

Issue 2

April 2008

MINOTAUR

The Official, Irregular Webzine of the MAZES & MINOTAURS Revival



THE MINOTAUR IS BACK !

New Name, New Formula, Same Old School RPG Goodness !

Two Complete Adventures, New Creatures & Mythic Items, Official Background Material, Variant Rules, Inspiration for Maze Masters and more !



A Word from the Editor

The More Things Change...

Welcome to the second issue of the official **Mazes & Minotaurs** webzine !

As you have probably noticed, it is no longer called the *Minotaur Quarterly*, which was a nice title but also implied that we would be able to produce a new issue every three months (yeah, *Quarterly* means just that). After the wild celebrations that followed the release of our grand first issue, we eventually came back to our senses and realized that we would not be able to meet this deadline and that issue 2 would probably be at least one month late – not *that* late as far as jam-packed, 100% free RPG webzines go but too late still to be called a *Quarterly*. So, in order to save face, we just had to change the name of the webzine. We contemplated various alternatives, such as the *Minotaur Journal*, the *Minotaur Gazette*, the *Minotaur Irregular* and even the *Minotaur-not-so-Quarterly*... A few days before publication, we finally cut the Gordian knot of indecision and chose the simplest solution.

Minotaur Quarterly is dead, long live ***The Minotaur*** !

So, okay, new title... but what about the contents ?

Well, to begin with, we've made it as long as the first issue (46 pages !), which was supposed to be a double-sized issue – yes, that's right 46 pages of *M&M* goodness, including an extended adventure by Andrew Trent, a short introductory scenario by yours truly, special *Mythika Gazetteer* about the Three Cities, a variant version of the Noble class and all the regular columns that give the *Minotaur Quarterly* – oops, sorry, the *Minotaur* – its unique, old-school-revival flavor : *Mythic Bestiary*, *Pandora's Box*, *Griffin Archives* and, of course, the *Play Nymph*. We even have a Letters Column ! The only column missing from this 2nd issue is *Muse's Corner*, which has gone 'semi-regular' (yes, more or less like the zine itself) and will return in issue 3.

The one thing we *did* abandon was the idea to give each issue a specific theme – an idea which seemed pretty nifty at first but quickly proved too restrictive for us big-time creative people. Sure, we could have decided to dub this second issue a "warrior semi-special" or something like that but we simply found it more interesting to favor variety over thematic obsession. Now, this does NOT mean that we won't have a special theme issue once in a while (such as, say, a "city special").

This, like the periodicity (or is it aperiodicity ?) of the zine, depends on Fortune and the Muses. See you in... a few months, for our third issue ! Meanwhile, enjoy your reading, enjoy your gaming and beware of strange bull-headed guys lurking in labyrinths.

Long live the Minotaur !

Olivier Legrand (2008)

MINOTAUR MIRTH



- So, I guess you weren't really a *Quarterly*, after all...

Opening Credits

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All game material included in **Minotaur Quarterly** uses the **Revised M&M** rules (1987 edition).

In Memoriam

This issue of *The Minotaur* is humbly dedicated to the memory of **Gary Gygax** (1938-2008), the first maze builder.



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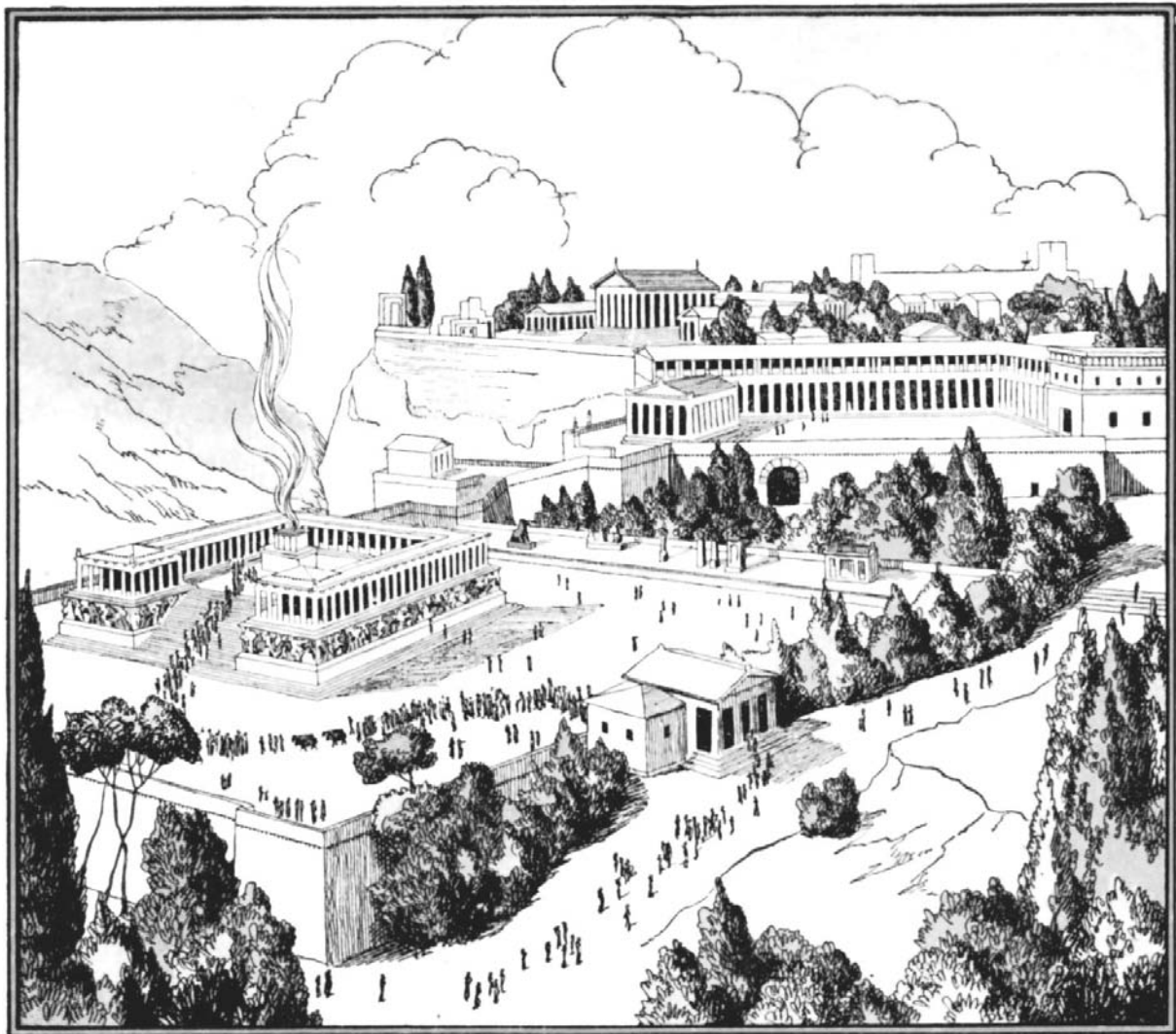
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MYTHIKA GAZETTEER

THE THREE CITIES

Glorious Bastions of Civilization in a Perilous World

by Olivier Legrand and Andrew Trent, with some material by Darren Peech and Emmanuel Roudier



“ (...) this rich and civilized coastal country is divided into three independent (and rival) city-states : Thena, Heraklia and Argos. Each of these city-states is a major political power with its own culture, economy and armed forces. In the past, the strong rivalry of the Three Cities has caused several wars but they have been in peace for more than 100 years now, thanks to the efforts of the Thenan monarchs...”

Maze Masters Guide (p 8)

The Three Cities

This issue, we take a closer look at the glorious Three Cities : Argos, Heraklia and Thena, homes of many *Mazes & Minotaurs* heroes (well, at least the civilized ones). But fear not, gentle reader ! We shall not inflict on you lengthy, pseudo-scholarly exposés full of superfluous facts, this article presents each city-state in a practical, no-nonsense, player-friendly manner, using the following format :

Cultural Overview

A short presentation of the city's cultural identity, including its patron deities.

Current Affairs

The present-day political situation (including, of course, the current monarch) ; for the purposes of this article, '*present-day*' means *circa* the year 340 of the Age of Heroes.

Founding Myth

How the city came to be.

Places of Interest

The city's most famous sites.

Notable Personages

The local celebrities.

Before we detail each city's specific profile, let us examine a few common, basic facts about the culture and society of the Three Cities :

Rulership

Each of the Three Cities is an independent state, ruled by its own king.

The Nobles of each City belong to extended families known as the Great Houses, which assist the king in the rulership, administration and defense of the state. Note that the city of Thena has recently become an exception to this long-standing political tradition, as detailed in its description below.

The successor of a king is usually his eldest son – unless the monarch selects another heir to the throne in his family or among the local aristocracy. When a king dies without a designated heir, the successor is usually elected by (and chosen from) the local Nobles (which may, of course, cause all sorts of power struggles and family feuds).

Population

The city-state as a whole includes the City itself as well as many smaller towns, villages etc. The inhabitants of a City are known as its citizens, a broad denomination which encompasses common citizens as well as local nobles but obviously excludes slaves, transients etc.

Each City is a major political, commercial and cultural center, with an intra muros population of approximately 50,000 citizens (counting women, but excluding children and slaves). As an element of comparison, fourth century BC Athens had a population of around 30.000 male citizens.

Over the centuries, each of the Three Cities has also established various colonies outside its original territory. Most of these colonies are located on small islands of the Middle Sea ; the farthest ones can be found on the northern Charybdiian shores. Such settlements (which are beyond the scope of this article) are a testimony of the Cities' cultural, economic and military vigor.

Culture & Religion

The Three Cities share a common language (Minean) and cultural heritage, which is very similar to that of legendary Greece as shown in movies like *Jason and the Argonauts* and *Clash of the Titans* (as if you didn't know that...).

While all Olympian deities are worshipped and honored in the Three Cities, each city-state has two or three divine protectors, who are especially revered by the local population and nobility.

These gods or goddesses usually played an important part in the ancient history of the city, or even in its foundation. The high priests of these deities usually wield great political influence, often acting as the king's advisors. In the Three Cities, temples are places of spiritual *and* temporal power.

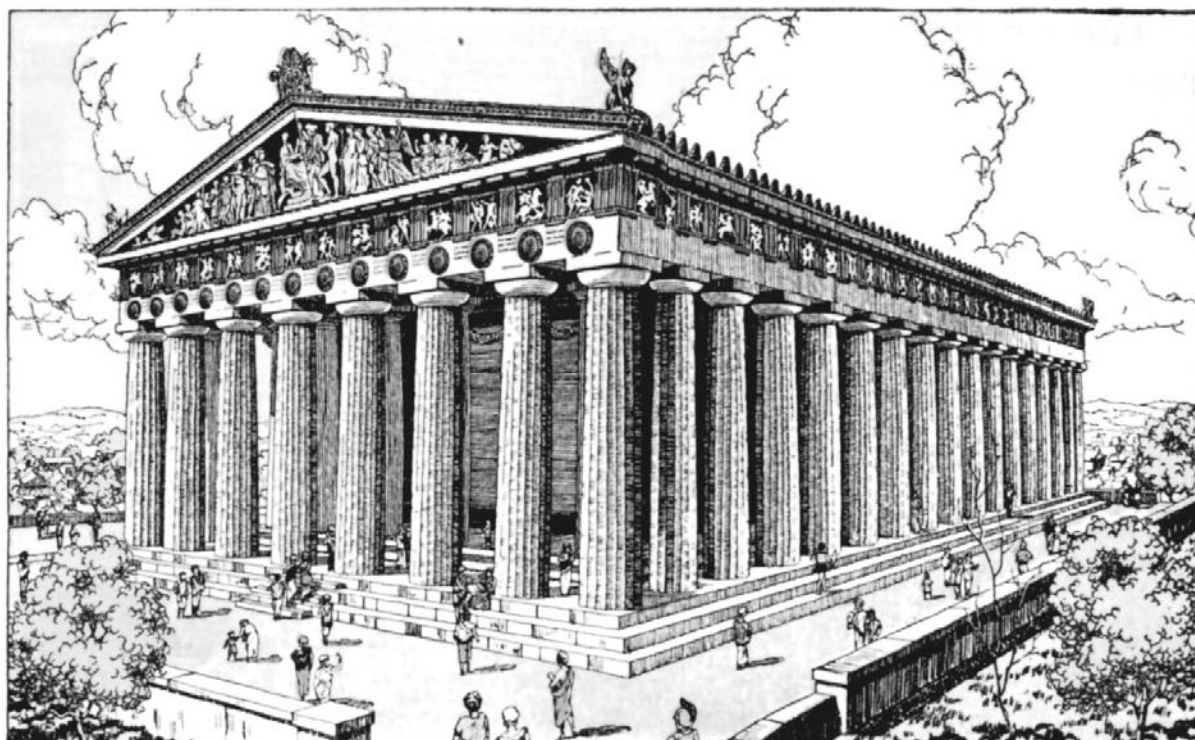
Laws & Customs

Warning : *before you read the next two paragraphs, please keep in mind that there is NO such thing as Political Correctness in the world of Mythika – no, even the Philosophers haven't invented that yet.*

While each of the Three Cities has its own set of laws, all their institutions are based on the same set of ancestral laws, known as the Minean Law.

Under Minean Law, male citizens are known as « free men » ; as far as law is concerned, women and children are not considered « free » and are placed under the authority of their father (or his heirs) or husband (for married women), unless they become Priestesses. This, of course, does not apply to foreign women – such as the dauntless Amazons, who tend to see Minean Law as just another typical example of blatant phallocracy.

Slavery is perfectly legal in the Three Cities – it is an accepted and essential component of their social system, cultural ethics and economic prosperity. That being said, slaves in the Three Cities (and in Seriphos) are treated with much more humanity than anywhere else in Mythika. Speaking of this, the only people in Mythika who do not practice slavery are Centaurs, to whom personal freedom is sacred.



The Athenon, the greatest temple ever built for Athena, on the Thenan Akropolis

Thena the Golden

Cultural Overview

As befits to a city dedicated to the goddess Athena, Thena is a true center of civilization, learning and art. It is also a very well-defended city-state, with one of the finest armies in all Mythika. The favorite color of Thenan Nobles is gold – the color of light and grandeur. Their favorite patron deities are Zeus, Athena, and Apollo.

Current Affairs

For the last fifteen years, Thena has been living an unprecedented political experience, at the initiative (and under the protection) of its current monarch, **King Theseos**, a hero of legendary stature... and a very atypical ruler.

During his early years of adventuring, Theseos had a reputation as a very ambitious and merciless warrior. Yet, when he was crowned after the death of his father King Aegeus, Theseos soon made himself known as a very liberal and bold ruler often favoring the interests of the common people over those of the local aristocracy.

Three years after his coronation, Theseos did the unthinkable : he abdicated most of his royal charges (except for the leadership of Thena's army) and withdrew most of the authority of the local Nobles, leaving the reins of political power to the free citizens of Thena...

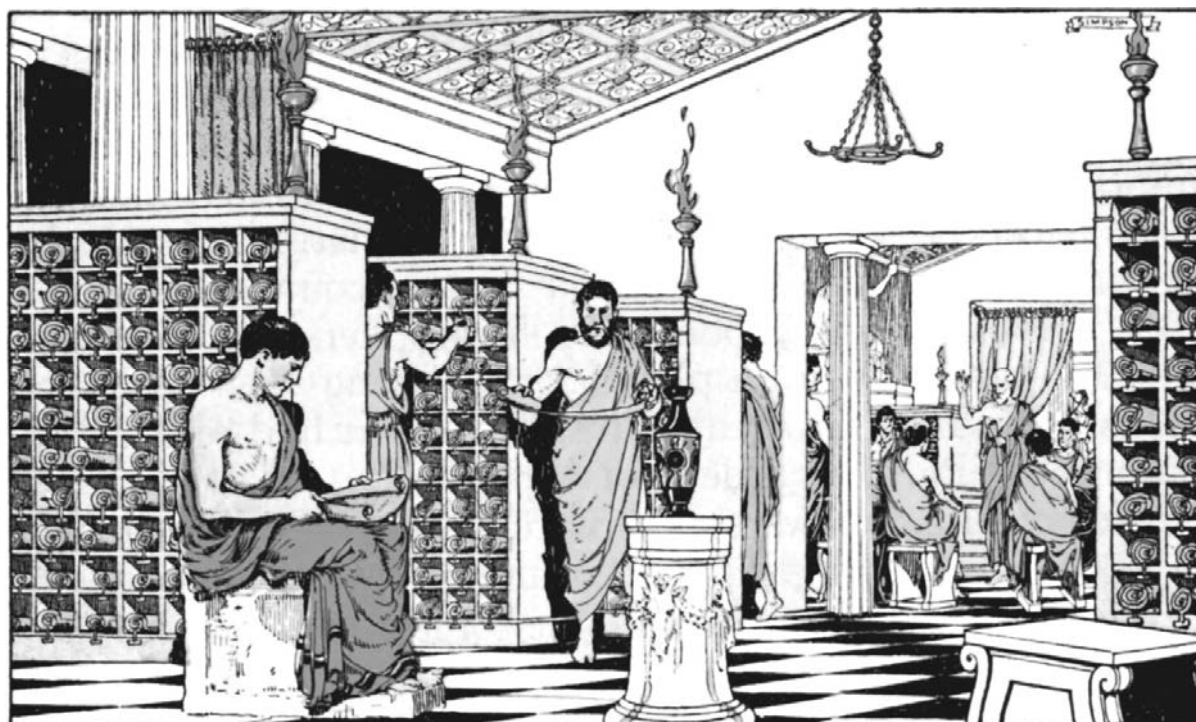
For fifteen years, the Assembly of the People (farmers, craftsmen, merchants...) have been deciding of the politics of Thena, as well as of the use of an important part of the treasury... and for fifteen years, many local Nobles have been plotting against Theseos, to stop once and for all this « democratic nonsense ».

So far, thanks to the vigilance of Theseos and his plebeian supporters - including the entire army of Thena, whose soldiers have always shown a complete and unwavering loyalty toward their king - these plots have always been foiled before they came to fruition. So far...

Founding Myth

According to its historians, the city of Thena was founded more than three centuries ago, at the dawn of the Age of Heroes, by the great hero **Letos**, who became its first king. At that time, Letos was in his late fifties, with a lifetime of heroic exploits, quests and adventures behind him. His greatest deeds were recorded by his friend **Cleos**, himself a Lyrist of extraordinary talent, in his epic poem the Letiad, one of the most famous works of Minean literature.

According to the city's oldest records, the first citizens of Thena were refugees from an older city known as Thuria. The great city of Thuria had been destroyed during the Age of Magic and whose ruins had become infested with Lamiae, Sons of Cecrops, Serpent Folk and other evil ophidian creatures under the rule of a very powerful Serpent Sorcerer known as Thulsos.



The Akademia of Thena, probably the greatest library and place of learning in all Mythika

Under the protection and command of Letos, the Thurian survivors eventually managed to defeat and exterminate Thulsos' reptilian minions and build a new city on the ruins of Old Thuria.

Letos named the new city Thena in homage to his patron deity, the goddess Athena, whose divine intervention had played a decisive part in the final defeat of Thulsos. In return, Athena placed a special blessing upon the city, granting « *wisdom in peace and war* » to all its future rulers.

So far, all Thenan kings have lived up to the reputation of this divine prophecy... but King Theseos' bold political reforms have given a new, controversial dimension to this old story : while Theseos' fervent supporters take Athena's blessing as a guarantee and proof of their king's wisdom (some of them even think that the goddess herself inspired Theseos' decisions as a way of testing the possibility of a "new society", built on wisdom and freedom), some of his detractors are using Athena's prophecy as a propaganda tool, implying that Theseos' "unwise" rulership will soon attract Athena's divine anger on the city... unless someone stops this nonsense *right now*.

But let's get back to the distant, legendary past. During his reign, King Letos the Just was often advised by Cleos the Lyrist, who proved to be the wisest of counselors and helped to make Apollo one of the three tutelary deities of Thena.

