HARPer's Bazaar

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Introduction

Welcome to the seventh issue of the HARPer's Bazaar. Things have been a bit hectic at work recently, so this issue does not have an overall theme like several recent issues have had. However, it does contain a good selection of articles covering a wide range of topics.

As always, I hope that you enjoy the material that you find here, and that you come back for more next time.

WARNING! All Items in this PDF should be considered optional and completely unofficial.

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What Level is That Barmaid Anyway?

Note: These rules are only for determining the levels of NPCs. Under no circumstances do they or should they ever apply to player characters—even those out of play.

Contrary to popular player beliefs, killing monsters, especially in HARP, is not the only way to go up levels. The majority of the NPCs that characters encounter in fantasy settings will be well above first level. To determine the level of a random NPC the GM should take several factors into account:

Age: How old is the individual? Page 25 of **HARP** suggests adding one level for each age increment of that the character or the NPC is above the starting age. For humans, this works out to one level for every 2 years above the age of 18. The average 30 year old will be about seventh level just through normal life experiences. In game terms, this translates to up to 24 skill ranks in skills the person has chosen to actively study.

Environment: What are the individuals' surroundings like? Are they living in a quiet backwater, a lively metropolis, or a war zone? People living in and surviving in high-stress environments will likely be higher than average level. What kind of educational opportunities are available to the individual? Does his or her lifestyle bring them into contact with unusual individuals?

Personality: This is a sum total of the person's ambitions and interests. Adventurers tend to be higher level than the general population because they are ambitious, actively seek out interesting situations, and make the most of their opportunities to learn new skills. Ambitious, hardworking, intelligent and well-educated people will likely be higher level than individuals satisfied with the status quo. In this situation "Education" is more than just book learning, it also refers to a person's craft training. All in all, personality is probably the most important factor in determining level. Some people may never rise above fifth or sixth level no matter how old they get, simply because they cease to learn.

So what level is that bar maid in the FOO pub? Sophy is 25 years old, which means that she is probably at least fourth level. The GM does some quick thinking about Sophy and comes up with the following facts:

1. Sophy started working in the FOO pub part time at age 16 to earn extra money. This early experience is worth at least one additional level.
2. At 25 Sophy is single, but has turned down plenty of offers.
3. Working in the FOO pub for 9 years has brought her in contact with many interesting individuals. She has had many opportunities to learn a variety of unique skills including magic and some combat skills from adventurers. Sophie actively seeks out the company of adventurers and wheedles them into teaching her new things.
4. Sophy works in the FOO pub because she likes the people and the money is good.

The GM considers all these factors and decides that Sophy is about tenth level. She has a mean right hook, and some skill with a dagger and quarter staff. She can cast all of the cantrips, and spells such as Minor Healing, Arcane Bolt, Water Breathing, Transcription, and Repel Pests. Her experience as bar maid has also given her the following skills: First Aid, Persuasion, Streetwise, Trading, Perception, and Brawling and some Lore skills. These are just the obvious skills—Sophie probably has a many more skills.

What about other NPCs? A master craftsperson is by default fourteenth level, since 40 skill ranks are required to reach master level. A competent village blacksmith will be about fifth level, while a savvy experienced merchant can easily be fifteenth level or higher. Most of the NPCs will not be spending all of their Development Points each level, but there are always exceptions.

NCP Level Guide	
NPC	**Level Range**
Dedicated Under-Achiever	1st - 5th level max.
Average Individual	Add 1 level for each age increment over the racial starting age.
Ambitious, Hardworking	Add 1½ - 2 levels for each increment over the racial starting age.
*Stressful Life Experience	Add 1 – 5 levels to the person's overall level depending on the circumstances.
*Backwater Environment	Add .5 levels for each age increment over the racial starting age.
*Access to Education	Add 1 – 5 levels to the person's overall level. (Only if the individual is at least average; underachievers do not benefit from these opportunities.)

Stressful Life Experience: War (escaping the fall of New Tarahir), plague, major crisis, individual suddenly thrust into a leadership position.

Backwater Environment: Nothing to do but watch the plants grow or the paint dry, or alternatively, a highly sheltered environment.

Access to Education: A university, a gifted mentor, great tutors, guild schooling, first class professional or craft training.

New Professions & Cyradon

Several issues of **HARPer's Bazaar**, and more recently **The Codex**, have added a number of new professions to **HARP**. However, none of these new professions have been discussed in relation to **HARP**'s premier setting, *Cyradon*. The following is a short overview of each of those professions, and how they might best be incorporated into *Cyradon*.

Paladins

The Paladin first appeared in HB #2, and he is essentially a spell-using warrior for his deity. Paladins are required to follow a code of ethics as set forth by their religion, and the Paladin profession itself may be customized according to its deity as well.

There are several distinct cultures and orders that may support Paladins. From Anias, we have the Lightbringers of Tarahir. This is actually two distinct orders, the Lightbringers and the Firebrands. Of the two, the Firebrands could easily be considered to be Paladins of Memra.

The order of The True Spear, a Skaldi religious order could also easily support lesser branch of the order who are Paladins. The order itself is primarily an order of warrior-priests, so it is no small stretch of the imagination to see Paladins as a welcome addition to their ranks.

Far to the south, in the Dwarven homelands, it is also possible that one might find Paladins there as well. Any Dwarven Paladins are most likely to be dedicated to Vasila, and her aspect of protection.

Among the Gryx, it may be possible, though rare, to find Paladins dedicated to the Shrine deities Rasa and Rema, although Remanic Paladins tend to be more volatile than most other types of Paladins.

On the continent of Cyradon itself, it will also be easy to find Paladins. Among the Nagazi, the Sage, Menhit, is a god of both law and war, among other things. The Nagazi could quite easily have a small order of Paladins who are seen as special protectors of the Nagazi culture. Although dedicated to all 7 of the Sages, the Paladins would be chosen or selected during the annual festival held in honor of Menhit.

It is possible that there may even be Paladins among the Janieal and Desnian cultures. However, if a GM is going to allow such Paladins, they would likely to be based upon the Spirit World information that is found in HB #6, since the Arali are very spirit-oriented.

Beastmasters

The Beastmaster first appeared in HB #3. He is a non-spell-user who specializes in the communication with and the mastery of animals of all types. Beastmasters will always be found among the more rural cultures, and only very, very rarely be found among cultures that lean more towards urban centers.

From Anias, Beastmasters are more likely to appear among the Skaldi, the Sithi and the Gryx cultures. From far to the south, there is a race of small beings who live in

the Western Jungles, and who are friendly with the Mablung Dwarves. It is very possible to find Beastmasters among them as well.

