A magazine for old school fantasy roleplayers



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# Editorial

Welcome to the new-look *Oubliette*. The changes are fairly subtle, and the magazine is still designed very much to be a printer-friendly PDF, but the new layout means it looks much better in its print-on-demand form. If this is your first taste of *Oubliette*, you can pick up all the back issues at rpgnow.com and a printed compilation is also available from Lulu.com

Hope you enjoy the issue.

Peter Regan, Editor



## Monster Club #8

#### The Monstermark System for Labyrinth Lord

The Monstermark System, by the late Don Turnbull, was originally published in White Dwarf Magazine (Issues 1-3 1978/79). A later, revised version, by Roger Musson, appeared in Imagine Magazine (Issue 25 1985). The system was designed to provide an accurate measure of how dangerous a given monster would be to an average 5th level fighter. Of course, experience points already do this to some extent, but they are a fairly crude measure.

For example, a 1st level party open a door, successfully surprising the four orcs that are lurking behind it. The orcs have 5HP, are AC7, and each has a hand weapon that's good for 1d6 damage. The party's magic-user has already cast his solitary *sleep* spell but the cleric still has a *cure light wounds* spell at the ready. The other three party members are all heavily-armoured fighters. Not surprisingly, the fighters engage the orcs and a few rounds later are standing over four fresh orc corpses. They've taken a couple of hits, but nothing the cleric, and a bandage, can't take care of.

Now, let's say the same party surprise the same four orcs but, this time, the orcs are all wearing plate mail (AC3) and wielding two-handed swords (1d10 damage). In this instance, the party close the door and flee. Although the orcs in plate have the same experience points value as the first group, they are clearly far more dangerous foes for the party to take on.

The Monstermark system, in essence, is a calculation that combines how many rounds a monster can survive, with the average damage it can deal per round. The Revised Monstermark rules use a 5th level fighter in plate mail with a shield (AC2) and longsword (1d8 damage) as a constant oponent. The system assumes that if the fighter dies, another identical one instantly takes his place.

The tables on page 5 provide most of the math required to calculate a creature's Monstermark. The first gives the number of rounds a monster with a given HD and AC will survive fighting our line of 5th level fighters. The second table shows the average damage by HD a monster deals per round. If a monster has more than one attack, then the average values are combined to give a total average damage per round. To calculate a creature's Monstermark, simply multiply the two figures. This would give an orc's Monstermark as 1.17 (1.67 rounds x 0.70 average damage). If the orc was wearing plate mail and armed with a two-handed sword its Monstermark would be 2.75 (2.50 rounds x 1.1 average damage).



Average Number of Rounds a Monster Survives, by AC

HD	AC9	AC8	AC7	AC6	AC5	AC4	AC3	AC2	AC1	AC0	AC-1	AC-2
1нр	0.32	0.34	0.37	0.40	0.44	0.49	0.56	0.63	0.74	0.89	1.11	1.48
1-4 <sub>HP</sub>	0.79	0.85	0.93	1.01	1.11	1.23	1.39	1.59	1.85	2.22	2.77	3.70
1	1.43	1.54	1.67	1.82	2.00	2.22	2.50	2.86	3.33	4.00	5.00	6.67
2	2.86	3.08	3.33	3.64	4.00	4.44	5.00	5.71	6.67	8.00	10.00	13.33
3	4.29	4.62	5.00	5.46	6.00	6.67	7.50	8.57	10.00	12.00	15.00	20.00
4	5.71	6.15	6.67	7.27	8.00	8.89	10.00	11.43	13.33	16.00	20.00	26.67
5	7.14	7.69	8.33	9.09	10.00	11.11	12.50	14.29	16.67	20.00	25.00	33.33
6	8.57	9.23	10.00	10.91	12.00	13.33	15.00	17.14	20.00	24.00	30.00	40.00
7	10.00	10.77	11.67	12.73	14.00	15.56	17.50	20.00	23.33	28.00	35.00	46.67
8	11.43	12.31	13.33	14.55	16.00	17.78	20.00	22.86	26.67	32.00	40.00	53.33
9	12.86	13.85	15.00	16.36	18.00	20.00	22.50	25.71	30.00	36.00	45.00	60.00
10	14.29	15.39	16.67	18.18	20.00	22.22	25.00	28.57	33.33	40.00	50.00	66.67
11	15.71	16.92	18.33	20.00	22.00	24.44	27.50	31.43	36.67	44.00	55.00	73.33
12	17.14	18.46	20.00	21.82	24.00	26.67	30.00	34.29	40.00	48.00	60.00	80.00
13	18.57	20.00	21.67	23.64	26.00	28.89	32.50	37.14	43.33	52.00	65.00	86.67
14	20.00	21.54	23.33	25.45	28.00	31.11	35.00	40.00	46.67	56.00	70.00	93.33
15	21.43	23.08	25.00	27.27	30.00	33.34	37.50	42.86	50.00	60.00	75.00	100.00
16	22.86	24.62	26.67	29.09	32.00	35.56	40.00	45.71	53.33	64.00	80.00	106.67

### Average Damage Dealt by Monster per Round

HD	Hit Prob	1d3	1d4	1d6	1d8	2d4	1d10	1d12	2d6	2d8	3d8
1 or less	0.20	0.40	0.50	0.70	0.90	1.00	1.10	1.30	1.40	1.80	2.70
1+ and 2	0.25	0.50	0.63	0.88	1.13	1.25	1.38	1.63	1.75	2.25	3.38
2+ and 3	0.30	0.60	0.75	1.05	1.35	1.50	1.65	1.95	2.10	2.70	4.05
3+ and 4	0.35	0.70	0.88	1.23	1.58	1.75	1.93	2.28	2.45	3.15	4.73
4+ and 5	0.40	0.80	1.00	1.40	1.80	2.00	2.20	2.60	2.80	3.60	5.40
5+ and 6	0.45	0.90	1.13	1.58	2.03	2.25	2.48	2.93	3.15	4.05	6.08
6+ and 7	0.50	1.00	1.25	1.75	2.25	2.50	2.75	3.25	3.50	4.50	6.76
7+ to 9	0.55	1.10	1.38	1.93	2.48	2.75	3.03	3.58	3.85	4.95	7.43
9+ to 11	0.60	1.20	1.50	2.10	2.70	3.00	3.30	3.90	4.20	5.40	8.10
11+ to 13	0.65	1.30	1.62	2.27	2.92	3.25	3.57	4.22	4.55	5.85	8.78
13+ to 15	0.70	1.40	1.75	2.45	3.15	3.50	3.85	4.55	4.90	6.30	9.45
15+ to 17	0.75	1.50	1.88	2.63	3.38	3.75	4.13	4.88	5.25	6.75	10.13

Special attacks and defences are not included in this version of the Monstermark System. The 1985 rules included additions for things like poison, paralysis or petrification attacks. Creatures were given an increased rating based on the potential lethality of their *special* attack. In place of this, I have included an additional rating for creatures with such attacks that shows the average number of saving throws an opponent (once again our trusty fighter in plate mail) will be forced to make before the creature is slain.

Here are a couple of worked examples of creatures with venomous attacks. A giant rattlesnake has a Monstermark of 7.04; its bite requires a victim to save versus Poison or die. The first table on page 5 shows that the snake will survive for an average of 8.00 rounds. It has a 35% chance of hitting the fighter, meaning he'll need to make an average of 2.80 saving throws during the fight. If we now consider a giant scorpion, it is has the same HD as the snake, but thanks to a better armour class and two nasty claw attacks, it manages a Monstermark of 54.18. Against the scorpion, our fighter would need to make an average of 4.57 saves. The scorpion is far more deadly in every aspect, yet in terms of experience points, the snake is worth 135 and the scorpion 190 - hardly representative of the relative danger of each creature.

Regenerating creatures present a problem for Monstermark calculations. For example, against a troll, our single-file line of 5th level fighters isn't able to deliver enough damage to knock a troll down to zero hit points. Regenerating creatures can still be given Monstermarks by ignoring their regenerative ability for the calculations. These creatures can then be evaluated on a case-by-case For instance, against a whole party of basis. adventurers, a troll might well only last a few rounds if it is subjected to multiple attacks per round. However, one-on-one, a troll could still give a very high-level fighter problems. In fact, with no strength or magic-related bonuses, our fighter would need to be 13th level before his average damage per round would beat the troll's three hit point per round regeneration. With this in mind, care should be taken when planning encounters that feature regenerating creatures. Consider the average damage per round the party will do against the opponents and gauge how long fights will be extended because of regenerated hits.

One factor that neither the Monstermark system nor experience points takes in to account is morale. In any given encounter either the monsters or the party can decide to flee, negotiate, or even surrender. Try not to get locked into the notion that all encounters have to be balanced, fair fights, as sometimes running away is the best option. When compiling wandering monster tables it is probably more appropriate to aim for more of a balance, especially if they feature creatures that are likely to attack a party on sight.

There is no doubt that players who make good use of tactics are far more likely to survive. In one situation, an encounter against a single, large opponent like an ogre (Monstermark 18.57) might be straightforward for a party of six 1st level adventurers. If they hear him crashing through the forest and take cover with bows at the ready, there's a chance that they might kill him before he makes a single attack. If the party encounter 14 orcs (Monstermark total 17.78) in the same area, they would be a lot harder to hide from. The party might be better making a run for it, or if they feel lucky, talking to them. Where a party has access to magic in the form of a spellcaster or an artefact, it can greatly reduce the threat posed by many encounters. A 1st level party with a sleep spell can make light work of sizeable groups of enemies. Likewise, a party with a cleric will have a far easier time dealing with skeletons and zombies. А Monstermark is just math at the end of the day and just an additional aid in setting up encounters.

Monstermark ratings could also be used to produce more accurate experience point values. To work out a creature's Monstermark experience point (mxp) value, simply multiply its Monstermark by 10, and then add the usual points for any special abilities, as given in the rules (LL p49). An orc, normally worth 10xp, would be worth 13mxp (MM:1.27 x 10). An ogre, normally 215xp, would be 186mxp (MM:18.57 x 10). This system also fixes anomalies in the existing xp rules that value a tiger at 570xp and a sabre-tooth tiger at just 560xp. Using the revised system the tiger would be worth 938mxp (MM:68.84 x 10 + 250). Its bigger sabre-toothed ancestor would be worth 1,442mxp (MM:144.19 x10).

Next issue, I'll take a look at revised encounter tables, created using Monstermark ratings.