King Letos died at the very venerable age of 110, after more than half a century of peace. It is said that Athena herself descended from the heavens to escort his soul not to the Elysian Fields but to

Olympus itself, where the great king joined the goddess' personal honor guard. His old friend Cleos the Lyrist composed his last song, the Eulogy for Letos, which he performed at the King's funeral and died peacefully the following day, just before dawn.

Places of Interest

The **Akropolis** is the name of the hill where the most important buildings of the city are located, including the palace and the temples of Athena, Apollo and Zeus. This majestic site is one of the great architectural wonders of the Three Cities.

The two most impressive buildings on the Akropolis are the **Royal Palace**, with its magnificent statues, mosaics and frescoes, and the temple of Athena, called the **Athenon**, the greatest (in every sense of the term) temple ever dedicated to this goddess.

The **Poets' Plaza** is a special agora located near the temple of Apollo, on the Akropolis : here, Lyrists and poets from the Three Cities congregate to swap stories, recite their latest compositions or even take part in oratory jousts, musical contests and poetic duels – before one of the most attentive and demanding audience of the known world.

The **Akademia** is a unique place of learning and knowledge where young men study literature, law, philosophy and other liberal arts under the tuition of some of Mythika's wisest scholars. In other words, it is the University of Thena – as well as the only university in Mythika. Its great white buildings are located at the foot of the Akropolis, overlooked by the majestic temples of Athena and Apollo.



Bilitis, the greatest female Lyrist of Mythika

Notable Personages

King Theseos is the current ruler of Thena – a great hero, a superb warrior...and a somewhat controversial ruler (see above for more details about Theseos' democratic reforms and this issue's *Maze Master's Lore* for his full description and game stats, plus a summary of his adventuring career).

Thena is also home to many illustrious personages, such as **General Periklos**, military commander and strategist extraordinaire (as well as Theseos' most loyal supporter), the venerable philosopher **Zenon**, whose bold theories about the true nature of the Universe have caused much agitation within the Akademia, or the divinely-inspired **Bilitis**, Mythika's greatest female Lyrist and poetess, famous for her melancholic elegies and erotic poetry.

Queen Phaedra, Theseos' second wife, is in her early thirties. Born on the island of Seriphos, Phaedra has never felt at home in Thena and rarely appears in public; her distant and haughty ways have not made her very popular with commoners, who often see her as a cold, aloof queen. Phaedra has been married to Theseos for more than 10 years but has never given birth to a child; according to some rumors, the queen's sterility has poisoned her marriage with Theseos and there is now little love left between them. Those who are better informed know that, back in his adventuring days, Theseos had a crush on Phaedra's sister, princess Ariadne of Seriphos, but nobody talks about these things anymore (at least not in the royal palace).

King Theseos does have a legitimate heir: his son **Prince Hippolytos** (now in his mid-teens), born to his first wife, the Amazon princess Antiope, who died giving him birth a few years before Theseos met Phaedra (and Ariadne!) on Seriphos.

Those who have known Theseos in his childhood say the young prince looks exactly like him. He also seems to have inherited his father's bravery and prowess, along with his Amazon mother's reckless and bellious temper.

His relationship with his stepmother is stormy (to say the least, especially since Queen Phaedra has begun to develop an (unwilling) crush on her stepson (who looks *so much* like his father when he was young...), a guilty, shameful feeling which she tries to conceal behind a mask of cold contempt for Hippolytos. Since Theseos himself has little time to devote to his son, Hippolytos spends most of his time in the outdoor, riding and charioteering.

Prince Hippolytos



Level 1 Noble, age 16, Royal Heir of Thena

Personality : Proud, dynamic, reckless; eager to prove his valor on the battlefield or on some heroic quest; wishes his father would show him more attention.

Attributes : Might 12, Skill 18, Luck 17, Wits 14, Will 15, Grace 15.

Combat : Initiative 17, Melee +6, Missile +7, Basic Defense Class 15, Hits Total 12.

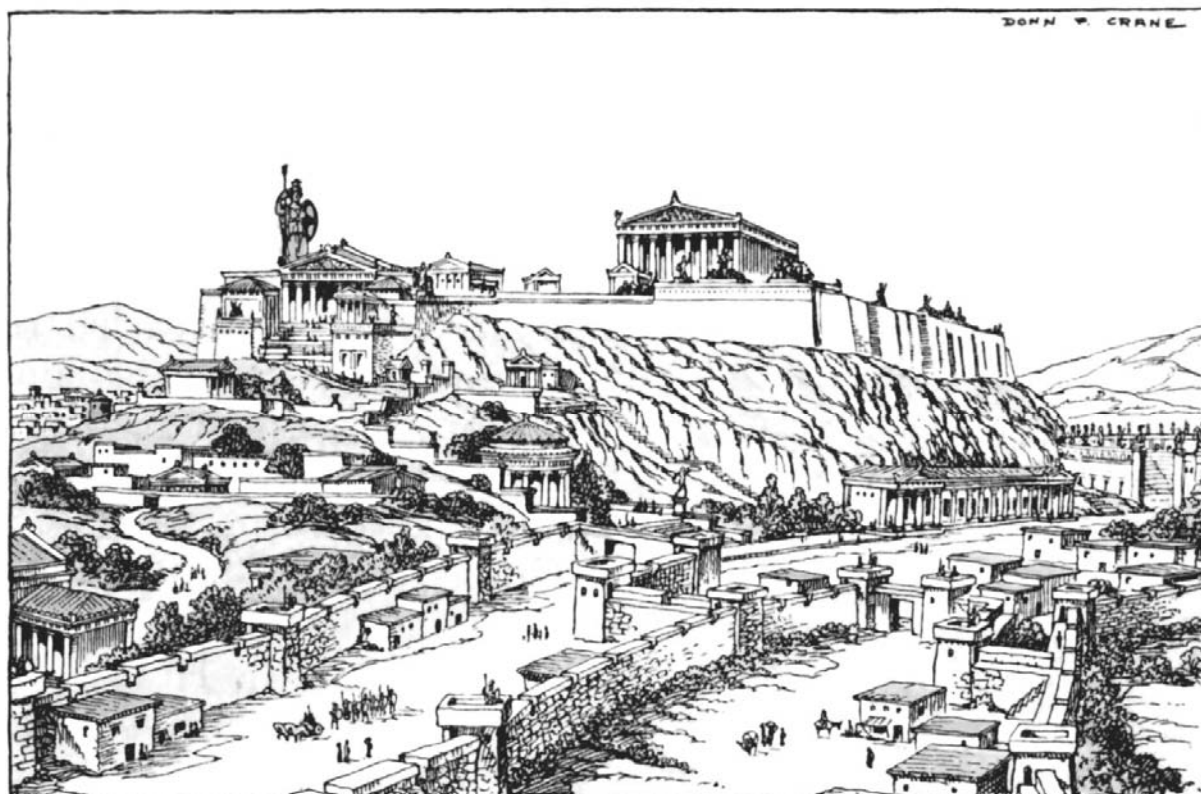
Weapon of Choice : Bow.

Saving Rolls : Athletic Prowess +6, Danger Evasion +6, Mystic Fort +7, Physical Vigor +5.

Personal Charisma : +7 (+8 to Thenans).

Background Talents : Equestrian, Tactician.

Mythic Items : Bow of Artemis (a gift from his Amazon mother Antiope).



Heraklia the Red

Cultural Overview

According to Heraklians, Heraklia is the mightiest of the Three Cities. It is certainly the most martial.

The favorite color of Heraklian Nobles is crimson, the color of blood and strength. Their favorite patron deities are Zeus and Ares, the god of war.

Current Affairs

The current king of Heraklia is **Thalos the Strong**, (see the next pages for more details about this character, including his complete stats).

As most of his predecessors, King Thalos dreams of uniting the Land of the Three Cities into a single nation, but that nation would (of course) be Heraklia, with his own dynasty as the only royal family. These dreams will probably remain just that, since King Thalos lacks the political shrewdness and diplomatic patience that such a formidable endeavour would require... unless Heraklia decides to go to war (once again) with Argos, but this would shatter the Thenan Peace which has guaranteed economic prosperity and political stability in the Land of the Three Cities for more than 60 years - see the *Maze Masters Guide*, p 13, for more details about the diplomatic tensions between Argos and Heraklia.

For the last six decades (ie since the end of the war against Argos and the establishment of the Thenan Peace, see *Maze Masters Guide* p 13), Heraklian

aristocracy has been the theatre of a constant political struggle between two rival factions, respectively known as the Sword and the Shield. Members of the Sword faction are Hegemonists, who think that Heraklia should conquer Argos, Thena and unite the whole Land of the Three Cities into a single Heraklian monarchy, while members of the Shield faction think that the Three Cities should stay united against outside enemies (such as warlike Umbria) but that the Thenan Peace should be replaced by a more militant coalition. Each faction is (more or less officially) supported by one of the two great cults of Heraklia : the cult of Ares for the Sword and the cult of Zeus for the Shield.

Both sides are now turning a very curious eye towards the unprecedented political changes that have recently occurred in Thena – a situation which could well be used by the more warlike Heraklian nobles to persuade their King of taking military action against the current Thenan monarchy “for the greater good” of the Three Cities. Even in times of peace, Heraklia is always preparing for war...

Founding Myth

The founding myth of Heraklia is quite simple and reflects the no-nonsense, martial culture of its proud nobility. According to this tale, Heraklia was founded at the dawn of the Age of Heroes – just like Thena and Argos, but (of course) before them – by a great warrior hero called Heraklion. Blessed with superhuman strength of body and mind, Heraklion was a champion of Ares as well as the general of an invincible army who had won many victories against the sorcerous Autarchs and their monstrous hordes.

When Heraklion saw that he had defeated and conquered all his foes and there were no enemies left to fight, he decided to settle down with his army and build a great fortress in the honor of Ares... but Heraklion proved (quite unsurprisingly) a very warlike ruler, as befits to all true devotees of Ares, and found himself unable (or unwilling) to maintain a lasting peace with his neighbors - including the fledgling cities of Thena and Argos. This greatly upset Athena (patron goddess of Thena) and Hermes (patron god of Argos), who eventually called for the arbitration of Zeus himself. After hearing their pleas, Zeus admonished Ares for his constant warmongering and ordered Heraklion and his followers to take a solemn oath.

Under this oath (known in Heraklian lore as the Oath of Zeus), the king of Heraklia and his warriors promised that they would only ever take up arms to defend their lands and that they would devote the rest of their lives to build a great city around their fortress : thus was the city of Heraklia founded, under the joint tutelage of its two major patron deities : Ares, lord of war and Zeus, god of rulership. As every Heraklian boy is taught from the earliest age, the Oath of Zeus only bound Heraklion and his men – but not their sons and other descendants, for Zeus, in his divine wisdom, knew full well that *“the arts of war and the love of battle run in the very blood of all Heraklians”*.

Places of Interest

The **Colossus of Heraklia** is an impressive, 100-foot tall bronze statue of an Heraklian warrior, complete with helmet, breastplate, shield and sword. He stands guard near the Hexagon (see below), as a solid symbol of Heraklia’s unconquered military might. Some legends say that the Colossus is actually a Titanic Statue (*Creature Compendium*, p 117) who will animate itself to defend Heraklia should the city be in direct danger of being captured by enemy forces – something which, according to all Heraklian warriors, will never happen.

The **Heraklium** is the name of the royal palace, a massive, fortified building which looks more like a citadel than a palace – but this is the way the Kings of Heraklia like it. Indeed, the Heraklium is the original fortress of King Heraklion (see *Founding Myth* above), around which the city itself was established.

The **House of Thunder** is the name of the local temple of Zeus, while the equally magnificent temple of Ares is known as the **House of War**. Both buildings face the Heraklium – a pretty impressive sight, all in all.

The **Hexagon** is the name of a large, vaguely six-sided plaza bordered by the Heraklium, the House of Thunder and the House of War. It acts as the city’s agora and is filled with huge statues of Heraklian kings and heroes of the past. Hexagons are often used by Heraklian artists and architects as abstract representations of might and power.



The legendary Heraklion after one of his many victories

Notable Personages

King Thalos the Strong is a worldly warrior-king whose might in battle is as legendary as his fiery temper. He is also known for his largesse; Heraklian poets and courtiers often say their king is as generous with war and anger as he is with gifts and rewards. Despite being in his mid-fifties, King Thalos is still one of the strongest men (Might 19) of his kingdom. He is usually very hospitable with adventurers (especially warriors) and takes great delight in hearing a good tale of Minotaur-slaying or Manticore-hunting while drinking the finest vintage from his royal vineyards.

Prince Herion is King Thalos’ eldest son and heir apparent. Despite being fanatically loyal to his father and monarch, Herion has a very different temper : while Thalos is a proud, short-tempered, larger-than-life king, Herion is a very dignified and austere warrior, believing in military discipline above all things. Unlike his father (who has somehow always managed to maintain a form of political balance within the local aristocracy), Herion is a staunch supporter of the Shield faction. He is in his mid-thirties and already has several sons. He also has six younger brothers, stalwart warriors all; together, the sons of Thalos are often known as the Magnificent Seven of Heraklia.

King Thalos is also the uncle of **Tharsus of Heraklia**, one of Mythika’s greatest living heroes. Rumored to be the son of Zeus himself, Tharsus is even stronger than his uncle (Might 21 !); he has been described by various Lyrists of Heraklia as “the epitome of might”, “the living embodiment of strength” or “the Lion of Heraklia”. Argosean Lyrists and Nobles also often refer to him as “the boar of Heraklia”, an ironic allusion to his brutish demeanor, uncouth manners and hairy body. See this issue’s *Maze Master’s Lore* for more about Tharsus.

King Thalos the Strong



Level 5 Noble, age 57, Monarch of Heraklia

Personality : Proud, fearless, generous and short-tempered; Thalos is a worldly warrior-king with a larger-than-life personality, quick to anger but easy to amuse. Loves battles, songs and stories (especially those about his own exploits and victories or those of his ancestors).

Attributes : Might 19, Skill 17, Luck 19, Wits 13, Will 19, Grace 10.

Combat : Initiative 18, Melee +11, Missile +8, Basic Defense Class 16, Hits Total 32.

Weapon of Choice : Sword.

Saving Rolls : Athletic Prowess +11, Danger Evasion +9, Mystic Fort +8, Physical Vigor +12.

Personal Charisma : +8 (+13 to Heraklians).

Background Talents : Tactician, Wrestler.

Mythic Items : Sword of Hephaestus, Spear of Conquest, Aegis, Breastplate & Helmet of Ares.

When fully clad for war, wearing his Breastplate of Ares, Helmet of Ares and Aegis, Thalos has an EDC of 29, making him virtually invulnerable.

These items also raise his Danger Evasion to +11, his Mystic Fortitude to +12 and his Melee attack to +14.

When using his Spear of Conquest, his Melee is raised by a further +2, while his huge Sword of Hephaestus gives him a +4 bonus to damage.

King Thalos is a formidable foe and often fights without any magical armament "for sport".

Prince Herion of Heraklia



Level 3 Noble, age 35, Royal Heir of Heraklia

Personality : Stern and resolute; fearless in battle and rigorous in peace; Herion leads a very austere, almost ascetic life, devoting all his time to martial exercises and political duties.

Attributes : Might 15, Skill 20, Luck 18, Wits 11, Will 17, Grace 12.

Combat : Initiative 17, Melee +9, Missile +7, Basic Defense Class 15, Hits Total 22.

Weapon of Choice : Sword.

Saving Rolls : Athletic Prowess +9, Danger Evasion +6, Mystic Fort +6, Physical Vigor +8.

Personal Charisma : +5 (+8 to Heraklians).

Background Talents : Equestrian, Tactician.

Mythic Items : Aegis, Sword of Ares.

When wearing his helmet, breastplate and Aegis, Herion has an EDC of 23.

His Aegis also raises his Danger Evasion and Mystic Fortitude to +8.

His Sword of Ares allows him to add his Skill bonus (+4) to his damage rolls.

Prince Herion of Heraklia is the eldest of seven brothers. Next in line are his two brothers Alios and Orios, 2nd level Nobles who often act as Herion's lieutenants on the battlefield. The other four, younger brothers are all 1st level Nobles and could well include a player-character (a great way to have a connection with the Royal House of Heraklia).



Argos has two great loves : commerce (which, as shown above, does include slave trade) and, of course, the Sea

Argos the Blue

Cultural Overview

It is often said that every Argosean has two mistresses : the sea and commerce. Argos is the wealthiest of the Three Cities and takes great pride in her material riches. It also has the best navy of the Middle Sea ; every noble or soldier from Argos is a seasoned sailor. The favorite color of Argosean Nobles is blue – the color of the sea and the open sky ; their favorite patron deities are Hermes, god of trade, and (of course) Poseidon, king of the sea.

Current Affairs

The current king of Argos is **Argon the Proud**, a very old (and slightly senile) monarch who has sired more than twenty daughters in his life – but only two sons : the reckless and romantic Prince Argan and the more practically-minded Prince Kyros.

King Argon's rulership is now purely symbolic ; the affairs of the realm are firmly in the hands of his various advisers and ministers. Argon's eldest son and heir apparent, **Prince Argan** became an adventurer some ten years ago, gaining glory in various heroic quests and ventures. Nobody has heard from Prince Argan since he sailed away two years ago, on yet another heroic expedition to the faraway shores of Charybdis ...

Since then, Argon's other son, the (very) ambitious **Prince Kyros** has been playing the part of the heir apparent and has gained growing political support from some of the most prominent members of the Argosean aristocracy.

Yet, despite his absence and his obvious lack of interest for rulership, the valorous Prince Argan still has staunch supporters among the local nobles and has always been immensely popular with the common people of Argos...

Given his ambition and love of power, Kyros could well persuade his declining father that Argan is dead, which would logically make him the legitimate heir to the crown of Argos. But what would happen if Argan *did* return to Argos to find his dear brother sitting on the throne ?

In the meantime, Argos continues to busy itself with its two great passions : trade and the sea. Under Argon's long reign, Argos has established several overseas colonies on the shores of Midia and has become the first commercial power of the Middle Sea. Under the joint protection of Hermes and Poseidon, Argosean merchants even manage to trade with the isolationist Sea Princes of Tritonis and have become a common sight in the fabled city of Kandaria, cosmopolitan gateway to the Land of the Sun... Meanwhile, bold Argosean explorers venture into the Typhon Sea and the great Western Ocean in search of glory, wonder and gold.



A typical scene on the streets of Argos the Blue

Founding Myth

Unlike the “us first!” primacy of the other two cities, Argoseans are happy in the belief that Argos was the last of the Three Cities to be founded. Legend has it that Argos it came into being the day that a philosopher from Thena and a warrior from Heraklia happened to meet one morning at the seashore.

The two entered into a discussion about which city was superior and argued for hours. It was well into the afternoon, with no end in sight, when a merchant named Argo happened by the pair. By then both the philosopher and the warrior were thirsty and hungry, and each offered to buy wine and food from the merchant. Seeing that he had two enemies who wanted the same goods, Argo played the two against each other and turned a tidy profit while managing to tweak the egos of both.

Argo used a portion of these profits to establish a small trading centre at the site of his “victory” over Thena and Heraklia. As word of his triumph spread, more and more merchants who sought a neutral place to conduct their business came to Argo's to trade. In time, many of these merchants opened their own businesses and soon the city grew to include the surrounding farms and fields.

Yet always was the sea the focus of Argos, as every merchant worth his salt knows that goods from distant lands bring the most return on investment.

The grandson of Argo, **Avatos the Blue**, was the first King of Argos. He made it his primary goal to form a strong navy to defend the sea trade that had led to the success of his grandfather's little village. The blue-sailed ships of the Argosean imperial fleet first appeared during his reign and continue to plow the waters to this day, blessed by Poseidon himself.

Places of Interest

The soul of the city, the **Great Market of Argos** is found on the city's southern edge, just inland from the docks. It is here that business reigns, and anything that can be bought or sold can be found in at least three of the market stalls.

The **House of Athena**, located on a hill high above Argos, is an unexpected facet of the city. Though Athena's influence is relatively weak in Argos, her priests maintain this temple and university here at the vanguard of Minean commerce so that new ideas and discoveries may be added to the general wisdom as soon as they become available.

