or any other. If it succeeds, that group continues to follow that companion's commands for the rest of the battle unless another companion rolls to take command.

The base TN to assume leadership of a group of NPC warriors is 16 minus the companion's valor score.

For the village militia, if the companion has not gained the "Friend of ____" trait with any of the town leaders, the TN for taking command is 20 minus valor instead. A companion who has gained the "Friend of ____" trait with one of the town leaders can use that to automatically succeed in taking command of the militia.

Once the companion is recognized as their leader, in each subsequent round the com-

panion can either adopt a standard combat stance and act normally, while still remaining the designated leader, or else adopt the special "leadership" stance and lead the NPCs instead of attacking him- or herself.

While in the leadership stance, the companion directs the NPCs' attacks and tactics. That requires a battle roll at TN 14. If it succeeds, the companion grants a bonus success die to that group's attack roll this turn (or two success dice with a great success or three with an extraordinary success).

In addition, a companion in the leadership combat stance can use the "protect companion" task of the defensive stance to step in and suffer an attack in place of an NPC follower.

NPC leaders

There are leaders among the NPCs: Hengist for the Barding spearmen, Gundin for the dwarves, Reinn for the militia bowmen (if on the walls of Greenfield proper). Each of them adds an automatic bonus of one success die to the group that he is leading. If the NPC leader is knocked out or killed, that bonus goes away. If a companion falls in the battle, the LM might allow the player to take over one of the NPC captains and decide his actions, either fighting normally or rolling each round for the leadership bonus.

Troll attacks

If the battle happens at the walls of Greenfield, the trolls must batter down the gate before they can lumber in and attack. Give each troll an attack roll once per round at TN 9 against the gate; but treat each attack as a called shot to attempt a piercing blow. Give the gate an Armor value of 5D the first time it is hit, 4D for the second time it is hit, 3D for the third time, and so on, until it can roll only the feat die. A piercing blow that defeats the gate's armor value smashes the gate to splinters. The trolls can charge through and start attacking in the next round.

In battle the trolls are smart enough to take advantage of obstacles such as the great rocks on Stony Hill and the houses and buildings of Greenfield. They move swiftly around buildings and rocks to force dwarf or Barding formations to break up and to gain cover against bowmen.

In each combat round, if a companion has dealt harm to the troll, the troll attacks that companion once (preferring one who dealt a wound or who did the most endurance damage).

If no companion harmed the troll, the troll attacks the NPCs. Because the NPCs are bunched up in fear or in fighting formations, the troll's attack affects from one to three of them. (Roll a success die and halve the result.)

For each troll attack on NPCs, roll one success die to determine each target. If the fight is inside the Greenfield walls, on a 1 the attack is against an unarmed bystander of the

village trying to flee the devastation or help the warriors. Wherever the battle takes place, on a 6 the attack is against the NPC leader of the group attacking the troll—typically Reinn, Hengist, or Gundin—if there is one.

Against an unarmed bystander, a success at TN 12 knocks the victim unconscious with a wound. A great success or piercing blow kills the poor villager outright. Roll 1D to determine which bystander gets it. In addition, if the bystander is a village leader then a number of Greenfield militiamen flee the battle to go to the bystander's aid. (A leader can try to restrain them; see "Fear" for details.)

- 1) An old man trying to drive his mule to safety.
- 2) A woman protecting a child, fallen husband, or brother.
- 3) A child fleeing in terror.
- 4) Conrad coming forth, with bow in shaking hands, to defend his people. (Four militiamen rush to his aid.)
- 5) Ginna, fleeing with several women and children. (Five militiamen rush to her aid.)
- 6) Arnora, bringing water and bandages to the defenders. (Six militiamen rush to her aid.)

Against an NPC warrior or leader, the attack TN is 9 plus the target's parry rating. An ordinary hit wounds and knocks unconscious the NPC unless the NPC makes a protection test. If the protection test succeeds, the NPC is unconscious but not wounded. A great success by the troll or a piercing blow slays the NPC unless the NPC makes a protection test against the troll's weapon; if the protection test succeeds, the NPC is wounded and unconscious.

If the attack kills the NPC, roll 1D. If it comes up 1–3, that number of other warriors retreat from the battle at the beginning of the next turn before any attacks can be made. If it's 4–6 and the victim was a leader, that number of other warriors flee; but on 4–6, if the victim was a regular warrior, there's no effect.

Troll Target Summary:

1: An unarmed bystander (inside town only)	TN 12
2–5: An NPC soldier or militiaman	TN9 + parry
6: An NPC commander	TN 9 + parry

Fear and flight

The trolls' sheer frightfulness can be more effective than their weapons. By spending 1 hate point a troll can invoke its strike fear ability. That forces each companion facing it to make a fear test. It also causes 2D6 of the NPC

warriors who attacked the troll in that round to flee in terror instead of attacking the next time they act.

When a group of 25 warriors is reduced to under 12 standing men, the remainder in that group flee the battle during their turn in the next round rather than attacking.

For example, if among 25 spearmen four are knocked unconscious, three are killed, and eight flee in terror due to an enemy's special ability, that leaves 10 standing. That's less than 12 so they all flee the field.

Rallying the Warriors: A companion can attempt to stop NPC warriors from fleeing, whether the flight is due to a troll's strike fear ability, or because of reduced numbers. At the beginning of the companions' turn a companion announces that he or she is trying to rally the fleeing NPCs, instead of attacking or leading an attack. The companion does not need to be the NPC group's designated leader. This calls for an inspire roll. The TN is 14. With a success, 2D6 NPC warriors from one specific group will rally and remain. With a great success it's 3D6. With an extraordinary success all of the NPCs from that group who had begun to flee turn around and stay in the fight instead.

(Note that the timing of the NPCs' flight is important. Since the companions act before the NPCs, it allows for the companions to attempt to rally the NPCs to keep them from fleeing.)

Trolls in retreat

A troll that has been reduced to 0 hate, and also is either wounded or reduced to 0 endurance, will attempt to flee the battle.

After at least one troll has fled or been killed, each of the other trolls attempts to flee when it reaches 0 hate or 0 endurance, or when it is wounded.

Trolls that flee the battle wander off into the wild to recuperate in their hidden troll-hole.

All NPCs, including the captains, are willing to let the trolls flee without pursuing them. They boast aloud that the monsters have likely learned their lesson—and anyway they can set out in the morning to track them down after dressing wounds and seeing to the dead.

The companions might persuade their allies to pursue and slay the fleeing trolls at once, while they are at their weakest. That calls for an encounter using valor for the tolerance.