From Cyradon, Beastmasters are more likely to be found among the Rhona Gnomes and the Danae Elves than any of the more civilized cultures. Beastmasters would likely be found among the Nagaral and Aoifar cultures as well.

Shamans

Shamans are masters of the Spirit World. They deal with all sorts of spirits, although some cultures may deal with just a single type of spirit or with a single type more often than not. They first appeared in HB #6.

From Anias, the Sithi are the largest practitioners of shamanism. Their deities are basically ancient and powerful spirits that have grown immensely from their humble beginnings ages ago. The Gryx could also be considered to be practicing shamanism, due to their veneration of the Shrine Deities of the Juras Mountains.

From Cyradon, the Rhona Gnomes, the Danae Elves, the Arali Elves, and even the Gryphons all practice varying forms of shamanism.

The Rhona Gnomes worship three powerful spirits embodied in their totems of the Sun, Moon, and Earth. Their practices involved venerating these three totem spirits, and each tribe's actual methods may vary slightly from one to the next.

The Arali and the Danae Elves all practice Ancestor Worship. And the Arali even have a variant version of the spell, Spirit Travel, which allows them to move large numbers of troops from one location to another relatively quickly when compared to more conventional methods.

The Gryphons do not worship any specific spirits. Theirs is a highly animistic belief, where everything is possessed of a spirit, every rock, every plant, and every animal. These spirits are known as Yazatas. The Gryphons do not worship them, but they do respect them and might ask them for intercession from time to time.

And finally, the Schirae also most likely practice shamanism to a high degree. However, it is much more likely that they like to capture and use the spirits without any regard for the spirits themselves.

Adventurers

Adventurers first appeared in **The Codex**. They are the ultimate jack-of-all-trades, able to focus themselves on what interests them, and even able to learn a number of useful spells. Adventurers are more likely to be found among any culture that has a fair amount of leisure time.

From Anias, Adventurers are more likely to be from Tarahir, or the Treaty Kingdoms, or even from the Theocracy of Asut, although any from this last are likely to be outcasts and renegades from their homes. Mablung Dwarves are another race that is likely to produce Adventurers. While far less likely, it is still possible that Adventurers might occasionally crop up among the Gryx, Skaldi or the Sithi.

From Cyradon, it is likely to be found that the Arali culture, both Janieal and Desnian, are more likely to produce Adventurers than any other culture. The Nagaral running a close second on producing Adventurers and the Nagazi a distant third. The other cultures to be found on Cyradon are all just as likely to produce the occasional Adventurer, though this would be a very rare occurrence.

Druids

Druids were introduced in **The Codex**, and they are essentially a nature-oriented magic user. It is not certain if their power comes from nature itself, from a deity, or from ambient mana like most other spell users.

On Anias, Druids are most likely to be found among the Sithi and Skaldi cultures, although it is almost as likely that they would be found among the Gryx as well. Druids are unlikely to appear in any other Anias cultures.

On Cyradon, Druids can most likely be found among the Rhona Gnomes, the Aoifar, and the Danae Elves than among any other culture. It is possible that a Druid may appear among the Gryphons or Nagazi, but it is highly unlikely that one would appear among the Arali Elves.

Mystics

Introduced in **The Codex**, Mystics are masters of spells relating to the mind and to mental powers, such as misdirection, seeing the past and the future, and sensing what is going on in other locations.

It doesn't matter what cultures are involved, Mystics are just as likely to be present as any other type of Mage. However, the Tarahiri, Janieal, Desnian, Nagazi and Ashari cultures are quite likely to be where more Mystics can be found than in any other culture.

The Ashari and the Desnians are likely to have more Mystics than most any other culture simply because of their desire to know what is going on elsewhere in what they consider to be their realm.

Shadowblades

Also introduced in **The Codex**, the Shadowblade is a master of stealth and stealth related magics. Although he can be found in just about any culture, he is more likely to be found among the more civilized cultures than the more rustic ones.

From Anias, Shadowblades are most likely from Tarahir and the other Treaty Kingdoms than they are from any other culture. Given the past of the Gryx, it is also likely to find a few Shadowblade among their ranks as well. Otherwise, Shadowblades are likely to be very rare.

From Cyradon, the Ashari, Desnian, and Nagaral cultures are the three most likely candidates for cultivating Shadowblades. The Gryphons might have a variant that they call the Nighthawks, and it is possible that the Rhona Gnomes and Danae Elves might have what they refer to as Shadow Walkers, but both of these possibilities are likely to be less violent overall than normal Shadowblades.

In a recent *HARP* product, **The Codex**, we introduced a spell called *Enchant Key*. This spell was designed to allow the creation of temporary magic items. We had intended to include a section in the product devoted to explaining and expanding upon the spell, but because of space considerations, we decided to save the expanded material for the *HARPer's Bazaar*. In order to do this, we will start off by reprinting the spell itself, and then explaining the basics of how the spell works.

SPELL BASICS

The purpose of this spell is to allow mages to create magical items that are meant to be part of a larger structure or item that will need periodic recharging. The word "Key" in the spell's name refers to keystone, such as the keystone of an arch, which is what this spell was originally used to enchant and from which it gains its name.

ENCHANT KEY

PP Cost: 11
Range: Touch
Duration: 1 Day
Spell Type: Utility
RR: —
Spheres: Guild
Description: The caster may imbue an item with a spell matrix capable of holding a spell of up to 5 PP, with the eventual aim of creating a Key Item.

The base form of this spell embeds the spell or spell effect into the Key Item being created by the caster. Once complete, the Key Item remains dormant until 24 hours after this spell is again cast on the Key Item using the *Activate Key Item* scaling option. Other scaling options may also be used to set specific targets or trigger effects.

This spell has a number of special scaling options:

Increase Matrix Potency: This allows higher-powered spells to be added to Key Items on a 1 for 1 PP basis.

Activate Key Item: Cast on a Key Item once it has been installed to make the imbedded spell active. This scaling option is also used to recharge a Key Item, allowing it to work for another year. This scaling option may be used multiple times, each time extending the basic active duration by 1 year.

Specific Target: This spell is cast prior to the activation of the Key Item in order to set a specific target for the spell that is activated when triggered. Without the use of this spell, the target is the person or object that triggered the spell.

Set Simple Trigger Event: Unless a Key Item is made using the *Constant Effect* scaling option, it requires a trigger. Use of this scaling option allows the caster to set a simple trigger event.

Set Complex Trigger Event: Unless a Key Item is made using the *Constant Effect* scaling option, it requires a trigger. Use of this scaling option allows the caster to set a complex trigger event.