The **Temple of Asclepius**, the most advanced “hospital” in all of Minea is located on the city's eastern edge. Priests of Asclepius, the true doctors of the Age of Heroes, tend to the diseased and dispossessed within the temple walls and house those unfortunates in fine marble dormitories located through the spacious and well-tended grounds. A hero can find no better hope for recovery than in the care of these healers.

Argos is home to the **Vineyards of Ione**, whose wines are renowned throughout all of Mythika. The grand estate of Lady Ione and her three sons is found on the hill that dominates the city's centre. Untold wealth lies in these halls, but the grounds are guarded by a pair of trained Griffins, a fabulous gift from Emperor Baraxis of the Land of the Sun.

Notable Personages

Princess Niobe is the first woman to be named the Admiral of the Argosean Fleet. An excellent warrior and sailor, she is the « widow » of Prince Argan. Rather than adventure with him as normal, she remained in Argos when the prince began his apparently ill-fated expedition due to the illness of her father, Lord Syagros. When the previous Admiral was killed in battle under somewhat mysterious circumstances, Niobe was elevated to the position at the behest of Prince Kyros, who desires her both for her beauty and, perhaps, as a way to lend legitimacy to his own ambitions.

Heirax the Churgeon is a disgraced priest of Asclepius who now maintains a private « hospital » in the city's warehouse district. Heirax caters to the shadier individuals who might require the attention of a healer with less than entirely sound scruples.

Bacchios the Vintner, is the fourth son of Lady Ione. Unlike his three elder brothers, he has struck out on his own and is determined to create a wine that is superior even to the best vintages produced by his family's label (the 294 being considered the finest, due to a perfect mix of warm, sunny days and light rain during the growing season). Bacchios can often be found in the Great Market, seeking barrels of unique foreign woods to use for experimental ageing processes.

Prince Kyros of Argos



Level 3 Noble, age 29, would-be Royal Heir

Personality : Ambitious and cunning ; thinks he is “destined for greatness” (ie become King of Argos). Despises adventurers, so-called heroes and other “romantic fools”. Hides a deep hatred for his elder brother Argan, who has always eclipsed him in the eyes of their father (who, like most Argoseans, think there is only “friendly brotherly rivalry” between the two princes).

Attributes : Might 12, Skill 15, Luck 19, Wits 18, Will 16, Grace 13.

Combat : Initiative 15, Melee +8*, Missile +9, Basic Defense Class 16, Hits Total 18*.

Weapon of Choice : Sword.

Saving Rolls : Athletic Prowess +8*, Danger Evasion +9, Mystic Fort +7, Physical Vigor +8*.

Personal Charisma : +7 (+10 to Argoseans).

Background Talents : Orator, Tactician.

Mythic Items : Girdle of Strength (see below).

** Includes the +2 bonus granted by Kyros' Girdle of Strength. Nobody in Argos knows that Kyros' Might is boosted by this item, which he obtained some 9 years ago during his first (and only) adventure with his brother Argan, on a Mysterious Island.*

Kyros has recently grown impatient and has begun to move his pieces across the board of Argosean politics to seize his father's throne. As part of his cunning (and complex) plans, Kyros arranged the previous Admiral's murder, killing two birds with a single stone : this ridded him of one of Argan's most influential political supporters in the local nobility and allowed him to appoint his sister-in-law Niobe as the new commander of the Fleet, much to everyone's surprise since Niobe had never shown much love for Argan's brother. This brilliant move also created confusion and dissent among Argan's loyal supporters. Niobe herself has begun to think she might have misjudged Kyros, who intends to use her as a useful political pawn in his bid for power (and perhaps even marry her when the death of Argan becomes a certainty).

Princess Niobe



Level 2 Noble, age 26, Captain of the Argosean Fleet and “widow” of Prince Argan

Personality : Resolute and clever; has a deep love for Argos, the Sea and Argan; dislikes toadying courtiers as well as reckless hotheads.

Attributes : Might 12, Skill 17, Luck 17, Wits 16, Will 16, Grace 14.

Combat : Initiative 18, Melee +6, Missile +8, Basic Defense Class 16*, Hits Total 16.

Weapon of Choice : Sword.

Saving Rolls : Athletic Prowess +6, Danger Evasion +8*, Mystic Fort +7*, Physical Vigor +5.

Personal Charisma : +6 (+8 to Argoseans).

** Includes the bonus from her Amulet of Protection.*

Background Talents : Sailor, Tactician.

Mythic Items : Sword of Ruse, Amulet of Protection (a gift from Argan).

Afterword for Maze Masters

The information presented in this article can be used either as a simple collection of background elements to add a breath of life to your *Mazes & Minotaurs* campaign or as a more direct way to send your players on the paths of adventure. The quest for the absent Prince Argan, for instance, could be a great way to send a party of adventurers on a perilous sea voyage, full of wonders and dangers...

Or perhaps Prince Hippolytos, the only son and heir of King Theseos, could actually be a 1st level Noble player-character (and why not ?)...

And, of course, the power struggles of Heraklian lords could form the basis of a great series of scenarios to save the fragile Thenan Peace, complete with diplomatic incidents, secret plots, rumors of war... and, perhaps, a few games of intrigue between the Gods.

The only limit is, as usual, your imagination.

THE WISDOM OF STONES

An epic quest for a group of valiant low-level adventurers by **Andrew Trent**



Against Atlantis !

This adventure is the first in a series called *Against Atlantis !* Within this series, valiant heroes (yes, this means the player-characters) will partake in several adventures culminating in a direct standoff against the advance guard of an Atlantean invasion force. The adventures in this series will be presented serially in the pages of the *Minotaur*.

This first adventure is suitable for a party of beginning heroes (level 1 or 2) just setting out to make a name for themselves. It presumes that the player-characters are already united in their quest for adventure. Ideally, they already have one or two successful play sessions under their belts and are now looking to increase their legend by serving the gods themselves.

This scenario is also based on the assumption that the player-characters own (or have access to) a ship. If the player-characters are veterans of the scenario **The Lost Lair of Laodice**, from the first issue of *Minotaur Quarterly*, you might want to use the NPC Barros "One Eye" from that scenario for the various sailing portions associated with one or more of the adventures in the *Against Atlantis !* series. Barros could certainly be persuaded to embark on this adventure in exchange for a share of any treasure that might be found en route. Regardless of your individual approach to this matter, just be sure you do finally let the player-characters on a ship. Otherwise this adventure will wind up going nowhere. Literally.

The Legend Of Nemedede

Maze Master's Note : *The following information is for your eyes only. Players should not begin the game knowing anything of the history of Nemedede.*

Far away across the Middle Sea lies the island of Nemedede. Many years ago this once-idyllic isle was home to a thriving community of artisans, philosophers, poets and dreamers, who contented themselves with exploring the mysteries of life from the relative safety of this secluded island. Because the island was so remote - and perhaps because it is encircled by dangerous reefs - the people of Nemedede kept no standing army. The colony, then, was unprepared for the doom that would befall it. But we're getting ahead of ourselves.

Among the residents of Nemedede was the great philosopher Thymoetes of Seriphos, whose insights and visions still resonate among the great thinkers of the Age of Heroes. In addition to his great wisdom, Thymoetes was also a seeker of history and knowledge of mythic items. It was said that during his time there was no place on the face of Mythika that held even the simplest of artifact but that Thymoetes knew of it, and moreover, what strange beasts or enchantments stood between the item and those who might seek it.

Seventy-five years ago life on this peaceful island was disrupted by the arrival of a Tragic Floating Head. No one knew how or why this monstrosity arrived on Nemedede. Little time passed before the



Watch out, this is the Hermes Express !

peaceful and defenseless folk of the island fell to the strange petrification powers of the foul being. With nothing left to destroy on the island, the Tragic Floating Head drifted out to sea and ceased to trouble this now barren earth.

Nemede as it was is now little more than a sculpture garden. So much knowledge, art and beauty was lost on Nemede that the gods themselves turned their backs upon the island in sadness. And where the gods do not look, evil springs forth. Dark things crawl about Nemede now, shrouded in the ever-present fog that envelops the island. And there, in the midst of it all, stands the silent stone that used to know where all great treasures lie.

Meeting Wind-Swift Hermes

Hermes, the messenger of the gods, appears to you one radiant afternoon, arriving on a zephyr blown by Eurus from the East.

He speaks clearly and directly to all of the heroes, with special attention paid to any hero whose patron deity is grey-eyed Athena. Hermes tells the heroes that a time of great troubles looms over Mythika and that they have been chosen by the gods themselves to take part in the defense of the land.

The task assigned to the characters is simple enough. Travel to the lost island of Nemede, speak with the great philosopher Thymoetes and discern the location of the Sextant of Eryximachos. With this artifact in their hands, they must return to the Temple of Athena in Argos where the priests will be able to use it to locate the source and nature of the impending danger. At this point, the heroes (since they are just that) will undoubtedly want to set forth

to serve the glory of the gods and to defend Mythika against those who would act against her. If they don't, though, feel free to hit them with this issue of the *Minotaur* and remind them that they're playing *Mazes & Minotaurs* and not some "What's in it for me? I'm an angst-ridden creature of darkness / kill-things-and-take-their-stuff mercenary dungeon raider" game. Or just have a Titanic Statue crush them underfoot and start over.

Before he departs, Hermes hands a simple phial to the hero with the highest Personal Charisma (or with the strongest link to Athena) and tells him :

"Use this water to soothe the sufferings of Thymoetes. He will only speak to you once he has drunk fully of this. You will know him from the others in Nemede by his resemblance to twice-lame Hephaestus."

Hermes then tells the heroes that the lord of winds, Aeolus himself will guide their course to Nemede so long as no blood is spilled on their journey to the island. The trip will take 7 days and the heroes should provision for such an expedition.

Maze Master's Note : No, Hermes doesn't tell the heroes that Thymoetes (and the rest of Nemede) has been turned to stone. Hermes himself does not know this. He is simply delivering the message as requested by Athena. As to why Athena doesn't impart this information, well, she considers this mission a test of the worthiness of the heroes. This complication cannot be overcome, even by the presence of a Lyrist in the party. Knowledge of the fate of Nemede is lost to all but the gods. Also see *What About Divine Vision ?* next page.

Act I : Voyage to Nemede

Now that the heroes have received their mission from the gods, they will need to embark for the lost island of Nemede. As mentioned in the introduction of this scenario, a ship to traverse the Middle Sea is of utmost importance. Feel free to take as much or as little time as you want in allowing your characters to secure passage, complicating or hand-waving this process as much as you see fit.

Setting Sail For Nemede

The journey to Nemede is foreboding, with many ill omens appearing along the way. The weather is foul throughout the trip and the mood among the sailors of the vessel is sour. Three days into the voyage a nasty fight suddenly breaks out between two of the seamen, each accusing the other of cheating at an otherwise friendly game of dice.

The heroes should recall the admonition against spilling of blood delivered by Hermes before the expedition set out and do their best to intervene and return this situation to normal. If they fail to do so, Aeolus is offended and the ship loses its favorable winds. The loss of these winds is enough to leave the ship adrift for three full days.



Aeolus in Action

After that time, Athena will have persuaded Aeolus to return his favor to the heroes and the journey may continue as planned.

Maze Master's Note : *If the adventurers failed to provision for more than a two-week journey, this loss of time will result in three days worth of Survival rolls (Players Manual, p. 46) on the trek to Argos that will follow the travel to Nemedé.*

Arriving At Nemedé

Nemedé is shrouded in a dense fog and is ringed by reefs, making the approach to this blighted island a treacherous one indeed.

If one of the adventurers is a Mariner (see the first issue of *Minotaur Quarterly* for more on this specialist class), then he should be allowed to make Danger Evasion roll (modified by his Seamanship bonus) to navigate their craft safely to the shore.

If such a roll fails or if no Mariner is among the heroes, each hero and sailor must make a Danger Evasion roll or be tossed overboard as the ship suffers damage from the reefs and encounters unexpectedly rough waters. Heroes and sailors who meet this fate have a special surprise in store for them as noted below. Characters who succeed at this roll remain aboard the ship safely and may help their water-bound compatriots as noted below.

Trouble In The Water

Heroes and sailors who fail the Danger Evasion roll called for above find themselves in the waters between the coral reefs and Nemedé's fog-shrouded shore. The sea here is rough, and characters must succeed at a Swimming roll (*Players Manual*, p. 44) or suffer the consequences of drowning and an additional die of damage due to being raked against the reefs.

To make matters worse, a flock of **Harpies** (see the *Creature Compendium*, p.54) roost nearby and know a tasty meal when they spy one. These foul monsters care little for any who have fallen overboard, figuring that they will be dinner one way

or another. Instead, the Harpies focus their attacks on those who remain on the ship or, perhaps more terrifyingly, on the ship itself. If the heroes defeat the Harpies, they will be able to pilot the ship safely the rest of the way to the forbidding shores of Nemedé.

Act II : In Search of Thymoetes

After landing their ship on the beach of Nemedé, the heroes will need to locate Thymoetes. This, of course, is easier said than done, since every last human on Nemedé was long ago turned to stone by the Tragic Floating Head. Nevertheless, clever characters should be able to use the clue provided by Hermes to identify which of the statues found in the village used to be the great philosopher.

What About Divine Vision ?

If there is a Priest in the party, he might have the idea to use his Divine Vision prodigy (see the *Players Manual*, p 30) to learn more about the location of the Sextant.

Since the will and whims of the gods are entirely into the hands of the Maze Master, such a divination should lead to different results, depending on when or why it takes place. Here are a few suggestions on how to handle this situation so that it contributes to the fun and excitement of the adventure, as opposed to compromising the very *raison d'être* of the adventurers' quest.

If the character uses his Divine Vision power at the start of the scenario, in order to learn the location of the Sextant without having to sail to Nemedé, then the Vision will only show hazy images of the shores of Nemedé, with perhaps a few glimpses of the "garden of statues" than the island has become (but with no explicit clue about the fate of Thymoetes himself or about the fact that these stone statues are actually the petrified inhabitants of Nemedé). In other words, the Vision will not show the location of the Sextant (that's what you get for thinking you smarter than the Gods) and the characters will still have to go to Nemedé – but the Vision will not have been completely wasted, since it gave an extra clue (the stone statues).

Alternatively, the Maze Master may prefer to actually show the location of the Sextant (the Mines of Iana) but without any indication of where this site might be : the Vision will simply reveal that the Sextant is probably in "some dark cave, somewhere..." This will also be the case if the heroes resort to Divine Vision to learn the location of the Sextant after (and because) they failed to revive Thymoetes, in which case the Divine Vision will certainly be followed by an impromptu visit from an ironic Hermes or an ice-cold Athena (see *But What if the Heroes Get it Wrong ?* next page).

The Silence Of The Fog

Nemede is a fog-shrouded and barren place.

The beach that the heroes have landed on stretches far in each direction, vanishing into the dense fog well before any end or variation can be seen.

Much should be made of the sepulchral silence of the island. No sea birds' cries, no winds, no sounds of life are heard at all. Even the water lapping at the shore is strangely silent. Note, though, that nothing mystical prevents sound here. Characters may still converse, swords still ring against shield when combat occurs, and so forth. But the utter lack of day-to-day sounds should, again, be played up.

A Road, And Worse

Once the heroes have satisfied themselves that the beach is of no further use than a place to land a ship, they should head inland to look for Thymoetes.

Not long after leaving the shore they stumble upon a weathered cobblestone road, in ill-repair and overgrown in places with weeds and lichen.

Following this road will lead the heroes directly to the village that lies at the heart of Nemede.

The road rises slightly as it leads inland, its stones are occasionally slick from mosses and the dampness of the ever-present fog.

From time to time someone might stumble as the heroes walk along the path. No significant combat penalties should stem from this. Once again, it's the atmosphere that matters. Maze Masters should mention how the fog remains dense about the road, making it very hard to see more than a foot or so beyond its edge.

After fifteen minutes or so of gentle climbing, the road levels out and turns slightly to the east.

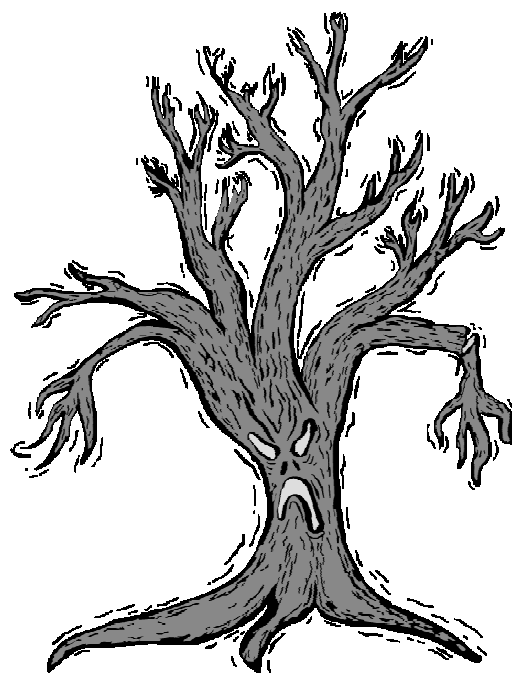
The fog here thins slightly, though visibility remains limited, at last the heroes can see some semblance of life about them. Low and twisted trees line the road, which continues on into the distance.

As the characters progress further they become aware of the sound of a light wind rustling the branches of the trees about them.

At times these sounds appear to resemble whispers of madness and despair. Consider passing a few notes to different players telling them specific phrases that they hear. Pump up the paranoia.

These strange sounds, it turns out, are the Vocal Entrancement ability of a trio of **Stichios** (see the *Creature Compendium*, p.109).

These possessed trees are clustered about the road at this point and will do their best to draw the heroes into their vampiric branches. Clearly, the heroes will strive to avoid this fate. Let there be combat !



A sinister Stichios

Arrival At The Village

Assuming that the heroes have survived their encounter with the Stichios they are free to continue down the road to the village.

The trip requires at least another 30 minutes on foot, with the fog having closed back in to previous claustrophobic levels. From time to time there is a slight breeze that rustles the trees shrouded in the fog, which should be good for plucking at the heroes' nerves. However, no monsters are lurking. At least not here.

After the half-hour of walking the fog once again thins a bit, enough for the heroes to make out some low buildings, fences and other structures close at hand. If the characters investigate the buildings they quickly discover that all of the inhabitants have, in fact, been turned to stone. Women at their washing, children at play, a group of men standing around in discussion. All are statues !

These houses and other buildings hold little of value, long rotten foodstuffs and moldered textiles seem to be their primary contents. A few rusted weapons may be found in spots as well – but there is nothing for the looting-minded to loot here.

Traveling further down the road the heroes soon find themselves within the heart of the village. As before, the complete lack of normal sounds should be impressed upon the party. There is no hubbub of civilization, no barking of dogs, no cries of delight or sorrow, no sounds of a jealous wife hectoring her husband. Instead, there is simply the silence of the grave. And everywhere, people turned to stone. Unlike the peaceful scenes at the farm, though, these statues all show terror on their faces and appear to have been fleeing from something.



The great Thymoetes, with one of his two canes

The Stone Speaks

At this point, the heroes will likely realize the puzzle-like nature of the situation before them. They need to identify Thymoetes out of the fifty-odd possible adult male statues that occupy the village.

Now is a good time to point out that there is only the single village and that if the heroes decided to explore the island further they find no other signs of human settlement. They may, however, stumble upon the Scorpion Folk who now occupy the island. See *A Final Battle* below.

In the end, the process is simple as there is only one statue of a man who carries two canes, and thus is "twice-lame" like Hephaestus. He lies in the middle of the town square, starting in horror, mouth agape, his walking sticks held out in both hands as if to shield himself from something that approached from the south.

All of that aside, there are other candidates who the heroes might choose, including the blacksmith (who was named Nikandros) who stands astride the town's central well, in the midst of swinging his hammer at whatever horror laid waste to his home. Another possibility is the epically ugly gentleman (who was named Prytanis) found cowering behind the same well that the blacksmith was defending.

Once a choice has been made, let the heroes pour the draught given them by Hermes into the mouth of the chosen statue (they all have open mouths, due to various forms of screaming). Only the complete contents of the phial will do, so the choice must be made fully.