The visiting Barding soldiers and dwarves instinctively look to the villagers for their cues. If the villagers are willing to take such a risk the honorable soldiers cannot decline.

The villagers' willingness to listen to the companions depends particularly on how the companions have dealt with Ginna. If they have gone out of their way to treat her with respect and patience as an elder of the town, despite her more irritating qualities, the tolerance is at +1 (+2 if she was killed in the battle).

If they've stymied her and treated her as an antagonist, the tolerance is at -1 (or -2 if she was killed in the battle). If they have actively insulted or shamed her, the tolerance is at -2 (or -3 if she was killed in the battle).

Pursuit of a fleeing troll uses the journey rules. Huntsmen must follow the trolls' tracks; scouts ensure the party doesn't stumble into a dead end or deadfall that only trolls could navigate; look-outs ensure that they don't run into an ambush; guides keep the party together on the trail. A lore roll while planning ahead might recall something about the ways of trolls in the wild and their most likely lairs.

Each "leg" of this journey represents one day of tracking and searching, and each companion must make a travel roll every day or else gain fatigue.

To catch the fleeing troll, the party needs a success at each function: hunting for the huntsmen, travel for the guides, awareness for the look-outs, explore for the scouts. Keep track of their failures. The TN for each is 12 if they've convinced the NPC warriors and militiamen to help, and 14 if otherwise. They may make one attempt at each per day.

The length of the pursuit determines its success.

1 day: They find the escaped troll in its lair before it has had a chance to recuperate.

2 days: They find the troll in its lair. It has recovered double its attribute level in endurance and half its attribute level in hate.

3 days: They find the troll in its lair. It has recovered all lost endurance and its attribute level in hate. If it was wounded, its wounds have healed.

4 days or more: By the time the companions find the troll's lair, the troll has fled with its treasure and the trail is lost for good.

If more than one troll escaped, they've regrouped in the wild and are found together at the lair.

Trolls that escape altogether flee the region. They won't be seen again this season. But they may come back in a few months for the treasure that they hid near their house on Stony Hill, and if any of it is gone they will terrorize Greenfield again. That may call for another showdown with the companions—or perhaps that will become another hero's tale that the companions hear about long afterwards over beer and meat in Esgaroth on the Long Lake.

Recovering the loot

After defeating the trolls the companions might offer to help the Bardings recover whatever treasure the trolls stole.

They find half of Greenfield's stolen treasure in the trolls' "house" on Stony Hill. A search roll (TN 12) finds it concealed under rocks and brush.

The rest of Greenfield's "tribute" is hidden and buried a mile away; finding it requires

a prolonged action using hunting to follow the trolls' trails and search to find the burial spot. Each of those must succeed (TN 14). If the companions fail four times total before succeeding at both, the trail to the treasure is simply lost. If the search roll is an ordinary success, they recover 25% of the remaining treasure; with a great success they recover 50% of it; with an extraordinary success they recover all of it.

The trolls have another, larger cache of loot at a big cavern in a ravine a good distance away. If any have escaped, that is where they have retreated to after the battle of Greenfield; only by running the fleeing trolls down can the companions find it.

A small part of that hoard is in sacks amidst a pile of skins, bones, and debris on the cavern floor. It takes an awareness test at TN 14 to notice it, but no roll is necessary if the companions specifically sift through the trash. That portion is worth 50 treasure.

Another awareness test at TN 18 notices loose earth from recent digging. Then a search roll at TN 14 finds a recently-dug mound in a little corner of the cavern that looks almost too small for the trolls to access—it must have taken some trouble for them to dig there. Inside that hole is a heavy old treasure chest with cowhide straps tied around it to keep it closed (the trolls' fingers are too clumsy to bother with keys and locks). Inside the treasure chest is a hoard of gold, jewels, precious artifacts and gleaming weapons worth another 150 treasure. (If in the Fellowship phase the companions take new weapons or armor as rewards, this would be an excellent source for them.)

If any of the trolls' secret treasure is found, the leader of the Bardings and dwarves asks the companions to share that loot with the families of the warriors who died in the battle and the farmers whose crops or herds were destroyed, with one share each. He won't insist on it if the companions found the cache on their own, but refusing earns a point of shadow for each companion and disfavor from the surviving warriors. That may come back to trouble the companions later if the LM wishes—so make a note of it. Agreeing to it, on the other hand, raises the Bardings' and dwarves estimation of the companions and ought to be worth a good turn later—so make a note of that, too. Sharing it with the survivors raises the companions' esteem even further.

In addition, after consulting with the villagers and farmers, the master offers a reward to the companions for their aid that is equal to 10% of whatever stolen Greenfield treasure they recovered from the trolls.

For a Barding, helping the village recover its stolen treasure, sharing the spoils with the warriors or the families of slain men, and turning down the reward offered by Greenfield gains standing, just as if the companions had spent that much treasure at home.

Allies and adversaries

No stats are provided for noncombatants such as Conrad, Arnora, and Ginna. The LM should improvise their abilities if necessary. The captains of the Bardings and dwarves are given detailed stats in case a companion falls and a player wishes to take over that captain temporarily.



Hark the hill-troll

Attribute Level 7
Endurance 87
Hate 7
Parry 5 (+1, shield-sized buckler)
Armor 3d
Skills Personality 3, Survival 2, Movement 2, Custom 0, Perception 2, Vocation 2
Weapon Skills Heavy Hammer 3 (Damage 8, Edge 11, Injury 16, CS break shield), Crush 2 (Damage 7, Edge 11, Injury 12, CS —)
Special Abilities
Great Size (The creature is so resilient and tough that it is not knocked out or killed when reduced to zero endurance or if wounded once. The creature keeps fighting until wounded twice, or reduced to zero endurance and wounded.)
Hideous Toughness (Reduce the creature's hate score by one to reduce the endurance loss caused by an enemy's attack by the creature's attribute level.)
Strike Fear (TN 14. Reduce the creature's hate score by one to force all companions to make a Fear test. See "Fear" under "The battle of Greenfield (or Stony Hill)" for other effects.)
Boulders and Debris (On Stony Hill or inside the walls of Greenfield, a troll may fling rubble or other heavy objects—carts, wagons, sheds, ponies—in an opening volley and to attack a companion in rearward stance or an NPC making ranged attacks. Treat this as a crush attack.)

