

A DVENTURERS CLUB

THE HERO GAMES,
IRON CROWN QUARTERLY

FALL 1986

ISSUE #8

\$3.00

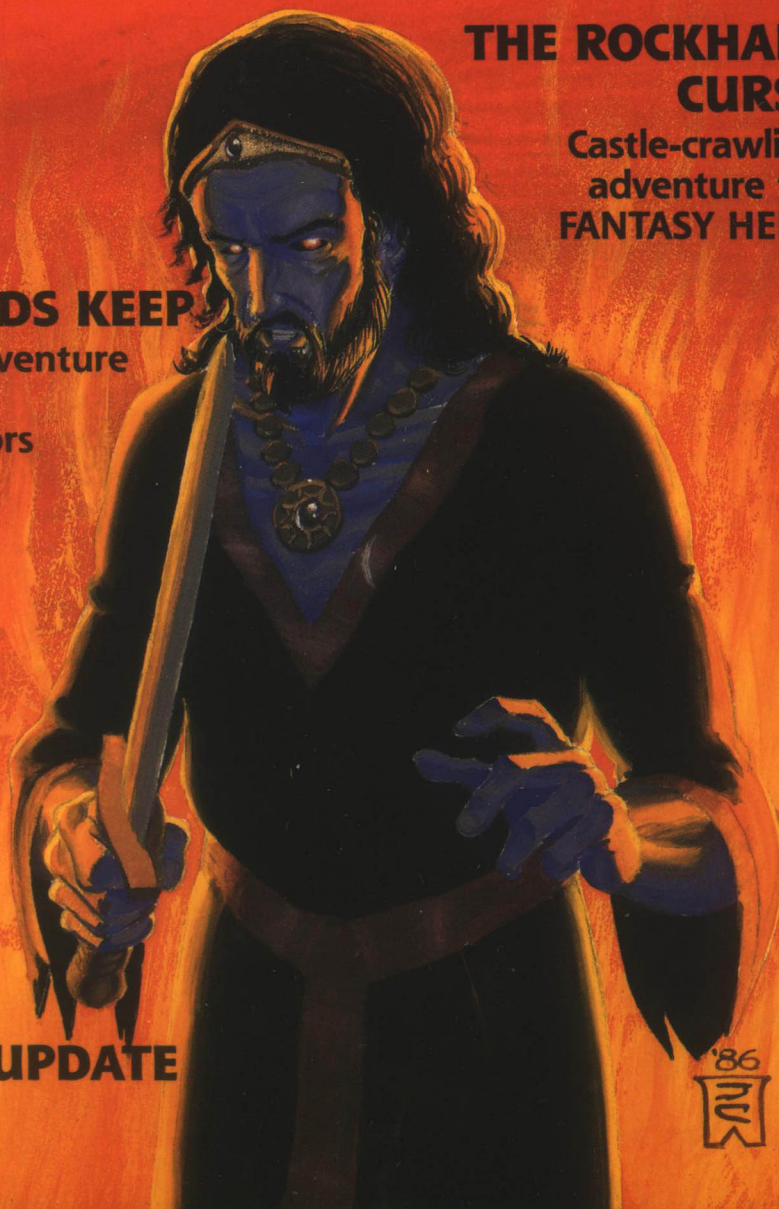
THE ROCKHALL CURSE

Castle-crawling
adventure for
FANTASY HERO

IFFGULDS KEEP

MERP adventure
on the
Ettenmoors

VIPER UPDATE



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NUFF SAID

BY AARON ALLSTON

Well, we've gone and begun making changes to the AC.

First of all, it's bigger. Take a look: More pages this time around. If we can sell all the ads and keep the up flow of articles we need, it'll stay bigger.

We've reorganized the magazine into three sections. The first, general, section contains the articles of interest to both Hero Games and Iron Crown Enterprises followers: 'Nuff Said, the Superhype news column, the letters column, and the review column.

We're getting some longer articles in — good ones. But many of them are going to be too long to fit into the still-cramped environs of one issue of the AC. This issue, we'll run the first half of our first two-parter; let us know what you think of multi-part articles. Don't like them? No problem? Do like them? Let us know.

Speaking of letting us know. . . The AC, for reasons of cost (*low cost*) is now being printed overseas, which gives us a longer "lead time" — that inexplicably great amount of time between the writing of a magazine and its eventual publication. In short, I'm writing this editorial in July and you're seeing it much later in the year. What this means is that there will be no letter column this issue — you haven't *seen AC 7* yet, much less had time to com-

ment upon it — and subsequent lettercols will address the AC of two issues before.

That's the gamut of changes for this issue. There may be more next time around. . . but we'll try to keep them reasonable. . .

IN THIS ISSUE

This issue, we have something for everyone.

For *Champions* Players:

Steve Maurer's "VIPER Update." Seems a few of you have yet to realize just how nasty these low-powered normals can be if they use their heads. Well, Steve has stepped in to fix this shortcoming. **Super-Agents** GMs should also take note. . .

And columns: "Gadgets & Treasures" has a nifty thingamabob for a supers campaign. . . "The Hero System" talks about the average **Champions** character. . . and in "Crooks & Crusaders" Lenore takes a break from letter-writing to show what she does in the *rest* of her time.

For *Fantasy Hero* Players:

This time around, the issue's adventure is for FH. In "The Rockhall Curse," your mighty fantasy heroes get to attend a joyous event. . . and cope with the less joyous parts of it. Conversions in

the back let you play this one with **MERP**, too.

For *Danger International* Players:

Part One of Greg Porter's "Sound the Alarm." This is the two-parter mentioned above, and it's required reading for **Danger International** players and especially GMs. Suddenly, all those generic security systems have become distinct... and distinctly troublesome. Greg also joins us as a contributing editor this issue; welcome aboard, Greg.

For *Middle Earth Role-Playing* Players:

Jessica Ney's "Iffguld's Keep" is the first installment of MERPS material to appear in the AC. Since this is our first go-around with MERPS material, we're hoping for a lot of feedback from you. For those of you who don't play MERPS, we're giving you **Fantasy Hero** conversions in the back.

And now:

IN UPCOMING ISSUES

Upcoming in the AC is some neat stuff, including:

"The Joy of Solo Adventuring," Scott Bennie on the hows and whys of one-character **Champions** adventuring...

"The Wilderness Experience," Greg Porter on weather — and its less delightful effects on your **Danger International** and **Justice, Inc.** characters...

"**Champions** Minus," by Marc R. Blumberg, Keith Hannigan, and Mike Malony — who may just earn themselves the distinction of being the Three Stooges of the AC with this piece on unofficial rules...

"**Champions/DC Heroes** Conversions," the much-requested piece by George MacDonald, master of **Champions** mechanics...

"Exotic Weapons for **Justice, Inc.**," Greg Porter taking a hard look at the gadgets that the folks of the 1920s and 1930s really *did* make up for themselves...

"The Care and Feeding of Deathtraps," Duane Tremaine's piece on — well, the title says everything...

"Agents of Darkness," Kevin R. Criscione's present to you of a lot of eldritch nasties for a **Champions** campaign...

And, with any luck, the start of our **Fantasy Hero** "Spells" column.

LASTWORD

Now that the AC is actually alive again, and promises to be better than ever, we really do need some feedback from you. So, write us — real letters, not tomes of challenge or admiration to Foxbat or Lenore — at the following address:

Aaron Allston
Hero Submissions
PO Box 7111
Austin, TX 78713

Thanks much. We'll be checking that mailbox...

Iron Crown submissions should be sent to:

AC Submission
Iron Crown Enterprises
P.O. Box 1605
Charlottesville, VA 22902

SUPER HYPE!

Here's what's happening with Hero Games.

In January, we completed a deal with Iron Crown Enterprises, where ICE will take care of all production and distribution of Hero products, and Hero will continue to write, edit, and create new products. So Hero Games still exists and functions — we just don't have offices or employees any more. We've reduced the experience of adventure game business to the parts we enjoy most: Acquiring new products, editing products, and cashing checks.

The consequence of this deal is that you'll be getting more products. Already this year, ICE has produced more releases than our output for all of 1985. In 1987, expect to see at least one release a month(!).

The releases so far this year include **The Coriolis Effect** by Dennis Mallonee, a 32-page **Champions** adventure that gives you a great series of comic book-style adventures; **Gadgets!** by Andrew Robinson, a collection of gizmos for **Champions** and **Danger International**; **The Hero System Bestiary**, hundreds of creatures, real and mythical, for any *Hero System* game; and **Super-Agents**

BY STEVE PETERSON

by Aaron Allston, a campaign supplement for **Champions**, **Danger International**, or both games.

Coming soon to your local stores (if they aren't already there) are **Shadow of the Vampire** by Derek Mathias, an adventure for **Danger International** and **Justice, Inc.**; and **Robot Warriors** by Steve Perrin and George MacDonald, a *Hero System* game about giant robots and excessive firepower.

Whew! Seems like a lot, but there are even more products that should be out before Christmas. Watch for them.

In case some of you may be wondering, I thought I'd bring you up-to-date on where the Hero people are and what they're doing:

George MacDonald is working on **The Guardians**, a supplement for **Champions** that will detail the original Hero Campaign and the characters that grew up there (they're currently starring in the **Champions** comic book from Eclipse, too — get your copies now!) Rumor has it that he's working on some freelance projects that will amaze you — watch for his name in the future.

Ray Greer is working for Steve Jackson Games as a print buyer

and marketing person. He helped crack the whip that got **GURPS** out in time for *Origins*. He's managed to find the fun places to go in Austin, a not inconsiderable feat (just kidding, Austinites!).

Steve Peterson is now working for Electronic Arts in the Marketing Department. Software is a lot of fun, especially when you get to work with the best company in the industry (this was my opinion even before I started working for them). On a personal note, I married a wonderful woman in September and have moved to San Francisco.

Debi Maxwell is also working for Electronic Arts (yes, I did

recommend her) as administrative assistant in the Marketing Department.

One more thing before I depart. The *Adventurers Club* is finally on a regular basis, and the issues are getting bigger. Between that and the increased production schedule, we need articles, adventures, and products. So I'd like to encourage you to write up those proposals and send them to Aaron, because we want to publish more products. Send us your tired, your poor, your huddled words yearning to... sorry, I got carried away.

Until next time, *Be a Hero!*

Steve left me a little space so I thought you might be interested in what's happening at Iron Crown Enterprises.

Terry Amthor is putting the final touches on the **ROLEMASTER COMPANION**, the long awaited Rolemaster supplement. Its got lots of additional spells and optional rules. And the cover... Angus McBride at his best! Because of the long lead time (2 months) the RC will have been on the shelves for 1 month as you read this. Check it out at your local store!

Pete Fenlon and Coleman Charlton are floating down a canal in France! Boy are we jealous! When they get back Pete will be finishing up **LORDS OF MIDDLE-EARTH**. From the looks of the product and from its advance sales this promises to be hot item. 96 pages of info and stats on famous characters from Professor Tolkien's world! Vol. I (slated for Nov.) covers the Elves, Maiar and Valar. Vol. II (early '87) will cover the Men of Middle-earth (including the dreaded Nazgul). Vol. III will in-

clude Ents, Dwarves, Hobbits, Orcs, and Trolls. This series will be an absolute must for every adventure gamer!

The rest of the I.C.E. crew asked me to say hi and welcome you to our first combined issue! The loyal I.C.E. men and women include Bruce, Deane, Kurt and Billy from operations, John from production, Chris from sales, the waredogs Bill, Kurt, Dwarf, and Karl, myself and of course Swink, the wonder ferret.

By the way, we're soliciting articles and mini-scenarios on I.C.E. products. These need to be sent to us here in Charlottesville, where we'll check over the systems stuff and (assuming they're accepted) send them off to our Lone Star editor Aaron Allston (who has to be the most prolific gaming author in the world!). That address is:

I.C.E.

AC Submissions

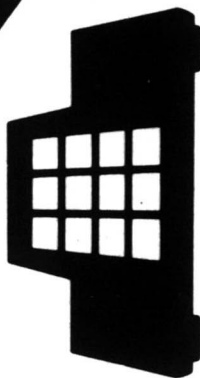
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That's all for now, and until next time, good luck and good gaming!