If the heroes correctly chose Thymoetes, he slowly transforms back into flesh and blood, for just a brief moment his body convulses with terror, as though awakening from a nightmare, but he quickly realizes that whatever fate befell him has long since passed.

If asked about the petrified condition of his village, Thymoetes relates the fate of Nemedes as outlined in the introduction, as far as the point where the village was attacked by the Tragic Floating Head, which he should describe but not name.

When asked about the Sextant of Eryximachos, the revived sage drifts into a reverie, muttering softly to himself, his eyes glazed over and his words all but inaudible. In a moment his focus returns and he tells the heroes of the island of Iana, whose twisting mines are guarded by a cyclops whose flocks are made of gold. The legends, Thymoetes continues, say that Eryximachos followed his Sextant to these shores for unknown purposes, but that he was never heard from again. Therefore the Sextant must reside on the island of Iana, which lies thrice-nine days west of Argos... With that, Thymoetes stiffens, and begins to return to stone. He struggles briefly, but then relaxes, resigned to his fate.

In addition to gaining the information they sought, for correctly choosing Thymoetes, each hero should receive a *temporary* Divine Boon (see the *M&M Companion*, p.8) from Athena. It is up to the individual Maze Master to determine the form that each particular hero's boon takes, though it is advised that these be items of a defensive nature.

What If The Heroes Get It Wrong ?

Adventurers who misunderstood Hermes' clue may well choose the wrong statue to revive. Maze Masters who wish to avoid such a risk may rule that any character with a Wits score of 13+ is clever enough to interpret Hermes' clue correctly.

If such an unfortunate mistake does happen, the Maze Master has two choices. Either the elixir has no effect, for Athena's will was that this draught affect Thymoetes and no other, or the wrong person does come back to life; in this case, feel free to act out their terror and confusion at awakening. As with Thymoetes, the restored person will only remain animate for a short while and will return to stone despite the best efforts of anyone involved. The wrongly-animated individual might share the legend of Nemedes with the heroes, giving them something for their troubles.

Obviously, using the elixir on the wrong statue eliminates the possibility of the characters determining the location of the Sextant of Eryximachos. In such a case, Maze Masters might decide to put things back on track with a little impromptu divine intervention. Hermes could arrive, taunt the heroes a bit about their stupid blunder and then tell them the location of Iana before sending them on their way. Or perhaps even Athena herself appears to the characters, in her cold, brisk anger to put her "ill-chosen champions" back on the right track.

In any case, the party should still learn where they are expect to venture next. Under no circumstances, however, should a party that selects the wrong statue receive the temporary Divine Boon mentioned above.

A Final Battle

As Thymoetes (or Nikandros or Prytanis) returns to stone, the heroes' attention is drawn to skittering creeping sounds coming from the fog.

Each hero should be allowed a Perception roll (see the *Players Manual*, p. 45) to be able to spot the **Scorpion Folk** who are approaching from the fog.

This group of Scorpion Folk are a scouting party sent out from the larger enclave of such beasts that now occupies the far shore of Nemedé.

There should be as many creatures as there are adventurers in the group.

The creatures are delighted to find fresh flesh here in the village, having visited only once before and being disappointed at its inedible stone residents.

The Scorpion Folk will fight a pitched battle, but will retreat if the tide turns against them.

If the heroes choose to pursue any retreating monsters, they will eventually find the Scorpion Folks' encampment, where another group of twice as many fell beasts will happily descend upon them in the hopes of a tasty meal.

Return To The Sea

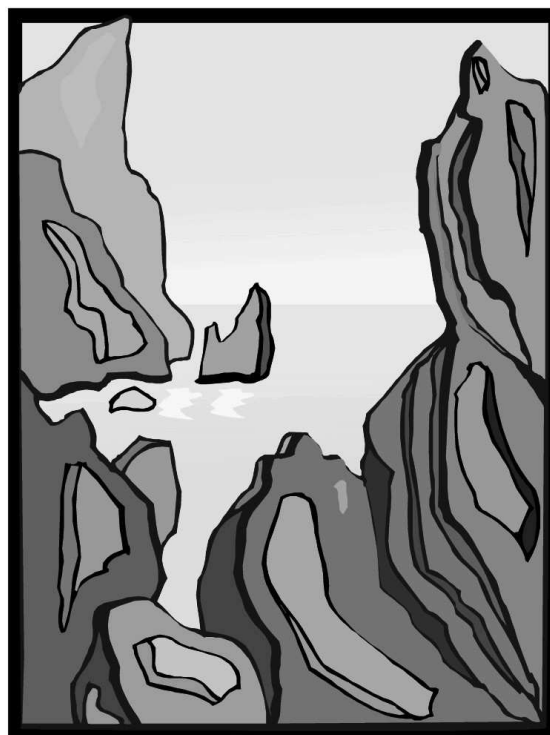
Armed now with the answer they were sent to secure, the heroes may return to their vessel and set sail for Iana to secure the Sextant of Eryximachos. A stop at Argos to resupply and visit with the priests at the Temple of Athena are certainly advisable. In addition to healing the party, the priests provide a lodestone compass to help the heroes find their way to Iana.

The Maze Master is free to handle this trip to Argos as he sees fit. The adventure can be drawn out as long as desired with one or more random Mysterious Islands, Temples, City-States and Adventures (*Maze Masters Guide*, p. 28-35) or the heroes may simply be hand-waved back to Argos.

Further details on Argos, some of which may inspire the Maze Master with ideas for side quests or additional adventures, can be found in this issue's *Mythika Gazetteer*.

Deceit & Betrayal

While in Argos, the adventurers should prepare for a lengthy journey, laying in supplies and replacing any lost crewmen. Among the new sailors taken aboard is **Aeson**, an amoral fellow currently working as a spy for the forces of Atlantis. Aeson is exclusively tasked with reconnaissance, and will do nothing to harm or hinder the heroes at this stage. He will work hard, fight bravely, and do all that is required to earn the heroes' trust. Later, he will show his true colors. But for now, he is the heroes' best friend...



Approaching the Mysterious Island of Iana

Act III : The Mines of Iana

The heroes, provisioned, healed and ready to go, must now set sail for the lost island of Iana.

The voyage, though long, is largely uneventful... unless of course the Maze Master wishes to spice up things with a few chance encounters *en route*, such as some Mermaids or Tritons, a ferocious Sea Monster or two, a flock of Sirens or even a whole Mysterious Island to explore.

As far as the heroes' current quest is concerned, the only incident of note occurs on the fourteenth day, when black sails are spotted on the northern horizon, sailing westward, in the same general direction as the heroes. It is obvious to all involved, though, that these ships (three, it seems, though they are far too distant to count or identify) are not headed to the same destination as the heroes.

Arrival at Iana

After the nearly month-long journey into the furthest reaches of the Middle Sea, the adventurers at last lay eyes upon fabled Iana. Its high cliff walls loom forbiddingly, foreboding the danger that waits within.

It takes the ship and its crew the better part of a day to circumnavigate the coast of Iana in search of a reasonable place to land.

In time, though, a small pathway that winds from a ledge at sea-level up to the high cliffs is spotted. Once anchored, our brave heroes may begin their ascent in search of the Sextant of Eryximachos...

Climbing The Cliffs

Ancient inhabitants of Iana constructed the narrow path that leads from the sea to the inner reaches of the island, and they did so with an eye towards defending their island. With this goal in mind, they included several traps (see the *M&M Companion*, p 29-30) to weaken or defeat any who would attempt to gain access to Iana. There are three such traps along the route to the top of the cliffs, each of these is detailed below, in the order encountered.

Trap #1 (Falling & Entrapment)

The ledge at this point has been artificially weakened, and an unwary climber can easily fall through. The first character to encounter this trap will suffer 1d6 Hits of damage from falling 15 feet onto a precipice below. Without a rope or other help from the other heroes, the unfortunate victim of this trap will be stuck on the outcropping. The only way out is to jump into the rocky sea below. Doing so results in an additional 2d6 Hits of damage and leaves the victim subject to drowning (*Players Manual*, p 44) and other aquatic hazards at the Maze Master's discretion.

Trap #2 (Crushing)

A number of boulders are precariously balanced above the path at this point. A lever worked into the natural hand-hold for crossing this spot triggers the boulders to fall directly onto the second person in line. That unlucky soul suffers 2d6 Hits and must make a Danger Evasion roll (*Players Manual*, p. 44) to avoid being knocked from the ledge into the sea below. A hero who is knocked into the sea suffers an additional 2d6 Hits and, as with trap #1, is subject to drowning and other aquatic hazards.

Trap #3 (Direct Damage & Poison)

A poison-tipped javelin shoots from a crevasse in the cliff, doing 1d6 Hits to the lead climber. The victim of this trap must immediately make a Physical Vigor save against a target number of 12 (the venom has weakened over time). Success means that the target is able to shake off the effects of the venom. Failure results in complete paralysis for 1d6 minutes. A paralyzed victim must also make a Danger Evasion roll one per minute (unless secured by his or her compatriots) to avoid falling from the ledge. Falling from the ledge results in (you guessed it...) 2d6 Hits and a shot at aquatic hazards.

The Golden Flocks of Iana

Once the heroes have scaled the high cliff walls of Iana, they are able to see what makes this island so worth defending. Spread out before their eyes is a scene of bucolic wonderment of the likes normally only heard of in the poetry of the Age of Magic. Tall trees hanging under the weight of succulent fruit, green lawns of perfect whispering grasses, crystal clear streams babbling as they run their course to a large pond nearer the center of the island. And

everywhere the eye can see are beautiful golden sheep, at rest and at play. This tableau of harmony is guarded by the tireless mechanical eye of a Golden Ram (see the *Creature Compendium*, p 51). This strange creature was constructed to defend its territory against all interlopers, and as soon as it spots the heroes it will attack without mercy.

Upon defeating the Golden Ram, the heroes are free to explore the plateau. Before long they will find the entrance to the mines where, it would seem, the Sextant likely resides.

Into The Mines

The entrance to the mines is a cave opening in the landward side of one of the high cliff walls of Iana. This passage is rough, but spacious, allowing two men to travel abreast with plenty of elbow room. The long and winding trek eventually leads to a T-intersection. To the left can be heard the ringing of hammer on anvil, to the right gentle singing.

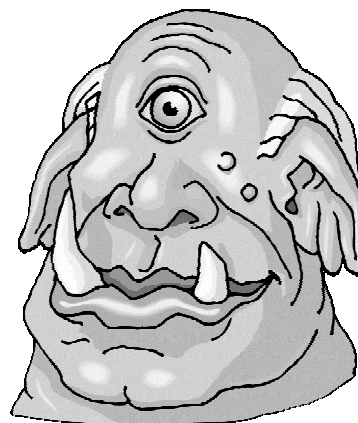
Maze Master's Note : *The layout of the Mines is so simple that no map is necessary...but nothing prevent you from using a typical "cavern adventure map" and "beefing up" this part of the quest into a fully-fledged scenario of its own, with more traps, more mythic treasure and, of course, an appropriate selection of Monsters and Animates.*

The Treasure Trove Of Gyras

This room is the quarters of Gyras, a **Lesser Cyclops** (see *Creature Compendium*, p 31) who is the last resident of Iana. Here Gyras eats, sleeps and lives, surrounded by extraordinary items.

The room is filled with various trinkets, automata and other items, including three **Singing Keledons** (*Creature Compendium*, p 104) who serve as guards when Gyras is at work. Gyras is busy in his forge at the time that the heroes visit this room.

The Singing Keledons do not attack the heroes so long as nothing in the room is disturbed. If the heroes enter combat with the Singing Keledons, Gyras will enter the room after the third round of combat, ready to make pulp out of any intruders.



The Cyclops Gyras, Crafter of Wondrous Items

Important note : The Sextant of Eryximachos is not among the items found in this room. It is in the possession of Gyras, who wears it as a pendant.

The Forge Of Gyras

In this room, the Cyclops Gyras works, crafting wondrous items for the amusement of his master, Hephaestus. Gyras is a curious sort, more interested in his toys than he is in just about anything. However, Gyras does not take kindly to anyone intruding upon his domain and he will happily use his very large hammer against any intruders. Doubly so if they have done any harm to his prized Singing Keledons.

When entering this room, all heroes should make Perception rolls (*Players Manual*, p 45) to notice the well-crafted silver sextant that hangs on a fine chain about Gyras' neck. This is, indeed, the Sextant of Eryximachos. A well-played oration might convince Gyras to part with the Sextant in exchange for the lodestone compass that the priests of Athena gave the party back in Argos. Otherwise, expect combat.

The Sextant In Hand

Whether by guile or by force, the heroes should now be in possession of the Sextant of Eryximachos. With this item in hand, a return to Argos is in order. As with the return from Nemedé, the Maze Master is welcome to complicate this trip to taste.

Once the heroes return the Sextant, the priests of Athena will require more than a little time to use it to divine the nature of the threat to Mythika... The next part of *Against Atlantis!* will be published in our next issue and will begin with the priests summoning forth our heroes to send them into the fray once again. In the mean time, don't hesitate to send your heroes forth on additional adventures. Ideally, you should allow them to reach level 3 in the process, giving them a better chance to face the perils that await them... And consider throwing in some Atlantean presence - even if just off-screen - to further set the stage for the incoming storm...

The Sextant of Eryximachos

The Sextant of Eryximachos is a Unique Artifact and the proverbial "Mc Guffin" of this adventure. Maze Masters can remain as mysteriously vague as they wish about its wondrous powers or drop the players a few hints through Thymoetes or the Argosean Priestesses of Athena to whom the heroes are supposed to deliver the item in the end.

The Sextant is a relic from the Age of Magic. Its purpose is to assist in the act of divination by allowing the diviner to "navigate" the stars that affect the future, thereby more effectively charting the waters of time. In the hands of a Priestess of Athena, the Sextant improves the clarity and scope of a Divine Vision. The exact nature of this improvement is left to the Maze Master and should be treated on a case-by-case basis.

Dear Minotaur

Yes, we now have our own letters column ! Well, we got one letter anyway...



Dear Editor,

*In the first (and otherwise brilliant) issue of Minotaur Quarterly, I stumbled upon the pretty obscure word **peplum** – the Maze Master's Lore column even referred to the "M&M peplumesque tradition"... I've made several searches in various dictionaries but couldn't find a single clue about the meaning of this word – except that it meant "tunic" or something like that in Latin, which does not seem to shed more light on the matter. What in Hades do these words mean ?*

Steven Hanson, New York (NY)

Dear Steven,

*Yes, "peplum" is a pretty obscure word – except for European movie buffs, who use it to label movies set in the Ancient / Roman / Greek / Biblical era, be they historical dramas (like **Spartacus**, **Gladiator** or **Ben Hur**) or mythic fantasy adventures (like **Jason & the Argonauts** or the various **Maciste** films made in Italy during the sixties). The word refers to the fact that characters in these movies usually wear tunics –or peplums (incidentally, the correct plural would be pepla but let's not get linguistic here). You can take it as an earlier denomination for what now tends to be referred as the "sword & sandal" genre.*

So why did Olivier Legrand used such an obscure term ? Because : (a) he is French, (b) he just turned forty, which means he does tend to assume that everybody shares his own cultural references, no matter how obscure or dated they might be. When asked about this matter, he also pointed out that peplumesque did sound far better than "sword-and-sandalessque" (and what can you answer to this ?).

Wanna write to us ? olivier.legrand6@free.fr

The Renovated Noble

An Alternate Look at M&M Aristocratic Warriors by **Dorian Greville**

If (like me) you think that the Noble class as written in the Revised M&M rules is grossly unbalanced, then you might be interested in the following article, which details an alternate, more balanced version of the Noble class. If, on the other hand, you think that there is nothing wrong with the Noble class as it stands, then you might be interested in finding out why the class is really unbalanced and how these flaws you hadn't noticed before can be corrected.

So what are these fatal flaws, you ask ? Well, in fact, there is only one but it is a major flaw, which has very important repercussions in game terms. This flaw is the +2 bonus granted to the Noble's primary attribute scores – Luck and another attribute which varies according to the character's family heritage. Let's take a closer look...

Unfair Privileges

Outrageous Fortune

In the Revised M&M rules, all Nobles receive a +2 bonus to their Luck score... and since Luck affects nearly every modifier in the game, these 2 extra points of Luck result in a flat +1 bonus to nearly every derived score (including Melee, Missile, EDC and, of course, all four saving rolls), making Nobles inherently better than everybody else at virtually anything... This is supposed to reflect the Nobles' higher degree of divine favor and there is nothing inherently wrong in this reasoning, except that Luck is one of the Noble's two primary attributes, which means that all Nobles will *already* have a high Luck score to begin with, since a character must devote his two best scores to his primary attributes...

Moreover, Nobles are the only warriors who have Luck as one of their primary attributes – making them inherently luckier than Barbarians, Spearmen, Amazons or Centaurs, even without the +2 bonus.

Having Luck as a primary attribute is, in itself, a major advantage, which can in itself reflect the idea of higher divine favor : adding a +2 bonus on top of that is completely redundant and simply makes Nobles unfairly overpowered compared to other warriors, at least as far as 1st level characters are concerned. This over-the-top bonus also impacts on their Battle Fortune ability, since it is directly based on Luck; even without the +2 Luck bonus, Battle Fortune would already be a major advantage; with the +2 Luck bonus, it makes the class even more unbalanced compared to other characters.



The Other Problem

In the *Players Manual*, a Noble's second primary attribute must simply be chosen by the player... but since attributes do not have the same degree of usefulness in game terms, players will always tend to select Might or Skill rather than, say, Grace. This is not really a problem in itself : after all, M&M Nobles are supposed to be warriors and their special heritage should logically emphasize martial prowess. Yet, for some mysterious reason, the *M&M Companion* adds an optional rule which, if used, forces the player to roll on a random table instead of selecting his character's primary attribute. In other words, Noble A can get a +2 to Grace because of an unlucky die roll... while his friend Noble B gets a +2 to Skill. That's justice and game balance for you. Let's face it : this optional rule is not simply useless, it is both useless *and* unfair.

A Matter of Class

The two major flaws of the Noble class as defined in the Revised rules can be summarized as follows :

Flaw n°1 : The +2 bonus to Luck is too powerful.

Flaw n°2 : The way their other primary attribute is determined is very unsatisfactory, whether you use the regular rules from the *Players Manual* or the optional rules given in the *M&M Companion*.

So, why not dump these damn attribute bonuses and replace them by another special ability, similar to those of other warriors, in addition to Battle Fortune ? This would solve all our problems and put Nobles "in line" or "on par" with other characters.

I must say I disagree with this reasoning : superior attributes have been the distinctive advantage of Nobles ever since the original *Mazes & Minotaurs* rules (1972) and are really part of the "spirit" of the class; on a more technical level, these bonuses are also a simple and efficient way to reflect such varied notions as an exceptional education, a special family trait or a divine lineage.

On closer examination, the attribute bonuses granted to Nobles are not as powerful as they might seem in the first place, because the edge they give to 1st level Nobles will tend to disappear at higher levels (since no attribute can be increased past a certain limit). According to game designer Olivier Legrand, this side-effect is a deliberate part of the system : the idea behind this was to make Nobles gifted, privileged characters from the beginning and then allowing other characters to "even out" by gaining Glory or Experience.

The next section of this article details a possible rule variant, which solves the two aforementioned problems without altering the spirit and style of the *Mazes & Minotaurs* Noble class.

The Alternate Noble

Heroic Potential

Like all other warriors, our variant Noble will still have two special abilities : **Battle Fortune** (which works as per the regular rules, adding the Noble's Luck mod to his overall Initiative score) and another, alternate special ability covering their superior attributes – and this is where things would work differently. To avoid any confusion with the standard *Noble Heritage* ability detailed in the regular rules, we shall call this alternate ability **Heroic Potential**.

Heroic Potential adds +2 to two of the Noble's attributes : one martial attribute and one personal attribute. The **martial attribute** can be either Might or Skill and reflects the fact that Nobles are warriors. As its name implies, the **personal attribute** is linked to the Noble's personality (rather than to his fighting prowess), chosen between Wits, Will and Grace.