Horst the hill-troll

Attribute Level 7
Endurance 84
Hate 7
Parry 5 (+1, shield-sized buckler)
Armor 3d
Skills Personality 3, Survival 2, Movement 2, Custom 0, Perception 2, Vocation 2
Weapon Skills Heavy Hammer 3 (Damage 8, Edge 11, Injury 16, CS break shield), Crush 2 (Damage 7, Edge 11, Injury 12, CS —)
Special Abilities
Great Size *See above*
Hideous Toughness *See above*
Strike Fear *See above*
Boulders and Debris *See above*

Gorst the hill-troll

Attribute Level 7
Endurance 84
Hate 7
Parry 5 (+1, shield-sized buckler)
Armor 3d
Skills Personality 3, Survival 2, Movement 2, Custom 0, Perception 2, Vocation 2
Weapon Skills Heavy Hammer 3 (Damage 8, Edge 11, Injury 16, CS break shield), Crush 2 (Damage 7, Edge 11, Injury 12, CS —)
Special Abilities
Great Size *See above*
Hideous Toughness *See above*
Strike Fear *See above*
Boulders and Debris *See above*



Jool the troll-mother

Attribute Level 8
Endurance 96
Hate 8
Parry 5 (+1, shield-sized buckler)
Armor 3d
Skills Personality 3, Survival 2, Movement 2,

Custom 0, Perception 2, Vocation 2
Weapon Skills Heavy Hammer 3 (Damage 8, Edge 11, Injury 16, CS break shield), Crush 2 (Damage 7, Edge 11, Injury 12, CS —)
Special Abilities
Great Size *See above*
Hideous Toughness *See above*
Strike Fear *See above*
Boulders and Debris *See above*

Reinn, constable of Greenfield

Attribute Level 4
Endurance 18
Parry 4 (+1, buckler)
Armor 3D (mail shirt)
Weapon Skills Great Bow 3, Sword 2
Skills Battle 2, Inspire 2

Hengist, Son of Hedinn, King's Man

Attribute Level 5
Endurance 19
Parry 4 (+3, great shield)
Armor 4D+1 (mail hauberk, cap of iron and leather)
Weapon Skills Spear 3, Sword 2, Great Bow 2
Skills Battle 3, Inspire 2

Gundin Redbeard, dwarf captain

Attribute Level 5
Endurance 23
Parry 5 (+2, shield)
Armor 4D+2 (mail hauberk, helm)
Weapon Skills Axe 3, Short Sword 2
Skills Battle 3, Inspire 3

25 Barding spearmen

Parry 3 (+2, shield)
Weapons Spear 3D (Damage 5), Short Sword 2D (Damage 5)
Armor 3D+1 (mail shirt with cap of iron and leather)

25 dwarvish warriors

Parry 5 (+2, shield)
Weapons Axe or Short Sword 3D (Damage 5)
Armor 4D+1 (mail hauberk with cap of iron and leather)

25 Barding bowmen

Parry 4 (+1, buckler)
Weapons Great Bow 3D (Damage 7), Short Sword 2D (Damage 5)
Armor 3D+1 (mail shirt with cap of iron and leather)

22 Greenfield militiamen

Parry 3 (+1, buckler)
Weapons Great Bow 2D (Damage 7), Short Sword 2d (Damage 5)
Armor 2D+1 (leather corselet with cap of iron and leather)



Super-science in fantasy games

by Eric Hindley

From the classic Expedition to the Barrier Peaks to the country of Numeria in Golarion, fantasy role-playing games have a long and illustrious history of including brief cameos with science-fiction elements, and your campaign can do the same with the below items and options, which range from force fields to ray guns.

New Old Tech

The easiest way to add a little science fiction to your world is to create new descriptions for existing items. For instance, add a power cell and some brass wiring (just for show) to a brilliant energy longsword, and you have a great, no frills stand-in for a lightsaber or power sword. This makes the item feel unique without requiring you to cobble together a whole new set of rules.

Goggles, helms, and even boots can easily have extra workings and decorations to make them seem more mechanical than magical in nature. A large set of eyes of the eagle, for example, might have a small engine and a switch that tints the lenses green and allows the target to see a magnified view of his surroundings, highlighting important subjects with boxes or crosshairs. A pair of boots of springing and striding might have lights that indicate when they are repelling gravity or small thrusters that activate as the wearer springs about. The only limit to re-skinning like this is your own imagination. Just remember to use

descriptions to make the item feel unique.

Having technological items that function exactly like the magic items in the core rulebook may seem like a letdown, but it keeps the game easier to run. You can use the existing rules for identifying items and the Use Magic Device skill can still activate them. Players know what to expect if you tell them the item has an aura of faint evocation, which helps make them feel like their in-game knowledge and choices still have meaning, even in a high-tech setting. Yes, this does make technology feel like simply another form of magic, but it is the cleanest and most elegant way to introduce tech items into your game.

If you are concerned about the proliferation of these items in your campaign world, consider varying their limitations to restrict their usefulness and keep them from being too powerful. The item may recharge only while within a certain dungeon setting (such as the crashed spaceship in which they were found), or it may require a battery cell sporting a blinking charge counter in an alien language (think of the ending of the movie Predator and the timer on its bomb). The GM may also want to limit the construction of super-science items, requiring a new feat or special materials before it can be done (see sidebar for an example feat).

While all of the items described and presented here list a market price, this is primarily a tool to gauge its relative effectiveness against traditional items. Most of these artifacts would

be nearly priceless to the right collector, especially someone seeking to replicate the effects and reproduce the item in question. This also goes for construction requirements, which are presented for comparative purposes. The details of actual construction methods are left to the discretion of the GM.

Adding a handful of super-science items to your regular Pathfinder RPG campaign doesn't need to create a ton of extra work. It can be as simple as a single villain with one or two well-chosen items, which function much like the items that you know and love.

Force Field

Aura moderate abjuration; **CL** 7th
Slot wrists; **Price** 3,000 g.p.; **Weight** 1 lb.

Description

This sturdy, steel-colored bracelet has a small box attached to it, its smooth surface broken by a series of three luminescent gems of red, amber, and green. As the item's charges deplete, the glow shifts from the green gem to the amber and finally to the red before going out entirely.

When worn this item creates a field of force energy, similar to a mage armor or shield spell. This grants its wearer DR 10/adamantine. Each time the field absorbs damage (even if it results in the wearer taking 0 points of damage) it uses one charge. A newly made force field has 10 charges, and its green gem glows brightly. When the force field drops to

5 charges remaining, the light shifts to the amber gem. When only 2 charges remain, the red light glows. A fully used force field does not glow at all.