#### Sample Montermarks

For each creature below I've listed: Monstermark rating, experience point value, Monstermark experience point value, and if applicable, average number of saving throws needed.

Ant, Gt. MM:24.50 XP:80 MXP:245

Basilisk MM:38.00 XP:570 MXP:630 Petrify Saving Thows 13.82

Bat, Gt. MM:2.29 XP:20 MXP:23

Bear, Grizzly MM:43.63 XP:200 MXP:436

Beetle, Carnivorous MM:19.75 XP:65 MXP:198

Beetle, Fire MM:3.20 XP:15 MXP:32

Bugbear MM:11.27 XP:100 MXP:148

Bulette (avg AC2) MM:630.67 XP:1,000 MXP:6,307

Cat, Tiger MM:68.84 XP:570 MXP:938

Cat, S-tooth Tiger MM:144.19 XP:560 MXP:1,442

**Centipede, Gt.** MM:0.16 XP:6 MXP:3 Poison Saving Throws 0.16

Crab, Gt. MM:35.99 XP:50 MXP:360

Cyclops MM:278.46 XP:2,400 MXP:3,685

Ettin MM:292.50 XP:1,700 MXP:3,625

**Ghoul** MM:6.84 XP:47 MXP:95 Paralysis Saving Throws 2.73

Giant, Hill MM:88.01 XP:560 MXP:880

Giant, Fire MM:288.52 XP:2,000 MXP:3,685

Goblin MM:0.99 XP:5 MXP:10

Hobgoblin MM:2.51 XP:15 MXP:25

Hydra, 7-Headed MM:134.75 XP:440 MXP:1,348

Kobold MM:0.47 XP:5 MXP:5

Lizard, Gt. Gecko MM:8.48 XP:100 MXP:120

Lizardfolk MM:5.99 XP:47 MXP:72

Ly'thrope, Werewolf MM:14.00 XP:190 MXP:250

Mimic HD7 MM:43.76 XP:790 MXP:788

Minotaur MM:34.48 XP:820 MXP:845

Ogre MM:18.57 XP:215 MXP:261

Orc MM:1.27 XP:10 MXP:13

Owl Bear MM:72.00 XP:350 MXP:870

**Purple Worm** MM:257.70 XP:3,300 MXP:4,377 Poison Saving Throws 19.09

**Rat, Gt.** MM:0.37 XP:6 MXP:5 Poison Saving Throws 0.19

Roc, Large MM:445.08 XP:1,200 MXP:4,451

Scorpion, Gt. MM:54.18 XP:190 MXP:652 Poison Saving Throws 4.57

Skeleton MM:1.17 XP:13 MXP:15

**Snake, Gt. Rattlesnake** MM:7.04 XP:135 MXP:125 Poison Saving Throws 2.80

**Spider, Gt. Black Widow** MM:11.47 XP:80 MXP:145 Poison Saving Throws 1.64

Statue, Crystal MM:14.01 XP:65 MXP:155

Stirge MM:0.67 XP:16 MXP:13

Toad, Gt. MM:4.27 XP:71 MXP:79

Wasp, Gt. MM:23.38 XP:135 MXP:289 Paralysis Saving Throws 3.11

Wolf, Dire MM:15.34 XP:140 MXP:153

Wyvern MM:157.50 XP:1,140 MXP:2,275 Poison Saving Throws 8.75

Zombie MM:3.48 XP:29 MXP:44



## The Vampire

#### Alternative Rules for Creating Terrifying Labyrinth Lord Vampires

Vampires in B/X and Advanced versions of the original fantasy roleplaying game are undoubtedly fearsome opponents. To some extent, their attributes do a good job of reflecting those of Vampires found in classic literature and films. For me, a vampire in a game 30 years ago would instantly have conjured up an image of Christopher Lee as Dracula. However, the established rules do not make any reference to drinking blood, so that is something the following rules will correct and then some! From the 1980s, many disparate ideas of vampires began to evolve. And today, depending on which book, film, or TV show you look at, vampires might be: good, bad, emotionally retarded, created by a virus and in one leading franchise, they even go all sparkly in sunlight, rather than being burnt to a crisp.

My intention is to provide a vampire toolkit to allow LLs to construct vampires that fit their campaign settings, and also to make vampires more of an unknown quantity, from the players' perspective. Vampires all share a number of strengths and weaknesses, but aside from these, individual vampires will vary greatly, according to their attributes in life. The older vampires get, the more powerful they become, and as they age, they may even gain new abilities. The downside is that as vampires become ancient and powerful, their mental health often deteriorates, making them highly unpredictable and far more dangerous.

When a person is drained to the point of death (Zero HP) by a vampire drinking his blood, then the vampire may elect to bring its victim back as a new vampire. To do this, the vampire must feed the victim a small quantity of its own vampiric blood and then leave the body buried in the earth. The newly-created vampire will then rise at dusk 1-3 days later with a raging hunger for blood. Normally, a vampires. However, if a newly-created vampire is not so instructed, it will not normally survive for very long. It will gorge on blood

with an unquenchable thirst, leaving a trail of corpses in its wake, paying little regard to its own vulnerability during daylight hours. The constant hunger for blood never leaves a vampire, but vampires learn to control it. Ancient vampires are often able go without blood for weeks with no ill effects.

When a character becomes a vampire it undergoes a traumatic physical and mental transformation. In essence, vampires are still the same persons that they were in life. However, all vampires are chaotic in respect to alignment, even if it conflicts with the path they followed in life. Such conflict will add to the tortured existence of being a vampire. Even if a vampire tries to do a good deed, it will always make sure it serves self interest before everything else. A vampire's main drives are the thirst for blood and having a safe place to sleep during the day. To determine the attributes of a newly-created vampire, consult the New Vampire Transformation Table below.

New Vampire Transformation Table							
Attribute	Adjustment						
Strength:	plus 2d4 points (maximum 18)*						
Dexterity:	plus 2d4 points (maximum 18)*						
Constitution:	plus 2d4 points (maximum 18)*						
Intelligence:	Unchanged						
Wisdom:	Unchanged						
Charisma:	plus 2d4 points (maximum 18)*						
Hit Dice:	Level in life <i>plus</i> 3to6 (1d4+2)**						
Armour Class:	5 plus dexterity adjustment						
Movement:	150' (50')						
Regeneration:	Hit dice x2						
Sanity Points:	Intellegence + wisdom minus 1d6						
*Maximum ability score is normally 18, but some LLs may prefer to allow higher scores in their games.							
**Minimum vampire hit dice is six.							

The following pages provide tables for vampire ageing, and descriptions of the many possible vampire traits and abilities.



'There are such beings as vampires; some of us have evidence that they exist. Even had we not the proof of our own unhappy experience, the teachings and the records of the past give proof enough for sane peoples.'

Professor Van Helsing in Dracula, by Bram Stoker (1897)

#### The Tale of Bill

Name: Bill Class: Fighter Level: 4 HP:20

Ability Scores: Strength12 Dexterity 13 Constitution 9 Intelligence 10 Wisdom 9 Charisma 11



Bill had gained quite a reputation from his adventures, but then he met Vlad the vampire. Vlad was pretty hungry, and after an easy fight and a quick drink, he found himself standing over poor Bill's corpse-like body. On a whim, Vlad decided he'd like another vampire to hunt alongside him. He cut open his wrist with a sharp finger nail, and let his blood trickle into Bill's gaping mouth.

Two nights later, Bill clawed his way up out of his shallow, earth grave. He stretched, taking in his new-found strength. His senses were buzzing, in a heightened state of awareness. However, the feeling of elation was quickly replaced by a desperate hunger. He heard laughter and whirled to see the vampire that had smitten him two days ago. In a flash of horrid memory and recognition, Bill realized he was no longer human. His tongue flicked over the two needlelike fangs that had replaced his upper lateral incisors. He was a vampire, and Vlad was his maker and master. He hated himself, and he hated the world that was now lost to him. But most of all, he hated Vlad. Internally, he swore an oath to himself, that he would avenge the atrocity committed on him. Vlad recognized the look of hate and disgust, and laughed even louder. "Come," he said, "you need blood." And with that he took off at a blistering pace. The hunger was even more intense now, and a moment later Bill was running after him.

A sample vampire record sheet for the newlycreated vampire named Bill, is shown on page 11. A blank version of the sheet is included in the supplemental materials section of this magazine.

As a vampire ages, it becomes more powerful and may even gain new abilities. Equally, the older a vampire gets, the more he risks losing control of his sanity. The four tables on page 12 determine all aspects of vampire ageing. You may prefer to make selections rather than rolling for the various changes, especially if you want a vampire to have a particular set of strengths and weaknesses to suit your campaign.

On page 13, is a vampire record sheet for vampire Bill when he is 1,000 years old. As a veteran vampire, he is a mighty foe, but he is prone to bouts of insanity, and has also become agoraphobic. He spends his days hidden away in the darkest recesses of his castle, and preys on any of the living, foolish enough to enter.



BILL Character name       HUMAN Race       FIGHTER Class       NEUTRAL Alignment before death         150' (50') Movement rate       4       8       31       0         Movement rate       4       Level before death       8       31       0         17       STR       +2 to hit/damage Modifier       9       Breath attacks       8         18       DEX       -3 AC       +3 missiles       9       9       Breath attacks         14       CON       NA       Modifier       9       Wands       12         10       INT       0       Modifier       15       Sanity points
$\frac{150' (50')}{Movement rate} = \frac{4}{Level before death} = \frac{8}{Hit dice} = \frac{31}{Age before death} = \frac{0}{Vampire age}$ $\frac{17}{17} STR + \frac{2 \text{ to hit/damage}}{Modifier} = \frac{31}{Modifier} = \frac{31}{Age before death} = \frac{0}{Vampire age}$ $\frac{18}{18} DEX + \frac{3 AC}{Modifier} + 3 \text{ missiles}}{Modifier} = \frac{14}{10} CON \frac{NA}{Modifier} = \frac{NA}{Modifier} = \frac{12}{Vampire age} = \frac{12}{Vampire age}$
<ul> <li>17 STR +2 to hit/damage Modifier</li> <li>18 DEX -3 AC +3 missiles Modifier</li> <li>9 Breath attacks</li> <li>8 Poison or death</li> <li>10 Petrify or paralyze</li> <li>9 Wands</li> <li>12 Spells / spell-like devices</li> <li>16 Sunlight</li> </ul>
18 DEX <u>-3 AC</u> +3 missiles 10 Petrify or paralyze 9 Wands 12 Spells / spell-like devices 16 Sunlight
14 CON NA Modifier 12 Spells / spell-like devices 16 Sunlight
$9 WIS _{\frac{0}{Modifier}} $
15 CHA <u>-1 reactions</u> Modifier Hit points Regeneration poin (HD+CON)
To hít AC 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
BITE 1d6+2 (neck -4 to hit) 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3
OPEN HAND 2d4+2 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3
L. SWORD 1d8+2 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 Armour class
Vampire abilities Languages and spells Equipment and possession
CHARM GAZE COMMON LONG SWORD
IMMUNE TO SLEEP     AL LANGUAGE NEUTRAL     50GP
IMMUNE TO HOLD     150GP IN GEMS
50% COLD RESISTANCE 50% ELECTRIC RESISTANCE
LEVEL DRAIN
Vampíre Dísadvantages
Vampire Disadvantages       BLOOD LUST