In other words, Nobles receive a +2 to either Might or Skill and another +2 to either Wits, Will or Grace.

The two primary attributes of the class are Luck and the martial attribute (Might or Skill). This makes the martial attribute is slightly more important than the personal one (Nobles are warriors, remember ?), especially if you use the optional rules on Heroic Development (see *M&M Companion*, p 6). All other elements of the class (level benefits etc) work exactly as in the *Players Manual* class description.



Renovatos against Regularos - who will prevail ?

The Luck Issue

In this variant system, Luck is the only attribute that cannot benefit from a +2 boost. This avoids the over-the-top effects examined earlier in this article.

Yet, since Luck remains one of the two primary attributes of the class and you must devote your two highest rolls to your character's primary attributes, Nobles will tend to start with better Luck scores than other warrior classes (none of which has Luck as one of its primary attributes). Thus, our variant Nobles will still enjoy a higher degree of fortune and divine favor than most other characters – but no more than, say, Priests, Nymphs or Lyrists.

Lastly, keeping the Battle Fortune ability also keeps Luck as an important aspect of the M&M Noble class – but in a far more reasonable manner.

Balance & Versatility

The "martial attribute / personal attribute" approach produces far more balanced results than the regular "free choice" rules from the *Players Manual* or the "random roll" option given in the *M&M Companion*, since it gives all Nobles a significant combat-related advantage (+2 to Might or Skill), while avoiding over-the-top combinations (such as, say, +2 to Skill and Luck or +2 to Might and Skill).

This system also restores some balance to the rules, giving all Nobles the same opportunities as far as Heroic Potential is concerned.

The respective benefits of Might and Skill are more-or-less balanced : a +2 to Might will give you a +1 to Melee, Athletic Prowess, Physical Vigor and Hits (as well as a better chance to succeed at feats of strength), while a +2 to Skill will give you a +1 to Melee, Missile, Athletic Prowess and Initiative.

NOBLES

Nobles are the members of the ruling families of kingdoms and city-states. They are often seen as proud and haughty (some Noble families even claim to descend from deities !) but also tend to show a very strong sense of duty to their people and nation.

Primary Attributes : Luck and the character's martial attribute (see below).

Gender : Nobles may be either male or female.

Basic Hits = 12

Battle Fortune : Nobles add their Luck modifier to their Initiative score in all circumstances.

Heroic Potential : All Nobles add 2 points to their martial attribute (Might or Skill) and to their personal attribute (Wits, Will or Grace), both of which must be chosen by the player. These bonuses may reflect gifts from the gods, an extraordinary lineage or the benefits of an exceptional education.

Weapon of Choice : Sword, spear, bow or javelin.

Level Benefits : Each level beyond the first gives a Noble character +4 Hits, +1 to Luck and +2 to any other attribute score (player's choice).

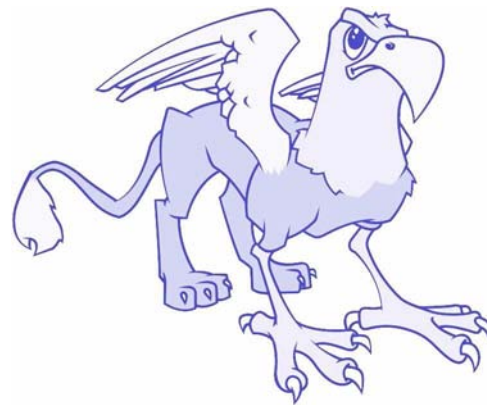
Possessions : Sword, dagger, shield, helmet, breastplate, and 3D6 x 100 silver pieces.

The respective benefits of the three possible personal attributes are also more-or-less balanced; Noble adventurers will probably (and quite logically) be more interested in Will (which affects Physical Vigor, Danger Evasion, Mystic Fortitude and Personal Charisma) or Wits (which affects Missile, Danger Evasion and Initiative) than Grace (which only affects Mystic Fortitude and Personal Charisma but may also be an important asset for would-be divine agents of Aphrodite) : balance is not absolutely perfect here, but it's still far more satisfactory than what the official rules offer.

This "martial / personal" axis also makes the Noble class easier to customize according to national or cultural stereotypes. The education of Heraklian Nobles, for instance, would be more likely to favor Might and Will, while Nobles from Argos would probably prefer Skill and Wits (see this issue's *Mythika Gazetteer* for more details on these cultural stereotypes). This can also apply to non-Minean Nobles : the Sea Princes of Tritonis, for instance, can simply be treated as Nobles, without the need for a specific NPC class variant like the one described in the first issue of *Minotaur Quarterly*.

Lastly, the "martial / personal" division also tends to make Nobles more versatile and well-rounded characters, much like many Noble heroes from literature and legend, from Odysseus to Jason, Perseus or Theseus, who all show a mix of superior fighting prowess and overall resourcefulness. Thus, this variant version of the class will make Nobles more balanced and truer to their heroic models.

The Griffin Archives



The article next page was the third (and final) instalment of the **Philosopher's Page**, an irregular, ephemeral and now quite forgotten column which appeared in the *Griffin* back in 1988, one year after the Revised M&M rules were published.

As its title more-or-less implied, the *Philosopher's Page* was aimed at "*intellectually-inclined gamers*", a phrase which the anonymous columnist regularly used in reference to his (nonexistent ?) readership.

So why reprint this article, you ask ?

First, as an archaeological piece, this article is a great testament of how, back in the eighties, some guys desperately tried to convince their fellow gamers (and themselves ?) that gaming could be "*serious*", that "*RPGs were not JUST THAT*" and that there actually was such a thing as a "*gaming culture*" - not to mention concepts such as "*neo-mythic sub-creation*", "*postmodern simulation*" and, of course, "*gaming as a way of life*".

Needless to say, this stuff did not really appeal to the majority of *Griffin* readers, who simply wanted more monsters to slay, more mazes to explore, more mythic items to grab, with the occasional rule variant thrown in to make the game "*better*", "*more realistic*" or (more rarely) "*more fun*".

But let's get back to our unfortunate *Philosopher's Page*. For all its pedantry, its contents were not as boring as its detractors claimed (it was voted "*worst column ever*" in the big 1988 Readers Survey - which was actually ran three months after the column had already been cancelled - talk about unpopularity, eh ?) - well, at least not in the case of this final instalment, which sheds an interesting light on the psychological, spiritual and metaphysical aspects of the Will attribute.

One last thing : the footnotes at the bottom of the page were not part of the original article and have been added with the 21st century's reader in mind.

Each issue, **Griffin Archives** unearths an old Griffin article from the glorious 1980s

THE PHILOSOPHER'S PAGE

This Issue : The Triumph of Will

Will to Power !

Now that the "Will vs Faith" debate¹ is over (?), intellectually-inclined gamers can start reflecting on the concept of Will and how its very existence alters the "imaginary reality" of *Mazes & Minotaurs*.

Despite what its detractors would have us believed, Will adds a whole new dimension to M&M.

More than any other attribute, Will can (and should) represent different things for different characters. Things like Might, Skill or, for that matter, Luck are objective, straightforward concepts : the higher your score, the Mightier, more Skilful or Luckier you are.

Will, on the other hand, is a much more subjective concept, since it is directly tied to a character sees himself as well as the world around him : different purposes, worldviews or moral codes necessarily imply different definitions of Will.²

This is especially important for characters who have Will as one of their two primary attributes : the Will of a Barbarian, for example, is probably very, very different from the Will of a Spearman, Priest or Sorcerer; yet, all these classes acknowledge Will as a primary attribute.

The purpose of this article is to examine what Will may represent for these Will-based classes, as well as for other types of characters; studying each class on a case-by-case basis will help us understand the true nature of Will as a character trait and, perhaps, allow us to learn a few things about the various M&M character classes and how their members envision their role and the world around them.

¹ As you probably remember, back in 1987, the replacement of the old Faith attribute by Will in the Revised rules caused quite an uproar among some die-hard fans of the Original M&M rules. Indeed, the debate between the "pro-Faith" and the "pro-Will" raged for several months in the Letters page of the Griffin.

² This last sentence, with its pretentious, pseudo-scholarly style is pretty emblematic of the column's overall tone. For some readers, this was ample proof that the anonymous "Philosopher" was none other than Olivier Legrand himself, whose "purple prose" and "pompous verbosity" were notorious. This theory is not very convincing, though, since the Philosopher seemed to disagree with several of Legrand's design choices. Unless, of course, there was some sort of Multiple Personalities Disorder involved. Oddly, the matter was never really investigated.



Not many people seem to realize this, but Will is the most widely shared primary attribute – yes, more than Skill, Wits or Luck. Among the twelve character classes covered in the Players Manual, no less than five (five !) classes share Will as one of their primary attributes : Barbarian, Spearman, Sorcerer, Priest and Elementalist – not to mention those Nobles who have Will as their heritage attribute. This fact shows the importance of Will as well as its polyvalent, multi-faceted nature.

Will & Warriors

The Will of a Barbarian represents his courage, guts and daring : it is this savage, stubborn, undaunted quality attributed to many barbarian heroes in fiction, from Robert E. Howard's *Conan* and *King Kull* to Lin Carter's *Thongor*, John Jakes' *Brak* or Gardner F. Fox's *Kothar*.³ The Will of a Spearman, on the other hand, is forged in military training, discipline and self-command. This contrast clearly illustrates *how* Will differs from all other attributes.

Will & Magic

For Priests, Will equates faith and devotion – how devoted and dedicated they are to the service of their deity. It is interesting to see how Will interacts with Priests' other primary attribute, Luck : if Luck represents what a Priest's deity gives him (divine favor and attention), Will clearly represents what the Priest gives the deity in return.

³ Strangely, none of the books mentioned in this column had anything to do with philosophy. The "Philosopher", on the other hand, seemed to be quite an avid reader of fantasy fiction and pulp literature.

What about Sorcerers and Elementalists ? Since these two magician classes also share Wits as a primary attribute, it would be tempting to give their Will the same exact meaning – but Sorcerers and Elementalists wield very different types of magic and might well have very different ways of envisioning Will as an essential part of their magical talent.

Sorcerers work their magic on the minds of others, playing with their senses (Confusion, Illusion, Cloak) and even, through their powers of Compelling and Enslavement, overriding their victims' free will. A Sorcerer's Will represents his psychic force, his ability to imprint and impose his own willpower to the minds of his victims. An Elementalist's Will, on the other hand, reflects his power to control raw elemental forces to achieve spectacular results, an activity which obviously requires enormous amounts of concentration and determination.

While Sorcerers directly impose their Will on others, Elementalists impose their Will on nature itself – which, incidentally, explains why Sorcery powers can be resisted with Mystic Fortitude, while Elemental magic usually calls for Danger Evasion rolls. Thus, Sorcerers will tend to view Will as their ability to dominate the Wills of other sentient beings, while Elementalists will view it as the ability to summon and manipulate raw elemental power, with no direct relation to their victims' own willpower.

Where There's a Will...

But what about other classes ? The possibilities are broader here, simply because Will is not an essential aspect of their abilities and thus might be interpreted in a very variable manner : a Thief with a low Will, for instance, will simply be lacking in resolve and, perhaps, courage... but this does not mean that all Thieves with a high or very high Will are steadfast, iron-willed adventurers : in the case of a Thief, a high Will score will more likely represent cockiness, aplomb and self-confidence or, for less flamboyant rogues, grit, guts and backbone.

Or what about Nymphs ? A low Will could be seen as being consistent with the cliché of the indolent, playful and elusive Nymph, while a high Will could represent a form of inner force linked to the idea of Nymphs as living embodiments of all-powerful Nature. In both cases, Will can be interpreted in relation to the character's personality and role.

The only class for which this approach does not work is the Amazon, weak-willed warrior women being quite hard to imagine : Amazons should *really* have been given Will as one of their two primary attributes, rather than Grace⁴ (there was obviously some semi-unconscious sexist bias at work here !). So what does a character's Will *really* affect in game terms ? Well, quite a lot of things, actually...

⁴ Our next issue will indeed present a variant version of the Amazon based on this very line of reasoning by someone who's never read this article (or so she says).

While it does not directly influence a character's combat scores (except for warriors with Will-based special abilities, namely Barbarians and Spearmen), a character's Will affects his Mystic Fortitude (strong Will helps defend against hostile magic), Danger Evasion (strong Will makes you more vigilant, more resolute and collected - and thus more likely to escape from unexpected perils⁵) and Physical Vigor (strong Will increases your stamina and endurance), as well as his Personal Charisma – in this latter case, Will can once again represent a variety of personal qualities, including conviction, command, self-confidence and force of personality.

Fate & Free Will

The Revised rules make Will a pretty universal, all-pervasive attribute, much like Luck, albeit to a lesser extent, which is perfectly logical in a world where the will of the Gods always takes precedence over the will of mortals. Speaking of this, interpreting Luck as the "will of the gods" (and, even more specifically, as their "goodwill" towards a character) is a good way to see how Luck relates to (and differs from) Will, especially for characters whose Luck and Will scores are separated by a large gap (say, 7 pts or more). Note that such an unbalance cannot exist in Priests, who always have high (or at least decent) scores in both Will and Luck.

Characters whose Will is significantly higher than their Luck will usually have more faith in themselves and their own abilities than in the gods. Conversely, characters with a very high Luck but an average or low Will will tend to "trust the gods" (or their good fortune) in an optimistic, happy-go-lucky, something-will-turn-up sort of way. Indeed, the spiritual and metaphysical interactions and oppositions between Will and Luck are so rich and fascinating that one can only regret that the designers of the Revised rules didn't think (wish ?) to use these interactions / oppositions as the basis of some Hero points / Fate mechanics like those found in more recent, state-of-the-art game systems – in a third edition, maybe ?⁶

Next time, we'll talk about the Platonician concepts of *nous*, *thumos* and *epithumia* and how they can enhance your *Mazes & Minotaurs* game.⁷

⁵ This is precisely what bothers Luke G. Reynard in this issue's **Twist in the Maze**. You can always count on an old rule lawyer to dig up this kind of stuff...

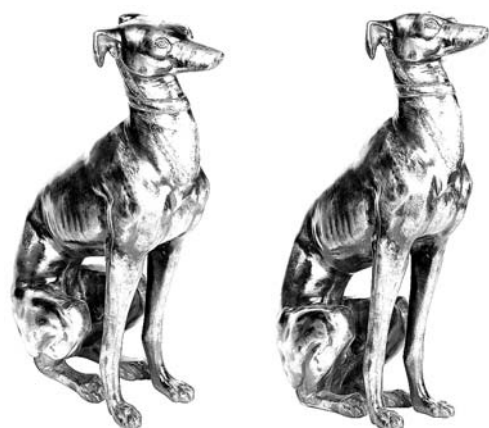
⁶ As you are well aware of, M&M never had a third edition (who would have bought such a thing anyway ?) but the bit about Hero/Fate points actually gave birth to an article presenting an optional Fate system, which was published two months after this column and might well be reprinted in a forthcoming Griffin Archives !

⁷ Sadly (?), this promising piece of gaming philosophy was never published (and probably never written in the first place). If you really want to know what these terms actually mean, read Plato's Republic or use Wikipedia.

MYTHIC BESTIARY

CAVE CANEM !

A Whole Pack of New Canine Creatures to Dog your Adventurers



Alkenian Dog

Taxonomy : Animate

Description : Magically-animated metal watchdogs crafted by the god Hephaestus to guard the palaces, strongholds, temples and treasure rooms of his most powerful devotees. These wonders usually come in pairs : one made of silver and one made of gold.

Size : Medium

Ferocity : Dangerous

Cunning : Average

Mystique : Weird

Movement : 60'

Initiative : 12

Melee Attack : +4

Damage : 1d6 (metal jaws)

Defense Class : 17

Hits Total : 16

Detection / Evasion : +4 / +2

Mystic Fortitude : +6

Special Abilities : Magic Resistance, Mindless, Natural Armor, Sixth Sense, Supernatural Vigor.

Awards : Glory 70, Wisdom 50.

Artemisian Greyhound

Taxonomy : Beast

Description : Exceptionally clever hunting dogs, considered as prized possessions by Nobles, Hunters and devotees of Artemis. As their name implies, they are sacred to the Goddess of the Hunt.

Size : Small

Ferocity : Dangerous

Cunning : Clever

Mystique : Normal

Movement : 60' (240' galloping)

Initiative : 20

Melee Attack : +5

Damage : 1d3 (jaws)

Defense Class : 14

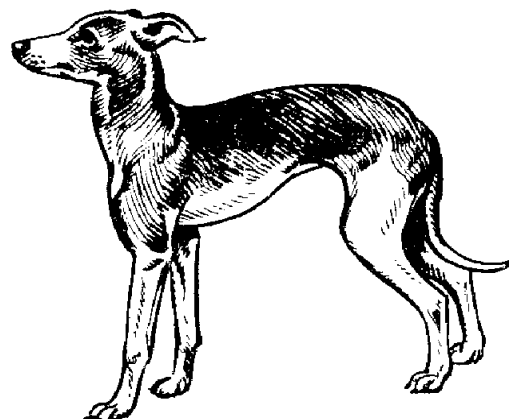
Hits Total : 6

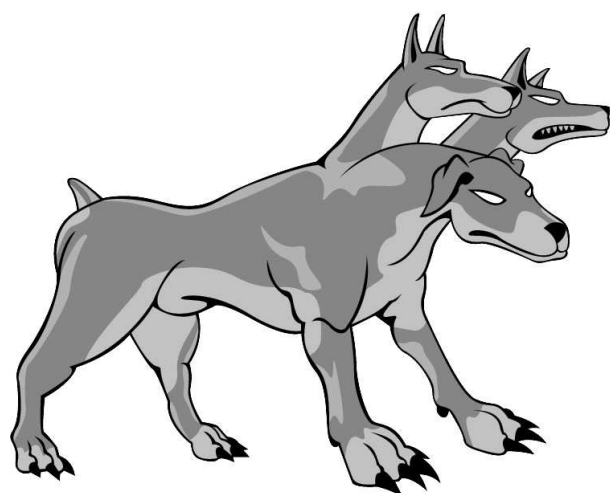
Detection / Evasion : +8 / +10

Mystic Fortitude : 0

Special Abilities : Gallop, Lightning Fast, Sharp Senses, Stealthy (20), Uncanny Agility.

Awards : Killing a Dog of Artemis brings no Glory, Wisdom or Experience.





Cerberion

Taxonomy : Monster

Description : Cerberions are a variant breed of Cerberus. While true Cerberus hounds (see *Creature Compendium*, p 27) are as huge as bears, Cerberions are not bigger than normal mastiffs (which already makes them quite big). In terms of physical abilities, Cerberions are less powerful than their larger cousins but are much more agile... and can run much faster.

Size : Medium

Ferocity : Deadly

Cunning : Alert

Mystique : Weird

Movement : 60' (240' galloping)

Initiative : 18

Melee Attack : +7

Damage : 1d6 (claws & bite)

Defense Class : 17

Hits Total : 20

Detection / Evasion : +12 / +6

Mystic Fortitude : +6

Special Abilities : Charge into Battle (Initiative 20, Melee Attack +9), Gallop, Magic Resistance, Multiple Heads (3), Sharp Senses, Sixth Sense, Supernatural Vigor, Tough Skin, Uncanny Agility.

Awards : Glory 220, Wisdom 60.

Additional Lore : Cerberions seem to be to hunting dogs what Cerberus are to watchdogs. According to an unverified legend, they were first bred as hunting hounds by the god Hades, King of the Underworld. Another (more recent) theory makes them the hybrid descendants of true Cerberus and normal hounds.

Demon Dog

Taxonomy : Monster

Description : A huge black hound with bat-like wings. These creatures are sometimes found in the service of evil Sorcerers who have Enthralled them, using them as guardians, steeds, hunters or assassins.