Construction

Requirements Craft Wondrous Items, stonemasonry; **Cost** 1,500 g.p.

Freeze Orb

Aura moderate enchantment; **CL** 9th

Slot --; **Price** 3,500 g.p.; **Weight** 3 lbs.

Description

This opalescent sphere has a single button on top of its otherwise smooth surface. When the button is depressed, the orb begins to spin, gradually picking up speed. One round later the orb emits a bright blue flash. Every creature within 10 feet of the orb must make a DC 15 Will save or be held as per a hold person spell for 1d4 rounds. The orb works just once before its surface darkens and dulls, taking on an ashen hue as the device becomes inert.

Construction

Requirements Craft Wondrous Items, *hold person*; **Cost** 1,750 g.p.

Healing Patch

Aura faint conjuration; **CL** 5th

Slot --; **Price** 150 g.p. (minor), 750 g.p. (typical), 2,250 g.p. (major); **Weight** --

Description

This small fabric patch is etched with fine silver filigree. It adheres to a target's upper arm and remains inactive until the wearer is in an emergency situation. These patches activate when the wearer drops below a certain percentage of their total hit points, healing the target as a swift action, as summarized below:

Type	Healing	Percentage of hit points remaining
Minor	1d8+1	50%
Typical	2d8+3	30%
Major	3d8+5	10%

If the target does not have a swift action available the patch waits for the next available swift action. Alternatively, the target can activate the patch with a touch, using a standard action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity.

A healing patch can only be used once.

Construction

Requirements Craft Wondrous Items, *cure light wounds* (minor), *cure moderate wounds* (typical), *cure critical wounds* (major); **Cost** 75 g.p. (minor), 375 g.p. (typical), 1,125 g.p. (major)

Ray Gun

Aura faint evocation; **CL** 4th

Slot --; **Price** 6,750 g.p.; **Weight** 2 lbs.

Description

This item resembles a hand crossbow, except that the bow is replaced by a small dish and focusing lens. When fired at a target it unleashes a beam of searing energy that deals 4d6 points of fire damage. This attack requires a touch attack to hit. Each shot fired uses one charge, and a fully charged ray gun has 50 charges.

Construction

Requirements Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *scorching ray*; **Cost** 3,375 g.p.

Ray Gun, Freeze

Aura moderate enchantment; **CL** 9th

Slot --; **Price** 8,100 g.p.; **Weight** 2 lbs.

Description

This item resembles the basic ray gun, but it has a slowly spinning set of wings in place of

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the dish. When the wielder fires it at a target and makes a successful touch attack, the target must make a DC 17 Will save or be held in place, as a hold monster spell. A typical freeze ray gun has 10 charges.

Construction

Requirements Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *hold monster*; **Cost** 4,050 g.p.

Ray Gun, Shrink

Aura faint transmutation; **CL** 5th

Slot --; **Price** 1,150 g.p.; **Weight** 2 lbs.

Description

This item resembles the basic ray gun, but with an elaborate series of progressively smaller dishes at its tip. When fired at a target, the target shrinks (as the spell *reduce person*; CL 5). The target remains reduced for 5 minutes. A typical shrink ray gun has 10 charges.

Rumors exist of more powerful shrink rays that reduce a man-sized target to the size of a house cat, fly, or even tinier than the eye can perceive, but these variants are shrouded in myth. Their actual use or existence is left to the GM's discretion.

Construction

Requirements Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *reduce person*; **Cost** 575 g.p.

Shock Baton

Aura moderate evocation; **CL** 6th

Slot --; **Price** 10,305 g.p.; **Weight** 4 lbs.

Description

This short rod has a heavy metal tip that crackles with energy. It counts as a +1 light mace. In addition, the wielder can depress a button to unleash a powerful shock.

This shock can either stun or kill. On the stun setting, a target hit must make a DC 13 Fortitude save or fall unconscious for 1 hour. On the kill setting, a target hit takes an extra 5d6 points of electricity damage (DC 13 Fortitude save for half damage).

Each use of the shock function costs 1 charge. A fully charged shock baton has 10 charges.

Construction

Requirements Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *shocking grasp*; **Cost** 5,305 g.p.

Visor of Heat Vision

Aura faint transmutation; **CL** 5th

Slot eyes; **Price** 12,000 g.p.; **Weight** --

Description

This silver visor covers a creature's eyes with a thin sheet of ruby, obscuring normal vision while enhancing other types of sight. It grants the wearer the ability to see heat patterns; discerning creatures by differences in temperature. Treat this effect as 60-foot darkvision. The goggles also grant a +2 bonus on survival checks to track a creature that has departed within the last 10 minutes, as the wearer can use the lingering trail of ambient heat to follow them.

New Feat:

Craft Super Science Items (*Item Creation*)

You have studied the technologies of another world and can craft high-tech gear that is foreign and baffling to most people.

Prerequisite: Any other Item Creation feat, Knowledge (engineering) 1 rank, access to super-science items or resources.

Benefit: You can recreate any item of super science. Crafting an item of super-science takes 1 day per 1,000 g.p. in its price and costs half its price in raw materials. You can only construct items you have had a chance to examine or possess a working knowledge of, either through blueprints, diagrams, or similar resources.

In addition, if the wearer is subjected to an extreme heat source (such as a spell with the [fire] descriptor or an open flame), they must make a DC 15 Fortitude save or be blinded for

1d4 rounds.

Construction

Requirements Craft Wondrous Items, *darkvision*; **Cost** 6,000 g.p. ■



Dueling through the AGEs

by Rodrigo García Carmona

With men came conflict, and conflict begot war. But a massacre on the field of battle is not the only way to solve differences. Sometimes the situation does not justify the loss of lives, or the subject matter is of such importance that the only proper way of dealing with it is to get personal. At times like these, civilized people turn to the duel.

A duel pits man against man on equal terms, under a specific set of rules and at an agreed time and place. It is as orderly as combat can be, but no less fierce. Dueling represents the human instinct to compete and prevail.

This article describes five kinds of duels and provides rules to handle them:

1. The humble arm wrestling, the staple of so many nights at the inn
2. The ferocious holmgang, in which the barbarians of the north fight to see who can shatter three of his opponent's shields
3. Jousting, where proud knights compete on horseback for the favor of a king or a lady
4. Fencing, pastime of bored young nobles unable to tolerate an insult, and
5. The pistol duel, which begins with the fall of a handkerchief and is finished in less than a heartbeat.

Although the rules are written for the AGE system, they are easily adaptable to the game of your choice.