Vampire Ageing Table										
Age	Hit Dice Adj	Ageing Effects								
20	plus 1 hit die*	roll once on Ability Table 1								
50	plus 1 hit die*	roll once on Sanity Table								
100	plus 1 hit die*	roll once on Ability Table 2								
150	plus 1 hit die*	roll once on Sanity Table								
200	plus 1 hit die*	roll once on Ability Table 1								
300	plus 1 hit die*	roll once on Sanity Table								
400	plus 1 hit die*	roll once on Ability Table 2								
500	plus 1 hit die*	roll once on Sanity Table								
600	plus 1 hit die*	roll once on Ability Table 1								
700	plus 1 hit die*	roll once on Sanity Table								
800	plus 1 hit die*	roll once on Ability Table 2								
900	plus 1 hit die*	roll once on Sanity Table								
1,000	plus 1 hit die*	roll once on Ability Table 1								
1,200	plus 1 hit die*	roll once on Sanity Table								
1,500	plus 1 hit die*	roll once on Ability Table 2								
2,000	plus 1 hit die*	<i>roll</i> once on Sanity Table								

\*Maximum vampire hit dice is 20, thereafter a vampire gains two hit points only as it reaches each new age bracket.

#### **Ability Table 1**

- d100 Special Ability/Enhancement
- 01-05 *plus* one point of strength\*
- 06-10 *plus* one point of dexterity\*
- 11-15 *plus* one point of constitution\*
- 16-20 plus one point of intelligence\*
- 21-30 *plus* one point of wisdom\*
- 31-40 *plus* one point of charisma\*
- 41-50 *minus* one point of armour class
- 51-60 *plus* 30' (10') movement
- 61-70 Climbing
- 71-80 Hear noise
- 81-90 Jumping
- 91-00 Move silently

\*Maximum ability score is normally 18, but some LLs may prefer to allow higher scores in their games.

	Sanity Table								
d100	Sanity Effects								
01-30	No effect								
31 <b>-</b> 60	minus one sanity point								
61-80	minus two sanity points								
81 <b>-</b> 90	minus three sanity points								
91-93	Blood lust								
94	Megalomania								
95	Greed								
96	Split personality								
97	Depression								
98	Agoraphobia								
99	Manic depressive								
00	roll twice (ignore repeats of this result)								



### Ability Table 2

- d100 Special Ability/Enhancement
- 01-15 No effect
- 16-25 Gaseous form
- 26-35 Flying
- 36-45 Polymorph self
- 46-55 Summoning
- 56-65 Animate dead
- 66-75 Invisibility
- 76-80 Control weather
- 81-85 Telepathy
- 86-90 Telekinesis
- 91-95 Extra-sensory perception
- 96-00 *roll* twice (ignore repeats of this result)

**General Note:** If a vampire rolls the same special ability twice, then the LL may elect to roll again, or give the vampire an enhanced version of the ability.

Vampire Reco	ord S	heet	t										
BILL		HU	MAN Ce		FIG	HTER S	2	_ !	NEUTRAL				
Character name		0							Alignment before death				
<u>180' (60')</u> Movement rate		<mark>4</mark> Lev	vel befa	ore dei	ath	<u>20</u> Hít	díce	<u>3</u>	l ge bef	ore dea	<b>1,000</b> th Vampíre age		
[17]ST	R	+2	<mark>to hit</mark> fier	t/dan	nage			Г			ng throws		
		Modí	fier					-			attacks		
[18]DE	Х	-3	<b>AC</b> fier	+3 n	nissile	es		-	<ul><li>3 Poíson or death</li><li>4 Petrífy or paralyze</li></ul>				
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#### **A-Z of Vampire Traits**

This list serves as glossary for vampire abilities and as a reference for other aspects of running vampires in a game. It should be treated as a pool of source material from which you may select rules, and, as required, adapt them to suit your campaign.

Animate Dead – If a vampire gains this ability, it operates in much the same way as the cleric spell *animate dead*. The vampire may raise dead within a 60' radius once per night. The dead will rise as either zombies or skeletons, depending on the level of



decomposition of the remains being animated. A vampire may animate creatures up to the same total hit dice value as its own hit dice. For example, a 16 hit dice vampire may animate 16 skeletons or 8 zombies – or a combination of both up to a total of 16 hit dice. These undead will remain under the control of the vampire until it is destroyed, and will follow simple, single-sentence commands only.

**Attacks** – If a vampire attacks a victim with its bite it does 1d6 points of damage. However, if the prey is a charmed or willing victim, the bite does no damage. Vampires will normally attempt to bite a victim's neck, for which they receive a -4 to hit. On making a successful bite attack, the vampire begins to drain blood. No further to hit rolls are required, and for each round of blood-drain, the victim will lose one point of both strength and constitution. If either score reaches five or less, the victim will pass out, and if either score falls below three, the victim dies. If a victim is resisting the vampire, then the vampire may continue to savage the victim's neck as it feeds, causing an additional 1d6 damage every round.

A vampire may also attack opponents with its fists, for 2d4 damage plus any strength modifier. Some vampires will use weapons and wear armour, especially if they used them in their former lives. Vampire arms and armour will often be ornate in design and magical in nature.

**Blood Lust** – When a vampire is first made, it has an unquenchable thirst for blood. Each night, it will have to make a sanity check every time a living, humanoid creature crosses its path. If the vampire fails a check, it will instantly attempt to bite and drain the creature's blood. Even though a vampire will be well fed on two pints of blood, the thirst will rage regardless of how much blood is consumed. When it becomes bloated, the vampire will vomit blood and continue searching for more victims to drain. The thirst for blood never leaves a vampire, but with guidance, usually from the vampire's maker, it will learn a degree of control. As vampires age and gain in power, they gain more control over the urge to feed. However, when vampires become ancient, and the grip they have on their sanity begins to slip, they can be afflicted with the same blood lust as a newly-made vampire suffers. This, combined with their great age and power, makes them truly terrifying beasts, capable of wiping out a whole village in a single evening.

**Charm Gaze** – All vampires have an ability to charm prospective victims with a gaze. The charm gaze has the same effect as a *charm person* spell. The victim is permitted a saving throw versus Spells, but they suffer a penalty based



on the Vampire's charisma score (12 or less: 0, 13-15: -1, 16-17: -2, 18: -3).

**Control Weather** – Although rare, some ancient vampires develop the ability to control weather. The ability works in the same way as the 7th level cleric spell *control weather* but the weather effect will never be one that increases or intensifies the amount of sunlight. A vampire with this ability may use it once per week.

**Drinking Blood** – Vampires are undead beings and, as such, require no food. However, all vampires must drink blood in order to remain at full strength. A newly-created vampire will have a constant thirst for blood, and without the aid of an older vampire, it will feed



constantly every night. This uncontrollable blood lust makes the vampire more and more vulnerable with every night that passes. It is unusual for such a vampire to survive more than a week or two, as

the trail of death it leaves makes it far easier to track and destroy during daylight hours. If correctly trained for a minimum of three months, a vampire learns to control the urge to feed. A vampire will normally need to feed at intervals equal to no more than its own hit dice in days. For example, a 10 hit dice vampire would require blood at least once every 10 days. For a normal vampire, a feed requires one to two pints of fresh, warm blood. Once a vampire goes past its normal feeding interval limit, it must make a sanity check every time it encounters a warm-blooded creature. If it fails this check, the vampire will take everincreasing risks in order to drink the creature's blood. Once a vampire goes past its normal feeding interval limit, it also starts to lose regeneration points at the rate of two per day. Once the vampire's regeneration points have all gone, then the vampire starts losing hit points at the rate of one per day. A vampire will not die from this starvation but will continue to lose hit points until it is reduced to 10% of its full hit points. A single feed will restore all of a vampire's regeneration points, and allow it to heal instantly by using them. If a vampire feeds and then rests for one day, it will always rise that evening with full hit points and regeneration points.

#### Extra-Sensory Perception -

If a vampire develops this ability, it functions in the same way as the 2nd level magic-user spell *ESP*. The vampire may use the ability up to three times per day.





**Fire** – Vampires are vulnerable to fire-based attacks, and will take full damage from them. However, fire will only destroy a vampire if the creature is completely reduced to ash.

Flying – With age, some vampires develop the power of flight. This allows them to fly/levitate/hover at up to twice their normal ground movement rate.



Garlic – Vampires loathe garlic and will cringe for



1d4 rounds if threatened with it. Depending on the circumstances, the vampire may be given the benefit of a saving throw to overcome the effect. Vampires will also tend to avoid feeding on victims that regularly eat garlic, as the taste taints the blood.

**Gaseous Form** – If a vampire gains this ability, it allows it to assume gaseous form, and travel in the air at its normal ground movement rate. The ability can be used up to three times every 24 hours.





**Hear Noise** – All vampires have acute hearing, but in some it develops even further. Such vampires are able to *hear noise* in the same way as a thief of a level equal to the vampire's hit dice.

**Holy Symbols –** A vampire will always recoil if confronted with a lawful Holy symbol. It will try to attack indirectly, anyone bearing such a symbol. However, if the vampire comes into contact with such a symbol it will take 1d6+1 points of damage.



**Holy Water** – Holy water has the same effect on vampires as it does on most undead creatures. When splashed with it, they take 1d6+1 points of damage.



**Immunities** – As undead beings, vampires are immune to all forms of sleep, hold, and charm type attacks. They also only take half damage from cold, and electrically-based attacks. At the LL's discretion they can be made immune to normal weapons, but silver weapons will damage them, and may also cause additional burn damage.