Size : Large

Ferocity : Deadly

Cunning : Alert

Mystique : Weird

Movement : 90' (360' flying)

Initiative : 16

Melee Attack : +8

Damage : 2d6 (claws & bite)

Defense Class : 17

Hits Total : 36

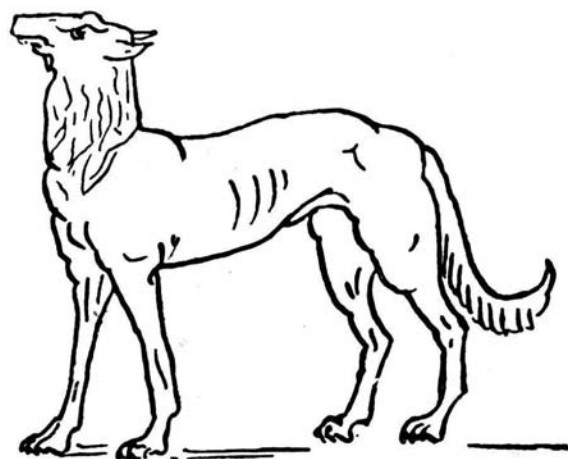
Detection / Evasion : +10 / +6

Mystic Fortitude : +6

Special Abilities : Fearsome, Magic Resistance, Sharp Senses, 6th Sense, Stealthy (12), Supernatural Vigor, Tough Skin, Winged.

Awards : Glory 380, Wisdom 50.





Hound of Zeus

Taxonomy : Monster

Description : A magical, golden-hued, griffin-headed tracking dog, as huge as a bear. Hounds of Zeus has the reputation of always catching their prey.

Size : Large

Ferocity : Dangerous

Cunning : Alert

Mystique : Weird

Movement : 120' (480' galloping)

Initiative : 19

Melee Attack : +7

Damage : 2d6 (claws & bite)

Defense Class : 23

Hits Total : 30

Detection / Evasion : +10 / +10

Mystic Fortitude : +6

Special Abilities : Charge into Battle (Initiative 21, Melee Attack +11), Gallop, Invulnerability, Lightning Fast, Magic Resistance, Sharp Senses, Sixth Sense, Supernatural Vigor, Uncanny Agility.

Awards : Glory 420, Wisdom 50.

Additional Lore : As their name implies, the Hounds of Zeus are sometimes used by the King of the Gods to track and catch other magical creatures, especially those that are reputed to be uncatchable. They always serve a specific purpose and are never encountered as "wandering monsters".

Orthos Hound

Taxonomy : Monster

Description : These huge hell hounds are a variant species of Cerberus, with only two heads but with a venomous snake-like tail.

Size : Large

Ferocity : Deadly

Cunning : Alert

Mystique : Weird

Movement : 90'

Initiative : 17

Melee Attack : +8

Damage : 2d6 (claws & bite)

Defense Class : 17

Hits Total : 36

Detection / Evasion : +11 / +4

Mystic Fortitude : +6

Special Abilities : Charge into Battle (Initiative 21, Melee Attack +12), Fearsome, Magic Resistance, Multiple Heads (2), Poison (tail bite; paralysis), Sharp Senses, Sixth Sense, Supernatural Vigor, Tough Skin.

Awards : Glory 440, Wisdom 60.



Spectral Hound

Taxonomy : Spirit

Description : These evil Spirits appear as ghostly, shadow-black hounds with fiery eyes. They can only be encountered at night, in some desolate parts of Hyperborea, preying on unfortunate wayfarers...

Size : Medium

Ferocity : Dangerous

Cunning : Alert

Mystique : Eldritch

Movement : 60' (240' galloping)

Initiative : 17

Melee Attack : n/a

Damage : 1d6 Life-Energy Drain

Defense Class : 18

Hits Total : 12

Detection / Evasion : +6 / +4

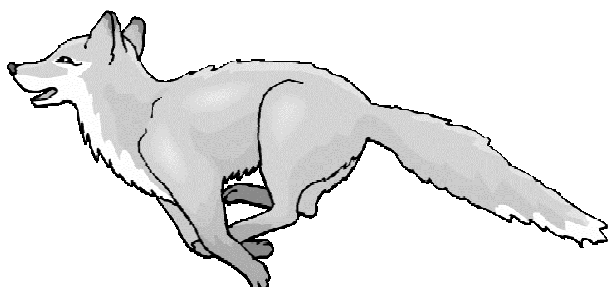
Mystic Fortitude : +6

Special Abilities : Fearsome, Gallop, Insubstantial, Life Energy Drain *, Magic Resistance, Mindless, Sixth Sense, Stealthy (20), Uncanny Agility.

** Their Life Energy Drain ability is their only way to cause physical harm to their opponents. In game terms, this attack is treated in all respects as a Touch attack, even though the Spectral Hound appears to "bite" its victim (which it cannot really do, since it is intangible).*

Awards : Glory 110, Wisdom 180.

Additional Lore : Those rare scholars who have had the opportunity to study them (and survive) believe Spectral Hounds to be Spirits of Hunger, set loose on the North of the world by some angry deity.



Teumesian Fox

Taxonomy : Monster

Description : A monstrous, bear-sized fox reputed to be impossible to catch. It likes to cause havoc and terror in remote rural areas, slaughtering whole herds of sheep (not to mention unlucky shepherds and their dogs) and sometimes even attacking isolated homes at night. It is a very vicious creature, much more cunning than most Large-sized monsters.

Size : Large

Ferocity : Dangerous

Cunning : Crafty

Mystique : Weird

Movement : 120' (480' galloping)

Initiative : 21

Melee Attack : +7

Damage : 2d6 (claws & bite)

Defense Class : 17

Hits Total : 30

Detection / Evasion : +14 / +14

Mystic Fortitude : +6

Special Abilities : Galloping, Lightning Fast, Magic Resistance, Sharp Senses, Sixth Sense, Stealthy (18), Supernatural Vigor, Tough Skin, Uncanny Agility.

Awards : Glory 400, Wisdom 40.

MAZE MASTER'S LORE

MYTHIKA'S MIGHTIEST

Part One : Theseos of Thena and Tharsus of Heraklia

by Emmanuel "Croquefer" Roudier and Olivier Legrand

The following article is the first instalment of a three-part series about the greatest heroes of Mythika's current era. . Each instalment will present two of these living legends, with complete game stats and a short biography, starting this issue with King Theseos of Thena and the mighty Tharsus of Heraklia, also mentioned in this issue's Mythika Gazetteer.



*Theseos slaying the Minotaur of Minea
(Yeah, that was him on that old Hekatoteratos cover)*

Theseos of Thena

The present king of Thena, Theseos is a tall, athletic, handsome man in his late thirties, with curly blond hair and a short beard. His career as monarch of Thena is detailed in this issue's *Mythika Gazetteer*, which also contains information about his wife, Queen Phaedra and his son Prince Hippolytos.

The son of King Aegeus of Thena and princess Aethra (daughter of Pittheus, lord of Sphaeros), Theseos was rumored to be the child of Poseidon himself – something which his mother has always refused to discuss with anybody. To this day, the true identity of the hero's father remains uncertain, even to Theseos himself.

During the course of his adventures, Theseos has defeated an impressive number of enemies, including hordes of beastmen, evil lords, giants, dark sorceresses, giant boars, magical bulls and many others. He also waged war against the Amazons and abducted one of their princesses, the proud Antiope... whom he married shortly afterwards. Antiope then died in childbirth (perhaps as a result of some terrible curse bestowed upon her for having forsaken her Amazon heritage), giving the hero his only son, Hippolytos.

Theseos

Level 5 Noble, age 38, King of Thena

Personality : Fearless and self-assured (to the point of overconfidence); loves to take risks and accept crazy wagers; loves beautiful women and strong wines; may have an unconscious death wish; truly heroic and immensely popular.

Attributes : Might 19, Skill 20, Luck 21, Wits 15, Will 15, Grace 15.

Combat : Initiative 21, Melee +13, Missile +11, Basic Defense Class 17, Hits Total 32.

Weapon of Choice : Sword.

Saving Rolls : Athletic Prowess +13, Danger Evasion +9, Mystic Fort +9, Physical Vigor +11.

Personal Charisma : +9 (+14 to Thenans).

Background Talents : Tactician, Wrestler.

Mythic Items : Aegis, Sword of Aegeus (Sword of Ruse with a hilt wrought like a serpent), Spear of the Pallantides (Spear of Athena), Crown of the Nereids (same powers as the Amulet of the same name, worn as a diadem-like headband), Ariadne's ball of twine, Spear of Conquest, pair of Magical Horses (see *Creature Compendium*, p 58). Theseos also owns the Mace of Perphestes, a non-magical, enormous bronze mace (see *Players Manual*, p 22).

When wearing his breastplate, helmet and Aegis shield, Theseos has an EDC of 24. His Sword of Ruse allows him to add his Wits mod of +2 to his Melee score, for a total attack mod of +15, while his Spear of Athena adds his Skill mod of +4 to his damage rolls.

Development : Theseos' Luck reflects the optional Heroic Development rules given in the *M&M Companion*. If he makes it to level 6, he will increase his Will to 17, adding +1 to his Danger Evasion, Mystic Fortitude, Physical Vigor and Personal Charisma scores. His Hits Total will also be increased to 36.

But his most famous adventure remains his journey to Minea on the island of Seriphos, where he defeated the huge minotaur Asterion (also rumored to be a child of Poseidon) and managed to come out alive of the gigantic Maze of Minea. This he could accomplish only with the help of Ariadne (and her famous ball of twine), princess of Minea and priestess of Demeter, whom he later abandoned on an island during his flight from Minea (since then, she has reportedly been taken as a bride by Dyonisos, but this may be just another wild rumor). He later married Ariadne's younger sister, princess Phaedra of Minea, now queen of Thena.

Recently, King Theseos, along with mighty Tharsus of Heraklia, has led a difficult yet victorious battle in the mountains against a savage tribe of Centaurs. To this day, both Amazons and Centaurs still feel a bitter grudge toward Theseos, whom they tend to see as an enemy of their respective kins.

Theseos has a weakness for women and wagers and seems to have a really hard time resisting one or the other. These days, the love of strong wines seems to have become another problem of his. With all these Nobles in the surroundings plotting against him and Phaedra looking so much like her older sister, beautiful Ariadne, whom he stupidly and cruelly abandoned so long ago, the hero nowadays indulges in drinking more and more often (which may eventually lead to many problems, like, say, accepting the wager of entering Hell to abduct Persephone herself because "she's a smasher"...



Big, mighty Tharsus of Heraklia

Tharsus of Heraklia

One of the mightiest living heroes (perhaps THE mightiest living hero) of Mythika, Tharsus of Heraklia is also known as "Herakleos", a nickname which can directly be translated as "the Lion of Heraklia".

Believed by many to be the son of Zeus himself, Tharsus was born to Princess Alcidia, daughter to King Leos of Heraklia. The unmarried, young and beautiful Alcidia had been impregnated in her sleep by the King of the Gods and became extremely nervous when she found out that she was with child; more than anything, the princess feared the wrath of her elder brother, King Leos, who at that time was away from Heraklia with Alcidia's brother, Prince Thalos the Strong, waging war against an allied horde of beastmen in the Helicon Mountains.

How would her father and brother react when they'd return victorious, only to discover her unexplainable pregnancy ? Blinded by shame, fear and despair, Alcidia ordered a trusty servant to take the baby to the wilderness and leave him to die there...

But the newborn child, who was incredibly vigorous, did not die (he even strangled two serpents all by himself !) and managed to survive before being found by a Centauride named Tharsa, who, having lost her own child, decided to keep and raise this strange, hairy "man-cub" as her own son. The boy was named Tharsus and was quickly adopted by the Centauride's tribe.

Meanwhile, back in Heraklia, a true tragedy was unfolding. Mad with grief and guilt, Princess Alcidia took her own life by plunging a knife into her breast.

Martial Arts of Mythika !

During his training years, Theseos has developed two unique unarmed fighting styles which became famous : the Crane, a patient, fast strike-to vital-spots technique, and the Dancer, a swirling and unbalancing sweeps-and-throws technique. When he uses these techniques in unarmed combat, any opponent (especially rash and overconfident ones), are sure to end pinned down with a locked arm, fractured bone or broken neck. Maze Masters who wish to give these two combat styles an effect in game terms can use the following optional rules.

These techniques can only be mastered by characters with scores of 13+ in Skill, Will and Grace; it can only be learned through a long, arduous period of training under the tuition of someone who already masters its secrets (which would mean Theseos himself, who is extremely unlikely to teach these techniques to anyone).

These unarmed combat styles are only effective against Medium or Small humanoid opponents. Like all unarmed strikes, attacks made with them always occur at the end of the Melee phase.

Both styles work like Pugilism, except that a successful attack has a different result. A successful Crane attack does (1d6+*Might* mod) Hits of subdual damage instead of the usual (1d3+*Might* mod), while a Dancer attack works like a Bashing attack (*M&M Companion*, p 14). As the inventor of these techniques, Theseos is always *advantaged* when attacking with them.



Tharsus with his famous Nemean Lion Pelt

The day after Alcidia's suicide, her father's army came back, carrying their dying leader. King Leos, who had been treacherously hit by a beastman's poisoned arrow, only had the time to hear the sorrowful tale of his daughter's death before succumbing to his wounds. The crown passed to his only son, Prince Thalos. A few days after his coronation, the young king was visited by Zeus in person, who told him that he was the true father of his sister's son... and that the child has survived. Thalos then took a solemn oath to find his sister's child, no matter how long this quest would keep him away from his throne. The young monarch took five of his most courageous companions with him and went in search of his lost nephew; thus began seven long years of travels, adventures and perils...

Then, one day, King Thalos and his men eventually stumbled upon the Centaurs who had adopted the young boy as one of their own, teaching him the arts of combat and archery. A new life now awaited him as a royal prince of Heraklia – a new life full of weird things like palaces, clothes and baths... but his feral education had shaped him forever and Tharsus always remained a Centaur at heart – as reckless, proud, short-tempered, turbulent and, well, feral as any self-respecting man-horse. At the age of 15, the restless Tharsus left Heraklia to lead a heroic life full of adventures, dangerous journeys and fights with monstrous creatures. Over the following years, he completed various quests (including the famous Ten Tasks of Tharsus), many of which were given to him by Zeus to test his might.

Tharsus is especially renowned as a monster slayer, having slain various Monsters of Large or Gigantic size during his long adventuring career – as well as an impressive quantity of magical beasts, beastmen and creatures of all sorts. He retains a deep friendship for Centaurs (in fact, some Thenan Lyrists have even hinted at his carnal knowledge of at least two Centaurides). On more than one occasion, his friendship with Centaurs (as well as his short temper and loud mouth) has caused him to publicly express his brutish contempt for Theseos of Thena, who has led several campaigns against some Centaur tribes during the last few years... In return, Theseos himself has expressed his own disdain for "the Boar of Heraklia". Surely the two great heroes will square it out one day or another...

Tharsus of Heraklia

Level 6 Noble, age 38, Mythic Hero, nephew of King Thalos, "the Lion of Heraklia"

Personality : Immensely proud and utterly fearless; brutish and uncouth, Tharsus behaves more like an uneducated Barbarian than a royal-blooded Noble; his personal hygiene could also be improved.

Attributes : Might 21, Skill 16, Luck 21, Wits 9, Will 19, Grace 8.

Combat : Initiative 18*, Melee +15*, Missile +8*, Basic Defense Class 18*, Hits Total 39*.

Weapon of Choice : Club.

Saving Rolls : Athletic Prowess +15*, Danger Evasion +10*, Mystic Fort +9*, Phys Vigor +17*.

Personal Charisma : +9* (+15* to Heraklians).

** These scores include the bonus granted by Tharsus' Tunic of Fortune, which he **never** takes off, as well as by his Girdle of Strength. Without the Girdle, Tharsus would be "reduced" to Melee +13, Athletic Prowess +13, Physical Vigor +15 and Hits Total 37.*

Background Talents : Sailor, Wrestler.

Mythic Items : Big Club, Nemean Lion Pelt, Bow of Herakles, Girdle of Strength, Tunic of Fortune.

Tharsus' **Nemean Lion Pelt** (which he usually wears as a cloak / headdress, encumbrance 1) allows him to add his Might mod to his Defense Class, for an EDC of 23. Tharsus never uses shields or breastplates because "it's no fun".

Tharsus' **Big Club** looks like a huge, crude wooden club better suited for a Large being than for a man. It is actually a mythic item, which Tharsus gained during an early quest. It is indestructible and allows Tharsus to add his (hefty) Might mod of +7 (+5 from his natural Might and +2 from his Girdle of Strength) to his damage rolls when he wields it single-handed. Alternatively, Tharsus can use his Big Club two-handed, in which case he gets an extra damage die, for a monstrous damage roll of 2d6+7 but striking at half-normal Initiative (9).

That being said, Tharsus can also be very dangerous in missile combat, using his **Bow of Herakles** (who he ?) with a Missile mod of +13 and for a damage roll of 1d6+7.

Next issue : *Titania, Warrior-Princess of the Amazons and Prince Pellias of Seriphos !*

A TWIST IN THE MAZE

A Regular Column by Luke G. Reynard

The Great Saving Roll Swindle

Since the Revised M&M rules came out (gee, is that 20 years already ?), many Maze Masters have developed their own house rules, tweaking, fine-tuning or otherwise turning inside out specific elements of the game – some of them have even re-designed some of the classic M&M classes, as illustrated by this issue's Renovated Noble. As the guy who first introduced the Physical Vigor saving roll in M&M (it was called Toughness, back then), I should probably plead guilty for starting this trend – and as this issue's column shows, I am an unrelenting sinner...

What's the Problem ?

As a Maze Master, I've never been too happy with the way the **Danger Evasion** saving roll was calculated in the *Revised Mazes & Minotaurs* rules. In the Original rules, this saving roll was based on Wits and Luck. The Revised rules replaced the old Faith score by Will and, since saving rolls were now based on three attributes instead of two, Will was added as the third component of Danger Evasion.

Apparently, the official reasoning behind this is that willpower and self-discipline make you more vigilant and thus help you to react quickly and appropriately to unexpected situations... Personally, I fail to see how resolve or self-discipline can actually help you to detect a trap or avoid a Chimera's breath, but I won't argue on this here. (*Incidentally, the role of Will in the game is the topic of this very issue's Griffin Archives – Ed*). What really bothers me is the way this formula disadvantages some classes.

The current formula for Danger Evasion means that Sorcerers, Priests and Elementalists having better Danger Evasion scores than most Hunters (yes !) – or, for that matter, than virtually anybody else, with the exception of Thieves and some Nobles. This, even if we try to justify it by some sort of mystical sixth sense (and why not ?), does NOT feel right. And then there is the poor Amazon, who is usually worse than *everybody else* at Danger Evasion, with the exception of Centaurs...

Some M&M veterans have also pointed out that the standard calculation method for Danger Evasion makes it a purely mental affair, with no physical attributes being involved – which seems a bit odd, considering this saving roll may be used, among other things, to dodge various sorts of special attacks, avoid traps, move quietly or even perform perilous maneuvers on horseback. Once again, this does not feel right... especially when creatures do get an Evasion bonus for having Uncanny Agility.

These problems become especially obvious in the case of horsemanship. Since risky riding maneuvers require Danger Evasion rolls, most Sorcerers, Priests and Elementalists will be better horsemen than most warriors; sure, warriors are more likely to have the Equestrian talent and not *that* many magicians will own a mount, but still...



- Hey, says the Amazon to the Barbarian, how come your Danger Evasion score is better than mine ?

This brings us to the origin of the problem : the fact that Danger Evasion rolls cover many different types of situations under one single score – ones that are agility-related and ones that are perception-related. In the case of creatures, these differences were taken into account, in the form of separate Detection and Evasion scores. This logic was NOT followed in the case of characters because the designer wanted to retain the idea of an all-purpose Danger Evasion roll, which was a popular feature of the original M&M rules. Sure, we could simply split up Danger Evasion into two separate scores, but we won't go in that direction because (a) I too love the idea of all-purpose Danger Evasion roll and (b) remember what we said about the character record sheets ?

So What's the Solution ?

By now, you're probably thinking that this whole Danger Evasion thing is inherently flawed – just like, say, the various versions of the Encumbrance rules (*What are you talking about, Luke ? – Ed*). It is not ! *A Twist in the Maze* is happy to bring you a simple and elegant solution, which will fix most of the aforementioned problems without turning the M&M system upside down or changing the splendid M&M character record sheets.