Decrease Recharge Time: This scaling option allows an imbedded spell to be triggered more often than once per hour.

Trigger Effect: This scaling option allows the imbedded spell to be activated every time that the trigger event happens. The imbedded spell also causes the spell to remain active so long as the trigger condition is met. This may not be used with attack spells or spells that do not have a specific duration.

Constant Effect: This scaling option allows the imbedded spell effect to remain active all the time. This may not be used with attack spells or spells that do not have a specific duration.

Universal Key Item: This scaling option has 2 uses. If used while creating the Key Item it allows any spell caster who knows this spell to activate, recharge, and set targets and triggers. This scaling option also allows a spell caster to work on Key Items created by another caster who did not use this option.

Area Effect: This scaling option allows the caster to have a spell effect work on an area that is 10' x 10' x 10' in size. It can only be used during the creation of the Key Item and cannot be used with attack spells.

Increase Area: This scaling requires that the scaling option, Area Effect, be used, and it increases the area covered by the spell by an additional 10' cube.

SCALING OPTIONS:	
Increase Matrix Potency (per +1 PP)	+1 PP
Activate Key Item (per year of activation)	+1 PP
Specific Target	+2 PP
Set Simple Trigger Event (per event)	+2 PP
Set Complex Trigger Event (per event)	+4 PP
Decrease Recharge Time (10 minutes)	+2 PP
Decrease Recharge Time (1 minute)	+4 PP
Decrease Recharge Time (10 rounds)	+6 PP
Decrease Recharge Time (5 rounds)	+8 PP
Decrease Recharge Time (2 rounds)	+10 PP
Trigger Effect	+10 PP
Constant Effect	+20 PP
Universal Key Item	+4 PP
Area Effect (10' x 10' x 10')	+4 PP
Increase Area (by an additional 10' cube)	+2 PP

The caster has to craft the item to be enchanted using this spell. This item could be a stone to be used in building an arch or a wall, a plank of wood used to make a floor or ceiling beam, a piece of tile to be used in a mosaic or perhaps a wall sconce. The item could be anything that is used in building. The spell caster who is creating the item must enchant it following the same rules for enchanting an item using the *Imbue* spells from **College of Magics**. The only exception is that the caster does not have to use the *Power Projection* skill to seal the sigil imbedded into the item. This spell does that for the caster, but in a limited fashion.

Items created by this spell are known as Key Items because they are used in the creation of other items. Key Items are items that are integral to the item that they are built into. For example, a stone wall would not be considered whole if one of the stones was missing from its center. A wooden floor would not be considered whole if a plank was missing, however, a missing nail would not change whether the floor was complete or not. Another aspect of Key Items is that they must be accessible to the mage, since he has to be able to touch the Key Item in order to cast the spell to activate it.

One major feature of a Key Item is that once activated, it cannot be moved from its location without canceling the magic that activated it. Depending upon what spell is imbedded in the Key Item, this may not cause problems, as the item will work again once it has been reactivated. Key Items built into structures such as walls or floors will have problems if they are moved as the targets and trigger portions of the spell take the surrounding structure into effect, and moving it from that original structure means that the target and trigger conditions can most likely never be met.

This inability of movement also means that Key Items are rarely incorporated into hinges or doors as they both move, and the act of doing so would disrupt the spell. However, mages have found it convenient to incorporate Key Items into larger items that are rarely moved, such as

Cold Chests (see below). Even though the Cold Chest has moving parts, the Key Item itself is not among those moving parts, and people who own a Cold Chest know that it is often better to wait until time to re-activate the chest before moving it, or to have a mage on hand who can re-activate it once the Chest itself has been moved.

When the caster has completed imbedding a spell into an item, the Key Item is dormant, and spell within cannot be triggered. This will allow workman to use the item safely in the structure of a building or other object.

Once the item has been properly placed, and the construction is finished, the spell caster returns and casts this spell on the item again. The Key Item has to be accessible as the spell requires the caster to touch it. This time he uses one or more of the scaling options for setting the target of the imbedded spell and for setting up the trigger.

Once these have been set they can never be changed. This is because these scaling options incorporate the surrounding structure into the spell itself. For example, if one of the stones used in building the wall of a room is imbedded with a spell that casts Mage Light on the wall sconces when somebody enters the room, then the whole room, but not its contents, has been incorporated into the spell. If that stone were moved the spell would not work as it would be missing the sconces and the walls, ceiling, and floor of the room. Also, if the owner enlarged the room the original structure, imbedded into the target/trigger portions of the spell would no longer match the spell and the Key Item would be disrupted. The only recourse would be to replace the Key Item with a new one, and set up new targets and triggers.

Finally, once all that has been done, the mage is now ready to activate the Key Item. This time he uses the scaling option, Activate Key Item, which makes the magic item active 24 hours later. Once activated, the item will work for 1 year for each time the scaling option, Activate Key Item, was used in this final casting.
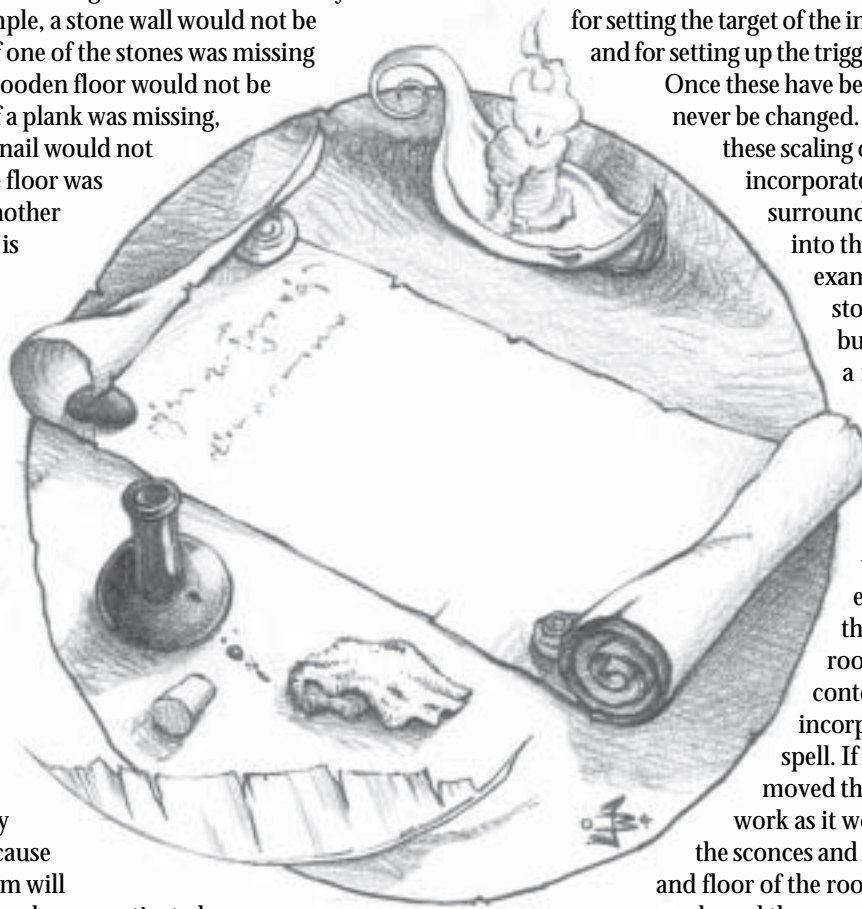
Recap: Key Item Creation Steps

The creation and activation of a Key Item breaks down into 4 simple steps, as outlined below.