**Invisibility** – A vampire that gains this ability can make itself invisible in the same manner as the 2nd level magic-user spell. As with the spell, if the vampire makes an attack, it instantly becomes visible. The ability can be used a maximum of three times every 24 hours. **Invitation** – A vampire may not enter a residence unless invited in by a member of the household. Thereafter, the vampire may come and go as it pleases, unless the inviter rescinds the invitation.



**Jumping** – All vampires enjoy greatly increased strength and dexterity, but a vampire with *this* ability is able to spring, bound, and pounce like a cat. From a standing start, the vampire may jump up to 30 feet forwards, 10 feet backwards, or 10 feet straight up. There is no limit to the

number of uses a vampire may make of this ability, but total movement per round will never exceed the vampire's normal rate.

**Level Drain** – In some instances, when vampires consume blood, they may also drain life-force energy from their victims. If using this ability, a vampire drains two levels per round from the person it is feeding on.





Mirrors - Vampires have no reflections and will always avoid mirrors and other reflective surfaces. In brightly lit rooms, they will skulk and crawl to avoid exposure to their nonreflection. In dark rooms, they will be less restricted,

but will still be wary of anything that might expose their lack of a reflection. Sunlight reflected by a mirror will have the same effect as direct sunlight, but any saving throws against reflected light receive a +4 bonus as the rays will be weaker. Anyone using a mirror to direct light at a vampire must also make a successful to hit roll against the vampire's unarmoured armour class.

**Move Silently –** All vampires are able to move quietly, provided, they are not wearing metal armour. In some vampires, this ability develops further and they



become able to move silently. This ability gives a vampire the same chance of success as a thief of a level equal to the vampire's hit dice.

**Movement** – All vampires may move at a faster rate than they did in life. The base move for a vampire is 150' per 10 minute turn for exploration and 50' per 10 second round in combat. Some vampires gain increased movement speed as they age.



**Polymorph Self –** A vampire that gains this ability is able to change into a giant bat or a large, black wolf (in game terms equivalent to a dire wolf). As a vampire with the ability to polymorph ages, it

may also learn how to change into other creatures, but the ability, like spells of the same name, will not allow a vampire to assume an individual identity. Polymorphing vampires can do so up to three times per 24 hours.



**Regeneration** – All vampires can regenerate at the rate of three hit points per round. However, this regeneration is not unlimited, and all vampires have a bank of regeneration points that diminishes as they heal themselves. To determine how many regeneration points a vampire has, simply multiply its hit dice by two. A vampire can only restore regeneration points by feeding on blood. If it cannot feed, then it cannot heal itself even with rest.

**Resting** – During daylight hours, vampires must rest, either in a coffin/sarcophagus, or simply buried in the earth. If vampires do not rest during the day, they take damage at the rate of one point per hour. In addition, a vampire that misses rest may not replenish special abilities that it made use of the previous night.



**Sanity** – Becoming a vampire is a very traumatic transformation for both mind and body. To reflect their mental health, all vampires have a sanity point score. Their initial sanity points are equal to the sum of their intelligence and wisdom minus

1d6. As vampires age, they risk losing sanity points and, in some cases, they may develop other mental health problems. When a vampire tries to act against its nature, the LL may elect to make a sanity roll for it. This is simply a d20 roll like a saving throw, where a result less than or equal to the vampire's sanity point score is a save. If the roll is failed, then the vampire will take an action that may be impulsive, random, risky, cowardly, etc... For example, a vampire that hasn't fed for 10 days during a long sea journey will be required to make a sanity check every time it encounters someone on the ship. Success means the vampire manages to suppress its hunger, but failure means someone's going to get bitten.

Along with a gradual slide into insanity, ancient vampires are also risk from other mental health maladies. If they are unlucky, they can find themselves suffering from one or more of the following: megalomania, greed, split personality, depression, agoraphobia, manic depression. It is left to the LL to decide how the symptoms of these conditions will manifest.

**Saving Throws** – Vampires have their own saving throw tables (see below) which give them saves equal to a fighter of the same level as their hit dice. In addition, vampires also have a special saving throw versus sunlight.



**Scent** – As undead creatures, vampires carry a recognizable scent of death and decay. They will often mask this with strong-smelling perfumes and balms. Vampires that spend daylight hours in the earth also emerge in a filthy state.

**Sense of Smell** – All vampires have an acute sense of smell which rivals that of many wild animals. It is particularly tuned to the scent of fresh blood and they



will easily be able to pick up and track this scent at a distance of several hundred feet, depending on wind and weather conditions.

**Silver** – Vampires suffer burns when their flesh comes into contact with silver. They are vulnerable to silver weapons, and if successfully struck with one, will take an additional 1d6 points , of burn damage. A vampire may



be bound with the lightest of silver chains and will be barely able to move when restrained in this way. If bound by silver, a vampire will lose 1d6 hit points per round, until it is reduced down to one hit point. Silver damage may only be healed/regenerated once the silver is removed.

**Spells** – If a vampire was a magic-user in life, then there is a chance that they retain this ability in death. Vampire magic-users may also continue to advance as they age with each extra hit dice being equivalent to one extra magic-user level. In exceptional circumstances, a vampire may begin training as a magic-user, but this process will require study under a high-level magic-user, making it a very rare event indeed.

**Staking –** Driving a stake through a vampire's heart kills it. However, if the stake is removed, the vampire will begin regenerating. To be sure a staked vampire does not rise again, the body should be burned to ash, or the head should be completely severed.

Vampire Saving Throw Table									
Hit	Breath	Poison or	Petrify or	Wands	Spells	Sunlight			
Dice	Attacks	Death	Paralyze						
6	13	10	12	11	14	18			
7-9	9	8	10	9	12	16			
10-12	7	6	8	7	10	14			
13-15	5	4	6	5	8	13			
16 <b>-</b> 18	4	4	5	4	7	12			
19+	4	3	4	3	6	11			

**Summoning** – Some vampires gain the ability to summon creatures to serve them. When underground, a vampire may summon 1d10 giant rats or bats (x10 if the creatures are not giant versions). When above ground, the summons will bring 3d6



wolves, or 2d4 dire wolves. Summoned creatures take 2d6 rounds to arrive, and will remain until dismissed or slain. Vampires may use their summoning ability once every 24 hours.



Sunlight - Even the slightest exposure to sunlight is potentially lethal all to vampires. Every round in which a vampire is hit by the sun's rays, it must save versus Sunlight or die. If the vampire makes the saving throw, it will still take 6d6 burning damage,

and if this takes it to zero hit points, it is destroyed. If reflected sunlight is being used against a vampire, it gets a +4 bonus on its saving throw. The LL may also elect to apply bonuses for overcast weather or partial cover. If a vampire finds itself in danger of being exposed to sunlight, its instincts will take over and it will do whatever it can to reach a safer location away from the light.

**Telekinesis** – A vampire that gains this ability may use it once every 24 hours. It works in the same way as the 5th level magic-user spell, except that the duration is equal to the vampire's hit dice in rounds. While moving an object, a vampire must

remain focused on the task, and cannot take any other actions.



**Telepathy –** A vampire that develops a telepathic ability is able to read the thoughts of any intelligent creature up to 60' away. To maintain the link, the vampire must have clear line of sight and remain fully focused on the reading. The creature being read will not be aware of the vampire listening to its thoughts. However, if made aware of the vampire's attempt, the creature may make a wisdom check every round (roll under wisdom on a d20) to avoid thinking about anything. All creatures' thoughts will be in their main spoken language.

**Turning** – Like all undead creatures, vampires can be turned by a lawful cleric. Vampires with 10 or higher hit dice should be treated as infernal on the turning table.



**Water** – Traditional B/X vampires are harmed and can even be destroyed by immersion in running water. Holding a vampire under water will cause damage equal to 10% of the vampire's hit points per round, killing the vampire outright after 10 rounds.



#### Vampire Blood

Vampire blood is a potent substance, and is highly sought after for its healing properties. It can also give super-human qualities to a person that ingests However, users may also suffer serious and it. unpredictable side-effects after taking it (see the sideeffect table below). If stored in an airtight bottle, vampire blood will keep for up to one month. A dose of vampire blood is just a few drops placed directly on the tongue and swallowed. If more than one dose is taken in any 24 hour period, then the user gets no additional benefit from it, but may still suffer a sideeffect, and must roll on the side-effect table for every dose taken. Once ingested, the vampire blood will instantly have a healing effect. It will do one of the following in the order they are listed:

**1) Neutralize Poison:** Any poison is removed from the recipient's system. Where a victim has already died from poison, the vampire blood will still revive them as long as it is given within 10 rounds.

**2) Cure Disease:** Cures and removes any trace of a disease or sickness from the user's system.

**3) Cure Serious Wounds:** When a wounded person takes a dose of vampire blood it cures 2d6+2 points as per the cleric spell *cure serious wounds*.

If a person taking vampire blood is not suffering from poison, disease or wounds, then roll on the table below to determine the effect.

#### Vampire Blood Effect Table 1d100

**01-19** No Effect: The vampire blood has no noticeable positive effect, but the user must still roll on the side-effect table.

**20-49 Heroism:** Affects the user in the same way as a *potion of heroism* (*LL p111*) but only lasts for six turns.

**50-69 Speed:** Affects the user in the same way as the magic-user spell *haste*. For three turns, all movement, actions and attacks may be made at up to double the normal rate.

**70-84** Strength: Affects the user in same way as a *potion of giant strength* (*LL p111*) giving them the strength of a frost giant for three turns. **85-00** Super Heroism: Affects the user in the

same way as a *potion of super heroism* (*LL p112*) but lasts for one turn.

#### Vampire Blood Side-Effect Table d100

01-80 No Adverse Effect

**81-83** Allergic Reaction: A day after drinking, the user develops an itchy rash that lasts for 2d4 days. During this time, he may not wear armour, and all attacks are made at -2 to hit.

**84-86 Sickness:** Several hours after ingesting the blood, the user falls sick. The sickness lasts for 1d6 days, during which time combat is not possible, and any movement is limited to half normal speed.

**87-89** Weakness: The blood leaves the user feeling weak and light-headed for a period of six turns. Strength is reduced by 1d4+2 points (but will not fall below three points) for the duration.

**90-92 Fear:** The user will be terrified by random people, creatures, and objects, both real and imaginary, for a period of six turns.

**93-94 Delusion:** For the following six turns, the user will become delusional and regard himself as being a mighty hero, capable of vanquishing any foe.

**95-96 Berserker Rage:** For one whole turn, the user flies into a berserker rage. Every round, he will have a 10% chance of attacking a random individual in his immediate vicinity. The rest of the time, all his actions will be fuelled by extreme aggression.