Wits (alertness and awareness) and Luck (good fortune) are obvious components of Danger Evasion and must remain constant elements in the formula. Will, on the other hand, is much more debatable.

But let's get back to our problem. Bearing all the aforementioned examples in mind, the obvious replacement for Will should be Skill, since this attribute represents, among other things, a character's overall adroitness, martial training and eye-hand coordination – all of which can come in handy when trying to dodge or avoid all sorts of natural perils. This would give the following formula :

Danger Evasion = Wits mod + Skill mod + Luck mod

But wait, you say, Danger Evasion is also used for detection ! How can dexterity make a character more perceptive ? This is a good question, for since it directly points at the origin of the problem : the fact that Danger Evasion rolls cover many different types of situations – ones that are agility-related and ones that are perception-related. In the case of creatures, these differences were taken into account, in the form of separate Detection and Evasion scores.

I guess this approach was not followed in the case of characters because the designer wanted to retain the idea of an all-purpose Danger Evasion roll, which was a popular feature of the original M&M rules. But let's get back to Skill. When you come to think of it, Skill and perception are not completely separate concepts : persons blessed with superior coordination do tend to be very alert and aware of their surroundings. Sure, Skill does not *equate* perception, but can certainly include factors like sharp senses or keen spatial awareness. Thus, it would not be illogical at all to integrate Skill as an essential element of Danger Evasion.

What Does This Really Change ?

Every time you make such a "tweak" in the rules, the benefits it will bring to some characters are bound to penalize others. This is not a problem per se, since the original rules did the same thing – but we must be sure that the new results feel right (or, at least, "righter" than the old system).

Characters most likely to benefit from this change are those who have Skill as one of their two primary attributes : Amazons, Hunters, Centaurs, some Nobles, as well as probably quite a few Thieves (who tend to favor Skill over Will). In the case of Spearmen, the change will tend to 'even out', since their other primary attribute is Skill. Remember our old friend Pyros ? With the old rules, his Will of 15 (+2) gave him a Danger Evasion score of +3. Under these variant rules, his better Skill of 18 (+3) would give him slightly higher score of +4.

As a further example, let's re-calculate the Danger Evasion scores of the various NPCs presented in this issue (yeah, I had access to the source files) :

Hippolytos (p 7) : +7 instead of +6, thanks to the young Prince's superior Skill.

King Thalos (p 10) : +8 instead of +9, the king's Skill being slightly less formidable than his Will.

Prince Herion (p 10) : +7 instead of +6, thanks to Herion's superior Skill.

Prince Kyros (p 13) : No change, since his Will and Skill are in the same league.

Princess Niobe (p 13) : +9 instead of +8, thanks to Niobe's superior Skill.

Theseos (p 34) : +11 instead of +9, thanks to his phenomenal Skill.

Tharsus (p 36) : +8 instead of +10, since his Skill is not as exceptional as his Will.

We can see an interesting pattern emerging here : the variant formula clearly advantages quick, nimble characters, like Hippolytos or Niobe. The case of Theseos and Tharsus, is especially interesting; from their description and overall profile, you'd expect the big, hulking and not particularly bright Tharsus to be less alert, perceptive and quick to react than the fast, dextrous Theseos : yet, the old rules – sorry, the *official* rules – give Tharsus a better Danger Evasion score (or at least an equal score if we take away the bonus granted by his Tunic of Fortune), simply because he is monstrously stubborn. By giving Theseos a slightly superior Danger Evasion score from +10 to +11 and by lowering Tharsus' own score from +10 to a (still very good) +8, my variant rules clearly set things right !

On a more general basis, characters most likely to be disadvantaged (ie end up with a lower Danger Evasion score) by this option are those who have Will as one of their two primary attributes : Barbarians, Priests, Sorcerers and Elementalists. In the case of magicians, this is not really a problem, especially since their other primary attribute (Luck for Priests, Wits for Sorcerers or Elementalists) still guarantees them a decent Danger Evasion score : they will still be good at it but will no longer be better than virtually anybody else, which is only fair.

The only real loser here is the Barbarian – but remember his high Will and Might tend to give him good scores in the three other saving rolls - Mystic Fortitude, Physical Vigor and Athletic Prowess. Also keep in mind that Luck increases at each new level and that Skill is the only attribute that Barbarians can increase by +2 aside from their primary attributes (Might and Will). In other words, the variant formula for Danger Evasion will make low-level Barbarians a bit less alert than they were (and why not ? After all, M&M Barbarians are supposed to be powerhouses, not panther-like gymnasts) but this 'disadvantage' will tend to disappear at higher levels, thanks to increases in Skill and Luck.

Next time, we'll talk about the M&M encumbrance rules -just kidding, of course (yeah real funny, no, in fact next issue, you'll show how well an aging columnist can dodge an angry Barbarian's big axe - Editor).

PANDORA'S BOX

A regular selection of new mythic items for Mazes & Minotaurs

Even though the one-theme-per-issue idea did not survive Issue One, Pandora's Box has decided to keep the Thematic Ideal alive, with a different theme every issue. For our second installment, we bring you a collection of fantastic magical armaments...

Wonders for Warriors

Silver Aegis

by Darren Peech

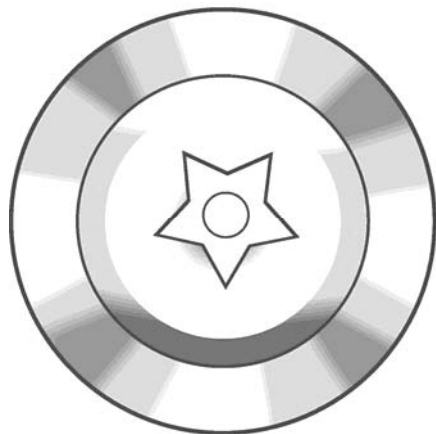
This magical shield is a very rare, more powerful variant of the classic Aegis shield described in the *Maze Masters Guide* (p 37). While classic Aegises are made of magical bronze, these shields are made of shiny, mirror-like magical silver.

A Silver Aegis has the same magical properties as a bronze one (+4 to Defense Class and +2 to Danger Evasion and Mystic Fortitude) and offers additional protection against Petrification attacks.

Its reflective surface confers an additional +4 bonus to Danger Evasion rolls made to avoid Petrification (for a total bonus of +8 : +2 for using a shield, +2 for using an Aegis and +4 for using a Silver Aegis).

In addition, if the total of the Danger Evasion roll is 20 or more, the petrifying gaze is reflected back to the attacking creature, who must immediately make a Mystic Fortitude roll (no Evasion roll allowed) against a target number of 20 or be turned to stone.

Silver Aegises are sometimes given as divine boons by Zeus or Athena to their most faithful champions. Athena herself sometimes carries a Golden Aegis, a truly Unique Artifact of even greater power...



Royal Amazon Helmet

by Danielle R. Virgo

This beautiful magical helmet can be worn by any character but its magical properties will only awaken when worn by an Amazon of noble bearing (ie with a Personal Charisma of +1 or more).

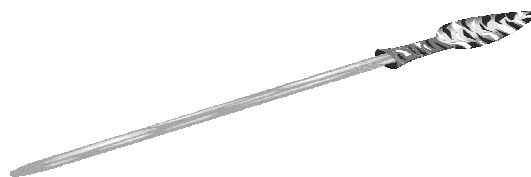
It has the following effects. It doubles the Amazon's Personal Charisma, adds +4 (instead of the usual +2) to the character's EDC and grants her a +2 bonus to Mystic Fortitude.

Spear of Monster Slaying

by Olivier Legrand

This magical spear grants its user a bonus to his Melee attacks and damage rolls when used against Monsters. This bonus varies according to the size of the creature (the bigger the better !) : +1 if Medium or smaller, +2 if Large and +4 if Gigantic.

It confers no special bonus against other types of opponents (Man, Beast, Folk, Animate or Spirit).



Nine Items for the Price of Four !

Each of the four illustrations shown on this page and the next one corresponds to two (or sometimes even three !) of the mythic items described below. Most of these items were written for a friendly contest ran on the M&M newsgroup... and in the end I was unable to choose... so the choice is yours ! **Olivier Legrand**

Armor of Eleon

by Andrew Trent

This armor, which once belonged to the legendary hunter Eleon, was crafted during the Age of Magic by the Dryads who make their home in the forest south of the River Rhena. They gave this armor to Eleon to help him defend their lands against the ravages of the wild north.

The "scales" of this mail shirt are actually the leaves of a sacred tree, woven together by such powerful magics that the wearer makes no sound save for the gentle rustling of leaves.

In game terms, the armor of Eleon grants its wearer the ability to succeed automatically at all his stealth rolls when in forests, as if he was a Dryad (*Players Manual*, p 45), regardless of his Encumbrance total.

Armor of Hubris

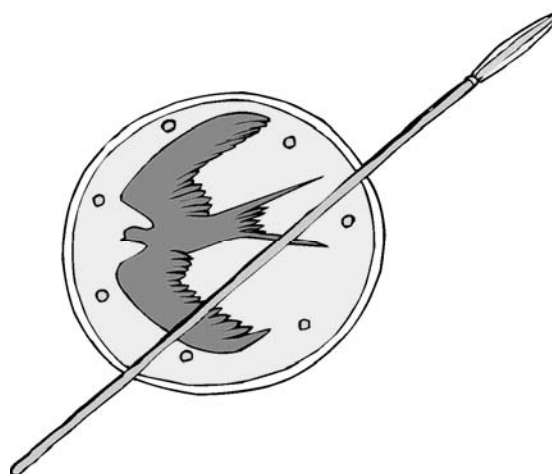
by Darren Peech

This breastplate was forged by the gods to punish the haughty. Arrogant characters will see it as gleaming armor only which they are worthy to wear. Once it is put on, it will actually *lower* the character's EDC by -2. Only when the wearer has learned humility will he be able to remove the armor.

(How do you judge a character's arrogance ? In the absence of any rules on the matter, I suggest that Maze Masters adjudicate things on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the character's attitude toward other people and, above all, toward the Gods. Anyone who has ever offended or angered a deity should be a prime candidate for this "treasure" – O.L.)



Armor of Hubris or Breastplate of Earth ?



Iolanthe's Spear and Shield ? Avian Shield and Spear ? Spear of Vapor and Shield of Ice ?

Iolanthe's Spear and Shield

by Andrew Trent

This spear and shield once belonged to Iolanthe of Argos, who was a noble woman from the late Age of Magic. She traveled widely throughout Mythika, but ultimately made her home in Midia, where she led several key raids against the Stygians.

Known for her blinding speed on the battlefield (which sometimes lead to the illusion that she floated on the very air itself), Iolanthe was known among the Midians as "Apous" - "one without feet."

Iolanthe took great pride in this moniker and commissioned this shield, complete with its bird symbol, from the finest smithy in all of Midia.

The spear found with this shield is the one she last wielded, when she led the Midians in one last triumph against the Stygian Lord Xolel.

The shield gives its user a +3 Defense Class bonus (instead of the usual +2), as well as a +3 bonus to Danger Evasion rolls.

The spear gives its wielder a +2 bonus to Initiative and Melee ; it also does an extra die of damage when used against creatures of Stygia.

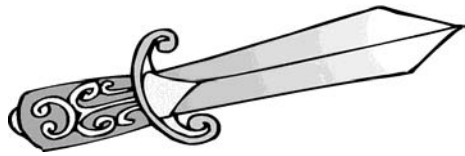
Avian Shield and Spear

by Darren Peech

These two items are always found together; they were obviously part of some ancient panoply from a forgotten time.

The shield grants an additional +2 bonus to Defense Class (for a total of +4) against all flying creatures.

The spear adds +2 to its wielder's damage roll against flying creatures (whether it is used as a melee weapon or hurled as a javelin).



Is this : (a) a Thurian Sword, (b) a Sword of Fire ?

Thurian Sword

by Olivier Legrand

These ancient short swords were used by the men of King Letos, first monarch of Thena (see this issue's *Mythika Gazetteer*) in their battles against the ophidian minions of Thulsos.

Their blades inflict +2 damage against reptilian creatures. This includes Basilisks, Dragons, Giant Snakes, Hydras, Lamiae, Lizardians, Serpent Folks, Sons of Cercrops, Troglodytes etc.

They have no special effect against Monsters which are only part-reptilian, like Chimeras or Cockatrices, or against creatures that only look like reptiles (such as Rocky Pythons).

Implements of The Elements

by John Coleman

The Implements of the Elements were designed by Hephaestus, god of the forge, for an Elementalist who had particularly pleased the Lame God as one of his agents. Unless otherwise stated, each of the mythic items described below may be used by any character; this includes Elementalists of the item's opposite element (thus, an Elementalist of Water could still use the Sword of Fire without penalty).

After the death of their owner, each item was placed in a different subterranean maze. Each of the four mazes is themed after the element contained at the maze's end. Thus, fiery monsters and fire-based traps abound in the maze containing the Sword of Fire, while the Spear of Vapor and Shield of Ice are guarded in an undersea maze by an assortment of Tritons, sea monsters and other marine creatures.

Sword of Fire

This weapon can launch as many Fiery Darts (as per the Elementalist power of the same name) per day as the character's Melee mod. It can also be used as a normal sword.

Spear of Vapor, Shield of Ice

The Spear of Vapor, when thrown by a character with a Skill of 13 or higher, turns into a vaporous form, bypassing armor, carapaces, shields, and other forms of armor. In game terms, it allows its thrower to ignore the effects of armor, shields, Tough Skin and Natural Armor, reducing the target's Defense Class by the appropriate amount.

The Spear can also be used to harm *Insubstantial* beings but has no special power against magical armor, magical shields or the *Invulnerability* special ability. It be retrieved after a battle.

The Shield of Ice adds an additional +2 bonus to the effective Defense Class of its wielder (for a total bonus of +4). This modifier of +4 is also applied to the user's Danger Evasion rolls against fire-based special attacks, such as Breath Weapons or the Fire powers of an Elementalist.

Mail Shirt of Air

Wispy and pliable as a sheet of silk, this shirt gives the same protection as a normal breastplate (+2 to Defense Class), but has an effective Encumbrance value of 0 (yes, zero !).

Its light weight and thin mass also allow it to be worn under a breastplate, for increased protection.

The Shirt of Air is also very stylish, automatically form-fitting its wearer, which makes it usable by fashion-conscious Nymphs as well as brawny Barbarians. Speaking of Barbarians, the lightness of the Shirt also makes it compatible with the special defensive bonus of Barbarians, Amazons and Thieves (unlike a breastplate).

Breastplate of Earth

This breastplate adds a total of +6 to the wearer's effective Defense Class, but only as long as the wearer remains firmly standing on the ground once combat begins.

If the character ever uses *tactical movement* or *full movement* while wearing the Breastplate of Earth, its protection reverts to that of a normal breastplate (+2) for the entire battle round(s) during which this movement occurs. It has the Encumbrance value of a normal breastplate (3).



Mail Shirt of Air ? Nay, 'tis the Armor of Eleon !

FURY OF THE BOARMEN

A not-so-classic cavern crawl scenario for beginning characters by **Olivier Legrand**

Fury of the Boarmen is a short scenario for a small party of first level adventurers. It works well as an introductory adventure and can easily be run in a single, 3 to 4 hour gaming session. Depending on the importance given to the character of Lelios and his tragic story (see below), there are two ways of running this adventure : either as a fast-paced, classic cavern crawl or as a more involved story about rejection, blood ties and betrayed feelings. This scenario was actually created with the Adventure Plot generator given in the *Maze Masters Guide* (p 34-35), with the following rolls :

Adventure Patron = 3, a noble person / family.

Main Location = 1, deep caverns.

Adventure Goal = 5, rescue important captive(s).

Complication = 1, foul play.

The Mission

As they are travelling throughout the Land of the Three Cities, the adventurers come across the villa domain of Lord Joris, a local Noble. Here, they are greeted by two household guards who take them before Lord Joris himself. An ageing, melancholy man, Joris soon tells them the following tale : his only living child, his beloved daughter Veda, who has just turned 19, has been abducted three days ago by a marauding band of brutish Boarmen.

Veda was taking a walk in the woods to collect various medicinal plants, accompanied by two of her father's retainers, when the Beastmen ambushed them. One of the retainers was killed by the Boarmen ; the other one was grievously injured but lived long enough to return to Joris' house and raise the alarm : before drawing his last breath, he explained how Veda was captured by the beastly marauders and was taken away, alive and kicking, as if the Boarmen were following specific orders...

A small rescue party composed of soldiers and woodsmen was quickly organized. After a full day of tracking and scouting, the trail of the Beastmen led Joris' men to the Caverns of Voros, which are said to be cursed and are viewed with considerable fear by the superstitious locals. As the men were arguing among themselves about whether or not they should enter the caves, they were ambushed by Boarmen, who slaughtered them all – except for one of them, who was lucky enough to escape and returned to Lord Joris' house to tell the tale...

Joris desperately needs the adventurers' help and asks them to rescue his beloved daughter before the Boarmen kill her (or make her suffer "a fate worse than death"), the nobleman will reward them with his eternal gratitude and all the money he could gather, a total of 3000 silver pieces (which is quite a sum, enough to buy a small ship).



Lord Joris, the worried father

A Family Secret

As implied by the Complication roll (Foul Play) of this adventure, the story told to the adventurers by Lord Joris is NOT the whole truth : it does not include any outright lie but it purposefully omits some very important facts... Alert adventurers will have noticed that Lord Joris referred to his daughter as "his only living child". If this topic is raised during conversation, Joris will reply in a very cold manner that his only son, Veda's twin brother, has been "taken away from him" by the same foul creatures that now have captured his daughter. Lord Joris will not discuss the matter further but the adventurers may have the familiar feeling that "something isn't quite right" here. If they question servants about Joris' son, they might learn his name (Lelios) but will not get any substantial information about his fate, as if Joris' people had been explicitly ordered to avoid this subject with strangers – in fact, their Lord has expressly forbidden them to even mention his son's name in his presence. If hard pressed, they will use euphemisms like "Lord Joris has lost his son", never explicitly telling whether Lelios is alive or dead.

The young man is, in fact, very much alive... but he has been disavowed and banished by his father because he is... a Shapeshifter !

The Fate of Lelios

Lelios first discovered his shapechanging powers 6 years ago, at the age of 13; he didn't tell anybody about his prodigious, newfound abilities in total secrecy, (rightfully) fearing the reaction of his father if he ever found out his son was a "freak of nature".

Lelios kept his secret to himself – he would have loved to share it with his dear sister Veda, but he also feared her reaction and did not want to run the risk of being rejected by the person he loved the most in this world... but this secrecy caused a lot of

tension in Lelios. This emotional stress, as well as the necessity of being alone to explore his new powers, gradually eroded his relationship with Veda, who never understood why her beloved brother had changed so much and why he no longer seemed interested in her confidences or in her company.

The only one who knew about Lelios' magical gifts, unbeknownst to Lelios himself, was Euryskos the Satyr - see below for more details on this character and his possible role in the adventure.

Then, one year ago, a local hunter wandering in the nearby woods unwittingly witnessed one of Lelios' transformations (from Stag back to his human form). Believing that some evil forest spirit had somehow taken possession of his lord's son, he ran to Joris' house and told him what he had seen.

When Lelios, who was unaware that he had been observed, returned to his father's estate a few hours later, he was confronted by Joris and several of his most faithful retainers, who all thought that Lelios was in fact some malevolent, appearance-stealing creature in the guise of Lelios : the men quickly restrained him and a local Priest was called to the rescue. In fear and confusion, Lelios managed to take the form of a hawk and fled for his life...

During the following night, a naked, exhausted and terrified Lelios sneaked back in his father's house; he went to his sister Veda and told her the whole truth. As the young man was weeping in his sister's embrace, their father burst in, mad with rage and anger. *"It's me, father ! I am your son !"* cried Lelios.

Veda tried to reason her father but he refused to listen to her desperate pleas and drew his sword... Lelios could only save his life by taking once again the form of a bird... While transforming, he heard his father utter these fateful words, which left no doubt in his mind : *"You are no longer my son !"* Lelios fled away and was never seen again.