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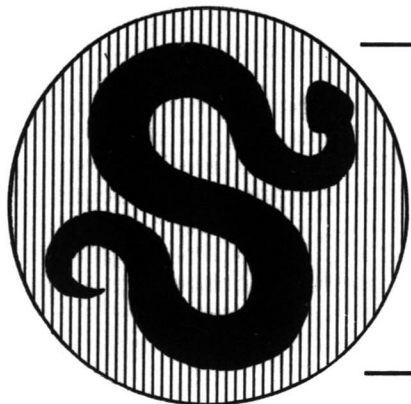
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VIPER

UPDATE

BY STEVEN MAURER

This is the latest update on organization, strategy, and tactics used by most VIPER Nests. This article also should dispel a number of myths about how dangerous VIPER is and how they deal with enemies.

ORGANIZATION

Many people believe that VIPER is a monolithic, well-knit agency. If someone is Hunted by VIPER, they think that all of VIPER is after them. This is far from true. VIPER is actually a franchise operation where each Nest is "privately owned and operated" — it is to crime what burger chains are to food. To set up a VIPER Nest, all a mob leader has to do is apply. If he has the muscle and moxie, VIPER One at VIPER HQ will start him out, and thereafter have little to do with him. If his Nest is later penetrated, any investigation will be stopped dead at the burnt-out Serpentine telelink.

This allows VIPER to be both diverse and cohesive. Though individual Nests may fall, VIPER itself is usually unharmed. Over the Serpentine computer goes

much vital information, such as status on heroes, villains, weaponry, police methods, and crime analysis. Serpentine has everything an inexperienced Nest Leader needs to know about crime to be successful at it. Through untraceable foreign bank accounts, the Nests pay for being part of VIPER, but sometimes rewards are offered for the delivery of items and superbeings, which temporarily reverses that cash flow.

Because of its structure, different VIPER Nests may have very different methods of operation. In different Nests, the Nest Leader may be cowardly, brave, foolhardy, cautious, reckless or cunning. Depending on availability and price, Nests may use supervillains often, seldom, or never. The same goes for bases, equipment, and vehicles.

How VIPER goes about its criminal activities also differs widely. Some Nests go out of their way looking for fights; some avoid them at all costs.

Some Nests are actually several subNests, connected and run by a particularly successful Nest Leader. Others are groups of

less than ten people. In essence, to say that anything is typical of VIPER is basically incorrect.

Diversity, VIPER's greatest strength, is also its greatest weakness. Individual Nests are not allowed to know of each others' operations, so they sometimes collide. Nothing says that groups from different Nests have to cooperate with one another, and they seldom do. This has occasionally led to purely internal wars.

VIPER COVERT STRATEGY AND TACTICS

Though often ignored or missed by supers, the VIPER Covert Operations branch is the backbone of a VIPER Nest. It is Covert Operations which is responsible for gathering funds, equipment, and information. Covert operatives are often disguised and even unarmed — nevertheless, this department can do more damage to inexperienced heroes than a whole horde of villains. Covert Operations specializes in tricking heroes into letting their defenses down... then blasts and captures them, or smears their reputations and gets them into trouble with the law.

Spread over Serpentine is information on the latest weaponry and tactics used by successful Nests. Failures are analyzed rigorously to see what went wrong, and new techniques are devised to fix the problem.

This also means, though, that if a hero is Hunted by VIPER, special information files exist on his powers and weaknesses. From this information, VIPER can

develop many plans and tactics to use against overconfident supers.

Following is a fairly comprehensive list of the tricks VIPER Covert Operations likes to play. Your heroes won't necessarily fall for all of them... but success with just one of these tricks is enough to inconvenience or incapacitate a hero, or even remove him from the business.

Pigeon Hunt

The idea behind all Pigeon Hunts is the same: Trick the hero into standing there like a dope while all your agents carefully Find Weakness, take aim, and fire. Naturally, this tactic doesn't work too well on supers who have Danger Sense, so if VIPER knows a character has this power they will play a different game. However, Pigeon Hunt is still tops on the "most favorite tricks played" list.

"Say Cheese" is a typical Pigeon Hunt scam. Covert VIPER agents disguise themselves as reporters. They corner a hero on the street and ask him to tell them about his latest accomplishments. Then they ask for photographs. Of course, the cameras are not *real* cameras — they are 8d6 EBs, Normally Invisible power effects (and no Knockback, of course), IAF, one charge (Real Cost: 17 points). While setting up, the agents use Find Weakness — you can give them a +2, if you like, for all the time they have to study him. If he is knocked out (a good possibility), a fake doctor will immediately arrive on the scene, examine him, call up the fake ambulance, and drive the hero to the Nest.



“Say Cheese” doesn’t work against most antisocial heroes or those with severe Unusual Looks — often they don’t want to get in the papers. However, it works very well on arrogant, overconfident, or Public ID heroes, who are often too used to the attention to notice the faked press cards.

Savior Game

In a Savior Game, Covert VIPER agents try to make it look like innocents are villains, and villains innocent. The former approach involves enticing a hero to kill an innocent. In the latter approach, VIPER tries to get a plant in with the heroes and then spy them out.

“The Masked Man” is a Savior Game. In it, Covert VIPER agents design a flashy but unpowered costume. The newly created “villain,” a covert agent with the

costume on, leads a bank robbery. He does nothing but look impressive as his goons collect the cash. Once this has been done a few times, Covert Operations will find some insane person, a derelict, or a prominent citizen who is drunk — especially someone who is sickly (LOW BODY). The “villain” is released where the heroes can find him.

This trick is always used against trigger-happy heroes — those who can be counted upon to shoot before they ask, and who can kill this stooge with one blow. This is just great for VIPER, since their high-powered lawyers have been pushing for anti-vigilante laws for a long time. If the villain stooge is an unknown, the killing also “solves” the bank robberies — and since the villain is dead, no heat comes back to VIPER.

“My Hero” is also a Savior Game. In it, Covert VIPER agents set up thugs to push people around. The thugs don’t know who they work for. Then along the hero’s normal patrol route, the agents have the thugs attack some (very beautiful) woman. Correctly timed, this scenario has the hero arriving on the scene just as the thugs begin their assault on the victim.

The trick to all this, of course, is that the woman is actually in Covert Operations herself. Once rescued, she will try her best to initiate a relationship with the hero. If a romance starts between them, she can then secretly tell VIPER his plans, base layout, and maybe even his Secret ID. (The occasional drawback to this plan is that some agents get too involved with the hero and later turn against VIPER.)

A Pigeon Hunt variant of “My Hero” has the lady armed with a blaster with which to fell the hero when she goes to throw her arms around him. This isn’t done very often — concealable blasters rarely have the power to take a hero out entirely, so assault troops have to be near the scene.

One last classic example of the Savior Game is the “Fatal Misunderstanding.” This costs VIPER nothing more than a phone call; the only ingredients are a fast-talking VIPER agent and a few overeager heroes. The heroes get a frantic phone call — “Supervillains are robbing the Intercity Bank. Help, please! Arrrrgggg!!!!” (click).

The “supervillains” are actually a superhero team — preferably an unknown team, or one from a foreign country (so they won’t speak English very well). They’ve just gotten the call that the Intercity Bank is about to be robbed by supervillains disguised as the local hero team. Guess what happens when our heroes show up?

Masquerade

In a Masquerade, Covert VIPER agents try to smear a hero’s reputation by impersonating him. A Covert Agent dresses up as the hero and employes gadgets which mimic his powers (or at least his special effects). He then goes about beating up normals, smashing cars, and robbing art galleries. This only works well against characters who have Secret IDs, because they can’t easily prove they’re not doing the dirty deeds.

“Switcheroo” is the most dangerous form of Masquerade. If a hero is captured and nobody

knows about it, VIPER may try to put an impersonator in his place. The agent has to be specially trained in acting in the hero’s personal style if the deception is going to be pulled off for long. It is best used when the hero has a Public ID, so that VIPER knows how the guy should behave.



There are two ways to GM a Switcheroo.

Method A involves player cooperation. You outline your plan to the player — tell him that his character has just been captured, and how, and then ask if he wouldn’t mind role-playing the villainous double who’s taken his place. He’ll usually be intrigued enough by the scenario’s possibilities that he’ll jump at the chance.

Method B involves player absence. When a regular player

fails to show up, assume that the capture-and-switch has already taken place. Run the “super” as an NPC during that episode. Then, do your worst.

Distraction

The Distraction is the oldest trick in the book, and VIPER is no one to go against tradition.

The idea is a simple one. Barring the presence of the Duplication power, it is hard for a hero to be in two places at one time. VIPER, therefore, will make sure the heroes are off fighting somewhere else than where the real heist is going down. Since superhero battles tend to attract the attention of the police as well, the Distraction will draw them off, too, and be doubly effective.

Classic Distractions include kidnapping DNPCs or releasing giant monsters to rampage through the city. Listed below are some more sneaky alternatives.

“Inside Info” is the trick that VIPER uses to get at many of the villains they hunt. The heroes get an anonymous call about the location of a villain VIPER doesn’t like. Just to keep things fair (and to make the battle last longer), the villain gets a phone call too, from the ever-so-helpful Nest Leader. While the heroes are battling the villain in his base, VIPER commits its own operation. If the villain wins, VIPER claims a favor for tipping him off. If the heroes win, the villain goes to Stronghold and gets to think about how things would be easier if he cooperated with VIPER — and if VIPER later springs him, he may be glad to go work for them.

“Pandemonium” is also a nice trick to play. Send over a few

agents to the city’s power stations. Blow them up. Watch downtown go dark. Human nature being what it is, the night turns into a looter’s and lunatic’s holiday — every street tough (and many a respectable citizen) on every block is going to try to get his hands full of anything valuable. Under this kind of cover, all sorts of good VIPER operations can happen.

Coercion

If a VIPER Nest is running out of villains to do their dirty work, they have no qualms about using heroes instead — VIPER is an equal opportunity employer.

Methods of coercing a hero into a crime are many and varied, but usually center around doing something nasty to innocents if the hero doesn’t do as he’s told. There’s the “We’ve got your DNPC” and the “Lots of Innocents will die when we blow up the (fill in the blank).” Here are a few more methods:

VIPER agents kidnap a hero and surgeons give him a remote-controlled “Bomb In the Skull” (the name of the game) and set the hero loose. If he does anything they don’t want him to, if he ever leaves radio range. . . *Boom!* Of course, the bomb has a two-way radio, which can pick up all conversation for 2” around the hero, and with which VIPER can give the character secret instructions and warnings. He is also being monitored by undercover agents. The hero must play along, while frantically trying to warn his comrades without being detected by VIPER.

A variant on “Bomb In the Skull” is “Slow Poison.” Here, the

hero is not monitored. He is simply given a slow poison which will kill him unless he gets the antidote. Of course, VIPER is the only one who has the antidote. Encourage the hero not to cooperate with the villains, or not to spend his time in the hospital praying — these aren't heroic options. He should rather be trying to find the Nest; once it's found, he should be bashing it in until he locates the antidote. Of course, the antidote won't be in the medical lab, it will be on the Nest Leader, who is the only one who escaped. A frantic chase should ensue. Our hero must catch the villain, but he has only minutes to live, seconds . . .

"We Saw Your DNPC" is a cute variant on "We Have Your DNPC." If VIPER sees a villain take off with a DNPC, or even if they see a known DNPC getting sidetracked somewhere out of the way, they might be tempted to claim credit and demand that the heroes perform a service for them. Make it a service the heroes won't balk at overmuch, and one which is simply accomplished. If the heroes comply, VIPER has gotten something for nothing. If they don't, VIPER hasn't lost anything. And you won't believe the expressions players will give you when they find they've fallen for this one.

FIVE-TEAMS

The latest battlefield tactic VIPER has under development, one sure to cause trouble for superheroes, is the "Five-Team" tactical organization — a specialty assault team now to be found at all participating VIPER Nests.

Over the years, VIPER has

found that supers, even "slow" brick-type supers, could outspeed, out-manuever, and frustrate well-trained combat troops. So the agency has come up with its specialty Five-Team training program specifically for dealing with supers.

Each Five-Team is composed of five specially trained agents. Rather than being trained for flexibility and diversity, these agents are specifically chosen for their ability to perform one single task well. They are given the best equipment available, and given tactical schooling to become one of the three agent types found in Five-Teams.