**97-98 Blood Thirst:** Over the next 2d4 days the user will have a strong craving for fresh blood. If any opportunity to freely drink blood arises, he will take it. Otherwise, each day, a save versus Poison must be made, to avoid actively hunting for a victim to drink from.

**99-00 Blood Poisoning:** The blood causes a nasty blood disease in the user, one day after use. The disease will last for two weeks, during which time, no movement or other actions are possible. If the sufferer receives basic nursing care, recovery will take three weeks. If not given appropriate care, then a saving throw versus Poison must be made to survive.



## Good Shop/Bad Shop

A regular feature highlighting unusual retail establishments which offer useful, bizarre and sometimes dangerous goods and services.

## Mad Varto's

Varto was the most powerful wizard of his generation. He sealed rifts to the underworld, routed goblinoid armies, and some even speculated that he could bend time itself to steer world events. But that was all before he tripped on a wet step, after a late night in his study. Awaking from a three-day coma, Varto appeared normal, but he seemed tinged with an indefinable something extra. Varto's interest in his craft, and the manner of its application began to change. Kind onlookers would refer to him as jovial, or even playful, but the general consensus was that Varto had gone mad.

In any other person such a madness may have been harmless, but when a wizard with *power word kill* at his fingertips loses it, you really don't want to be anywhere nearby. Mad Varto was moved to a country estate, where he could be properly contained for his own, and everybody else's, safety. To this day, he continues his work, making powerful artefacts on a whim. Every now and then, he goes off wandering, often travelling with a band of gypsies – He likes nothing more than to join in with their flamboyant way of life. If encountered during one of these road trips, Varto will happily trade one of his items for a random object in the PC's possession that takes his fancy.

**Instant Cemetery** – Creates a home away from home for vampires, dark lords and other necromantic types. This item resembles a small coffin-shaped box which, when placed on the ground and opened, instantly turns into a one-acre graveyard, complete with graves, headstones, rolling mist and intermittent wolf howls. Just add an *animate dead* spell for an instant party. The cemetery neatly packs itself away at dawn.



**Sprite-o-light** – A magically freeze-dried sprite that when snapped emits a bright light for six hours. The light, as from a lantern, covers in a 30' radius around the sprite.



**Wyvern Caller** – This appears to be just a small, plain-looking wooden whistle. It could easily be mistaken for a child's toy. However, if a person blows into it, the sound generated belies its small size. It produces a very loud bestial call that carries far and wide across the sky. The sound is an almost perfect reproduction of a female wyvern's mating call. There is a 50% chance that 1d3 turns after the caller is blown, 1d2 male wyverns will arrive looking for a mate.

**Dehydrated Rot Grubs** – These come in a glass jar labelled *Grubs*. If opened, the contents resemble dried out, giant maggots – typically, around a dozen or so in quantity. If water is applied to them, they begin to rehydrate and will be fully formed after 2d4 rounds. The rot grubs will be very hungry, and will instantly attempt to feed on anyone holding the jar unless the lid has been replaced. The jar

may be thrown at a target, with the same ranges as a flask of oil. If the jar breaks, any creature within 10' will risk being attacked by 1d3 grubs. A successful save versus Breath Attack allows a creature to dodge the grubs.



**Novelty Fireballs** – A novelty fireball is a harmless, yet terrifying item. The fireballs look like round, crystal spheres about the size of a man's fist. They are amber coloured and, whilst they are cool to the touch, they give off a fiery glow. If one is thrown, then it will explode as soon as it hits any object or surface. The explosion will look exactly like the explosion of a *fireball* spell and, whilst it will give off some heat, it will not be enough to burn anyone. The explosion, however, may be enough to dazzle anyone nearby and possibly cause panic unless they save versus Spells.

Fake Dungeon Door – This useful item appears to be a large rolled-up canvas or rug. When unrolled, the design on it is of a full-size, sturdy, wooden door. If thrown against a wall, the material instantly adheres to the surface, and the door becomes a real door that may be opened and closed.



The door will form an inter-dimensional tunnel, up to 20' long, through the wall to an adjacent room, or even the outside. Once the user emerges on the other side, he steps through an identical doorway, and, if the door is then closed, it becomes a canvas again and falls to the ground. No trace is left of the item's use on the surface of either wall.

**Auto Map** – A regular piece of parchment that has had a powerful enchantment placed on it. When underground, it automatically renders a map showing the route taken by its owner. The shortcomings of this item are that it always centres on the owner, and the map only extends out in a 100' radius. As soon as the map is moved more than this distance from a location, that area simply drops off the edge of the map.

**Bag of Olding** – If studied, this tatty-looking, small sack will easily be mistaken for a *bag of holding*, and it functions in much the same way. It can hold up to 1,000 pounds of weight and will take items large and small up to 10 feet long. However, any item placed in the bag will be subject to rapid, magical ageing. Items will age one whole year for every hour they are left inside. This limits the item's usefulness, but to a winemaker it would be almost priceless.

**Urin's Tankard** – This bejewelled tankard is rather distasteful in use, but produces beverages that rival the nectar of the gods. If filled with normal water or other drink, it will all taste like swamp water and be undrinkable. However, if filled with urine,



the tankard transforms it into a sweet, mead-like drink. The drink is not alcoholic but has a similar effect if imbibed in large volumes – making the drinker feel relaxed and eventually a little sleepy.

Troglodyte Skin Cream - This is a special ointment that is primarily pharmaceutical in nature, but with an added bit of magical kick. It comes in a very tightly-sealed jar, and when opened smells overpoweringly vile. It is, in fact, refined from the skin secretions of troglodytes. Anyone standing within 30 feet of the open jar must make a save versus Poison, or suffer a -2 penalty to all attack rolls until the lid is replaced, or they move away from it. If someone uses the ointment, then he will smell as bad as a troglodyte for 2d4 hours and will receive a -4 attack penalty for that duration with no saving throw allowed. However, the ointment does have a genuine medicinal use. If generously applied to anyone suffering from a disease, it will cure them in a single day. It can also be used to instantly remove rot grubs from a person's flesh.

**Eau d'Orc** – Although odourless to humans, this lotion actually contains highly-concentrated orc pheromones that will drive any female orc into a sexual frenzy. If a character uses the lotion,



then any female orc within 100 feet underground, or 100 yards above ground, will catch the scent. The lady orc will then need to make a saving throw versus Breath Attack, to resist being consumed with passion and rushing to seek the object of her desire.

Dungeon in Box - Varto made this box for a local lord who wanted something special for his 12-yearold son's birthday feast. The children all survived but still have nightmares about the experience even though they have long since reached adulthood. The box is made from polished hardwood and measures about 18 inches square. On the top, there is a carved design depicting a labyrinth made up of dozens of identical little rooms. Varto will offer anyone who is willing a game, and will even offer a prize if they win. The box has a hinged lid with a small silver catch. If a player agrees to a game and opens the box, he will see a detailed model of a labyrinth, complete with tiny doors and figures to represent its inhabitants. An instant later, the character will be sucked into the game, to find two doors before him. A full, playable version of Dungeon in a Box can be found on page 22 as this issue's What's on the Battlemat? feature.

## What's on the Battlemat?

Mad Varto's Dungeon in a Box



**Background** (reproduced from the entry in Good Shop/Bad Shop on page 21)

Varto made this box for a local lord who wanted something special for his 12-year-old son's birthday feast. The children all survived but still have nightmares about the experience even though they have long since reached adulthood. The box is made from polished hardwood and measures about 18 inches square. On the top, there is a carved design depicting a labyrinth made up of dozens of identical little rooms. Varto will offer anyone who is willing a game, and will even offer a prize if they win. The box has a hinged lid with a small silver catch. If a player agrees to a game and opens the box he will see a detailed model of a labyrinth, complete with tiny doors and figures to represent the inhabitants. An instant later, the character will be sucked into the game, to find two doors before him.

#### Notes for the Labyrinth Lord

There are 64 rooms laid out in an 8x8 grid. Each room measures 20'x20' and has at least one exit door. All rooms are magically lit so there is no requirement for additional light sources. The majority of the rooms are empty but in each row of eight rooms there is a random distribution of: a monster, a trap, and a healing potion. The game map on the following page illustrates the basic layout. It is stocked ready to play, but the following notes explain how to re-stock it for a new game. **Doors:** To determine how many exit doors there are in a room, roll a d6 and consult Table 1. The locations of the exit doors are all relative to the entrance door. Ignore doors that do not open into another room, to ensure all play remains on the grid. Every room must have at least one viable exit door, so if a roll does not provide one, roll again. All doors are unlocked and easy to open, so no *open doors* rolls are required.

**Monsters:** There is one monster per rank of eight rooms (see Table 2: Monsters). The monsters get progressively tougher the further across the board a character ventures. Roll a d8 for each rank to determine in which room the monster should be placed. Whenever a monster is revealed, both sides should roll for surprise and initiative as in a normal combat encounter. Monsters are not required to make morale checks and will fight to the death.

**Traps:** There is one trap per rank of eight rooms (see Table 3: Traps). The traps get progressively more dangerous the further across the board a character ventures. Roll a d8 for each rank to determine in which room the trap should be placed. If a room already has a monster in it, then roll again until the result indicates an empty room. If a character has an ability to find/disarm traps, then he may use it normally in the game.

**Healing Potions:** There is one healing potion per rank of eight rooms. Roll a d8 for each rank to determine in which rooms the potions appear. If a room already has a monster or a trap in it, then roll again until the result indicates an empty room.

**Winning the Game:** A player wins the game if his character reaches the room on the other side of the board labelled *Finish*. The character will be instantly transported out of the game and will find himself completely unharmed. Experience points may be awarded for all monsters killed during the game, and Varto will present the player with a gem worth 3d4x10gp.

Losing the Game: A player loses the game if his character is slain by a monster or a trap. The character will be instantly transported out of the game and will find himself completely unharmed. Experience points may still be awarded for all monsters killed during the game, and Varto will thank the player and go on his merry way.

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# PC for PCs

Political Correctness for Player Characters by Lam McGra

### A Guide to Paladin Persecution



A guide to help referees persecute players that elect to play a paladin. Other players may also enjoy monitoring the actions of fellow players with paladin characters and ensuring they stay on the path to virtue.