Arm Wrestling

There's no duel more widespread than arm wrestling. Practiced by the most disciplined members of the palace guard and the vilest bandit scum alike, its rules are universal and understood in every corner of the world. Both contenders place the elbow of one arm on top of a flat surface, grip each other's hand, and try to push the opponent's hand onto that same surface.

While most people believe that arm wrestling is just a display of brute force, this popular vision couldn't be farther from the truth; a

true master of this contest knows that reading your opponent and keeping a cool head are much more important than raw strength.

To represent this, an arm wrestling contest is divided into several turns, in which each participant chooses one of the following three actions:

Push: the character exerts all his strength, trying to bring the opponent's arm down. He must make a Strength test. This roll is modified by +3 if the opponent is faking.

Withstand: the character concentrates on maintaining his position, preventing his opponent's advances. He must make a Willpower test. This roll is modified by +3 if the opponent is pushing.

Fake: the character tries to fool his opponent, making him believe a push is incoming, while really saving his stamina. He must make a Communication test. This roll is modified by +3 if the opponent is withstanding.

The actions must be chosen in secret, written down, and revealed at the same time. Then, both players make an opposed test, with each character using the ability that corresponds to his chosen action. Each action is strong against one other and weak against the third. Take note of the Dragon Die's value of the winning character.

Repeat this cycle until the accumulated total of the Dragon Die from all successful tests for one character is 15 or greater. The first character to reach this number is declared the winner and will have humiliated his rival, often under scrutiny by a mob of drunken bystanders.

The Game Master can allow a character to use an ability focus in any of the rolls, if he



deems it appropriate.

Holmgang

In the frozen north, where fierce barbarians make their home, life is hard and tempers are short. And, like anywhere else, disputes must be settled. But with every able person being valuable for the survival of the clan, unnecessary bloodshed is best avoided. Only decadent city-dwellers and foul beasts should die by the hands of a son of the mountains!

To solve disagreements while, quite literally, keeping heads on shoulders, barbarians fight a kind of duel that offers minimal chance of ending up dead or incapacitated: the holmgang, a ritual armed battle. In a holmgang, each combatant may use three shields; each time a shield is broken the combat pauses, and its owner must pick up another one from his pool. The holmgang ends when one participant has no shields left.

Therefore, the aim of a holmgang fighter is not to kill his rival, but to hack away his shields. Holmgangs are always fought with axes, the traditional barbarian weapon and the best way to splinter a shield. Both opponents struggle to hit the other's shield as hard as possible, while at the same time trying to parry the enemy's blows before they reach his own protection.

In place of the usual rules for combat, the characters are pitted in a series of opposed Dexterity tests. The winner of each test lands a blow on his opponent's shield. Check the value of the winner's Dragon Die: if it's 5 or higher his strike has shattered the shield. Add 2 to the Dragon Die if the winner has either the Strength (Axe) or Strength (Might) focus, and add 3 if he has both.

Jousting

In a joust, two proud mounted knights ride their warhorses, lances at the ready, charging against each other. They meet in a thunderous crash, wood shattering and bones cracking. This brutal dance is repeated until one rider falls, his pride aching more than his body.

This duel is structured in alternating turns. Before every turn, each knight must decide in secret whether to aim for the opponent's head or body. Then both must attack using their lance. If the knight aims at the head, he'll have a -2 penalty to the attack roll. These attacks don't generate stunt points, but the Dragon Die's value is still relevant, so leave it on the table.

A successful attack means that the enemy has been hit, and he must make a Dexterity (Riding) test to stay on top of his mount. The target number of this test is the Dragon Die's value of the attack +10, and an extra +2 if the attack was aimed at the head. If the defender fails this test, he is knocked to the ground and loses the duel. If both knights fall to the ground in the same turn, the joust ends in a draw. Both attacks happen at the same time.

Optionally, the duel can continue on foot after a knight is dismounted. If that's the case, both characters fight using the standard combat rules, with a dismounted knight suffering a -2 penalty to his attack rolls and defense value against a mounted knight. The first knight whose Health falls to 0 is defeated.

Fencing

Is there a fight more beautiful than a duel between two master swordsmen? Lunges, ripostes, and amazing footwork are the ingredients for quick and astonishing combats. Truly a sight to behold—as seen in many a fantasy movie.

Capable fencers are almost always proud individuals, eager to demonstrate their skills at the first opportunity, and easily offended. When this happens they demand satisfaction, which can only be obtained at sword's point. The flash of steel is sometimes the last thing the owner of a sharp tongue sees.

Fencing duels can be to first blood or death. The former is the most commonly practiced and ends the instant blood is drawn. The latter is reserved only for the most egregious insults and ends only when one contender stops breathing.

First-blood duels are very intense. The fencers spend most of their time poking, circling,

Jousting: My Lady's Favor

Motivation plays a huge part in every fight, and defending the honor of a beautiful damsel or noble lady can make all the difference. If a knight earns a token of favor from a woman (or a man if the knight is a woman) he will enjoy a +1 bonus to all his rolls during a joust. The GM might even allow for a +2 bonus if the source of his motivation is a true love or a fiancée.

What actions the knight must perform to be worthy of these attentions is left to the devices of the GM. He'll decide what tests, if any, should be taken.

and measuring their opponent, searching for a gap in his defenses to strike true. Since a single hit can end the duel, combatants attack only when they see a clear opportunity. There's no more vulnerable position than after a failed lunge.

To represent this, the participants of a first-blood duel, starting with the challenger, take turns choosing one of two actions:

Study: the character fights while observing his rival's movements, stance, and habits, trying to figure the best way to attack him. The character gains a +1 cumulative observation bonus to his next commit.

Commit: the character decides it's time to attack, using all the knowledge he has been building up until this moment. This is a risky move. If the attack finds its target he'll have won the duel. However, if not, he'll be in a very disadvantageous position.

When a player decides to commit, his character attacks the opponent. Both characters make an opposed Dexterity (Duelling) test, and the character who committed (and only him) adds his total observation bonus to the roll. If the attacker wins, he has drawn blood from his enemy, ending the duel. If the attacker loses or the result is a draw, he has missed and his observation bonus resets to 0. The defender's observation bonus is unchanged.

This procedure is adequate for a first-blood duel. For a fight in which the life is on the line refer to the standard combat system. You can also use these rules to simulate any duel with weapons in which the objective is only to hit an opponent: just change the Dexterity (Duelling) focus to a more appropriate one.