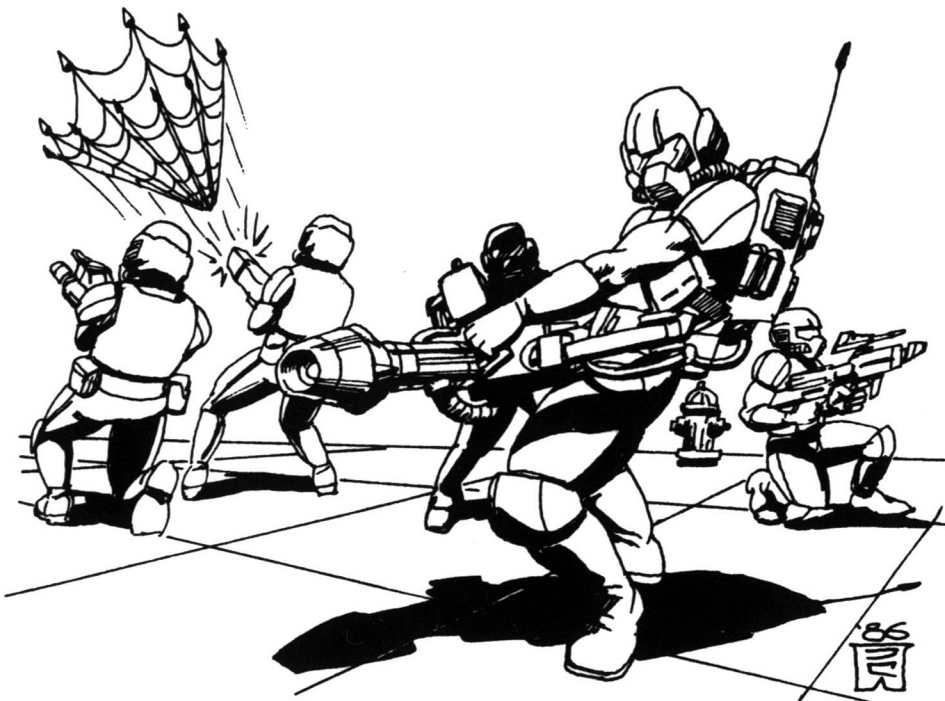
These agent types are Baiters, Blasters, and Maulers.

Baiters

Baiters are supposed to prevent VIPER troops from being outmaneuvered; they do this by disorienting or slowing the heroes enough so that agents can hit them. Baiters favor wide-area weapons: Net guns, blasters, and explosives. Their weapons are often equipped with computer tracking scopes to aid in firing. Properly-equipped Baiters can even be effective against invisible or very long-range heroes.

Blasters

Blasters are typical, balanced agents — they are reasonably effective against heroes, but still have enough charges in their guns to perform a sustained fire-fight against standard military or agent troops. Blasters are the assault troops used on the street, but can have a wide range of skills or equipment.



Maulers

VIPER also learned that most supers could stand up to any normal super-agent weapon attack. Bullets bounce off with no effect. So VIPER Research & Development created hand-held tank-level cannons which give much better results against supers.

Maulers are the troops entrusted with this weaponry. Since they are the most effective against supers, they can expect to be attacked most often by supers. Thus, Maulers are chosen for their stupidity and their ability to withstand punishment. They also carry heavy armor.

Five-Team Organization

Almost all Five-Teams have two Baiters, two Blasters, and one Mauler. For special assignments, other team arrangements may be

made, but this happens so rarely that VIPER agents jokingly refer to aberrant Five-Teams as "Mutant" Teams.

Five-Team Battle Tactics

In battle, Five-Teams are encouraged to get under cover. On an open field, supers will beat a crowd of agents any day — so Five-Teams try to stay out of the immediate conflict and let the supervillains bear the brunt of the battle.

Five-Teams always delay and support one another in combat. The frontmost Five-Team is supported by the one behind it, this one by the one behind it, etc. Because of these tactics, and weapon improvements, superheroes give VIPER Five-Teams a bit more respect than the old-style VIPER agents.

Generating Five-Team Agents

Following are writeups of the most effective Five-Team agents VIPER has available. Few Nests can actually equip their troops this well, so you're well within your rights to tone down their attacks if you wish.

Choose a Five-Team agent's powers, skills, and weapons for each agent based on the enemy VIPER thinks it is going to be fighting. If you prefer a faster agent generation, roll 1d6 for the appropriate equipment categories.

Agent Characteristics (All Five-Team Agents)

STR: 15	DEX: 14	CON: 13
BODY: 10	INT: 11	EGO: 10
PRE: 15	COM: 10	PD: 3
ED: 3	SPD: 3	REC: 6
END: 26	STUN: 25	

Cost: 35

Powers/Skills (All Five-Team Agents)

Pts.	Powers/Skills
2	5 points Flash Defense, OAF Helmet Visor
2	Two-Way Radio, OIF Helmet Communicator
3	10 points EGO Defense, only vs. EGO Attacks, IIF Helmet Psi Scrambler
6	+3 PD, +3 ED Armor, OIF Suit and Helmet
7	+10 PD, +5 ED Force Field, OAF Force Field Belt, three clips of 8 phases each (as per Champions III)

5 Knowledge Skill: Five-Team Tactics, 14-

Cost: 25

Agent Miscellaneous Skills and Equipment (Choose One)

Baiter	Blaster	Mauler
1 UV Vision <i>OAF Night Scope</i>	Find Weakness 11-	+3 PD +6 ED +3 with gun -2" to Knckbck <i>OIF "Chain"</i>
2 Active Sonar <i>OAF Sonic Sighter</i>	Regeneration on Others, Four Contin. Charges <i>OAF Medipak</i>	+15 PD <i>OIF Plasti-Plate</i>
3 +7 to Gun, vs. range mod only (+1) <i>IIF Targeting Comp.</i>	+2 with gun <i>OIF Scope</i> Stealth 12-	+15 ED <i>OIF Reflec Armor</i>
4 Locate Mutants (Detect) <i>OAF Mutant Scanner</i>	Missile Deflect 11- <i>OAF Reflec Shield</i>	+3/+6 Armor <i>OIF Flak Suit</i>
5 +6 pts. <i>Flash Defense</i> +3 with Gun <i>OIF Targeting Goggles</i>	1d6 Flash Damage <i>Shield, 3 clips,</i> 8 phases each <i>OIF Bright Suit</i>	+15 STR vs. <i>Entangles</i> +5 PD <i>OIF Slip Suit</i>
6 +3 Sight Perception +1 Assault Training	+3 DCV <i>OIF Shimmer Field Generator</i>	+10/+10 Force Field, 3 clips at 8 chgs ea. <i>OAF Overload Field</i>

Cost: 10 points

Five-Team Weapons (Choose One)

(Unless otherwise noted, all weapons have these Limitations:)

Baiter	Blaster	Mauler
OAF 3 clips, 8 charges each Activation 14-	OAF 3 clips, 8 charges each Activation 14-	OIF (Bulky) 4 charges Activation 14-

(The weapons themselves:)

Baiter	Blaster	Mauler
1 4d6 Flash, No Range Mod, one target, penetrating (-6 to Flash Defense) Flash Cannon	15d6 physical EB Recoilless Hand Cannon	18d6 energy EB Chemical Laser Cannon
2 2d6 Def/6d6 Entangle, one-hex area of effect, takes no damage, 2 charges Net Gun	10d6 physical EB, explosive Mortar Gun	12d6 physical EB, armor-piercing Gyro-Rocket Launcher
3 30 STR TK, explosive, uncontrolled continuous, lasts 4 phases each Gravity Bomb	10d6 EB, STUN only, Affects Desolid Phase Stunner	4d6 physical RKA, no range mod. Smart SAM
4 5d6 Invisibility Drain, at range, instantly removable but permanent until removed Paint Gun	1d6 physical RKA, armor piercing, +3 STUN multiplier, autofire, 2 clips of 40 chgs each Recoilless 30-Caliber	2d6 STUN, 1d6 BODY Destruction, usable at range Neutron Cannon

5 5 Def/5d6 Entangle, Affects Desolid Phase Binder	9d6 NND, Defense is Force Field; delayed effect one turn Nerve Toxin Dart Gun	Tunnel 6 BODY, 16 Def, usable at range Sonic Shatterer
6 3d6 Flash/Autofire, 2 clips, 170 charges Roman Candle Rifle	17d6 Neutralize Flight, controlled continuous Gravity Projector	7d6 END Drain, at range, cone area of effect Knockout Gas

Cost: 30 points

FINAL NOTES

Though designed specifically for VIPER, the strategy and tactics in this article can be used by practically any villain organization — feel free to adapt them to any organization in your campaign. But don't use too many of the covert operations tricks — if you do, players won't be able to trust anything they see, and this is certainly not what happens in comic books.

The final thing to remember about criminal groups is that they are in the business of crime — not battling heroes. Groups cannot afford to be as irresponsible and flamboyant as supervillains. Any group which did nothing but battle heroes would soon lose bases, members, money, and cohesion; inevitably it would be destroyed. So any time a group is in on any action, try to think of reasons why the group would show up — there should always be a direct (if not necessarily obvious) benefit to the group for participating in the scenario.



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SOUND THE ALARM!

(PART ONE) BY GREG PORTER

It is often all too easy in **Danger International** to say "Make your Security Systems roll with a -3 and you're in." Getting through security systems is often not that easy or painless. It may take several hours of painstaking, exact work to get into a high-security area, requiring the deactivation of several types of alarms.

It adds an extra dimension to the event if the GM can describe what the character sees, and knows what tools are needed to bypass the alarm or lock. The players will also sweat a little more if they have to figure out some of what is going on themselves, rather than letting the skills of the character automatically get them through.

A lot of alarm and security systems are not known to the average GM, so he may not really be aware of a proper security setup, and leave easily exploitable loopholes for the characters to drive tanks through. I'm not saying there shouldn't be loopholes — but they should be very hard to find, and the GM should know where they all are.

With these goals in mind, let's now look at alarms and security systems in general.

ALARMS IN GENERAL

Anything used to detect an intruder can be classified as an alarm. This includes guards, animals, and technical devices,

though I shall deal only with the latter.

Most electronic alarms are arranged on what is known as a closed circuit. This means that normal condition is a closed loop of sensors, and any break in this system (like cutting the wires) will set off the alarm.

Lower-quality systems are easily neutralized — they are bypassed by shorting the output. Better systems are set to a certain resistance, that of the complete sensor net, and any change at all will trigger an alarm.

Small setups may have only one alarm, like a residential burglar alarm. Larger ones may have the sensors arranged in zones, to more accurately pinpoint trouble, like on a certain floor or a certain stretch of fence. This can be and is carried to extremes at high-security complexes, where an alarm can be pinpointed to the exact area of intrusion, such as a certain office, that door, or a small part of a perimeter.

The type of alarm can differ, depending on security needs. Naturally, you can have a bell, siren, flashing lights, etc., but in some cases it is more desirable to catch the intruders rather than frighten them off. Silent alarms are used in such cases. The silent alarm alerts the proper personnel, who go to the scene and hopefully catch the unsuspecting miscreants. This can be done through the phone lines or over the radio to the police, frequent methods used by banks and

small companies, or the alarm can alert on-site security forces, as is usually the case for larger corporations or government installations.

Most alarms have a central processor, which makes the alarm's decisions as to what to do. It is not intelligent in any sense of the word, but just does what it is programmed to, like call the police for burglaries, the fire department for fires, switch to battery backup if power fails, etc. If the central processor can be disabled, the entire alarm system is neutralized. For this reason, it is usually in a secure and secret location, with tamper guards (separate security measures, requiring their own Security Systems roll to bypass) to prevent unauthorized entry.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Usual tools for a high-tech burglar can include any of the following:

Lockpick
Cordless drill with selection of bits
Cordless soldering iron
Nail or stud finder (for finding nails in walls)
Climbing gear
Various electronic tools
Wire
Superglue
Tape
Multimeter (for measuring current, voltage, resistance)
Portable oscillator with frequency generator
Extendable dentist's mirror
Small crossbow (for rope throwing)
Several small but powerful magnets

Portable electromagnet with 200 kg pull (weighs 1 kg)
Plastic tongs
Ultrasonic or microwave sniffer

Some of these are very useful, while others will see little or no use. This list is partial, and you should pad it out for specific assignments.