#### Paladin minimum ability score requirements:

Strength: 12 Intelligence: 9 Wisdom: 13 Constitution: 9 Charisma: 17



The paladin has the highest minimum ability requirements of any class. In fact, if a player were to roll 3d6 five times (as there is no dexterity requirement), they would only have a 0.1% chance of rolling up a character good enough to be a paladin. Also, I'm not sure why there's not a Dexterity requirement for the class. Surely paladins would need fluid, choreographed moves, to present the correct image of grace and poise.

For a paladin to really hit his groove he's going to need some 18/xx Strength. Otherwise, he's just a pretty boy in shiny armour. Of course when a player presents a newly rolled-up paladin character, everyone knows the dice have probably been 'helped' a little. This presents the first major problem with the paladin. How can a character, who's raison d'etre is to uphold all that is lawful and good, be taken seriously, if the player responsible cheats with the dice from the outset? If players are going to cheat when rolling up a character, it would be foolish to stick to the minimum requirements. Here's a set of typical paladin ability scores:

Strength: 18/78% Dexterity: 15 Constitution: 16 Intelligence: 10 Wisdom: 13 Charisma: 18



Notice the slight restraint applied to the strength %. Going for 90%+ would be too obvious. The 18 in charisma is also key in an attempt to pass off such scores as honest. Few referees would expect a player to cheat by having a higher Charisma than required.

#### **Paladin restrictions:**

 They may never retain more than 10 magic items; these may never exceed: one suit of armour, one shield, four weapons\*, four other items.
 \*A magic bow and arrows only count as one weapon.

What sort of restriction is that? How many characters ever get 10 magic items? "Hail, I'm a humble knight sworn to protect the meek," said the paladin as he sat atop his plate-barded warhorse, wearing his +4 plate mail and +4 shield, armed only with a +5 holy avenging long sword, a magic bow, and a few dozen magic arrows. "Damn!" he thought. "I've forgotten my girdle of giant strength! Evil will have to wait." The best way to deal with this restriction, is to shower paladins with low-power, magic items, and force them to make tough decisions about what to keep.

2) They will never retain wealth, keeping only sufficient treasures to support themselves in a modest manner, pay henchmen, men-at-arms, and servitors, and to construct or maintain a small castle.

Pity the poor paladin in his cramped castle, with only a few dozen servants to cook, clean, serve, and fight for him.

3) An immediate tithe (10%) of all income – be it treasure, wages, or whatever – must be given to whatever charitable religious institution (not a clerical player character) of lawful good alignment the paladin selects. If you want to be a paladin, it comes with a 10% tax rate. Make sure that the 10% is calculated before a party splits magical treasure or pays hirelings.

4) Paladins will have henchmen of lawful good alignment and none other; they will associate only with characters and creatures of good alignment; paladins can join a company of adventurers which contains non-evil neutrals only on a singleexpedition basis, and only if some end which will further the cause of lawful good is purposed.

If a paladin rejects a henchman that the party want to hire, then the party should insist that the paladin hires an alternative companion at his own expense.

5) If possible, paladins will take service or form an alliance with lawful good characters, whether players or not, who are clerics or fighters (of noble status).

When a paladin has dealings with lawful good NPCs, you should routinely have something bad happen. This can be as simple as the NPC dying, or disappearing, or you can really go for it and have them turn out to be con artists, that make off with sizeable charitable donations from the paladin.

6) Law and good deeds are the meat and drink of paladins. If they ever knowingly perform an act which is chaotic in nature, they must seek a high level (7th or above) cleric of lawful good alignment, confess their sin, and do penance as prescribed by the cleric. If a paladin should ever knowingly and willingly perform an evil act, he or she loses the status of paladinhood immediately and irrevocably. All benefits are then lost, and no deed or magic can restore the character to paladinhood; he or she is ever after a fighter.

Without killing them outright, the best way to deal with a paladin is to get them to commit an act that costs them their paladinhood, and turns them into a far more sensible standard fighter.

Note: All the rules quoted and referred to above are taken from the 1978 Advanced version of the game. Paladin rules in *Labyrinth Lord* and other clones may be slightly different. However, electing to play a paladin character in these other games is just as misguided and players that choose to do so should still be suitably punished.

#### Ten trials to help break a paladin

1) The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the one. The paladin finds himself faced with a situation where sacrificing one life will save many.

2) But my armour will get dirty. Have the paladin repeatedly encounter the business end of monsters he meets, ensuring he gets a liberal coating of faeces, entrails, vomit, and other nasties. To maintain his image, the paladin will need to make frequent stops to clean his plate mail.

3) The orc guide is the only one who knows the way. An old orc that lives in the hills is the only one who knows the way through the caves to the monster's lair.

4) The map was buried with him. The party follow a series of clues that lead them to believe a treasure map to an immense hoard is buried with a recently deceased merchant.

5) The lesser of two evils. The only way to defeat the trolls is to team up with the duergar.

6) Nobody expects the Spanish Inquisition. The new head of the paladin's order is old school in a bad way. He issues commands to spread the word to the populace, with an iron fist. If the paladin joins in, he will lose his paldinhood. If he doesn't, he'll get excommunicated and, er ... lose his paladinhood.

7) Who will save us? At each settlement the paladin visits, ensure that the locals are living in fear of an evil force – either internal or external.

8) Please, we're starving. Along the same lines as the previous entry – Everywhere the paladin goes the local people will be starving, and will look to the paladin for charity.

9) Faithful servant. After the paladin saves someone from a terrible fate, have the person swear himself to the paladin's personal service for life. Then have the servant become increasingly annoying.

10) Anti-paladin brother. The paladin's long-lost twin brother turns up, and reveals himself as an anti-paladin. The paladin may also learn more about the parents he never met – cue an orchestral swell for the inevitable Darth Vader moment.



#### Paladin's Penance Table d12

1) Purging of the Flesh: Self flagellation three times per day.

2) Prayers of the Holy: One hour of prayers at dawn and dusk.

3) Fast of the Holy: The paladin must live only on water for 30 days.

4) Iron Boots: Must be worn for 30 days. Movement is noisy, painful, and limited to twothirds normal speed.

5) Vow of Silence: The paladin must not speak for 30 days.

6) Shrine in the Wilderness: The paladin must build a shrine in a wilderness area that will serve to spread his faith.

7) Reserve of the Pure: As a demonstration of his faith, the paladin will purposefully strike last each round in his next 12 combats.

8) Holy Blade: The paladin must surrender all his weapons in exchange for a rusty ancient dagger that is an prized artifact of the order. This becomes the only weapon he may use for his next mission. Should the dagger be lost by the paladin, he will be banished forever. The dagger may be blessed but it is not magical in any way.

9) Armour of the faithful: The paladin is given a Holy robe to wear in place of his armour and shield, for his next venture. He is told that if he is truly penitent, then the robe will protect him from all evil. The robe is just a robe giving the paladin a base AC of 9.

10) Quest: The head cleric of the order sets a quest for the paladin. Whilst the cleric will not cast the spell *quest* to direct the paladin, the command will be almost as strong if the paladin is serious about redeeming himself.

11) Rite of Re-birthing: The paladin must give up all his possessions with the exception of his warhorse, if he has one. The order then will anoint him, absolving all his sins. He will then be re-named and given new armour and a sword (non-magical), before being sent back into the world to begin his good work again.

12) Holy Avenger: The paladin will be given a mission to kill (assassinate) a political enemy of the order. Unless the paladin is able to draw out the enemy, and engage them in a lawful challenge, the paladin is likely to lose his paladinhood as a direct result of completing the penance.



# What's in the Oubliette?

A regular review column featuring roleplaying game material, with frequent diversions into other games and the odd book, film or TV show. Product submissions for review are welcomed.



Ultramarines – Codex Pictures DVD Boxed Set £25.99/\$39.99

*Ultramarines* is a computer-animated film set in Games Workshop's Warhammer 40k universe. If you look it up on IMDB.com, it scores a not-tooshabby 5.8 out 10. With a score like that, you might be tempted to buy or rent a copy. However, you won't find *Ultramarines* listed on Amazon, or at your local rental store. The film is only being sold direct from the *Ultramarines the Movie* website. Suddenly, the IMDB score doesn't look so trustworthy as the only people reviewing the film will be fans who have stumped up double the normal price of a new-release dvd film, just to get their mitts on the latest piece of 40K merchandise. The film comes as a lavishly-packaged two-disc edition complete with a 32-page graphic novel.

The film itself is very poor. It has a runtime of 70 minutes, but I'm pretty sure the guts of the film is barely an hour's worth. But an hour is too long when the experience resembles watching a friend play a dull video game. Some of the animation would be o.k. in a video game but none of it looks filmic. Coupled with this, is the dire script that kills off any prospect of developing the characters. And the characters are where some big money has been spent, employing well-known actors to voice the lead marines. I can't imagine what Terence Stamp, John Hurt and Sean Pertwee must have thought in the pub, after a morning spent reading such tosh.

Thankfully, I watched the movie at a friend's house. Normally, I wouldn't have reviewed it but I felt duty-bound to warn others about it in case they get too close to it with an itchy credit card.



Action Castle – Memento Mori Theatricks www.rpgnow.com PDF download \$0.99

Action Castle is the first title in a series of games from Memento Mori Theatricks. The games are called Parsley Games and take their name from early 80's text-based parser computer games. However, where once there was an eight-bit electronic brain running the show, now a human mind is required to referee. This means that although the referee can imitate a computer with his responses to player commands, he can also add sarcasm, humour, cruelty, and (as happened in my initial play-test), can even make mistakes.

The game itself comprises two sides of A4. One side has the adventure with a simple map, icons and room descriptions. The other side has a quick guide explaining how the system works. The game can be played one-on-one or with multiple players, where they take it in turns to issue commands. In my play-test the adventurer died several times and several reloads were required. But even with lots of back and forth, the whole game lasted about 40 minutes. With a group, I'd expect it to maybe last an hour – possibly more if everyone has been drinking. The game itself is great fun and for \$1 every gamer should pick up the pdf to give it a try.

There are several other titles in the series and I wouldn't be surprised if we see parser-style games appearing on blogs and forums in the near future. I might even be tempted to write one myself.



#### **Journeys of Frodo** – by Barbara Strachey Unwin Paperback 1981 \$ try eBay or Amazon

I didn't start out with the intention to include a LOTR review in every issue but it's sort of turned out that way. I'll run with it for as long as I'm able to find enough Tolkien-related material to fuel my interest.