Step 1 – Creation of the Key Item, and the enchanting of the item. These two are grouped together because the caster of the spell is required to create the item he is enchanting. He may not use an item created by another person.

Step 2 – Use the item in construction. This need not be building construction as the examples at the end of this article show. The Key Item may be used in making any item that is rarely or never moved. The mage who created the Key Item need not be involved in the construction of the item it is to be used in.

Step 3 – Set the targets and triggers. If the creator of the item has used the Universal Key Item scaling option in the creation of the Key Item, then any mage who knows the *Enchant Key* spell may perform this step. Additionally, even if the original creator has not used that scaling option, a mage who knows the spell may use that scaling option himself to set the targets and triggers on a Key Item created by another. Once the target and triggers for a given Key Item has been set, they can never be changed.

Step 4 – Activate the Key Item. Just as with setting the triggers and targets, if the Universal Key Item scaling option has been used in the original creation of the Key Item, then any mage may activate the Key Item using the spell and the proper scaling option. If the Key Item had not been made using that scaling option, then the mage who activates the item must use it when they do the activation.

Scaling Option Explanations

The *Enchant Key* spell has a number of scaling options that may not seem entirely clear, so we will expand upon them here, so that they are much easier to understand.

Increase Matrix Potency: The basic spell only allows spells of up to 5 Power Points (PP) to be used in creating items. With this scaling option, the caster may use more powerful spells in the creation of items as repeated use of this option increases the allowed amount of power points to be imbedded on a 1 for 1 basis. This scaling option may only be used during the initial imbedding of spells into an item.

Activate Key Item: This scaling option serves two specific purposes: the first is to activate a dormant Key Item and the second is to make that activation last for 1 year. The caster may use this scaling option multiple times when activating the item and each use increases the activation time by an additional year, though it is rare for a mage to create a Key Item that lasts longer than 5 years before needing to be recharged. In order to activate the item the caster uses the Enchant Key spell with just this scaling option, and no others. Once cast, the item will become active 24 hours later. This allows time for the caster and any others to remove themselves from the area of the item so that they do not trigger it accidentally. This is especially important if the spell in the Key Item is meant as a trap.

Specific Target: The default of any spell in a Key Item is for the imbedded spell to target the person or thing that triggered the Key Item. Sometimes this is not wanted. For example the Mage Light spell is imbedded in a stone used in creating the doorway into a room. By using this scaling option, the caster can set the target(s) to be sconces built into the walls of the room so that the Mage Light appears in the sconces whenever somebody walks through the doorway. This scaling option is used after the item is completed, but before it is activated. Prior to activation, the caster may cast this spell with this scaling option and one of the "Set XX Trigger Event" options. Once a specific target has been set, it can never be changed.

Set XX Trigger Event: There are two types of trigger events: Simple and Complex. A Simple Trigger Event is very simple, such as "somebody comes within 5' of the item" or "whenever somebody enters the room." In any case, a Simple Trigger Event is always a single, simple action that triggers the imbedded spell. Complex Trigger Events normally consist of multiple actions in a specific sequence. This could consist of the recitation of a small phrase, or placing several small objects, such as colored stones, in a specific order, or even more complex actions. One of these two scaling options is always used, sometimes with the scaling option, Specific Target, prior to the activation of the Key Item. If one of these two options is not used to set up the trigger events, then the item cannot cast its imbedded spell. Once set, the trigger conditions for an item can never be changed.

Decrease Recharge Time: Once the spell imbedded into a Key Item has been activated, it will not activate again for 1 hour unless one of these scaling options are used. This scaling option may only be used during the creation of the item, to set the recharge interval.

Trigger Effect: This scaling option allows the imbedded spell to be activated every time the trigger event happens. The imbedded spell remains active so long as the trigger condition is met. This may not be used with attack spells or spells that do not have a specific duration. This scaling option may only be used when the item is being created. A good example of this would be a Key Item that casts Mage Light upon some sconces along the wall of a room whenever somebody is in the room. With this scaling option, the lights would not have a set duration, but would remain alight as long as a living being was in the room.

Constant Effect: This scaling option allows the imbedded spell effect to remain active all the time. This may not be used with attack spells or spells that do not have a specific duration. This scaling option may only be used when the item is being created. This scaling option would allow for the creation of special rooms that maintained a constant temperature, such as small room that acts as a freezer.

Universal Key Item: This scaling option has 2 uses. If used while creating the Key Item, it allows any spell caster who knows the spell, Enchant Key, to activate, recharge, and set targets and triggers. This scaling option also allows a spell caster to work on Key Items created by another caster who did not use this option during the creation of the item. This means that if the original creator of the Key Item is not around, another caster can still recharge that Key Item even if it is hundreds of years later.

Area Effect: This scaling option allows the caster to have a spell effect work on an area that is 10' x 10' x 10' in size. It may only be used during the creation of the Key Item and cannot be used with attack spells. The Key Item is not the center point of the area affect. In fact, the area to be affected by the spell is not selected or defined until just prior to the activation of the item. By using the Select Target scaling option the caster sets the specific area to be covered by the spell. The Key Item does not need to be the center point of this area, it could be in the middle of one side of the cube, or at one of its corners, or anywhere else, so long as the area of effect covers or is directly adjacent to the Key Item.

Increase Area: This scaling requires that the Area Effect scaling option, be used, and it increases the area covered by the spell by an additional 10' cube. This additional area does not increase the area effect in all directions. The additional area is another 10' x 10' x 10' cube that is added adjacently to one face of the original cube, making an area that is 10'x 10' x 20'. Each time that this scaling option is used, another 10' cube is added to the total area. Each cube must have one face that is adjacent to at least one face of another cube, but these need not be in a straight line. This scaling option may only be used during the creation of the Key Item, and the Select Targer scaling option is used to configure the layout of all the area cubes.