SECURITY SYSTEMS SKILL

Most of the time, a failed Security Systems roll means a tripped alarm. This depends on the situation and the alarm, and is at GM discretion. To give the characters the benefit of the doubt, it is reasonable to say that if the roll is failed by only 1, the alarm is neither tripped or deactivated.

TYPES OF SETUPS

There are three normal categories of security systems setups:

Perimeter Defense
Building Defense
Item Defense

The first is designed to detect intruders before they reach the installation being defended. The second is designed to warn of entry to the installation itself. The third is designed to protect a specific location in the installation. Let's look at each of them in detail.

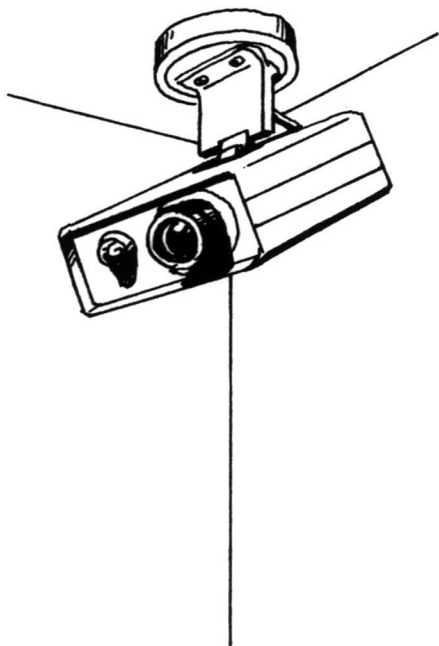
PERIMETER DEFENSE

There are various ways to detect intruders on the edge of a protected area, each with its own advantages and disadvantages.

TV Camera

Description: Generally in a weatherproof box about the size of a residential mailbox, these are set up to view a certain area, and are monitored by a person in a central location. These use the Perception of the viewer with a -1 modifier because of resolution and field of view restrictions.

Low security setups may have fake cameras or fixed cameras, while higher security areas may have pivoting cameras, telephoto lenses, and image intensification capability. Pivoting cameras can cover a wider area, but have the disadvantage that they leave blind spots unless there are mul-



iple cameras. Fake cameras are designed to be cheaper than real cameras, and are easy to spot (base Security Systems roll).

Most systems will have a video recorder hooked up to the

cameras; the recorder takes pictures at one-second intervals, and can be switched to normal recording mode if an alarm is sounded.

Neutralizing: To get by one of these, several tactics can be used. One is to have a distraction, something to draw away the attention of the viewer for a few seconds so you can sneak past. Another is to be incredibly stealthy and hope you aren't spotted. This works best if the cameras are pivoting — you creep through the setup's "blind spots" as the cameras pivot. This requires that the character be able to accurately gauge the camera's field of vision (base Security Systems roll), and the character must make a separate Stealth roll to bypass each camera in this manner.

A very difficult to accomplish but effective method is to somehow splice into the video feed lines and send in a false image. This can be done by taping a small segment of what the camera sees and continually playing it back. This is almost always done as an inside job.

The last way to get by a camera is simply break it — but even if this does not cause an alarm or investigation of the area, it will still make the defenders more alert.

Fences

Description: Fences serve to keep people out, and can act as alarm platforms.

An electric fence may have provisions to sound an alarm if cut. Sophisticated fences can even send the alarm when spliced before the cut was made, because the cut will produce a



small voltage pulse. Fences may also mount motion alarms. Both of these are designed to pick up the motion caused by cutting, climbing, or pushing over of the fence.

Such systems are rather obvious, usually being small (cigarette-pack sized) boxes mounted from 3-10 meters apart. They will detect the circumstances mentioned above on a base roll of 19- when placed 3 meters apart, -1 to the roll per extra meter of distance between sensors.

The Soviets have similar devices on fences on the Iron Curtain, but in addition to sounding an alarm, they explode like a small grenade. They are usually mounted at head, waist, and foot height, to incapacitate a person however he's trying to cross. Most of these devices have tamper

guards to prevent opening (-3 to Security Systems roll to open), but if a sample unit can be obtained beforehand, characters do not suffer the negative modifier.

Neutralization: The electric-type fence can be neutralized with special cutting and splicing equipment, designed to slowly break the old circuit over a turn or so, giving no pulses to set off an alarm.

Motion sensors are quite good enough to detect nearly any attempts to get by the fence, though you may wish to allow Stealth rolls to modify the alarm's chance for detection. If a character tries to deactivate the detector without knowledge of its circuitry, his base chance is a Security Systems roll at -3. If the character knows this particular device, the chance is only at a -1.

Tools needed for this are a small drill, small screwdriver, and needle-nose pliers. Lack of any of these tools gives the character a -3 to the roll *per tool*. Deactivating one of these will take at least a turn, so no bonus applies for extra time spent up to this amount.

Agents may also avoid the fence altogether, by such classic means as the human pyramid or improvised pole-vault.

Seismic Detectors

Description: These are insidious, as they are effectively invisible. Small detectors buried in the ground pick up the low-frequency vibrations of footsteps or vehicles. These are sent to a processor which filters out ambient noise and recognizes the sounds of intrusion.

Each detector will cover an

area several hexes in diameter. The base chance of detection is 19- in the hex where the sensor is buried, 17- one hex away, and -4 to the roll each hex past that. Vehicles add their Damage Bonus as a positive modifier to the sensor's chance for detection.

There are also magnetic sensors, which detect large metal objects only. These act in the same way as the seismic detectors, but are only set off by large metal masses.

Neutralization: Difficult. Stealth may be used to modify the chance of detection, but that's about all that will. Digging to them will set them off, and they cannot be jammed. A small portable bridge or anything that will keep the agents over (rather than on) the area will also prevent the alarm from going off — but this requires that the characters know exactly where the detector line is.

Beam Breakers

Description: These are the standard electric eye alarms. They can be on various frequencies (visible light, infrared, microwave) and are of differing quality. The simplest is a constant visible beam.

More complicated are invisible beams, pulsed beams, laser beams, and combinations of the above. Microwave-based beams are usually able to detect motion as well as beam interruption.

The transmitter and receiver are usually inside protective housings, and may be inside the area of another alarm, like just within a secure fence.

With beam breakers, the range usually goes up with the quality; low-budget systems may have a

range of 15 meters, while a laser-beam arrangement may have a range of 1000 meters. Light beams will cover a 1-hex wide line, while microwave beams will gain an extra meter of width to either side for each 150 meters of length.

Neutralization: Nearly any of these can be fooled by the proper application of technology, including frequency analyzers and generators, variable gradient optics, and other such gizmos. The whole mess of equipment would be about the size of a portable typewriter. A simpler way would be to analyze the system, then go home and have a special device made up particularly for that system.

The minus to a Security System roll will range from a base roll for the simpler alarms up to a -8 for something like an invisible pulsed laser. Most of these have tamper alarms to prevent from being deactivated, and the minus for the tamper alarms will be half that of the normal alarm — assuming you can get to it.

A more cinematic means of getting through such a sensor net is for the character to locate and squeeze through the sensor net in areas where the beams are too few or too far apart. This is easiest with visible-light beams; with other beams, the character must find a schematic plan of the security system. The GM decides how tight a "net" the beams make, and the character trying to slide through will have to rely on a DEX roll modified by circumstances.

Trip Wires

Not too common, but still used, a trip wire is more of an im-

provided or temporary alarm. The simplest trip wire is one hooked up to some sort of noisy or pyrotechnic device, such as a pile of pots and pans, a blank cartridge, or a flare gun. When it's tripped, the resulting sounds and sights alert anyone within Perception range to the presence of the intruder.

Trip wires can also be electrical, setting off a switch when triggered, to turn on lights, sirens, etc.

A trip wire is usually going to blend in with its background, making it a Perception roll at -3 to spot. High-tech trip wires may be used to cover an entire area, the trip wire being made of fiber optic cable. If cut or broken, the optic circuit is broken, and the alarm sounds. Concertina wire is cur-

rently manufactured in this way, with a fiberoptic strand in the middle to detect cutting.

The simplest way is to go around the trip wire. Cutting it is not always a good idea: A lot of trip wire alarms can be set to go off on increased *and* decreased tension. If it must be cut, make sure that it is not part of an alarm circuit (a portable micrometer will allow this on wire with an Electronics or Security Systems roll), and then fix it in place so the tension does not change when cut.

A fiberoptic cable is a -6 to Security Systems rolls if a splice kit is available, and impossible otherwise.

Next Issue: Building Defenses, Item Defenses, and Sample Alarm Systems.

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THE ROCKHALL CURSE

ADVENTURE FOR FANTASY HERO

BY AARON ALLSTON

"The Rockhall Curse" is a **Fantasy Hero** adventure playable in a single evening. It is designed for 4-6 characters built on 75 points plus disadvantages. For characters built on more or fewer points, or characters already possessing substantial amounts of experience, the game-master should modify the adventure's encounters accordingly.

Players intending to run characters through this adventure should read no further.

GAME-MASTER'S OVERVIEW

The Situation and Character Goals

Here's what's going on: A noble family, the Rockhall clan, has for generations maintained an important frontier pass which cuts through the mountains between a civilized nation and the bordering wildernesses.

Because of an sorcerer's curse, the clan is in danger of extinction. The sorcerer, now a powerful undead creature, is lurking about the Rockhall clan, preparing to strike and destroy the family forever. Naturally, the player-characters will wish to interfere with his plans and prevent the curse from occurring.

History of the Rockhalls

One hundred years ago, one of the clan's heroes, Gareth of the Rockhalls, stopped a foreign invasion coming through his pass. While his Rockhall forces engaged the foreigners, Gareth defeated their leader, Makkald, a prodigious magician.

Dying, Makkald cursed Gareth — decreeing that the Rockhall clan would diminish over the years, until, when it was its lowest strength he would appear to purge it entirely from the world. Then he died, his invasion foiled.





His curse was genuine. Over the next few generations, the Rockhall clan did diminish.

No more foreign invaders entered via the pass. Because it was no longer doing work vital to the crown, the clan's stature diminished. The size of the garrison defending the pass decreased. The women of the clan bore few children. While still noble in history, the Rockhalls are now regarded as a clan whose greatness is all in the past.

Today, there are only three Rockhalls: Lord Garay and Lady Cetara, heads of the clan, and their daughter, Dardra. Dardra is affianced to Lord Biehn, nephew of a baron whose lands lie elsewhere in the kingdom. Their marriage is to take place soon.

GETTING THE CHARACTERS INVOLVED

First: Where In the World?

Place Rockhall Pass in any mountain range at the periphery of your campaign's main kingdom. On the other side of the mountain range should be either (a) a nation which once was hostile to the campaign kingdom, or (b) wilderness, which once nurtured barbarian hordes prone to invade the campaign kingdom.

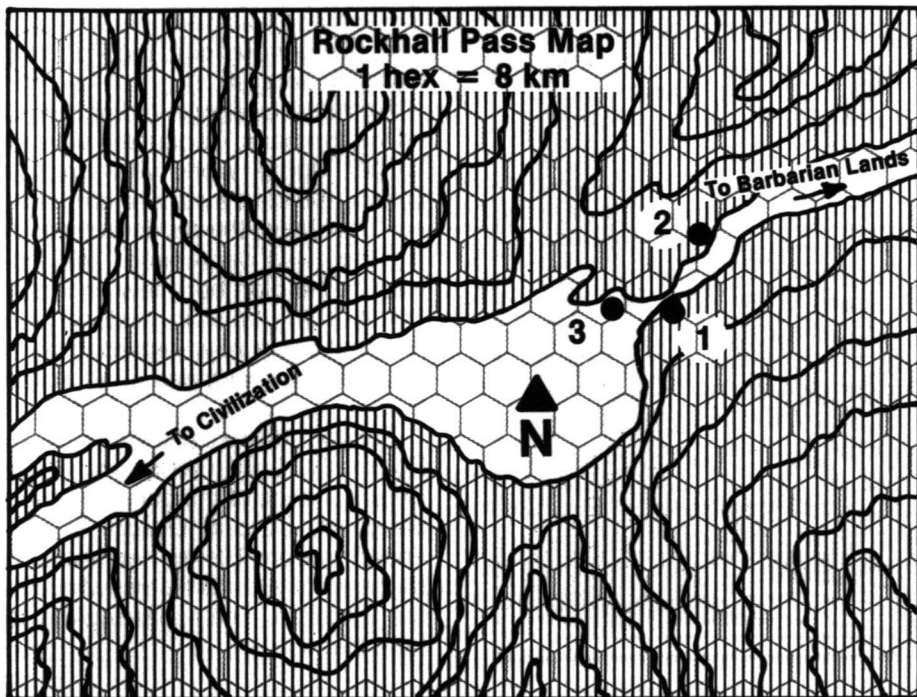
Then, figure out which barony is that of Lord Biehn's uncle. It would be best if it were one which the player-characters knew well, and had visited in times past.