Journeys of Frodo is a book I bought when it was first published, and it greatly enhanced my enjoyment of The Lord of the Rings. Looking at it now, I'm struck by the OSR ethos that the book seems to exude. Its author, the late Barbara Strachey, wasn't a professional cartographer or artist. She just wanted a set of maps to accompany the stories that she loved. The maps are all simple, two-colour, hand-drawn pieces. They are extremely basic, yet show all the locations visited, and routes taken by the main characters in the book. There are 50 maps in all and each one comes with a facing page of notes. These notes tie the maps back to the text of the story by providing key references that allude to the topography of a given area.

The book was reprinted in 1998 with a glossier cover, but you can still find the original edition with its charming green ink-washed cover on eBay or Amazon's market place.

#### Mouse Guard: Legends of the Guard

by David Petersen et al *Titan Books £14.99* 

Even though we take great delight in parodying it every issue, we're all huge fans of *Mouse Guard* really. *Legends of the Guard* is somewhat of a departure from previous *Mouse Guard* volumes (*Autumn 1152 and Winter 1152*) in that it features the work of a wide variety of artists and writers, hand-picked by Petersen. The book cleverly ties the work of all these contributors together around a background story concerning a tale-telling contest.

The patrons of the June Alley Inn each tell a tale in the hope of clearing their bar tab. The rules require that the tale must neither be completely true, nor completely false, and must never have been heard in the Inn before. This gives way to a series of delightful stories as the mice try to out-do each other with their yarns. The stories cover a number of different artistic styles, which for the most part complement the pre-existing *Mouse Guard* body of work beautifully. That said, fans will devour this book but still be left wanting a real *Mouse Guard* book all the more. Therefore, we pledge to continue doing nasty things to mice, in twisted homage to Mr Petersen, while we eagerly await his next volume.



## **Cleric Spell Cards**

This issue comes with a full set of Labyrinth Lord spell cards for clerics. Every spell from  $1^{st}$  to  $7^{th}$  level that appears in the main rulebook is included, complete with key information and a brief description of the spell's effects. The set also comes with blank cards for new spells or other notes, and a title card for spell books.

The cards are the same size as a standard credit card (54mm x85mm), making them perfect for collating into a tiny spell book. All you need is a simple card wallet with multiple transparent leaves. In case you missed it, last issue came with a full set of magic-user spell cards.



## THE SONG OF SITHAKK

Translated By Elk Runnymeade

#### PART V: The Night, the Dawn, and the Water

Sithakk pushed his empty plate away and settled back in his chair. His accommodations had taken a rapid turn for the better, reflecting his now honoured status. In preparation for the next day's Vendett, he had requested that the Old One from the quarry should serve as his attendant, arrange for him to be bathed, fed, and his war-gear made ready. It was the Old One who now sat opposite him, devouring the best fruits of the Sylvmorten with cheerful gusto.

"He is a bad one, that Listwela," observed the aged dwarf. "In his first week here as Governor, he had five prisoners chopped to death for minor infractions of the rules. It continues at the rate of a dozen random executions each year, by methods which even now turn my stomach to contemplate. The guards believe he does it to keep discipline, but he is simply evil. Some mead?" He gestured to the large flagon at one end of the table.

"No. We shall need clear heads tomorrow. You take a tankard ... but only one." The Old One nodded approvingly, and poured.

Sithakk retired early, leaving the Old One asleep near the fire, on an improvised mattress



adjacent to the table. His knapsack had been returned to him with its contents in chaos. It had been hurriedly searched, but there, in a bladder of orc excrement, together with a couple of large lumps of quartz and a bull's gallstone lay the eye of Sylvellan. He breathed a sigh of relief. Elsewhere, in a pouch, among crystals of rock salt, lay also the diamonds which Hordehund had bequeathed him. He washed his hands yet again, for as all will know, orc stools are slippery, tenacious, and overwhelmingly rancid ... He put his knapsack in order ... and so to sleep.

It must have been soon after midnight, for the moonlight was pouring through the upper windows of the chamber. The bed jolted violently as if the bottom had been lifted kneehigh from the floor, and dropped of a sudden. Sithakk slid on silken sheets, awoke as his head hit the oak panel at the top of the bed, then jerked into action, reaching for the Fadursword on his right as the bed hit the floor. With a strange, numb deadness, his hand touched the hilt of the sword, but his fingers would not close. He glanced down and gave a shout of disgust and horror, for his great sword arm was shrivelled into something like the wizened branch of a dead sapling. In shock, he banged his hand on the floor seeking to wake himself as from a nightmare, but with a sickening crunch, his fore-arm snapped through, leaving a ragged, splintered stump, and the lower part of his arm fell away into the shadows. Sithakk bellowed, grabbed at the Fadur-sword with his left hand, but could not move. In the moonlight, where the bedclothes were now tossed back, he saw the ragged remnants of his legs amputated half-way up the thighs, bleeding a black pool over the bedsilks. It was then that he saw it - immense, slow, pulsating with demonic energy as it emerged from the blackness in the furthest corner of the room, eyes redly glowing, grasping hands stretched forward, drooling from an immense maw of jagged teeth that might tear the throat to shreds in a single bite of rank contagion ... Sithakk let out a great quavering roar, and at that moment the door burst open. In staggered the Old One bearing the flickering torch that he had forgotten to extinguish. Sithakk reeled to his feet, his arm and legs miraculously restored, grabbed his



sword, and seizing the torch, searched the far corners of the chamber with a desperate futility – for the devilish abomination had seemingly dissolved in the torchlight.

"Peace, peace, my son," said the Old One. "What ails you?"

"Nothing!" roared Sithakk, bathed in sweat, quivering and battle-ready. "Nothing ... a dream ... such as I have never had before."

The Old One went to the end of the room. He breathed deeply. "Come here once more," said he. "Can you not smell it?"

Sithakk inhaled. "A strange stench, as when a wildcat marks out its territory."

The Old One nodded. He took the torch and replaced it in the adjoining room. Returning, he peered at the floor and adjacent wall. "Can you not see it?" He spread his hand and swept it before him, indicating a dim and dusty phosphorescence which formed an ill-defined semi-circle on the floor and extended some distance up the adjacent wall. "This was no dream," he said with the dogmatic assurance of the sage. "This was ... Sorcery!"

Sithakk reflected apace, then snapped back, "Tell me, who is Sharma, son of An-Haligan?"

"I know of no Sharma, but An-Haligan – now dead – was a Sorcerer of considerable repute among the Sylvmorten. It was said he could conjure devils, and, given time, could drain the life-force from a victim – even from a distance of three days' march. It is believed that he assured the succession of the present Sylvmortan King, by killing his uncle, slowly, in such a way. And there are those who believe that our own Prison Governor, the damnable Listwela, became Micht-rica over the bodies of two rivals murdered for him by An-Haligan."

"So it is not unreasonable to think that the son may possess some of his father's arts," said Sithakk. His companion nodded agreement. "The last words I heard Listwela speak, yesterday, demanded that Sharma, son of An-Haligan, be sent to him."

"There is our answer," responded the Old One. "Praise be to Hrath that the son is less skilled than the father." The old dwarf thought, briefly. "As Maglic, you can arrange for me to wake my friend Reafwuldor. He has something that may help us ..." Sithakk nodded. "... Good. We should find him in block two, cell three."

They were quickly back, and the Old One took from round his neck the talisman given to him by Reafwuldor. It was, to all appearances, simply a fragment of mirror, as long and as wide as two fingers. On the back were a number of characters in Old Dwarvish. Other than that it was utterly unremarkable.

"And how can it help us?" asked Sithakk.

"Reafwuldor has kept it safe for twenty years, waiting for a moment such as this," came the reply. Sorcerers do not pursue the powerless and the damned. This was given to his father long ago by Athelgeist, greatest of all the Warlocks, when Athelgeist lived among us, before the wars, before he went to the frozen North."

"Yes," said Sithakk patiently, "But how can it help us?"

"It is a spell-reversal mirror. When worn by the intended victim, it re-directs the spell back upon the immediate source – the Sorcerer – with double force." Sithakk's eyes narrowed in amusement. "But more than that ... it increases the force yet again, and unleashes the spell upon the primary source – he who hires the Sorcerer – with a force four times that of the original spell."

Sithakk smiled. "We may have much reason to thank Reafwuldor," he said. "We must speak more of Athelgeist, if all goes well today." So saying, he looped the thong over his head, and suspended the little mirror from his neck.

In the early hours, Sithakk stirred in his

slumber. Howls of fear and anguish arose from the room beneath, and a racket could be heard as guards broke down a door, perhaps to assist. Sithakk went to the window in time to see an unfamiliar figure flee across the courtyard outside. Fifteen or twenty paces behind, a wisp of mist floated after him, streaming in the wind, translucent, like the finest, most ephemeral black silk, and he, the Sorcerer, arms clasped to body, ran screaming in terror, as if it were a strangler's cord that pursued him.

The runner had scarce gone from sight when a series of hideous shrieks rent the air, and the second floor windows opposite were flooded with torchlight. Again, the heavy echoing footfalls of the guards; again, the cacophony of doors being turned to kindling, cries of "My Lord! My Lord", and for the space of a heartbeat, the lone figure of Listwela was framed in the entrance of the apartments on the other side of the square - a tortured soul, wretched, afflicted, dishevelled, wailing and tormented. Thus Listwela staggered into the centre of the yard, panting raucously for breath, clutching at his abdomen. A vast, grotesque shadow - the semblance of a demon in a cloak - fell over him, though there was no visible figure and no light source that could account for it. With a despairing cry, Listwela turned and bolted, retching and vomiting as he ran, to throw himself at the doors of the Temple of Zatvoritsa - Zatvoritsa, the Patron-God of Incarcerators. And as the doors burst open, he hurled himself inside. The square boomed and echoed metallically above his gibbering, as he barred the great bronze doors from the inside.

Sithakk retired to bed once more. He lay there in the darkness, smiling his grandmother's smile. A latch clicked, a shaft of light entered the room, and the Old One's head poked around the door: "Is all well, my Lord?"

"Yes, Vadre, all is very well indeed."

The line of the lofty hill overlooking the prison glowed gold against the angry red promise of dawn, as a rare procession made its way to the summit. It was led by the three Priests of the Zatvoritsan Temple, wearing the gilded masks of Sylvellan the Godhead, Tinar –

Goddess of Wisdom, and Haree the Wargod. Guards followed, each bearing two at a time, the masks of various minor deities, mounted on staves. The Old One recognised Zatvoritsa, Hrono, Disseo, Temis - but of the remaining six or seven he had no knowledge. In demonstration of the property and status of the combatants, a groom completed the procession, leading Listwela's dapple grey, and the satin-black Ethelwynn. A torchbearer burned incense which misted down the slope into the dusk of the prison compound. There, life had come to a standstill as guards and prisoners alike waited, fascinated, in the long shadow of the hill.