USING ENCHANT KEY

This Enchant Key spell is a major part of any magically-advanced society. While most mages will create their own personal items to be enduring and long-lasting, they do not want to put themselves out of work, or make the general populace less dependent upon themselves or their services. That was one of the major reasons that this spell and other spells like it were created.

It provides the mage, and those who follow in his footsteps, an opportunity for a recurring income. The potential for the recurring income is so great, that mages often charge much less for the creation of Key Items than they would for permanent items of the same type.

Some excellent examples of uses of Key Items that can often be found in highly magical societies include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **Street Lights** – Magical lights that activate at dusk and turn off at dawn.
- **Room Lights** – Sconces set into the walls of a room that activate and stay active so long as a living person is in the room.
- **Cold Rooms** – Special rooms set near kitchens to store food and to keep it fresh. Some are just cold, while others could be set at temperatures that are at or below freezing.
- **Cold Chests** – Special, large chests, that stand up on one end, and filled with shelves. Made especially for smaller homes, homes without a lot of servants.
- **Alarms** – These are often disguised as normal building materials, and they set off spells, often loud, noisy spells when unauthorized people enter a given area.
- **Traps** – Somewhat more dangerous than alarms, though often combined with them, some traps are meant to ensnare and hold intruders, while for more precious valuables some traps may be more violent and lethal in their protection.

Overall, Key Items allow for the creation of the equivalent of many modern items.

Game Mastering 101

Welcome to *Game Mastering 101*. The purpose of this recurring column is to provide you with tips and tricks to make you a better Game Master overall.

The tips and tricks that I will be sharing may or may not work for you. Every GM has his own individual style and quirks when it comes to GMing, and not every tip will be right for everybody. I just wanted to let you know this upfront, so that you are not surprised if you do not find a given article useful because your style of GMing is different from mine.

Anyways, enough prattling from me, let's get on with the show!

Sudden Resolutions

It has happened to every GM since the beginning of roleplaying games—at one point or another, the players are going to want their characters to do something unexpected or unusual, or even worse, something that is both unexpected *and* unusual. Both types of actions can cause severe disruptions in the game as you, the GM, attempt to figure out how to resolve the actions that the players want their characters to perform.

HARP actually took this sort of thing into consideration when it was being designed, and as a result you have 2 major tools to help you quickly come up with a fair and equitable method of resolving these unusual and/or unexpected actions. The 2 tools that I am referring to are the Difficulty Level system and the Maneuver Table. Together, these two items can be used to resolve just about every possible action that characters might be able to come up with. Let's go over each in a bit more detail starting with the Difficulty Level system.

Difficulty Levels

HARP contains 10 basic levels of difficulty. Each Difficulty Level is progressively more difficult for the character than the one before it, and each also has a specific name. Difficulty Levels can be extended beyond those named by applying another -20 modifier to the action or maneuver being attempted, though this should be very rare.

In determining the Difficulty Level on the fly, it's a good idea to become very familiar with the definitions of the different Difficulty Levels. Those definitions, found on page 30 of the core *HARP* rulebook, will provide you with a method of gauging how difficulty an action might be.

As you gain more practice in using the Difficulty Levels, you will be come more accomplished at determining the levels on the fly and gauging how difficult an action would.

Maneuver Table

The second and more important tool you have for resolving unexpected and unusual actions is the Maneuver Table found on page 66 of *HARP*. Also beginning on page 66 and continuing through page 70 are guidelines for different methods of utilizing the table in different situations.

Of the four columns, we will be most interested in the *Percentage*, *Bonus*, and *RR* columns. With them, and a standard *All-or-Nothing* roll, you have everything you need. Read through the guidelines in the core rulebook on how to use the table.

Using the Tools

By using the following steps, the GM will be able to retain control of the situation and keep the game moving without having to dig through rulebooks looking for some obscure rule.

Step 1: Assess the situation

The first thing that the GM needs to do when the unusual or unexpected occurs is to stop and assess the situation. This means that the GM needs to take a look at the action that the character wants to perform. He needs to determine if there is a skill that could apply, or if it would be a Stat-Based Roll (*HARP*, page 67). If there is a skill that applies, then he has to decide whether or not to use the full skill bonus or half of it.

Step 2: Determine the Resolution Method

Once you know what sort of maneuver the player wants his character to attempt, and what skills might apply, it is time to decide how to resolve the action. In many cases, especially if there is a skill involved, the resolution method will be the one for that skill, but that's not always the case. Sometimes a different resolution method will be required because of what the character is attempting to do with the skill.

It is even possible that you might need to combine different resolution methods. The most common combinations are likely to be the *All-or-Nothing* method or the *Bonus* or *RR* methods. In such cases, results of less than 101 are considered a failure, and only those that are 101 or above will consult the Maneuver Table to find out what result to apply.

Step 3: Determine the Difficulty

Determining the Difficulty level is likely to be one of the hardest steps since it is all subjective. Just like everything else, if you take it a step at a time you should not run into any problems. The first thing to do is to determine what the base difficulty is going to be. Most of the time, maneuvers will be of Medium difficulty, but in some situations they will be intrinsically easier or harder depending upon what the character wants to do.

Once the Base Difficulty has been determined, then the GM must figure in the situational modifiers. Is the character moving at more than a walking pace, is he riding, is he in combat, are there other large distractions, is the terrain stable, etc? Each item that you think of needs to be classed as either Lesser or Greater. Greater modifiers will change the base difficulty one whole step (i.e. from Medium to Hard) while Lesser modifiers require 2 modifiers to move the base difficulty one step (i.e. a noisy bar room and the curtains just catching fire behind you are Lesser modifiers).

Step 4: Resolve the Action

Resolving the Action is the final step to this process and I won't even mention it in the following example. Once you have determined what to do, you do it and resolve the action. You should also make a note to yourself about how you resolved it and what the situation was, so that you can check the books to see if there was a better way listed in there.

If there was then you have 2 choices:

1) The first choice is to become familiar with the official resolution to the situation and to let players know it exists and that you will be using it the next time such a situation arises.

2) Your second choice is to let the players know that you found an official resolution, but that you're going to stick with your method the next time the situation arises—and knowing RPG players, it will arise again.

The main thing in both choices is to let the players know what your gameplan is. Players like to have GMs who are fair and consistent. This means that if you decide to resolve something one way for a given situation, the next time that same situation pops up, they expect you to resolve it in the same manner.

Extended Example

For this example, Joe and Ed are two of your players. Joe plays a Mage named Makus and Ed plays Rorc, a Fighter who specializes in mounted combat.