If you're using the "Saduria" setting from **Fantasy Hero**, locate Rockhall Pass east of Barony Terenor. You see, on the Saduria map, how two parallel lowland passes head into the mountains east-northeast from the Barony Terenor. The map of Rockhall Pass links up there with the Saduria map.

If you choose this option, Lord Biehn is a nephew of Lord Terenor, not in the Baron's line of succession.

Rockhall Pass

The map below shows Rockhall Pass. The pass is a lowland valley between two mountain ridges. The people of the valley make their living growing wheat and grains in the valley and tending sheep and goats on the slopes of the lower mountain rises.



(1) The Rockhall: This is a cliff on the lower slope of one of the region's greater mountains. In a cleft on the clifftop, about 150 feet from the valley floor, is built the Rockhall, the strong fortress defending the pass. It's described in greater detail in its own map.

(2) The Watch Tower: Several miles from the Rockhall, also built up on a clifftop, is a single tower garrisoned by half a dozen guards. Their only job is to watch the valley and to alert the Rockhall if there is sign of invasion. In daytime, a rider will be sent; in nighttime, a signal fire lit.

(3) Rockhall Village: This is a cozy village of some five hundred people, mostly farmers. Its adult male population can be levied as footmen in times of invasion, but haven't had to go to war in living memory. The Village is described in greater detail in its own map.

Method One: Old Friends

If you've established that Lord Biehn is a new or recent friend of the player-characters, then it's perfectly reasonable that he invite them to his wedding. He'll be travelling to Rockhall pass in the company of two men-at-arms and the priest who will be performing the ceremony (his father cannot attend the ceremony due to political duties, alas) . . . would his friends accompany him on the trip? (If one player-character is one of Biehn's best friends, he could be the lord's man-at-arms, or "best man," during the wedding ceremony.) There's to be feasting, boozing, fun for all . . . If one of your characters has a friend or acquaintance who fits the bill, substitute him for Lord Biehn.

Alternatively, the characters could be friends of the Rockhalls, come to see the daughter of the family married to Lord Biehn.

Method Two: Circuit Priest — The Player-Character

If one of the player-characters has the "Priest" package deal, try the following: The character's superiors in the church contact him and tell him that the old "circuit priest" of the Rockhall area is very ill — would he take the route until the old man recovers? There's to be a wedding at the Rockhall in a couple of weeks, so it's critical that the character be there by then.

(For more on "circuit priests," see the end of the adventure.)

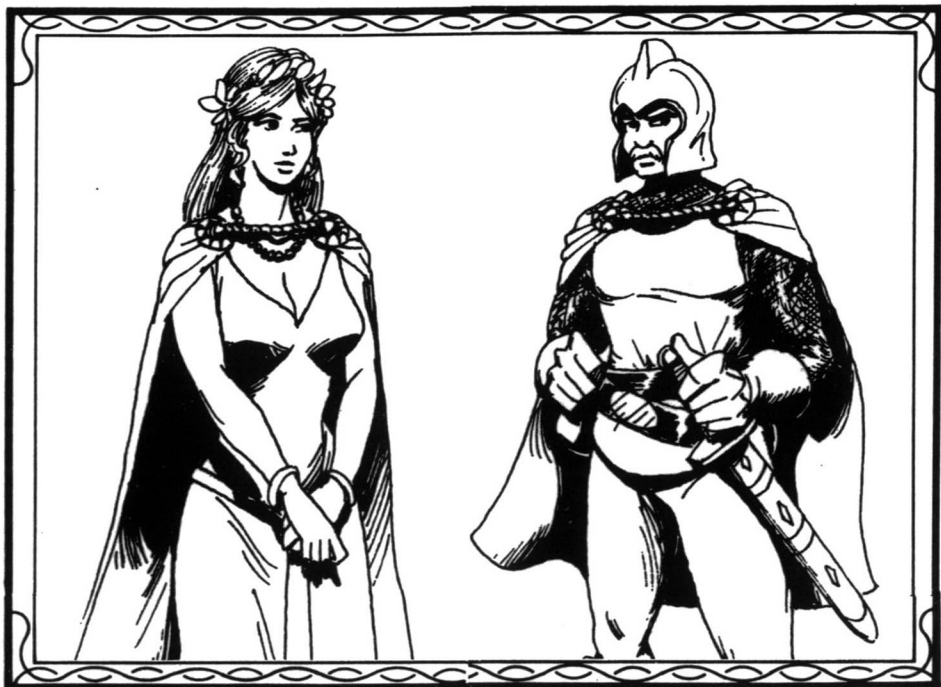
Method Three: Circuit Priest — The NPC That selfsame old circuit priest, the last time he was through Rockhall Pass, noted with his very limited magical perceptions that something was in the wind. He contacts adventurers he's heard about — the player-characters, naturally — to persuade them to come along to aid the family if necessity arises.

If the player-characters are wholly mercenary, he will know this fact and will offer the characters their standing rates.

A character sheet for Eldig, the circuit priest, appears at the back of the adventure.

Method Four: Just Passing Through

You might arrange things so that you play this adventure on the heels of any adventure which led the player-characters out into foreign lands. The characters return home through Rockhall Pass, arriving just before the wedding is to occur. They are invited to stay for the ceremony and feast.



Method Five: All of the Above

If your characters are not yet together as an adventuring party, you could use a combination of the above means. One character might be Lord Biehn's friend. Another might be a priest taken along for training by the old priest. A third might be an adventurer persuaded to come along by the old priest. A fourth might be an adventurer just returning to his nation — or departing from it — via the Rockhall Pass. Use any combination which suits your fancy and the events at hand.



THE ADVENTURE

Once you've (a) chosen where Rockhall Pass goes, (b) figured out by what means you'll get the characters there, and (c) contrived to get them out to the boondocks locale of Rockhall Pass, you're ready to start the adventure.

EPISODE ONE: THE WEDDING

For Starters

The characters reach Rockhall Village an hour or two before the wedding is to take place (several hours, if they're in the company of the priest who's to perform the ceremony). The villagers are in their holiday best — meaning that the richer folk are garishly attired, and there's some signs of color among the peasantry, and signs of washing and combing. The atmosphere is cheerful.

The wedding is to take place in the village's place of assembly, which looks like this:

(1) The Place of Assembly: The village's meeting area is a small field in the center of town, grassy and surrounded by trees. The five small dots in this field are wooden poles sunk into the ground, across which stretch an enormous canopy to shade the celebrants from the sun. At the southeast end of the canopy are several tables where ales and beers can be bought for standard inn prices (highway robbery, by boondocks standards); at the southwest end are tables with the feast for the groom and bride and their families.

(2) The Dais: Here is a small upraised dais where the priest, the groom, his man-at-arms, the bride, and her lady-in-waiting will stand during the ceremony.

(3) The Road: This is a broad cobblestoned street, the "main road" through the village.

(4) The Townsman's House: This is the largest house in the village, a two-story dwelling belonging to Paneset, the townsman (mayor), a 50ish, rotund, glib fellow who does a good job in the undemanding role of leader of Rockhall Village.

(5) Larger Houses: These are more of the larger houses to be found in the village, most of which are clustered around the assembly place.



Further out, the houses are uniformly one-story; one street away, they're mostly one-room as well.

Vignettes and Encounters

Let the characters set the tone of their time spent before the wedding commences. Some thoughts:

Party Time: The boozing and celebrating have gone on in the village since just after dawn, so there are a few in the crowd who are already very drunk. Some of them can be drunk enough to pick a fight with the player-characters — a standard tavern brawl, even if this is an open-air tavern.

Challenge Matches: In a more civilized manner, some of the Rockhall guard might challenge warrior player-characters to friendly matches of skill — combats using wooden blunts instead of real damage (substitute physical normal damage for the weapon's usual killing damage; thus a 1d6+1 sword would become a (4d6) wooden sword).

The Old Lunatic: There is an old woman, Adelin by name (Addlepate by nickname) wandering the crowd in the assembly park, shrilly proclaiming doom to come, doom to come. The villagers ignore her. If a character braves her attention to hear her story, she'll begin a long, theatrical description, learned at her granny's knee, of the battle between Gareth and Makkald, and the resulting curse. She's sure that Dardra and the nice young lord will come to tragedy. Play Adelin as a neglected old woman who's not all there. . . however, she's right, as the characters will find out.

Detecting Magic: If one of the characters has a Detect Magic spell and uses it while here, he will feel a faint whisper of magic in the air. If he can Analyze it, it will “read” as some sort of spell of command or control. If he can locate it, he’ll get a strange reading: It’s all over the place, faintly. (Makkald has summoned his wolves and scattered them all over the village, waiting for the ceremony to begin.)

Priest and Wedding Party: During the time before the ceremony, the priest character (PC or NPC) must be arranging the ceremony — he’ll be in the dining hall of the Townsman’s house with the bride, groom, lady-in-waiting and man-at-arms, rehearsing the ceremony. If one of the characters is in the wedding party, that’s what he’ll be doing for part of the afternoon.

The Wedding, And Uninvited Guests

In due time, mid-afternoon, the castle buglers will blow their fanfare and the crowd will settle into place to watch the ceremony. The crowd settles into two masses with an aisle between.

The officiating priest takes his place on the dais, facing the crowd. The groom and his man-at-arms take their place halfway along the aisle through the crowd. They are armed and armored — though the arms and armor are ceremonial. The bride, her lady-in-waiting, her mother and father make their way to the end of the aisle distant from the priest, then progress their way up the aisle until the groom and man-at-arms stand forth to bar their way.

The father gravely surrenders the bride to the groom; groom, bride, man-at-arms and lady-in-waiting proceed up the aisle and take their place on the dais. The priest opens his mouth to begin the prayer, a long-winded exhortation to his god to grant his blessings upon this worthy couple, come together here in proper manner to be wed in the view of the god. While he’s in the opening minute of his prayer, the wolves summoned by Makkald come trotting through the empty streets of the village, to the town center, then charge across the park to attack the figures on the dais and the crowd.

Set up the scene and conduct the combat. There are 16 wolves, and their targets, in order of priority, are Lord Biehn, Lord Garay, and Lady Cetara, then anyone else who gets in the way. Dardra is not to be harmed — she’s to be tortured by the murder of her fiance and parents. (Isn’t Makkald sweet?)

Not all the wolves will make it as far as the dais. Some will be delayed by guardsmen in the crowd, or by the press of people in the crowd and stampede of people away from the scene of action. Biehn, Garay, and Cetara will each start with two wolves attacking them. Biehn will take an immediate bite injury to an unarmored place; it does not have to be a serious wound, it needs merely to draw blood.

Whether the player-characters immediately throw themselves in to save those three attacked souls, or are too far away and have to deal with the wolves at hand, give each of them one wolf to deal with immediately, two wolves if the character is wearing his armor.



Conduct this battle to its conclusion. Regardless of how many of the targets are killed, when three-fourths of the wolves are dead or immobilized the rest will flee. A character with Animal Trainer, Animal Friend, or any normal experience with wolves will realize instantly that this attack is not in keeping with lupine behavior.

Aftermath of the Attack

If any of the three main victims (Biehn, Garay or Cetara) has been killed, there will naturally be no ceremony today. Dardra will collapse in teary grief on the corpse of the dear departed. The Rockhall guardsmen will scurry about, setting up guards around the town to warn of the wolves' return; Paneset, the townsmaster, arranges for medical care to the injured. If the characters haven't heard the legend of the curse from Adelin, they will now.