Lelios lived in the wilderness. He survived as he could, spending most of his time in various animal forms, which made hunting and feeding easier. It also allowed him to remain completely undetected by his father's men, who had been ordered to search the nearby woodlands for the "degenerate freak". His new way of living gradually changed Lelios, hardening his heart and darkening his soul.

Meanwhile, Veda sank into despair and melancholy, blaming her father for having forsaken her beloved twin brother. She tried to run away a few times, so Lord Joris had her watched and guarded at all times by two of his most loyal retainers.

But let's get back to Lelios. A few weeks ago, during one of his "animal trips" in a nearby forest, he saw a group of three brutish Boarmen hunting in the woods and followed them back to the Caverns of Voros. When he realized that there was at least a dozen of other Boarmen living here, he began to think about a plan...

Lelios



Level 1 Shapeshifter, age 19, rejected son

Personality : Used to be a bright, promising boy; a bit shy, perhaps, but full of life; since his rejection, he has turned into a bitter, callous, vengeful soul.

Attributes : Might 10, Skill 13, Luck 15, Wits 16, Will 13, Grace 14.

Combat : Initiative 13, Melee +3, Missile +5, Basic Defense Class 14, Hits Total 8.

Saving Rolls : Athletic Prow +3, Danger Evasion +5, Mystic Fort +4, Physical Vigor +3.

Personal Charisma : +4.

Magic : Protean Repertoire 4*, Power points 6.

Background Talents : Actor, Woodsman.

** His Protean Repertoire includes the four following nonhuman forms, with their Power costs : Hawk (5), Fox (5) Stag (4) and Boarmen (4).*

*See the **Mazes & Minotaurs Companion** (p 20-22) for more about Shapeshifters and their powers.*

My Son... the Shapeshifter

It might seem odd that, in a magically-rich world such as Mythika, a Shapeshifter should be rejected as an "unnatural freak" by his own father... but Joris' reaction is actually quite symptomatic of the social stigma against Shapeshifters. Sure, magic is part of life on Mythika... but Metamorphosis is something of a special case, since its very nature points to the taint of Chaos – something that Mineans tend to view as "inherently bad". Furthermore, Metamorphosis is a very mysterious form of magic : it is neither learned nor granted by the Gods and seems to be more a "twist of nature" than anything else – that plus the fact that the power of Shapeshifting is usually thought to be a hereditary gift... Since nobody in Joris' family has ever exhibited such a power, the shock and repulsion he felt when faced with his son's "coming out" can also be interpreted as a rejection of the boy's paternity. In other words, Joris is really convinced that Lelios *cannot be his son* – and since Joris' wife died several years ago, all the terrible questions that this revelation brought to Joris' mind are bound to remain unanswered.

Lelios' Revenge

Returning to the forest, Lelios practiced his shapeshifting and was soon able to turn into a very convincing Boarman. Being far more clever than the real pig-faced brutes, Lelios joined their band without arousing their suspicion and quickly became their leader, after killing the former "top hog" in single combat (thanks to his high Luck and Wits, which allowed him to use Subterfuge tactics in a very efficacious manner). Having submitted the Boarmen to his command, he then led a small group of them to the borders of his father's estate. As soon as the opportunity arose, Lelios and his Boarmen abducted Veda, killing one of her chaperons in the process before fleeing back to the Caverns...

As the leader of the Boarmen, Lelios claimed the captive for himself, making sure that no other Boarman would harm her. At first, Veda was terrified... but the strangely clever Boarman leader made her understand who he really was.

For Lelios, Veda's abduction was just a way of declaring war on his father. The next stage of his plan is to organize a massive raid on his father's land and destroy everything he has. Lelios has not decided whether or not he will kill his father : for now, he just want Joris to suffer and despair. That's the real reason why he abducted Veda, even if he prefers to believe (and have Veda believe) that he was driven by the need to have his beloved sister at his side. His grief, humiliation and loneliness have changed him, turning him into a bitter, hateful, callous creature – or, in his own view, into the fiend that his father wanted him to be. Veda has only begun to realize this and is becoming more and more afraid of her brother, despite her love for him.

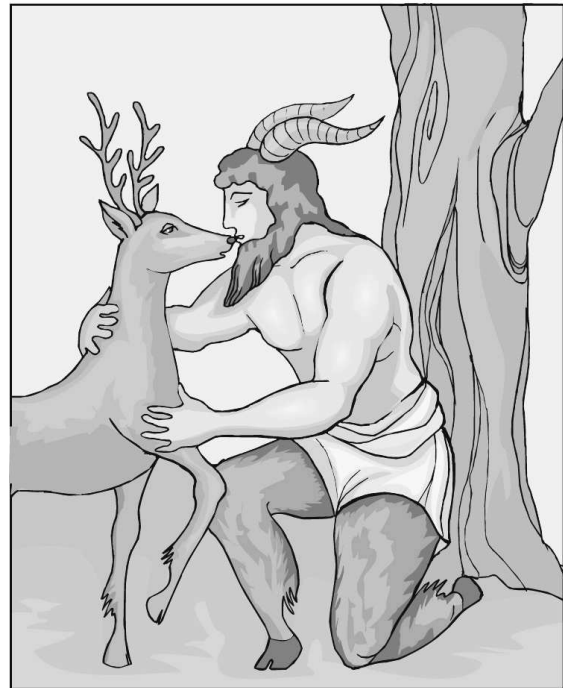
The Trip to the Caverns

If the characters accept to rescue Lord Joris' daughter, he will order some of his most trusted retainers to lead the party through the woods – but none of them will dare enter the Caverns.

The trip takes slightly more than one day of travel and, aside from the optional encounters detailed below, should be largely uneventful – unless the Maze Master wishes to spice things up with one or two extra encounters, preferably with wild beasts and other woodland creatures.

The Dryads

Maze Masters may consider adding an encounter with a few curious young Dryads who might heal, help or even hide wounded adventurers once they are out of the Caverns – especially if they are chased by those nasty, brutish Boarmen... but under no circumstance will these frivolous Nymphs accept to venture into the Caverns themselves. This optional encounter will be especially appropriate if the group does not have access to magical healing (or has never met Nymphs before).



Euryskos the Satyr and one of his Forest Friends

Euryskos the Satyr

If the Maze Master wishes to emphasize the tragic dimension of Lelios' character, the party should meet the Satyr Euryskos on their way to the Caverns – see below for more details about this encounter. Maze Masters who prefer to run this scenario as a classic, fast-paced cavern crawl should simply leave the Satyr out of the story.

Euryskos the Satyr is a really nice guy and, as far as Satyr standards go, a bit of a hermit. Unlike most other Satyrs, Euryskos is a thoughtful, meditative and sensitive type : he likes watching the stars at night and listening to the quiet music of the forest. He lives in the woods, among the local animals whom he considers as his friends, and has no contact with other members of his kin. Euryskos is on friendly terms with the local Dryads (see above) but, oddly, has never really tried to seduce anyone of them – much to the young Nymphs' surprise, given the behavior of Satyrs in general. The Dryads have accepted the fact that Euryskos was "special" and have developed a unique friendship with the lonely Satyr, whom they see as a sort of elder brother and confidant.

Euryskos knows everything that happens in the woods. Unbeknownst to Lelios, the Satyr has witnessed several of his transformations, including the first few ones, and has kept a watchful eye on the young lad, wisely sensing that terrible trouble would erupt when Lelios' gift would be discovered by his father, the haughty Lord Joris. Many times, Euryskos was tempted to make his presence known to the troubled Lelios but he never did – perhaps because of his shyness... or perhaps because he felt that his intervention would only make things even more complicated for the young man.

Aside from Veda and Lelios himself (who has never even suspected the Satyr's presence), Euryskos is the only one to know that the Boarman leader is in fact the shapeshifted Lelios. Euryskos also knows that Lelios and the Boarmen have abducted Veda; he has even witnessed the slaughter of the search party by the pig-faced brutes. Euryskos now feels he has to intervene before this whole story ends up in blood and tragedy for everyone – which is the reason why he will approach the adventurers.

Euryskos will come to the party in a peaceful and straightforward manner. He will welcome them to the forest and tell them he has some very important information to share with them. Then he will reveal the truth about Lelios : his shapeshifting debuts in the forest, how he was banished from his home, how he assumed the form of a Boarman to take control of a band of Boarmen marauders and how they abducted poor Veda. Once his story is told, Euryskos will ask the adventurers to spare the life of Lelios, who is, according to him, *"more troubled and misled than truly malevolent."* Euryskos even thinks he could help the young Shapeshifter to start anew, once this whole sorry business is over. Whether or not the adventurers intend to spare Lelios is up to them... and whether or not Euryskos is right about Lelios is up to the Maze Master, as detailed under the *Aftermath* section at the end of the scenario.

Euryskos the Satyr

Euryskos has the usual game characteristics of his kin, with a few extra special abilities (Sharp Senses and Stealthy) that reflect his special personality and way of life. His only weapon is a sling. He will try to avoid any form of combat.

Size : Medium

Ferocity : Peaceful

Cunning : Clever

Mystique : Weird

Movement : 80'

Initiative : 18

Melee Attack : +1

Missile Attack : +2

Damage : 1d6

Defense Class : 15

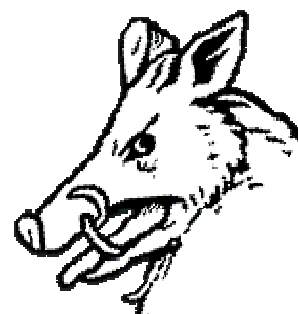
Hits Total : 8

Detection / Evasion : +8 / +10

Mystic Fortitude : +2

Abilities : Grapple (16), Lightning Fast, Missile Weapon (sling, 150'), Sharp Senses, Stealthy (18) Supernatural Vigor, Uncanny Agility.

Awards : Killing this well-meaning, non-violent Satyr will bring neither Glory nor Wisdom.



A brutish Boarman – or is this Lelios ?

Caves of the Boarmen

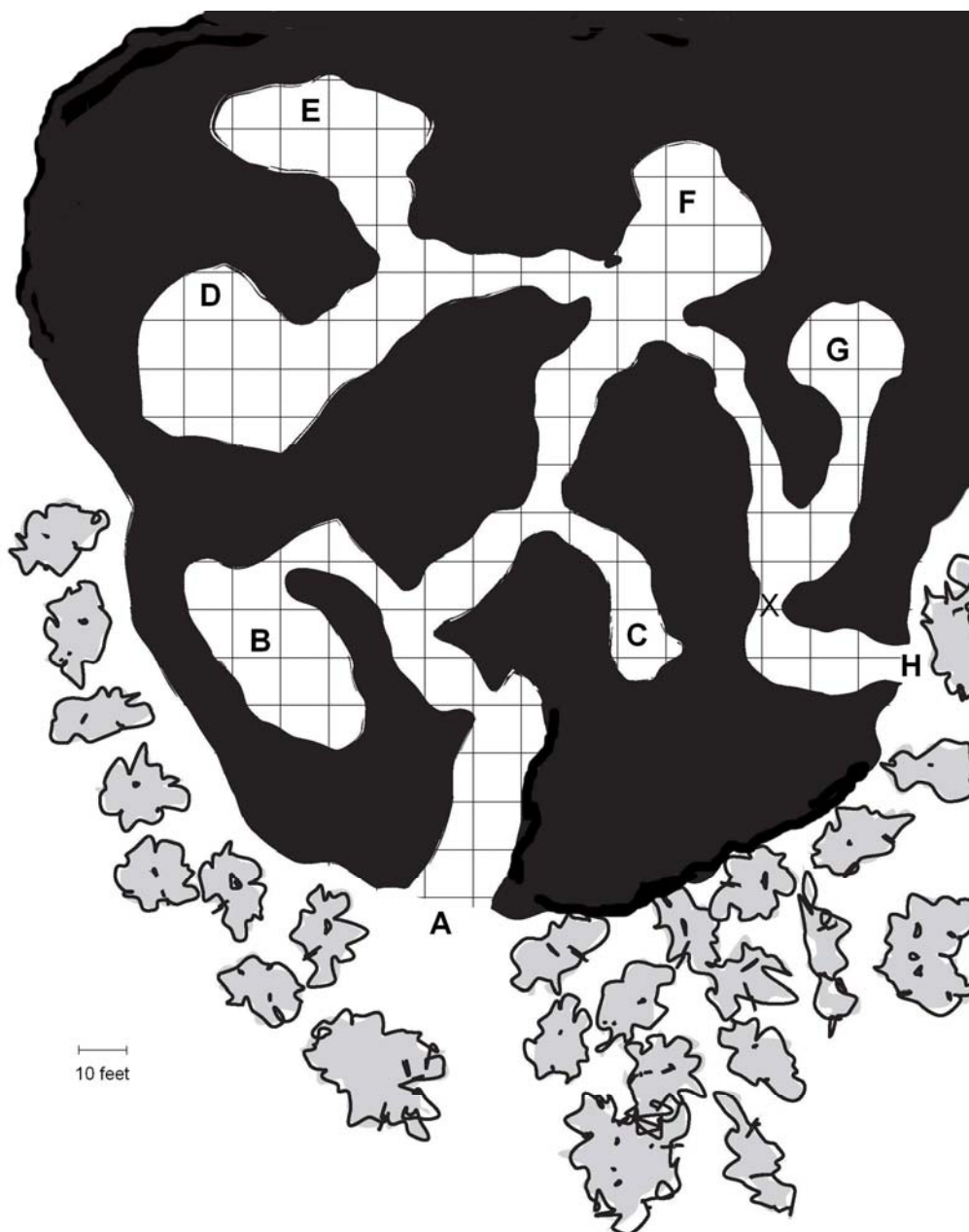
The number of Boarmen in Lelios' force should depend on the number of player-characters. To get this number, Maze Masters should multiply the number of adventurers by 3 and add 1d6 to this total. Thus, if you are running this scenario with four players, Lelios will have either 13 to 18 (1d6+12) Boarmen under his command.

All are standard members of their race, as described in the *Creature Compendium* (p 16). None of them carry shields and they all fight with one-handed weapons, mainly spears and crude axes. Like all Boarmen, they are very aggressive and will tend to attack all intruders on sight. They are fanatically loyal to their new cunning and ambitious leader... but they would certainly try to kill him on sight should they realize his true nature.

Even as Beastmen go, Boarmen are not very bright, disciplined or vigilant creatures. One or two easy victories are enough to make them believe in their own invincibility and these particular Boarmen have no reason to believe that Joris could send them men brave enough to venture into their Caverns. All this to say that Boarmen do not keep well-organized turns of watch duty and are likely to be surprised by any reasonably fast strike on their lair.

The Maze Master should place the Boarmen as he sees fits inside and around the Caverns, using the map given next page. The Boarmen are the only menace awaiting the adventurers in the caves : despite what local legends may imply, there are no fiendish traps, hidden dangers, ancient curses or wandering monsters in the Caverns, nor do they hide any treasure worthy of note – unless of course the Maze Master decides otherwise.

Maze Masters who want to make things tougher for the adventurers should feel free to add a few extra perils and denizens to the Caverns of Voros : perhaps some frightful Giant Spiders lurk in some unexplored, deeper level of the Caverns (which would explain the ill repute of the place), guarding some ancient, undiscovered treasure... or perhaps a few mythic items are scattered among the bony remains of their ancient victims (adventurers from an earlier, forgotten era). Another possibility could be an entrance to the realms of Hades, guarded by Charonts and other evil Spirits.



CAVE OF THE BOARMEN

Map Key

A) Main Entrance : This is the entrance used by the Boarmen themselves. It is likely to be guarded.

B) Empty Cavern : As shown on the map, the access to this chamber is extremely narrow, which explains why the Boarmen have left it unoccupied. At the Maze Master's discretion, this could also be an access to a deeper, more dangerous level of the caverns (see previous page for a few possibilities).

C) Dead End : Nothing of interest here.

D) Communal Cave : This is where the Boarmen gather to eat, feast, sleep etc. The only item of note here is the severed head of their previous leader, which has been left to rot in a small niche as a remainder of who is in charge now.

E) Leader's Lair : This is where Lelios (in his Boarman form) is most likely to be found. It is also there that Veda has been ordered by her brother to remain, under the "protection" of two Boarmen.

F) Storage Cave : There the Boarmen store their food, findings, extra weapons and other junk. There is absolutely nothing of real value here.

G) Boar Shrine : This small chamber holds a crude, 2' tall, wood-carved statuette of Og, the beastly god of Boarmen, surrounded by various offerings (mainly the remains of dead forest animals).

H) Hidden Entrance : The Boarmen don't know about this entrance nor do they know that the X-marked spot is actually a huge stone that can be moved away with a successful Feat of Strength.



Is fair Veda a Shapeshifter, too ?

The Fate of the Twins

While masquerading as the Boarman leader, Lelios will always let his warriors fight for him, unless someone manages to grab Veda, in which case he will attack that someone in mindless fury. At the Maze Master's discretion, such a crisis could also trigger an uncontrolled reversion of shape to Lelios' true form, with all the dramatic consequences that may ensue. Lelios' fate is pretty much into the Maze Master's hands : if wounded, he will either fight to the death in a blind, desperate rage... or turn into a hawk (which takes him one full battle round and costs him 5 Power points) and fly away – perhaps to return in a later scenario (see *Aftermath* below).

Veda's behavior and fate also depend on the tone you wish to give to the end of the adventure : she could either try to plead mercy for her misled brother or be grateful that the adventurers have freed her from the callous fiend her brother has become. In all cases, though, she is unlikely to forgive her father, whom she blames for rejecting Lelios and turning him into something else. (*"Nature or magic may have made Lelios different – but YOU, father, you're the one who really turned your son into a monster !"*)

Maze Masters might also consider the following twist : since Veda was Lelios' twin and since the power of shapeshifting is thought to be (at least partly) genetic in nature, then she too could well be a Shapeshifter – albeit a latent one, who has not yet discovered her powers. In this case, the major crisis of her abduction by Lelios could be the "trigger event" that unlocks her true heritage...

See *Aftermath* below for more details on possible endings and their consequences.

Aftermath

Although the plot of this scenario is very linear and straightforward, its ending is extremely open-ended. Here are a few possibilities :

The Death of Lelios

The Shapeshifter is killed by the adventurers or by the Boarmen themselves when they realize he was an impostor. Depending on her reactions to her brother's actions, Veda will either return to her father, saddened by the death of her brother but grateful to have escaped from his clutches... or escape to the forest to lead a new life under the protection of Euryskos and the Dryads.

Revenge of the Shapeshifter

Lelios manages to escape with his life and swears revenge against his father and those damned, meddling adventurers. His vengeance plans will also include his sister, if he feels she has forsaken or betrayed him. Depending on her reactions to her brother's actions, Veda may either return to her father's domain or decide to live on her own, in which case Euryskos will ask the local Dryads to help and adopt her.

Happy Ending

Lelios is spared by the adventurers and realizes all the harm he has done. Still forsaken by his father, he takes up residence in the forest under the tutelage of Euryskos the Satyr, who becomes his friend and mentor. Depending on how she reacted to Lelios' actions, Veda may either return to her father or take up residence in the woods too, living with her brother, Euryskos and the local Dryads.

Revenge of the Father

If, for some reason or another, Veda does not return home Lord Joris is likely to hold the adventurers responsible for the loss of his daughter and may try to get back at them later... Perhaps he becomes mad and hires an evil Sorcerer to Enslave them...

Unhappy Reunion

Veda does return home... but since she was Lelios' twin, her father begins to suspect that she too might not truly be *his* daughter. Perhaps he tries to kill her in a fit of blind rage... and she manages to escape and catch up with the adventurers and asking them to take her back to the safety of the woods, where the Dryads and Euryskos will help and protect her.

Fury of the Boarmen, the Sequel

Some Boarmen have survived and, in their beastly rage, decide to take revenge on Euryskos and the Dryads... Will the adventurers be there to defend the forest friends from the fury of the Boarmen ?

Olivier Legrand (2008)

Minotaur Play Nymph n°2



HYLAS AND THE NYMPHS, by *John W. Waterhouse* (1896)