Pistol Duel

In pistol duels, two gunslingers meet on the field of honor, walk a couple of paces away from each other, then turn to face each other. With hands hanging over their holsters they

are ready to draw and shoot, waiting for the signal of a neutral referee: usually the drop of a handkerchief.

In a pistol duel, accuracy isn't very important, since both rivals are just a few steps away and completely immobile. The fastest gun wins, and most duels end with only one shot fired.

This is the tensest of the presented duels, since it's determined by a single die roll. Both characters must take part in a Dexterity (Initiative) opposed test. Subtract 2 from a character's roll if he isn't trained in the Firearms weapons group.

Once you know who won the draw, the winner's Dragon Die value determines where the shot lands. The winning player chooses the result he wants from the following table, providing his Dragon Die's value is equal to or higher than the required number.

Minimum Dragon Die's value	Result
1-3	You have hit your opponent's body. Roll damage as usual.
4	You have hit your opponent's weapon, disarming him. He's unscathed, but humiliated.
5	You have hit your opponent's head or heart, you choose which. He's instantly reduced to 0 Health.
6	You have hit your opponent's face, enough to leave a permanent mark but without causing any real damage. This scar will forever remind him that you could have taken his life and chose not to.

If both opponents obtain the same result, they have fired at exactly the same time. Each player can choose an entry from the previous table and the duel is considered a draw, even if one participant dies or is injured and the other doesn't.

The rules presented here are equally applicable if the characters are using a ranged weapon other than a gun, like a bow or a throwing knife. Just change the weapons group the character must be trained in.

Firearm rules for the AGE system were introduced in the article "Weapons for a New AGE," published in Issue 22 of Kobold Quarterly magazine. One of the specializations featured in that article, the Gunslinger, allows for a re-roll of Dexterity (Initiative) tests. As you might expect, this rule also encompasses pistol duels.

Lost wonders of Caelmarath

by Brian Liberge

The Wasted West is a thriving cesspool for strange adventures. The Waste Walkers, giant aberrations summoned from another world, battle at a snail's pace above a desolate landscape. Goblins roam in outlandish clans, twisted by eking out an existence in a spell-scarred wasteland. Ruins of the old magocracies lie abandoned among the sand.

Anyone who finds even a lone tower buried in the sand might recover wondrous artifacts of untold worth. Heroes are not the only ones who seek out the power of Caelmarath in the west of Midgard. The eccentric Dust Digger goblins also dream of its power and guard their dig sites with violent diligence. The Waste Walker of alien crystal, Kb'r'ck, reached the base of this tower in secret and continues its slow entombment of the arcane halls.

Background

Hundreds of years ago, the western reaches of Midgard were a lush land running deep with powerful ley lines. The elves ruled the human kingdoms with a gentle hand, but the citizens of Caelmarath grew restless. They were powerful sorcerers but greedy for more. They rebelled against their elven masters and began to study dark, forbidden arts.

When the elves withdrew, the mages of the west fought amongst themselves and soon the region was awash in escalating arcane acts. Terrible beings from other worlds were summoned to do battle and when the dust cleared, the land had been twisted into an utter wasteland.

The once powerful Caelmarath was no more. But its treasures lay heaped in the ruins.

Questions

Ask each of your players one of these questions to help tie them to the story and world of Midgard.

- You hope to be the first to reach the tower and its hold. How did you learn of its recent unearthing?
- The Wasted West is a harsh and unforgiving environment. What unique skill have you developed to survive?
- The Dust Digger goblins sometimes serve as relatively peaceful guides and traders for their civilized neighbors. What unfortunate incident occurred the last time you met them?
- Many seek to plunder the lost secrets and artifacts of Caelmarath. Who is your secret backer? What do they hope to gain from you, and why do you serve them?
- You have stared into the strange horror

of one of the Waste Walkers. What dark knowledge was revealed to you?

- You are a direct descendent of Caelmarath survivors. Was your heritage kept from you or celebrated?

Special Bonds

Offer each player one of these bonds in addition to the bonds in their playbook.

It is a wonder [] still lives, being so oblivious to the dangers of the wastes.

[] pays no reverence to the gods. I must correct this.

Without the aid of [] I would have been giant food.

[] holds a secret that I must possess.

I owe a great debt to []'s family.

[]'s word is only good when it is in a signed contract.

[] is of a lesser class and it shows.

The First Old Tower of Caelmarath

Description: Many ruins stand throughout the wastes but the ruins of Caelmarath are the most sought after. The exact location of the prime city of this powerful magocracy was lost in the war, but recent quakes have uncovered a tower bearing the green tiles of Caelmarath, half buried in a newly formed rift.

Stakes:

Why are the Dust Digger goblins drawn to the tower?

What was the tower's intended purpose?

Why does Ascerat still roam the tower?

Can anything be done to stop Kb'r'ck?

Grim Portents:

[] The Dust Diggers find the Tower of Dalrot.

[] The Dust Digger goblins begin excavating artifacts from the tower.

[] Kb'r'ck opens the Tower's dormant portals and feeds on their energy.

[] Grimgear opens a portal unleashing new abominations into Midgard.

[] The Dust Diggers gather more goblins.

[] Kb'r'ck envelops the Tower of Dalrot.

Danger – The Dust Digger Tribe

(Humanoid Vermin)

Impulse: To hoard

Description: Goblins are an all-too-common problem in the Wasted West. They came in swarms after the Mage Wars and adapted well to the strange landscape. The Dust Diggers are skilled scavengers and gather lost vril technology, to the point of worshipping the most powerful items. They are slightly more sane than most goblin tribes and sometimes serve as

guides or peaceful trading partners.

Cast: Grimgear Oldear, dig leader. His divining instruments have picked up a power source near the tower, and he believes it contains a gift of the creators.

Moves:

Acquire ancient artifacts

Ready, aim, fire!

Follow alien instructions

Call for more goblins

Adversaries: Dust Digger Goblins, Dust Digger Watchmen, Dust Digger War Machine

Impending Doom: Tyranny

Danger – The Tower of Dalrot

(Abandoned Tower)

Impulse: To lure the greedy

Description: A recent earthquake exhumed this relic of lost Caelmarath. Though it juts from the side of a chasm, the tower is in remarkably good condition, a testament to the magic stored within. Its six uppermost levels have not yet been consumed by Kb'r'ck. Dalrot was a node of research before the fall, and it remains home to many experiments involving the outer planes.

Cast: Ascerat the Wise, a lingering spirit.