If somehow, miraculously, all three victims survived with none-too-grave injuries, there will be a delay of an hour or two as bandaging and inquiries occur, and then the ceremony will recommence. During this time, if the characters have not heard the legend from Adelin, they will.

The priest will pick up where he left off, asking the groom and bride if they enter into this union freely and with no reservation. Having received their affirmation, he asks if there are any challengers among the crowd — a formal (and seldom answered) request for anyone in the crowd challenging the wedding to step forth and do combat with the groom's man-at-arms. Then he has Biehn and Dardra extend their hands — her left and his right — and binds them together loosely at the wrists with a ceremonial cord. Finally, he declares them wed in the

eyes of man and their god, the couple turns to face the crowd, which commences to cheer. . .

And Lord Biehn collapses, crashing to the dais.

Biehn, depending on your own feelings on the matter and the abilities of the player-characters, is dying or dead. He's been poisoned: Careful looking (a good Perception Roll) of the area of his injury reveals some peculiar smears in the teeth-gouges on the clothes he was wearing when the wolf-attack occurred. It won't take the characters (or Paneset, if the characters aren't so inclined) long to realize that the teeth of one, and only one, of the wolves had been painted with some sort of violent poison — indicating a diabolical and intelligent mind at work behind the wolf attack.

If you have no reason to keep Biehn alive, and if the characters have no Medic skill among them (not Healing spell — Medic skill), Biehn is dead.

If, however, one of the characters has trained in the art of medicine, Biehn is alive. He's sustained a total of 13 BODY from the combination of wound and poison. And, while he can be Healed to diminish the amount of BODY he's taken, the poison is still active: It will continue to cause him more damage until it kills him. Another Heal won't do him any good — it's like healing the same wound. But a medical character can, especially if he has some secondary skill dealing with poisons (such as Toxicology) or drugs (Pharmacology, Chemistry, Apothecary).

Such a character can tell that Biehn is dying of poison, and perhaps can be saved with proper treatment. All NPCs concerned will agree that it's better to take him to the Rockhall, which is more defensible; the medic character can tell that Biehn will not suffer from the journey.

Whether Biehn died initially, died of poison later, or is merely dying of poison later, the survivors of the wedding party will wish to return to the Rockhall. Dardra, or Lord Garay or Lady Cetara (if still alive) will make an eloquent appeal for the player-characters to come up to the Rockhall as well — they are such puissant warriors and talented individuals, perhaps they can help forestall further tragedy. The NPC priest Eldig, if he is being utilized, will also be invited up to the Rockhall.

EPISODE TWO: STALKER IN THE HALLS

Before we begin this episode, let's look at the castle.

The Rockhall is built on a squarish ledge surrounded by cliffs.

South, there is steep cliff rising hundreds of feet; the mountain is so treacherous above the Rockhall that the hall residents have no fear of assassins or invaders climbing down from upper regions. (Climbing the cliffs here requires a normal Climbing roll for the first 30 feet; each 30 feet above that requires a separate climbing roll at a cumulative -2; the cliff is 300' tall over the Rockhall.)

East and west, the cliffs descend from the southern cliff-face, roughly parallelling the walls for most of their course northward, descending to the level of the Rockhall by the time they reach the end of the walls' course. These cliffs, covered with tumbled rock, are just as treacherous as the sheer cliff southward.

North is open to the air, and from the cliff-top, less than twenty feet north of the north wall, you can look down into the Pass.

The castle walls are 30' high (5" high), the towers 45' high (7" high). The walls are only 6' thick (who expects an invading force to get up here with siege equipment?) but made of well-dressed granite and very skillfully built.

The castle is very small due to the restrictions of building in available space; consequently, it is crowded, with every available inch going to housing people and horses or stores.

(1) The Guardhouse: This is a wall structure over the entrance into the castle. The little creek which begins at (15) passes through here, as does the road out of the castle. The passageway is guarded at the interior by a portcullis and on the outside by a great iron-shod wooden door, both of which can be dropped into place by pulling a lever and disengaging the winch holding up the door. Above the passageway are the four stories of the guardhouse (four large single rooms connected by a staircase); the first story up houses the exterior door and portcullis and the machinery to lower and raise them; the next three floors each house eight guardsmen. The road out of the Guardhouse follows a trail cut by man into the cliff-face and is adequate for horses to travel, single-file.

(2) The Yard: This is where the guards do their training and where the castle-dwellers socialize. The stream runs through the middle of the yard; clothes-washing and pot-scrubbing goes on in the water near the gatehouse.

(3) Wall Towers: These are ordinary defensive towers, but they have never really been used to repel invaders; they are used to house people. The tower in the center of the east wall is the small castle smithy, and smoke is usually to be seen billowing up from it; the towers on the west wall house three guards each.

(4) Watch Tower: This is the only active guard-tower, and the guards on duty here have the responsibility of keeping their eyes trained eastward, toward the watch tower at (2) on the Rockhall Pass Map.

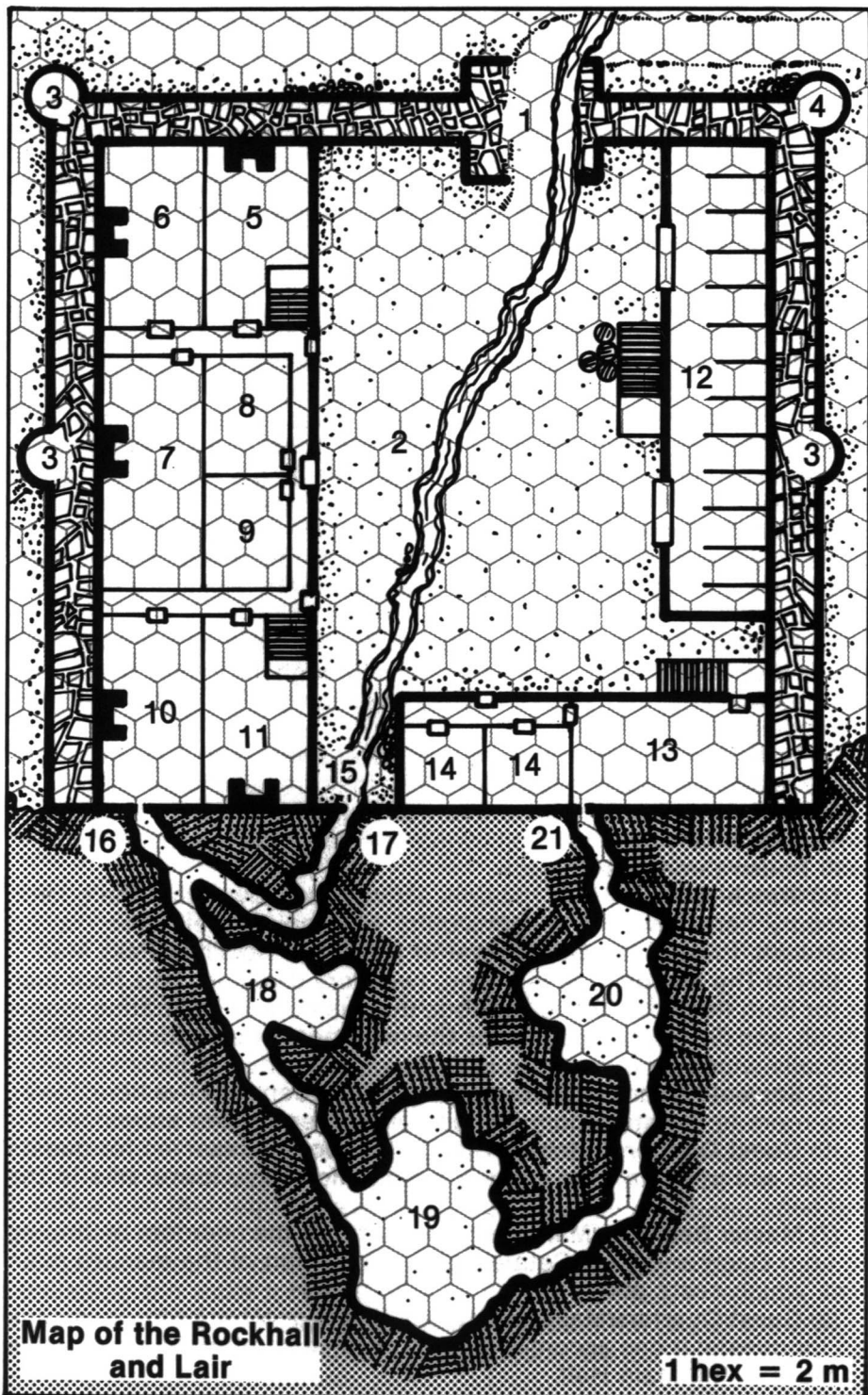
(5)-(11) The Manor: This is a long, two-story dwelling. This floor-plan is for both floors; on the lower floor, there is no wall separating rooms (7), (8), and (9); on the upper floor, the markings for exterior "doors" are actually windows.

(5) Servants Quarters/Stores: Upper, manor servants live here; lower, this room is the storeroom for food and other kitchen stores.

(6) Guest Quarters/Kitchen: Upper, this room is reserved for guests (it can accommodate four or even five comfortably); lower, this is the kitchen.

(7) Master Bedroom/Main Hall: Upper, this is the bedroom belonging to Lord Garay and Lady Cetara; lower, this is part of the manor's main hall, which seats about 35.

(8) Guest Quarters/Main Hall: Upper, this is another bedroom reserved for guests; it can accommodate two or three comfortably; lower, this is more of the Main Hall.



**Map of the Rockhall
and Lair**

1 hex = 2 m

(9) Scribe's Office/Main Hall: Upper, this is the office of the castle's scribe and correspondent (this is majordomo Tipperan, from (11) below); here also are records of the castle's correspondence, expenditures, etc. going back nearly two centuries. (Garet's own journal is here, and in modest and terse prose his story corroborates the legend of the curse, but adds nothing to the characters' knowledge.) Lower, this is the remainder of the Main Hall.

(10) Dardra's Room/Stores: Upper, this is Dardra's bedroom, which is spacious and comfortable. Unknown to Dardra, behind a panel in the south wall is a hole leading to (16). This is not a secret door: It is a section of permanent wall. Lower, this is a storeroom for textiles — bolts of cloth, stored clothes, blankets, etc.

(11) Majordomo's Room/Study: Upper, this is the bedroom of Tipperan, the majordomo, who oversees all correspondence to the Crown, the levying and collecting of taxes from the village, the monies paid to the garrison soldiers, etc. He is a short, rail-thin, sixtyish man, a good friend of the priest Eldig, a devoted Rockhall family servant all his life. Lower, this is a study or den for use by any noble resident or guest.

(12) The Stables: Here are quartered the horses of the garrison officers Rockhall family. Seven of the horses are for the garrison officers and messengers; two belong to Dardra, two to Garay, one to Cetara and one to Tipperan. The exterior stairs lead up to the stable loft, where grasses and grains for feeding the horses are kept; also, three stableboys (unfortunate souls) live here, directly above their charges.

(13) The Barracks: This two-story structure houses the remaining garrison guards, thirteen on each floor.

(14) Officers' Quarters: This is a one-story addition to the barracks; one room houses the garrison captain, the other his first lieutenant.

(15) Spring: Out from a cleft in the rock, about five feet from ground level, a spring emerges, cascades down into a shallow pool, flows down the slight slope of the castle's yard, out the gatehouse (which was built around it) and then over the cliff. This is the castle's water supply, naturally enough, one of the reasons the Rockhall was built here.

(16)-(21) The Caverns: See Episode Three for their description.

Back to the Action

On with the adventure: As mentioned, the characters will be given guest quarters in the manor, probably two or three to a room (due to the tight space considerations). If any of the family died, the characters will not be invited to share in the rest of the family's grief; if Biehn died and the characters are his friends, naturally they will not be excluded. If Garay, Cetara, or Beihn perished, Dardra will spend some time alone with the body and then return, red-eyed but in control, to her room for some time alone. If none of those characters died, she will be agitated with concern over Biehn's fate and will spend most of her time in his presence.