Makus wanders off into the woods looking for some wild herbs while the rest of the group is recuperating from an extremely early morning battle. After following a game trail for about 2 hours that Rorc had pointed out to him, Makus spots some healing herbs to one side of the trail. Makus goes to collect the herbs, but doesn't pay enough attention to his surroundings and stumbles over the edge of an embankment, falls a short distance, rolls the rest of way down the steep hillside and is knocked unconsciousness for a few hours.

At this point the you make your first on-the-fly resolution in this session. Since Markus does not have the Acrobatics skill you give him a chance to avoid the fall by making an Agility-Based RR (100). Joe makes the roll for Markus, and fumbles it.

Seeing that Markus failed this roll, you have Joe make a Constitution-based RR (100) to have Makus avoid serious damage. Joe fails this one as well, but only by a few points rather than the fumble that he made on the first roll. Thinking quickly, you decide that this means that while Makus only takes a couple of d10s worth of hits (rather than a potentially serious critical), he is also knocked for 1d10 hours (adjusted downward by Makus' Constitution bonus). This still leaves him unconscious for 4 hours.

Since Makus is unconscious now is a good time to check to see if any wild animals or other creatures will stumble across him. To do this, you decide to use the Percentage column and you make a roll to get your target number. Once you have that, you make a second roll. If this second roll is higher than your target number, then Makus is going to have visitors while he is "sleeping". If it is lower, he is left alone.

For your first roll you roll an 89, giving you a target number of '80'. Luckily for Makus, your second roll was a 23, well below the '80' mark, so as a result no animals bother Makus while he is unconscious.

After Makus has been gone for over 6 hours, the rest of the party decides that his little herbal expedition has taken too long. After a short conference to plan, they set out to look for him. Each party member is leading his horse in case Markus has hurt himself. Everybody agrees to meet back at the camp at nightfall whether they have found Makus or not. Each sets off in a different direction, Rorc taking the game trail that he had pointed out to Markus previously. The other party members go off in different direction in case Makus got confused and wandered off in some odd direction.

Rorc tries to follow Makus' tracks on the trail, but the ground is hard-packed and doesn't hold tracks well.

Ed, slightly discouraged that it would be a Sheer Folly maneuver to track Markus on the hard-packed ground, thinks for a few minutes, and then hits upon an idea. He asks you if the ground on either side of the trail is hard packed, and immediately seeing where this is going, you tell him that it isn't.

Ed says that instead of trying to follow barely discernable tracks on the hard ground, Rorc decides to look for places where Markus may have left the trail (i.e. show signs of somebody passing through), and then examine those areas more closely.

Rorc

Makus

You decide that the Tracking skill is not quite right for this maneuver, but that it would be helpful. You ask Ed to make a Tracking roll for Rorc, and you look up the result on the Bonus Column of the maneuver table. Ed gets an open-ended roll followed by another good roll. This along with his skill bonus gives him a total of 217 for the maneuver. This gives Rorc a +50 on all his Perception maneuvers to spot where Markus may have left the trail. Luckily for Rorc, Markus only left the trail in one location.

Rorc eventually finds where Makus left the trail, and is able to track him to where he fell over the edge of the embankment. Going back to the trail to get his horse, Rorc quickly finds another safer way down to the lower ground via another game trail. As he reaches the low ground, he heads back to the embankment. where he finds Markus just waking up. Makus is unhurt for the most part, but he's bruised and possibly has a twisted ankle. He was very lucky, especially since he landed just beside a pointy bit of log sticking out of the ground. A few more inches in one direction and he would have been skewered. Rorc helps Makus up onto his horse, leads the horse out of the gully and back up to the trail. Realizing that the branches on the trees surrounding the trail are too low for safe riding, Rorc decides it would be better to take a different route. Knowing of an old, abandoned road nearby, Rorc has Makus lay on the horse's back as he cuts cross country to the road.

On their way back to camp the pair runs across a band of Orcs who easily outnumber them by at least 5 to 1. The Orcs picked up their trail from where they had cut across the forest to the old road and cut through the woods using shorter trails that the horse could not take; arriving at edge of a small field just as Rorc and Makus arrive from the old road that they are following.

After a hurriedly whispered conversation, Rorc and Makus decide upon a plan. With Makus still slung across Rorc's house, Rorc is going to charge across the field, and Makus will attempt to cast a fireball into the midst of the Orcs as they race past them.

Step 1: Stop and assess the situation

We have already established that Makus has no skill in riding at all. We have also established that Rorc is the one controlling the mount. Also, what Joe intends for Makus to do is not really mounted combat, as mounted combat presumes that the person making the attacks is controlling the mount as well.

Both Joe and Ed are arguing that the fireball attack would not be mounted combat, however, they have an ulterior motive because if classed as mounted

combat, Joe would receive a -80 on his roll to see if Makus can cast the spell accordingly.

You happen to agree with them that this would not really be mounted combat as defined by the rules. However, you also happen to believe that the spell will be much more difficult than usual to cast because of Makus' position on the horse.

Step 2: Determine the Resolution Method

Since the action is the casting of a spell, we know that the skill for the spell will apply. And since this is an attack spell, it will get resolved normally.

Step 3: Determine the difficulty.

However, as you have already determined, there should be modifiers to the casting of the spell based on the difficulty from doing so mounted on the back of a moving horse. Makus can meet all of the casting requirements, one hand free and able to speak, so there are no modifiers there. However, since, his concentration is going to be split between staying on the back of the horse, by holding on Rorc, and the casting of the spell; the difficulty is going to be increased by 1 level. Additionally, the jouncing and bouncing from the movement of the horse is also going to increase the difficulty by at least 1 level as well. Luckily for Joe and Ed, the ground of the field is relatively level, as rough terrain would have increased the difficulty by 2 or more levels.

Okay, the difficulty is increased 1 level from the movement of the horse and 1 level from the split in concentration required to keep hold of Rorc. Thus the casting of the fireball, or any other spell, in this situation is going to be 2 levels more difficult than normal, making the casting of the spell a Very Hard maneuver to accomplish. This means that Joe will have a -40 modifier on his roll to see if Makus can cast the fireball on the Orcs.

Good Luck to Joe!!

SUMMARY

During the course of a game, players will want their characters to perform unexpected and/or unusual actions. Sometimes these actions will be easy to adjudicate, sometimes they won't. By following the steps outlined above, a GM can readily resolve almost any situation on the fly without having to look up obscure rules, and slowing down his game.

It does take some practice and getting used to, but the GM in the Extended Example could have easily completed steps 1 through 3 in about 30 seconds total, including telling the PCs what his decisions were. As you gain experience and confidence in this method, you will be able to trim things down to the smallest amount of time required, all the better to keep the game moving.