Ascerat researched the spells that summoned the Great Old Ones, and it weighs heavily on his conscience. He will repel treasure hunters but aids anyone seeking to banish the Waste Walkers.

Moves:

Activate a trap

Offer power

Reveal a dark truth

Unleash a minor abomination

Adversaries: Chaos Spawn, Ghostly Wizards, Oculo Swarms

Impending Doom: Destruction

Danger – Kb'r'ck of Crystal

(Great Old One)

Impulse: To grow

Description: Kb'r'ck is among the most alien of the other-worldly horrors unleashed during the Great Mage Wars. Its sprawling mass of interconnected crystal slowly grows and encases anything it touches, though its progress is just a few dozen feet each year. Little do scholars realize that, like the icebergs of the north, this creature's size is even greater below ground. It has already consumed the lower levels of the Tower of Dalrot.

Moves:

Instill fear

Fascinate lesser creatures

Feed off arcane energy

Ignore harm

Special Move: When you come into direct contact with Kb'r'ck, roll+DEX. On a 10+ you manage to break away quickly, losing only an item of clothing. On a 7–9, choose one. On a 6, choose two.

A key piece of equipment is lost to Kb'r'ck. You break away but part of your body is being slowly encased with crystal. You gain the Clumsy tag.

You see yourself reflected back in the alien crystal and flee in terror.

Impending Doom: Pestilence

Adversaries

Chaos Spawn

Solitary, Amorphous, Terrifying

Chaotic touch (d10 damage) 19 HP

Close, Reach 1 Armor

Special Qualities: Chaos form

Not everything summoned from beyond the planar walls was gigantic. The wizards also brought smaller beasts to fight the mage wars. Easily forgotten when compared to larger, looming abominations, the chaos spawn are a twisted mass of tentacles, eyes, and snapping jaws. *Instinct:* To undermine the established order

Moves:

Rewrite reality

Challenge your conceptions of possibility

Unleash chaos from containment

Dust Digger Goblin

Horde, Small, Hoarder, Intelligent, Organized

Salvage-Tipped spear 3 HP

(d6 damage) *Close* 1 Armor

The Dust Diggers scour the waste for long-abandoned artifacts, fiercely guarding new dig sites. These strange goblins seem supernaturally talented in getting vril technology working again. Most have an odd vril trinket in their arsenal. *Instinct:* To destroy trespassers

Moves:

Dig up artifacts

Call more goblins

Make trouble with a vril trinket

Dust Digger Watchman

Group, Small, Hoarder, Intelligent, Organized

Vril powerbow 6 HP

(d8+2 damage 1 piercing) 1 Armor

Close, Far

Dust Digger watchmen guard major excavation sites against looters. Surprisingly disciplined, these goblins know the power of the artifacts they seek.

They have mastered the strange vril bows whose bolts are charged with the power of the sun. When they open fire, reinforcements are never far behind. *Instinct:* To warn the tribe

Moves:

Stand watch from above

Mark a target

Retreat and come back with more goblins

Dust Digger War Machine

Solitary, Large, Construct, Intelligent, Organized

Giant claw (d10+3 damage) 20 HP

Close, Reach, Forceful 4 Armor

Special Qualities: Burrowing

These metal titans share the rough shape and build of an iron golem, with some notable exceptions. The arms are longer and bulkier, boasting proportions similar to a gorilla. Each one ends in a large shovel like claw for scooping up dirt—or for bashing in the heads of those who get in the way. Between the shoulders rests a cramped operations pit, visible through a plate of green glass. Within, a Dust Digger goblin frantically adjusts levers and dials to stay in control. *Instinct:* To smash the big guy

Moves:

Destroy intruders

Use a special vril attachment

Lose its driver

Call for reinforcements

Ghostly Wizard

Group, Devious, Intelligent, Stealthy

Ray of spectral frost 10 HP

(d6 damage ignores armor) 0 Armor

Close, Near

Special Qualities: Hover, Insubstantial

Several of the wizards of Dalrot never left when it was buried. They still labor away at their experiments, growing ever-more frustrated at their inability to properly manipulate their environment. *Instinct:* To haunt

Moves:

Reveal the terrifying nature of death

Offer information at a price

Protect its life work

Wield ancient magic, almost properly

Oculo Swarm

Group, Tiny, Amorphous, Construct, Terrifying

Acid squirt (d8-2 damage) 13 HP

1 piercing) 1 Armor

Hand, Near, Messy

Special Qualities: Hover, Swarm

Hundreds of eyes float before you in a swarm, each with a ganglia trailing behind like a twisted tadpole. Caustic fluid drips off slowly, sizzling as it hits the ground. Caemarath wizards created these creatures to serve as scrying aids, and they are still used on occasion by the mad wizards of Bemmea. *Instinct:* To extract eyes

Moves:

Invade a mind

Detect lies

Horrify the sane

Carry out ancient commands

Items:

Many wondrous items may be found in the tower of Dalrot. Here are a few examples:

Codex of Possible Truths 1 weight

A hefty tome filled with arcane ramblings both familiar and alien. Some sections read quite clearly, as if penned by a wise sage well versed in court forensics. Other passages seem written in a foreign language, though the words are clearly of the Trade tongue. If only there were an index, it might just answer all life's questions. Roll+WIS. On a 10+ choose a topic and the GM will tell you something interesting and useful about the subject. On a 7–9 the GM will tell you something interesting, that might be useful in the future, on a topic of his choosing. The Codex only takes five minutes to use but is so confounding it can only be used once a session.

Pitcher of Planar Waters 1 weight

A simple clay pitcher of earthy reds and browns. It always appears about half full or is it half empty? Tip it over and out comes an endless stream of cloudy water that stems from the River Styx. A single touch and you will lose an hour or more of your memories. Drink a cup and even the most regimented mind will not save your recollection of the last few years.

Winged Lantern 1 weight

An iron lantern with clear glass windows. On either side, folded in like a broken accordion, rest a mass of long thin tubes, gears, and cloth feathers. Set a candle inside and close the door. A minute later the two folded heaps will stretch and flap, moving with increasing speed until it buzzes above the ground like a hummingbird. Dwarves use them in the mines when paperwork must be processed on site. ■

Portions of this work are derived from Dungeon World by Sage LaTorra and Adam Koebel. See dungeon-world.com for more information.

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The Blighted Lands

(from page 42)

one unfamiliar with their tactics.