If Biehn Is Alive

If Biehn has so far survived his poisoning, he is still in deadly danger. Every hour, he will lose one more BODY to the poison. However, the

medical character may roll his base Medic skill (no negative modifiers) once an hour to try to forestall this damage with his knowledge. Each successful roll means that Biehn does not sustain more damage this hour. If a character has Toxicology, Pharmacology, or Chemistry in addition to Medicine, the skill with the highest roll is his primary skill for this purpose, and the skill with the next-highest roll is his only secondary skill for this purpose.

The poison will burn through Biehn's system for another twelve hours. The medical character will not know this precisely, but he will be able to gauge that if Biehn survives until dawn, his chances for survival will be much improved.

The Adventure's Course

Right now, whether they realize it or not, the progress of the adventure is in the characters' hands. They will be able to modify events by their actions — for example, posting special guards on people (naturally, Dardra and the other survivors won't think to assign themselves guards) or utilizing their own special or magical abilities.

What you must do is follow Makkald's plans through the adventure, but modify them according to the players' actions. If, for instance, the text says that Makkald enters the house to kill someone and the player-characters have taken no steps to prevent such an action, then it is successful. If they've posted a guard on the character, then Makkald must first deal with the guard — perhaps giving the characters time to get there. Perhaps one of the player-characters himself is the guard — meaning Makkald will have a fight on his hands and may be foiled this time around.

Makkald Begins: Screaming On the Walls

By the time the characters reach the Rockhall, get Biehn settled in (if he's still alive), and settle in themselves, it will be nightfall.

An hour after nightfall, a hideous wailing and screaming will sound from elsewhere in the castle. (More precisely, it sounds from upon the roof of Tower 4.) After a minute of the wailing and screaming, it settles into a mocking human voice, crying: "Rockhall! Rockhall! This is your last night upon the earth! A century past, to the day, you cast me down! Tonight, I return the favor!" Makkald, perched on the tip of the tower roof, is taunting the family, and will continue in this vein for several minutes — telling the Rockhalls to slay themselves before he gets to them, describing the awful punishments he will inflict upon them, etc.

If the characters wish to rush to that spot, they'll find numerous guards gathered within and around the tower. But there's no hatch up to the peaked roof, no way to get up there except a Climbing roll over a dangerous 45' fall. If the characters wish to climb up, conduct a dangerous scuffling fight between them and Makkald, whom they'll see for the first time. He'll protract the fight as long as possible, grab dangle characters over the tower edge, etc. until he receives 5 BODY in wounds. Then, with a mocking laugh, he'll turn into smoke and sink through the roof, disappearing.

Meanwhile, another of Makkald's demonic servants is doing some dirty work. Among the servants given Makkald by his mentor are skeletons (from **Fantasy Hero**), and one of them, while Makkald was distracting the castle, has emerged from the hole at (17), walked into the manor, and attacked one person — in order of priority (determined by who's still alive), Garay, Cetara, Biehn, or Tipperan. If the characters didn't arrange to have these folks guarded, they'll see Makkald disappear and then hear the screams from the manor as the skeleton accomplishes his primary goal and then goes berserk, slaying servants and guardsmen indiscriminately.

The Night Continues

As the night progresses, once an hour there will be one attack on each of the following (if still alive): Biehn, Garay, Cetara, Tipperan, Eldig, each player-character. Makkald uses skeletons for these attacks. He may send a skeleton out through (17) (he'll do this if there's no real chance of discovery); he may himself Climb out of (21) with a skeleton hanging around his neck, and lower the skeleton to the roof of one of the castle buildings. Remember, Makkald can "smoke" his way through walls and unlock windows and doors from the inside. There will be only one attack per character, regardless of whether the attack is successful or not; Makkald will try to contrive that the attack take place when the character is not surrounded by guards and friends, when this is possible.

As the night progresses, the normals in the castle — servants and guards (though not the guard captain and lieutenant) begin to grow panicky. If you wish to have a classic movie scene, during the night's wee hours, after most of the attacks, you can have the entire guard garrison try to bolt, only to be swayed to remain by a charismatic player-character. If you prefer, you can have most of the garrison bolt anyway, leaving the castle mostly undefended, spookier and more dangerous than ever.

For color, you can have Makkald occasionally repeat his roof-sitting, screaming and taunting. He's not stupid — he won't invite player-character fireballs and lightning bolts — but as his character sheet indicates, he feeds on grief and is determined to cause as much as possible.

Character Knowledges

The characters may have initiative enough to try to use their Knowledge Skills and those of Eldig and other NPCs to try and discover some weakness of Makkald's.

If characters are using their brains to this end, give each a simple Intelligence Roll. Success means the character can recognize Makkald's megalomaniacal nature. Another one, late in the night, could give a character with KS: The Supernatural clue that Makkald is deliberately spacing out his attacks to cause as much terror and distress as possible.

The characters can try to prepare defenses which are viable against vampires and other "classic" undead creatures. However, holy symbols, wooden stakes, and flame do no undue damage to Makkald. Sunlight

does — but they'll have to wait until tomorrow to learn that. (A character speculating on the subject should be given his Intelligence Roll to remember that Makkald was behind, but not part of, the wolf attack of the afternoon; the character may suspect, but not be sure, that this is significant.)

In any case, the last attack on a player-character should have taken place sometime in the wee hours of the night. It is followed by —

The Attack on Dardra

The last attack, a couple of hours before dawn, is upon Dardra. Makkald is attacking, not to kill her, but to seize her and carry her into his lair for a couple of hours of torment before he finishes her. After all, the immediate deaths of Garay and Cetara are not as important as Dardra's demise: Without her, the clan will not continue.

So, in the fashion he has been following, Makkald will try to kidnap Dardra. By now the characters will probably have her well-guarded, and so this attempt is probably doomed to failure. Makkald will send two skeletons, and contrive to get them as close to Dardra as possible before they're discovered.

If the attack manages to succeed (for example, if the characters have left a hole in their defenses for Makkald to exploit), you assume the hour was later than you thought and progress right on to the next episode. If the attack fails, as it probably will, the characters will have another hour's breathing space; that will make it half an hour or so of dawn.

Kidnapping Dardra

Finally, Makkald will make an all-out attempt to kidnap Dardra. The attack will be made in force — Makkald will be accompanied by at least one skeleton per guard on Dardra. He will have more and different servants if you feel that his kidnapping will not otherwise succeed — you might wish to use gargoyles in addition to the other forces, for instance.

If Dardra is in her room, Makkald and his assault force will come bursting through the wall panel placed over (16): The first intimation of danger the characters should have is when the wall comes shattering out, followed by Makkald and his line of attackers.

If Dardra is elsewhere, you might wish to locate (16) to be next to that room instead. If this is impractical, contrive to have some means for the attack to be sudden, swift, and successful. Perhaps Makkald and his minions can creep along other old hidden passages or through attics to get within reach of Dardra. Perhaps the characters will have no hint of danger until the floor collapses out from under Dardra, precipitating her into Makkald's arms.

In any case, unless this is absolutely prevented by character cleverness, the horde should burst into Dardra's room, and, while Makkald's servants engage and delay the guards and player-characters, Makkald himself should scoop Dardra up and flee with her back the way he came. The characters then have to defeat or break through the line of his minions in order to follow him.



If this approach is simply impossible because the player-characters are too efficient, then Makkald will feel himself foiled and will spend his remaining time trying to bring doom upon the player-characters. He will find one of the remaining servants, a young boy or girl, snatch him up, and taunt the characters to come and save the doomed soul. Then he'll enter (17), likely forcing the player-characters to follow to save the innocent servant.



EPISODE THREE: IN THE LAIR

Before we continue the adventure —

The Lair

(16) Bolt Hole One. This is the walled-over bolt hole, leading to manor room (10), concealed by some foolish Rockhall ancestor when it became evident that the Rockhall was not likely to ever need it again. It is a small natural tunnel, 4' in diameter. About ten feet down, it forks — southeast and east-southeast. The former branch leads to (17); the latter widens to about 6' in diameter, begins rising, and leads to (18).

(17) Bolt Hole Two. This is a 3' diameter hole about 1' off the ground, directly behind the falling water. Characters here can hear the rush of water from the underground spring mere feet overhead. Until Makkald begins his terror for the night, this way is blocked by a large circular plate of rock placed here by the same ancestor who blocked up the hole at (16). Should a character at (15) push on the stone there with any real strength — say, a Strength Roll made by 3, or a natural strength of 18 in any case — the stone will fall back and expose (17). A character in (17) can pull the stone away with the same required Strength.

(18) First Cave: Wolf-Den. There are no surprises here: The characters will see the eyes reflected in torchlight and hear the growls before the enter this chamber. This cave, 12' by 20', is where Makkald has stashed the wolf survivors of the attack in the village. (If there were no such sur-

vivors, he's called up another batch of wolves — but only four arrived this time.) A continuation of the tunnel leads southeast out of the chamber; the tunnel continues to rise.

(19) Second Cave: Skeleton Hole. This is a high-vaulted cave, silent and evidently empty. Makkald's voice, taunting and mocking Dardra, and Dardra's terrified voice can be heard from the opening in the southeast part of the cave. (The tunnel there curves around northeast, then north, gaining altitude all the while.) In this cave are the last of Makkald's skeletal servants, one for each player-character, are here — clinging to projections on the ceiling, ready to drop on the characters when they enter. Give the player-characters Perception rolls at -5 to detect them — -2 for the darkness, -3 for the skill of their concealment. When all player-characters have entered the cave, they will drop, each getting a free attack on the hapless characters. If they are noticed before they drop, they will drop as soon as the alarm is raised — but they get no free attacks.

(20) Third Cave: Makkald's Lair. In this chamber are Makkald and his prisoner, Dardra. He'll be standing toward the north end of the chamber, Dardra struggling but basically helpless in his grip, between Makkald and the characters; beyond, the characters can faintly see moonlight and the faint glow of impending dawn from the exit at (21). See **The Climax**, below.

(21) Cliffside Exit. This is a largish hole, 5' in diameter, opening up on the cliffside 45' above the barracks. It is blocked from view from the castle by a broad ledge immediately beneath it.

The Climax

Now we have the grand finale of the adventure — and it's mostly up to the characters' cleverness to bring it off successfully.

Makkald has the situation where he wants it: Dardra is minutes from death, and he can continue to torment her, lapping up her grief, until the minute before dawn; then, having run out of time, he will slay her and allow his demonic mentor to bring him "home." In the meantime, of course, he will hold the player-characters at bay by threatening her demise if they attack or approach him.

Of course, the player-characters can forestall this eventuality — if only they can figure out *how*.

Here are some ways it can be done; let the players think them up. . .

Stalling For Sunrise: The characters know that dawn is mere minutes away. If they've encountered him in person (such as during the battle on the tower-top, or during the kidnapping of Dardra), they must suspect that he is undead. And, as every good player-character should know, undead and daylight don't mix. If the characters think to stall him, to keep him talking and boasting and gloating, they will be rewarded by seeing reflected sunlight begin creeping in through the hole at (21), slowly crawling down the passageway, finally touching his foot — which bursts into flame, distracting him like a 3x Presence Attack, long enough for the characters to act.

Flank Attack: If any of the characters has a Climbing ability, a Transport spell, or a Levitate spell, he might realize that the moonlight is coming in through the hole at (21) and that he can, too. The Climbing or Levitating character will have to scramble down through the cave network; the Climbing character will have to get to the top of the barracks, to climb up the cliff face (two Climbing rolls, one normal and one at -2); any character getting that far will have to make two Stealth rolls, one to stealthily creep down the tunnel, one to get right behind Makkald. The other characters can improve this character's chances greatly by engaging Makkald in conversation and keeping up his soliloquy of gloating so that he does not hear the character behind him; if they do, Makkald will be at a -5 to his Perception rolls to detect his attacker.

Magicks Unknown: The characters might have a magic spell or item which can be used to get Dardra clear for the crucial second or two they need to upset the standoff in this cave; one example would be an invisible Telekinesis.