Then the chanting was finished. The High Priest anoints Listwela and turns to Sithakk. With a trace of contempt he says: "You are not of Sylvellan. Make whatever obeisance to your Gods you will."

Sithakk nods to the Old One, unsheathes his sword, draws blood from his left arm, and that of the Old One. Together they face the breaking dawn. Arms spread wide above their heads, they call on the name of Hrath, loud and long, to awaken him from his slumber. And then their voices blend in the Battlecry of the Barreldwarves: the quavering baritone of the Old One and the steady, baying bass of Sithakk in a strange harmony that cuts through the hushed and frosty air, unearthly, as old as time. In the compound beneath, many a dwarven pulse quickens.

Listwela and Sithakk faced off, swords at the ready. "You are an old fool, Maglic," sneered Listwela. "You overestimate the remnants of your skill." A gong sounded, and they advanced on each other.

"You seem tired," said Sithakk with a grim smile. "I shall send you to the rest you deserve."

Listwela struck out, enraged, fast as a viper. With his short, Sylvmortan sword he moved much more quickly than Sithakk. The dwarf parried the blow, noting how Listwela moved with a well-practised ease and style that betokened years of training. Sithakk, with the Fadur-sword, had advantages of reach, weight, and raw strength, but it was soon clear that his well-schooled opponent was as confident as he was fit, and believed he might dominate the fight from the outset.

Listwela had manoeuvred himself so as to

claim the higher ground, and struck down at a retreating Sithakk as they descended the hill black silhouettes, their fits and starts of violence outlined in gold against the red rising of the sun. Again Listwela struck, but this time Sithakk's defensive block was angled, and the Sylvmortan followed the downward arc of his own blade to Sithakk's right. Ducking to his left, Sithakk moved uphill, crashing his shield and sword hilt into the light mail that protected Listwela's shoulder, causing him to take a staggering pace downhill as he turned. Now the dwarf was in the ascendant position, and laid into his opponent with great crashing blows, directed at the Sylvmortan's head. The prison valley echoed to the crunch of tortured metal and the nerve-jangling, scything whine of blade grinding into blade as the combatants separated and renewed their onslaught.

Borne on the morning breeze, those in the prison yard heard it – soft and deep and resonant, the Deathsong of the Barreldwarves. Old warriors stemmed their tears and gazed in rapture.

But the wily Listwela yet again had Sithakk retreating, though more slowly, back up the hill where the ceremonial party waited, to motionless, silken banners and trappings floating lazily in the cold air. The warriors staggered back into the semi-circle formed by the dignitaries and their minions. Their breath came in harsh, steaming rasps. Fatigue was beginning to affect them both. Sithakk flung himself forward and unleashed yet another viciously jarring blow at his opponent's head. Listwela's defending sword absorbed it, and the Sylvmortan ground his teeth as the shockwave ran down his arm. He flexed his sword hand for a moment's respite. Sithakk twisted his blade sideways, and Listwela's weapon went flying crazily through the air to land at the feet of the High Priest. Listwela moved towards it, but Sithakk was too near. The Priest retrieved the sword, and tossed it clumsily in Listwela's direction. Sithakk paused and nodded. Listwela retrieved his sword and came back at Sithakk immediately.

"Take care, My Lord!" Ethelwynn's voice sounded urgently inside Sithakk's head. But, too late. It was no more than a patch of wet clay, but it was slippery as ice. Sithakk's back foot shot forward, connected with the ankle of



his other leg, and he went down in a twisted heap, his sword trapped beneath him. Fast as a snake, Listwela moved in for the kill.

"Dwarven pig, I have you!" He tensed his muscles to slice the floundering Sithakk's neck to the spine, but went flying over the dwarf's head as he was hit between the shoulders by the buttocks of his own dapple grey war horse which lurched suddenly out of the crowd, bucking and whinnying. Sithakk somersaulted backwards, disentangling his sword in the process, and leapt at the sprawling Listwela, who was turning over to heft his blade defensively as Sithakk brought both hands down, and drove the blade-point of the Fadursword through the upper left of Listwela's chest, with such force that it emerged from the lower right of his abdomen, pinning the arching corpse to the ground.

The silence of life-departed hung over the hill top. None moved, none spoke. Then Sithakk stood up, placed one foot on Listwela's chest and with a grunt, reclaimed the Fadursword. He faced the rising sun, raised his blade, and bayed his Bloodcry, wild, hoarse and abandoned, above the ragged cheers of the prisoners in the shadows of the valley. The High Priest covered his ears in horror, then turned away in attendance of the corpse.

The youthful Tusend-rica steps forward. He gives a curt bow. "You fought well," he says. "It was barbaric, but not without a certain nobility." More dangerously, he observes, "You are very fit for your age."

"I live simply," said Sithakk, carefully. "I grow food, collect herbs, hunt, chop wood ... but my old bones will ache tomorrow."

"I shall offer you direction as to the Michtrica's wealth and possessions as soon as possible, of course."

"I thank you, but for now, all I wish is a bed for a couple of nights, a servant, and to be able to continue my journey. This was a matter of Honour, and no more."

So it was that Sithakk retained the services of the Old One, and later that day the two of them, at Sithakk's suggestion, went riding in the high hills to the west above the prison. And returning, they followed the course of a crystal clear stream, from where the fresh, sparkling water emerges from bubbling springs and chatters merrily in steep descent over rock-bed and pebble, back again, to pause among rainbows where a little waterfall overlooks the prison.

"It is beautiful here," said the Old One, when one does not have to work."

"When will they release you and the other dwarves?" asked Sithakk. "The war has been over for a long time."

"Never. We shall all die here," said the Old One without emotion. "We know that not one of us shall return."

Sithakk left the Old One to rest in the sunshine, out of sight of the prison, in a quiet hollow sheltered from the breeze. The afternoon sun was starting to lose its warmth when he rode back, his hands and arms caked with earth. Ethelwynn pulled a crudelyfashioned stretcher bearing four large sacks.

"What is this, my son?" enquired the Old One.

"You shall see, Vadre," said Sithakk, with a smile. They returned to the little stream, and followed it to a point behind the prison where there were was a weir followed by stoneworks and a little sluice where water might be diverted into a cistern.

"The prison water supply," said the Old One

authoritatively.

"Yes," replied Sithakk, "and on the far side, held by nets in a wooden frame, you will note the reed filters which I plan to replace."

"But they were replaced only two days ago."

"Indeed, but mine are made of sterner stuff: Raghar, death's head toadstool, the roots of helfassen, blitshiest, purgenlief, livermort, wolfbane – and all that might blend sweetly with the peat and heather savour of the stream."

"But you will kill us all!" protested the Old One.

"No, Vadre ... I know no-one here, so you shall be the arbiter of life and death. Tell whom you will among our people, and any others who may be trustworthy and worth saving – None shall drink of this water who wishes to live. They have thirsted long for liberty, and foregoing water they shall have it."

When their business was completed, Sithakk washed, and together they returned to the prison.

Sithakk left Ethelwynn at the stables. A groom was fussing over Listwela's dapple grey. "Look!" he exclaimed in frustration. When I removed his ceremonial blanket at noon today, I found a large, weeping raw patch on his shoulder as if one of the other horses had bitten him."

Sithakk cast a long sideways look at Ethelwynn: "I thank you for my life."

"Always a pleasure, my Lord."









A magazine for old school fantasy roleplayes We will be a school fantasy roleplayes 



### Here's some we made earlier!

PDFs of Oubliette 1,2,3,4 & 5 available from **www.rpgnow.com** 

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# **Supplemental Material**

The following pages contain the Cleric Spell Cards and some extras for use with this month's features.

They comprise:

- 1) A full set of Cleric Spell Cards, levels 1-7, for Labyrinth Lord (see p29 for a short explanation).
- 2) A blank Vampire Record Sheet.
- 3) A blank template for Dungeon in a Box.



A selection of extra cards for: spell book covers, notes, new spells, magic items, and anything else you can think of.









A A A A A A A A (Hold Person Level: 2 Duration: 9 turns Range: 180' Causes most humanoids to become paralyzed and freeze in place. Undead and any monster bigger than an ogre are not affected. Held beings are aware and breathe normally but cannot speak or move. Subjects may attempt a saving throw versus Spells. This spell can effect 1d4 beings, if directed at a single target the saving throw is attempted with a -2 penalty. Silence 15' Radius Level: 2 Duration: 12 turns Range: 180' Stop all sound, conversation is impossible. No noise whatsoever issues from the area, but noise originating from outside the silenced area can be heard by those in it. Can be cast on a mobile object or creature. An unwilling creature can attempt a saving throw versus Spells, if successful the spell takes effect at a fixed point next to the creature. The The Area Animal Growth Level: 3 Duration: 12 turns Range: 120' One non-magical normal animal will be doubled in size when this spell is cast upon it. The animal can be a "giant" version of the animal, but intelligent animals are unaffected.











maximum. Cause critical wounds (reverse of cure critical wounds) causes 3d8+3 hit points of damage to a being if the caster can touch the opponent.







experience of the caster, and each +1 is calculated as 1/4 of a hit die. Summoned animals will fight to the death or until the

duration of the spell ends.







Range: Touch

The subject's severed body appendages, broken bones, and ruined organs grow back. Regeneration is complete in 1 round if the severed parts are present and touching the creature. It takes 2d4 turns otherwise. *Necrosis* (reverse of *regenerate*) causes body parts to die and fall off. The part becomes useless in 1 round, and falls off to become dust in 2d4 turns.













## Vampire Record Sheet

Character name	Race Class		Alígnment before death		
Movement rate	Level before de	ath Hít díce	Age before death	Vampíre age	
STR			Saving		
	Modífier		Breath att		
DEX	Modífier		Poíson or i		
				Petrífy or paralyze	
$\Delta$			Wands		
CON	Modífier		Spells / st	Spells / spell-líke devíces	
			Sunlíght	Sunlight	
( )INT	Modífier		Saníty po	ínts	
$\sum w$ is	Modífier			$\bigwedge$	
CHA	Modífier		FTIT DOLNES	regeneration points HD+CON)	
To hít AC 0	1 2 3	4 5 6	789		
Vampire abilities		nguages and spell	L Equípme	Armour class ent and possessions	
		- <u>j</u>			



#### DESIGNATION OF PRODUCT IDENTITY

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