Well, this wraps up this first installment of *Game Mastering 101*. I hope you liked it!

A Dozen Magical Rings

The following is a selection of a dozen magical rings that might be found within a treasure trove. Each of the rings are unique, thus there is no cost listed for the items. Suffice it to say that a retailer attempting to sell one of these rings is going to try to get as much as he possibly can for them.

Also, all names and places mentioned in the descriptions are completely separate from any particular published settings. GM's are encouraged to expand and even change the history of the rings to suit their needs.

The Archmage's Ring

This ring is made of carved dragon bone with traceries of dragons worked into the band. Legend has it that it once belonged to the former emperor of Targas, known only as the Archmage and that he wore it during his entire reign. Other legends also whisper of a mysterious figure that appears from time to time, in widely spaced locations claiming the sobriquet of "The Archmage" and claiming to be the rightful ruler of the city of Targas.

Powers: The wearer is able to cast any spell at will from the Mage Sphere (and the Elementalist, Thaumaturge, Necromancer, Vivamancer, and Mystic Circles), which has a base Power Point cost of 5 PP or less. This ability may be used a number of times per day equal to the twice the Insight bonus of the wearer. All such spells have a casting modifier of +50. Once all of its daily uses have been used, the ring becomes fully recharged as of the next dawn. The ring also grants the wearer a +20 to all other spell casting.

Should the wearer be killed the ring will wait 24 hours and then immediately teleport to a random location up to 1,000 miles away so that it may be found and used by another. Any person donning the ring must immediately perform a Will Contest (**HARP**, page 168) against the ring which has a Will of 60. Should the character who dons the ring fail, he will believe that he is The Archmage and that it is his destiny to rule the city of Targas. If this happens, the character will be obsessed with finding Targas so that he can properly rule it. The ring does **not** supply the location of the city.

Campaign Notes: A GM could have a lot of fun with this ring. Perhaps the city of Targas no longer exists, and has even faded from memory. Perhaps the only mention of Targas is in some ancient documents, documents that will be extremely difficult and maybe even expensive to track down. A clever GM can work this into a long chain of adventures.

Perhaps the ring, if it wins the will contest, slowly exerts its influence so that the character's personality does not shift overnight, though that could be fun as well.

Beastmaster's Ring

This ring is made from several different types of carved bone, held together cunningly by tiny slots and tongues. Each different type of bone has a different animal carved upon its outer surface. The ring itself, while looking fragile, is actually very sturdy.

Powers: Allows the wearer to speak with and understand all types of non-magical animals and creatures.

Campaign Notes: If you remember the recent *Dr. Doolittle* movie starring Eddie Murphy, then you, as GM, can give the ring a more obvious ability like those in the Eddie Murphy movie. You can make the ring bestow Minor Regeneration, and allow the Animal Speech powers to surface over time, with the PC hearing bits and phrases being said when nobody else is around, and/or having the animals react with major surprise when they find that they can understand a human (or dwarf, or elf, etc.).

Fire Fist

This is not a single ring, but five rings made as a set, one ring for each finger. Each ring is made of gold, with flames inscribed on the outer bands. The stone in each ring is a bright red ruby. The rings are connected to one another through a fine yet incredibly strong chain. Rumor has it that these rings were crafts for the last High Elementalist and that they were lost when he went on an expedition and never returned.

Powers: The set of rings contains 50 PP that are replenished with the rising of the sun every morning. The 50 PP may be spent to cast any of the following spells. However, the spells may not be cast using scaling options, unless the character knows the spells separately. If the caster does not know them on his own the spells have a casting bonus of 40 for all of the spells. The caster may also learn an Arcane Lore skill that allows him to have better aim with the elemental attack spells. If the caster knows the spells on his own, then he may use his normal spell bonus, if higher, and he may scale the spells up in power as he likes.

Spell

Ignite
Elemental Bolt (Fire)
Elemental Aura (Fire)
Heat
Elemental Ball (Fire)

Campaign Notes: Imagine the surprise of the players when they find that some small tribe of Kobolds is terrorizing much larger monsters, such as Orcs or Trolls, forcing them to raid nearby towns and villages because the leader of the Kobolds has this set of rings. This makes for a good twist to the one monster type subjugating another scenario.

Gladiator's Ring

This ring is made of Black Alloy and White Alloy in twisted strands. Legends and rumors have sprung up around this ring, saying that the wearer of the Gladiator's Ring is unbeatable in combat. These rumors grew out of the fact that the gladiatorial slave that was given the ring never lost a battle, not even when he led a slave revolt. At least, not until his friend stole the ring. Neither this friend, nor the ring has been seen since the ring was stolen from its owner just hours before the battle in which he lost his life.

Powers: The wearer is able to pick up and use any weapon, using his best weapon skill bonus as his OB. The ring also grants a +20 to any criticals delivers (i.e. to damage, not to hit), and a +30 to all attempts to resist stun. The ring also supplies a +30 to the wearer's DB.

Campaign Notes: The ring does not make its wearer unbeatable, but it will enhance the wearer's combat. For a fun twist you could always make the ring semi-intelligent, give it a Will of 60, and if the ring wearer fails the Will Contest (**HARP**, page 168), then he begins to believe that the ring makes him both unbeatable and invincible. If the wearer should suffer any damage while under the influence of the ring, he will believe that he let the foe hurt him on purpose to make things more sporting overall.

Gryphon Ring

This ring is made of White Alloy. It looks like the head of an eagle-like creature, with the wings spreading out to form the band. This ring was created by a mage who loved Gryphons and wanted to soar across the skies with them. This mage disappeared one day while flying with the Gryphons and has not been seen since.

Powers: The wearer is able to transform his body into two different forms. The wearer can take the form of a Gryph: a hybrid form halfway between that of a man and a Gryphon. The Gryph form stands upright and has hands tipped with sharp claws, but the feet are full talons. The Gryph's head is like that of the Gryphon and is able to produce human speech as well as Gryphon speech.

The second form is that of a full Gryphon. While in Gryphon form the wearer is fully able to understand and speak the Gryphon language, though the ring does not teach him etiquette or anything about Gryphon society. The ring wearer is able to freely change from one form to another a number of times per day equal to his Insight bonus.