2 x Fire Scorpions. AC 3, HD: 7, HP: 37/39
 Attacks: 3 plus special wing buffet. Damage:
 1-10 x2/ -4 plus poison (save vs. poison, or
 suffer additional 1d4 damage cumulative per
 round for 5 rounds). Special Attack: Wing Buf-
 fett (save vs. paralyzation or be knocked to the
 ground. +2 to all attacks in that round, Size L
 15' long)

There are other scorpions in the nesting
 area. 1-3 will be attracted to the disturbance
 in 3-18 rounds after initial melee begins. Rest-
 ing in this area will attract additional fire scor-
 pions if the party is foolish enough to do so.

Returning to Chentoufi

Once the party returns to Chentoufi, they
 will face some scrutiny at the gate if they are
 openly carrying the scorpion tails. The guards
 will ask why they have them, since they are
 used for poison and drugs. If they make a plu-
 sible reason/story (CHA check perhaps) and/
 or bribe the guard (+1 per 50 g.p. expended)
 they will be able to gain entry without inci-
 dent. Farnoosh will happily pay them for the
 scorpion tail, even offering an additional 500
 g.p. bonus for extra tails if they brought more
 back. Farnoosh will stick to his story about
 making a philter unless he is hard-pressed by a
 charismatic character in the party.

Eventually the Fangs will discover that Far-
 noosh has created a batch of Sting and seek to
 kill him and those in his ring, which from their
 perspective includes the party. Perhaps a moti-
 vated young inspector uncovers the bribed
 guard and attempts to track down and arrest
 the party . . . ■

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Leomund's Secure Shelter

(from page 19)

Imbibe a potion

1-20	All of the potion
21-65	d8 x 10% of the potion
66-90	d10 x 12% of the potion, which could be over 100% and therefore none of the potion is imbibed
91-00	Drops it!

The effect of the potion is then up to the DM to adjudicate.

Other actions

Other possibilities certainly exist. But things like flying away on a broom, magic carpet, or using a cape should likely be next to impossible or end in disaster.

After the first round

All of this takes us through to the round in which the person goes down to the hit points given in the first table. That person will continue to falter and will lose points at the rate of

one more negative point per round.

Once the figure is unconscious, no one including him knows if death has occurred. Do not let the wounded unconscious figure roll to see if he has died or not. He doesn't know, and therefore neither does any of his allies or enemies, unless the person is examined.

So let's look at poor Fred again. His constitution is 15. He is alive all the way to -6, so he can lie there awhile. But neither Fred nor anyone else knows what his current hit point total is. Did he fall over at -1, -2, -5, or -8? No one knows.

Once someone gets to Fred, then he can start to roll to see if he's alive. Here is the catch. Let's say Fred was lucky and only went to -1. However, he passes out. So, in 5 more rounds he'll hit -6. He is still alive. (See the table above.) Now when he goes to -7 there is a 5% chance of death. At -8 there is a new roll and a 10% chance to be dead. At -9 there is a 30% chance, at -10 a 55% chance, at -11 a 75% chance, at -12 a 95% chance, and at -13 he is dead no matter what. Fred has to roll at -7, -8, -9, -10, -11, and -12! Each time he will roll to see if time has killed him. Do not sum the percentages and make one single roll. That would doom Fred when he hits -10. Fred still gets to roll to see if he has died or not, but not until someone comes to him to bind his wounds. ■



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A Forgotten Grimoire

(from page 21)

evidence that makes the clearest case to view the Dalluhn Manuscript as a pre-publication version of *D&D*.

Here's an easy check along those lines you can perform with any edition of the original *Dungeons & Dragons*, from woodgrains to white boxes. If you look in the miscellaneous magic item section in the *Monsters & Treasure* pamphlet, you'll find four items that control elementals: a censor, a stone, a brazier, and a bowl. If you turn back a few pages to the description of elementals as a monster, however, you'll see a list of devices that can summon elementals which includes only "medallions, stones, gems or bracelets." Why list those four items, instead of the braziers, censors and so on of the miscellaneous magic item list? When we look to the miscellaneous magic item list of the Dalluhn Manuscript, we find an answer—because Dalluhn shows a very different list of elemental control items. Care to guess what they're called? The "Medallion of Controlling Water Elementals," "Bracelet Controlling Air Elementals," "Stone Controlling Earth Elementals," and "Gem Controlling Fire Elementals." When the elemental monster text of *D&D* was written, the author of that text had in front of him a miscellaneous magic item list that looked like the one in the

Dalluhn Manuscript, not the one published in *D&D*. That proves that the Dalluhn list came first.

Readers who are interested in reviewing my full (and quite lengthy) analysis of the Dalluhn Manuscript can find it linked off of the *Playing at the World* blog. The key point is this: I'm not aware of any other existing document that has these properties. Certainly there are no "rip-offs" that have these properties. As Dalluhn is the only document we have with this relationship to *Chainmail*, *Blackmoor* and the original *D&D*, by all appearances it contains the earliest known version of the game of *Dungeons & Dragons*. It certainly was not Gygax or Arneson's first draft; from the state of the system, it reflects something around the midpoint of their collaboration. We know that at the beginning of June 1973, Arneson and Gygax advertised to the broader gaming community that they were "compiling an extensive set of rules for fantasy campaigns," and invited gamers to contact them at that time. The Dalluhn Manuscript apparently reflects the state of their work in that era, and given its level of polish, it must have been intended for some sort of distribution. Whatever the exact circumstances of its production, it circulated at least to the extent that someone later gave a photocopy of the document to M.A.R. Barker,

and he stored it away in his garage until Keith Dalluhn recovered it.

Establishing that the Dalluhn Manuscript came before *D&D* doesn't resolve many unanswered questions. Was this produced in the Twin Cities or Lake Geneva? Who typed it? Who drew the illustrations? These are more complex questions to answer, but there are comparable mysteries about the first published edition of *D&D* as well. Unquestionably, there is more scholarship to be done related to the Dalluhn Manuscript. For that reason, it will, by the time you read this, have gone on display at the Strong Museum, the National Museum of Play, in Rochester, NY. The Strong will make this document available to future scholars interested in exploring its mysteries or learning what the system it preserves can tell us about how *D&D* was invented. With any luck, new evidence will come to light over time that will help clarify some of our unanswered questions: perhaps even earlier or later drafts in the course of *D&D*'s development, which will narrow down the circumstances in which the Dalluhn Manuscript was created. But we do not need to unmask the cowled figure to remove the curse of the forgotten grimoire—in fact, the first step to removing the curse is to ignore the cowled figure and instead to focus on what the grimoire can teach us. ■

Any World. Any Time.