Campaign Notes: To make things interesting, a GM can require a Self Discipline-based maneuver roll to change forms. The maneuver roll results are cumulative using the Percentage Column of the Maneuver Table and once the character has achieved a result of 100 or greater, then he has completed the transformation. However, when using such an option, fumbles should be equally dangerous. If the wearer fumbles, he will automatically transform into the full gryphon form and lose himself and actually believe himself to be a true Gryphon. How long he believes this will depend upon how badly he fumbled. A minor fumble roll might mean that the effect lasts a few hours, while a maximum on the fumble roll could mean that he will never remember his true self unless he has his memory jogged by somebody else

Morlin's Ring of Bolts

This ring is made from several different pieces of colored Laen. Each piece is a different color, and it shaped like an elemental bolt, with the four bolts chasing themselves around in a circle. This ring was made by an eccentric mage who also made a staff in the same manner as he worked in the bowels of an active volcano. Unfortunately, this mage was murdered in his sleep as he prepared for an expedition to find some lost artifact.

Powers: Any Bolt spell cast by the wearer automatically has its range extended by 50', and the caster gains a +20 to the casting of the spell. The wearer is also able to simultaneously cast a single Bolt spell of the four basic elements at the same time using the ring. This multi-bolt cannot have any scaling applied to it; in relation to the size and power of the elemental bolts (i.e. they are all tiny). The caster need not know all four types of Elemental Bolt spells because the ring provides this information. This Multi-Bolt ability is usable a number of times per day equal to the Self Discipline bonus of the caster.

Campaign Notes: Legends and rumors say that there was also a staff made of the same material and in the same manner of the ring. Perhaps the ring has an affinity for the staff and can lead its wearer to adventure by wanting to be with the staff. The wearer would feel a slight pull in the direction that the staff lays, but it will not interfere with any action,
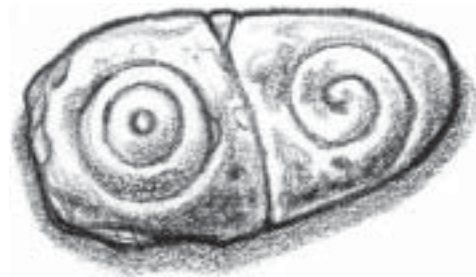
Quizzal's Ring of Health

This is a plain gold band set with a small yellow topaz cut into the shape of a heart.

Powers: The wearer gains +30 to his DB; Regenerates injuries at a rate of 3 hits per round; Gains a +30 to all Resistance Rolls against Stun.

Campaign Notes: The true origins of this ring are unknown. One possible story is that it was stolen from its true owner years before and shortly after coming into possession of the ring, the party encounters the true owner in a nearby city, and he wants his property back. The true owner is quite likely to be a local noble and has both a matching pendant (which has Lifekeeping and Lifegiving spells imbedded) and drawings, or even a portrait, showing him wearing the ring (which proves nothing).

Ring of the Adept

This is a heavy gold band, inscribed with various arcane symbols and set with a bright blue sapphire. It was originally made for a powerful Mystic, a member of an organization that hunter evil magic users. The ring was lost shortly after original owner's apprentice inherited it.

Powers: The wearer gains a +30 to all Will-based Resistance Rolls, and he also gains a +30 to all spells from the Mystic Circle that he knows.

Campaign Notes: This ring is a powerful item and any Mystic would want to possess it. The ring is also distinctive enough that those who belong to the original owner's order will recognize it on site, so will the many enemies of that order. Those enemies are quite likely to think that the wearer of the ring is after them, and to attempt to remove that threat to their safety as quick as possible.

Ring of the Alchemist

This is an intricate ring made of 5 thinner interlocking rings of plain gold. When together, the interlocking bands look like they are woven together. There are many legends surrounding this ring, though few if any are likely to be true.

Powers: The ring acts as a +5 Power Point Adder for use with the various Imbue spells. This is the only PP Adder known to work with Imbue spells, but only if all 5 bands are woven together correctly. If the individual bands are separated, each band will act as a normal +1 PP Adder, meaning that it cannot be used with Imbue spells.

Campaign Notes: This is an extremely powerful item. Be extremely careful about introducing it into your campaign.

Ring of Gilkhor

This ring is made of Laen tinted to be ice-blue and carved to look like it's made from ice on the verge of melting. It gained its name because it was used by Gilkhor the Ice Mage for many years.

Powers: The ring acts as a +5 Power Point Adder for spells dealing with cold and ice. The wearer also gains a +20 to his Resistance Rolls and DB versus cold-based spells and attacks. Finally, the wearer is totally immune to all affects of natural cold. However, continued use of the ring (longer than a week) has the side effect of permanently tinting the wearer's skin a bluish hue.

Campaign Notes: As a GM, you can have all sorts of fun with a character who has bluish skin. You could have the hue color deepen the longer the character wears the ring. It could be that the ring was stolen from a powerful Ice Mage, who is looking to exact revenge upon whoever has had possession of it, and the blue skin is usually a good give-away on that. Conversely, you could have some villagers and peasants think that the ring wearer is some sort of water demon or troll come to plague them. There are a lot of interesting ways to play it out.

Ring of Free Speech

This is a silver signet ring with a design of two faces fused together at the back of the head and staring in opposite directions. This ring was created by a hapless mage who once fumbled a *Tongues* spell so badly that he made himself totally unable to speak coherently in any language. This ring allowed him to speak normally for as long as he wore it.

Powers: The ring allows the wearer to understand and speak any spoken language. It also grants him a +30 to all Influence skills.

Campaign Notes: This ring would be highly prized by both trading houses and ambassadors to foreign lands. While the more scrupulous would pay a fortune for this item, those who are more morally deficient would be among those who might go so far as to hire somebody to steal the ring, with no thought to the fate of the owner.

As knowledge of this ring spread, lesser versions were created, able to translate from the wearer's native tongue to a single specific language. The more enterprising crafters of these lesser rings tended to make their rings look like the real Ring of Free Speech.

Silent Ring of Yarish

This ring is a simple band made of polished Keron. One the face of the ring is a simple onyx stone set flush with the band itself. It was originally created for the leader of a guild of Shadowblades. The ring disappeared along with that leader shortly before the Shadow Wars broke out between various powerful Shadowblades vying to replace that missing leader.

Powers: The wearer of the ring will not leave any tracks, scent, or other sign of his passing. He is also able to move silently at will, granting him a +30 bonus to Stalk & Hide. The ring also acts as a +5 PP Adder for all spells from the Shadowblade Sphere.

Campaign Notes: The GM could set the Shadow Wars in any major city, and within any time frame. One of the other Shadowblades could have stolen the ring but is afraid that wearing it would turn the entirety of the guild against him for disposing of the charismatic and popular leader. The PCs could be hired to find the missing ring, or worse yet hired to deliver it to one of those vying for control of the guild while others are present to implicate him in the disappearance of the leader.

Finis