If The Characters Can't Do It: If the characters can't figure out how to get Dardra clear for one second, you have two ways to conclude the adventure. If the characters have been smart, not rushing to attack Makkald when it would mean Dardra's death, waiting for their chance, but not figuring out how to bring it about, you can have the doughty Dardra see an opening, make a wondrous Strength roll, and slip out of Makkald's grip for a moment — perhaps pushing him back into the pool of sunlight the characters hadn't seen. If, on the other hand, the characters are foolish enough to rush Makkald and Dardra while she is at his mercy, he should kill her — perhaps this will show the characters that their actions have consequences. If he kills her, of course, he has won.

End of the Adventure

If the characters get their big break and can attack Makkald, they can save Dardra, keep Makkald away from her until he realizes that it's dawn and he's lost. He will be cut down by the characters, or forced back into the sunlight, or forced to flee into the sunlight — when one of these eventualities occurs, a foul odor will permeate the air, a resonant voice will declare: "Makkald — Pay Now the Price of Failure;" Makkald's form will be wrapped in flames, a blast of searing heat will drive the characters back, and then Makkald will disappear utterly. (The wrapping of flames will look less to the characters like a flame attack and more like the opening of a portal to some fiery realm.)

If the characters manage to get Dardra killed, something similar will occur — the flames appear, the blast of heat will drive the characters back (or cause them 1d6 energy killing damage per phase), and the voice decrees, "This Deed is Done — Makkald, You Have Duties Elsewhere." And Makkald will disappear triumphantly within his flames.

Epilogue

If Dardra survives, she will naturally be grateful to the characters who saved her — all the more grateful if they were earlier able to save Lord Biehn and/or her parents.

Her gratitude doesn't mean much from a financial point of view; she will gladly resupply the characters, give them operating money if they seem to need it (20 sp each), even give them ponies from the village if they have no mounts.

She will also extend them her friendship to characters who seemed to be motivated by a desire to do good, by friendship, etc. Friendship with the Dardra of the Rockhalls, or with any noble family, gives characters a haven to visit at (the Rockhall), a certain fame and respectability among the noble classes of the country, and a friend — a character who will help the PCs in times of trouble.

To characters who are obviously only mercenary, she will give financial reward as above, and with good grace, but extend nothing more than that and her thanks.

For more uses of Lady Dardra and the Rockhall after this adventure's conclusion, see "Future Use of the Characters," further on.

If Dardra dies, no blame will be levied at the characters — but they will have no reward except for some reprovisioning, and will not be welcome in the gloomy village or castle.



CHARACTER SHEETS

Dardra of the Rockhalls

Characteristics

STR: 10	DEX: 13	CON: 12	BODY: 10	INT: 13
EGO: 18	PRE: 15	COM: 16	PD: 4	ED: 2
SPD: 3	REC: 4	END: 24	STUN: 21	Cost: 49

Pts. Skills & Spells

- 3 Oratory 12-
- 3 Courtier 12-
- 2 KS: Rockhall Pass Area 11-
- 3 PS: Castle Economics 12-
- 3 KS: Area & Family History 12-

- 1 Literate
- 1 Riding 8-
- 2 Familiar: Knife, Bow
- 18 Skills Cost

- Pts. Disadvantages — Base Points 50, plus:
- 8 Determined to Restore Rockhall Clan (common, strong)
 - 9 Hunted, Makkald, 14-
 - 67 Total Cost
-

Dardra, the only child of Garay and Cetara, was reared to rule the Rockhall lands. She was brought up well-versed in the traditions of her family's history, well-trained in the duties and skills of the sole heir of a noble family. . . and, ultimately, well-aware that the family was faded almost to nothing, that the Rockhalls were dying out in both spirit and flesh.

She decided that she would bring the Rockhall clan back to life by any means at her disposal. Her first step was to arrange an alliance with a wealthy family. Lord Biehn fit the bill nicely — and was, additionally, well-favored, charming, and adventuresome.

Her second step would be to finance trade expeditions out beyond the pass and into the adjoining nation's outback. A strong trade party under the banner of the Rockhall — which still has its reputation among the former enemies — could turn a tidy profit. Eventually, other traders would become interested. . . and the pass would thrive from the presence of the trade route.

The violence upon (or murder of) Lord Biehn and her parents has shattered her immediate happiness. . . but has shattered neither her nor her goals. If she survives the adventure, she will grieve for her loss, but will ultimately return to her plan of making the Rockhall clan into a strong and prosperous family once more.

Dardra of the Rockhalls is of medium height. Her hair is a lustrous brown, with gold highlights; her eyes are dark brown, almost black. After changing out of her wedding garments, she usually wears colorful but simple cold-weather robes, suitable for working or riding. If her parents are dead, she will eventually wear the Rockhall coronet.

Makkald, the Grief Spectre

Characteristics

STR: 25	DEX: 18	CON: 20	BODY: 20	INT: 13
EGO: 18	PRE: 25	COM: 16	PD: 10	ED: 10
SPD: 4	REC: 10	END: 50	STUN: 40	Cost: 276*

*Calculated as per a monster and not per a character.

- Pts. Skills & Spells
- 16 8" Running
 - 11 Climbing 18-
 - 9 Stealth 15-
 - 5 Concealment 13-
 - 4 Familiar, common melee and missile weapons
 - 10 +2 in Melee Combat
 - 5 Magic Skill 12-
 - 33 See in Total Darkness, +6 Perception (from **Fantasy Hero**)
 - 37 +6 PD, +4 ED armor (from **Fantasy Hero**, Gargoyle sheet)
 - 40 Wash of Grief spell (see below)
 - 30 Smoke Travel spell (see below)
 - 64 Wolf-Friend spell (see below)
 - 264 Skills Cost

- Pts. Disadvantages
- 10 Distinctive Looks (pallid, corpse-like: not concealable, causes fear)
 - 11 Hunted: Player-characters (small group, 75+ pointers using magic, 14-)
 - 8 Takes 1d6 normal physical damage (defenses don't apply) per phase of direct exposure to sunlight (frequent, greatly)
 - 3 Feeds on Suffering: Must cause great suffering once per week or takes 1d6 normal physical damage (defenses don't apply) per day thereafter, not recoverable until he has again caused suffering (infrequent, greatly, x1/2)
 - 13 Massively Overconfident (very common, total commitment)
 - 10 Unluck, 2d6
 - 6 Watched, Demonic Mentor, 14-
 - 540 Total Points

Equipment Carried

Broadsword	OCV +1	Damage 2d6	STUN 1d6-1	END 5
Dagger	OCV +1	Damage 1d6 + 1	STUN 1d6-1	END 3
Small Shield	OCV +0	Damage (4d6)		END 3
Small Shield	DCV +1			

Upon his death, the notorious sorcerer Makkald descended to the realms customarily reserved for the unrepentently and gleefully evil. The "warden" of this subhell saw something beautiful and pure in Makkald's evil, and eventually granted him new powers and began sending him on missions of woe. Makkald did quite well, and now, after a century, he has been given a present — being permitted to tidy up the unfinished-

ed business of the Rockhall clan. He has been given a host of skeleton servants to help him accomplish his goal.

Still in the first century of his demonic duties, Makkald is "on probation" — any failure is enough to make his superior conclude that he's not made of the stuff of greater evil. Should Makkald fail in his quest to destroy the Rockhall clan, he will be snatched back to his plane of torture, as described in the text. (You, as game-master, will have to decide who Makkald's mentor is, from the demonic deities of your campaign-world.)

Makkald carries a broadsword, dagger, and buckler, and is not loathe to mix into melee combat. For reasons of stealth and his Smoke Travel power, he wears no heavy armor.

Makkald, the Grief Spectre, is about 6' tall and some 180 pounds, pallid of face, with jet-black hair and eerie dead eyes. He was handsome in life, but his good looks are now made obscene by his undead pallor and manner. Characters with any experience with undead creatures, or with a Knowledge Skill about supernatural creatures, will be able to recognize that he is one of the dead-alives.

Eldig, the Circuit Priest

Characteristics

STR: 10	DEX: 13	CON: 10	BODY: 10	INT: 15
EGO: 13	PRE: 13	COM: 12	PD: 3	ED: 2
SPD: 2	REC: 4	END: 20	STUN: 20	Cost: 22

Pts.	Skills & Spells
3	Scholar
7	Magic Skill 13-
11	Detect Magic spell (below)
7	"Strength of the Faithful" spell from FH
2	Language: Ancient, GM choice
3	Language: Modern, GM choice
5	Oratory 13-
3	Medical 12-
2	KS: Theology 11-
1	Literacy
2	KS: Holy Rituals 11-
2	KS: Legends 11-
2	PS: Carving (Icons) 11-
3	Familiar: Melee Weapons, Quarterstaff
3	Riding 12-
1	PS: Groom 8-
2	KS: Area of Circuit 11-
3	Survival 11-
62	Skills Cost

- Pts. Disadvantages — Base Points 50, plus:
- 5 Age: 60
- 4 Follower
- 8 Kindly; reluctant to do violence (common, strong)
- 3 Believes in Divine Power of his Gods (uncommon, strong, x1/2)
- 10 Loses Powers if he Disobeys Rules of his Religion
- 4 Package Bonus
- 84 Total Cost

Equipment Carried

Quarterstaff	OCV +1	Damage (4d6)		END 2
Shortsword	OCV +1	Damage 1d6	STUN 1d6-1	END 2

Eldig is a kindly man; he grew from kindly young man to kindly old man in the service of his god. In his earlier days, he was in one of his faith's military orders, physically battling horrible creatures and evil followers of evil gods; today he is retired from warfare, and protects his charges with his mind and his experience.

These days, Eldig travels his circuit, leading the religious observations of his flock, performing weddings and other ceremonies, providing sage counsel to troubled persons, and keeping a vigilant eye open for unusual forms of magic. By use of his first spell, he examines each village he visits, each time he passes through; each time he detects some difference in the way the village feels, he compares it to any more mundane changes in the village to determine if someone is up to evil doings.

Before play begins, you will have to decide which deity that Eldig serves; choose a deity already established as existing in your campaign universe. The god (or goddess) should be one concerned with justice and the quashing of evil; the god should have no aversion to warfare, but not be a god devoted to war. Examples: From the Norse myths, Odin; from the Greek, Zeus, Apollo, and Athena.

Eldig is about 5'8" tall, in good condition. His hair is white and sparse, his eyes blue; he wears neither mustache nor beard and his expression is usually thoughtful or cheerful. He wears well-worn robes displaying his priestly calling.

Lord Biehn and Lord Garay

For Lords Biehn and Garay, use the Bandit character sheet from **Fantasy Hero**. Biehn also has a PRE of 13 and COM of 12, Courtier on 12-, Riding on 12-, Familiarity with Lance; his Professional Skill is Hawking. Garay has a PRE of 15, Courtier on a 14-, Riding on 12-, Climbing on 12-; his Professional Skill is Close-Order Battlefield Tactics.

Guardsmen

Use the Ruffian sheet for guardsmen and other villagers who carry arms. Guardsmen typically wear a brigandine byrnie (Def 4, Locations 9-14, 5.0 kg.) and helmet (Def 5, Locations 4-5, .7 kg.), and medium shield (+2 DCV, 4.0 kg.) and carry a broadsword and dagger. The armor weighs 9.7 kg., resulting in a -2 DCV and 2 END per Turn expenditure.

Normals

Lady Cetara, Paneset, Adelia, Tipperan, and the "extras" in the adventure are Normals with scores of 8 in all primary characteristics and the Professional Skills pertinent to their occupations.

SPELLS OF THE CHARACTERS

Eldig's "Detect Magic" Spell

Eldig stands in the area he wishes to "scan," performs a prayer to his deity while accomplishing related gestures, and then "tastes the magical flavor" of the area. The spell does not tell him direction, but it does analyze the magic, telling him if it is elemental, necromantic, etc.

Effect: Detect Magic **END:** 0 **Base Cost:** 5 points.

Advantages: Detect Analysis (x1), Area Effect (x1/2), Increased Area (x1/2), Double Area six times (64" radius) (x1 1/2), Constant (x1/2) **Active Cost:** 25 points.

General Modifiers: Reduced END to 0 (x3/4) **Modified Cost:** 44 points.

Limitations: Gestures while Casting (+ 1/4), Incantation while Casting (+ 1/4), +1 Turn (+ 1), Materials (Obvious Accessible signet ring, + 1), Concentrate (casting only, + 1/2) **Total Bonus:** +3 **Real Cost:** 11 points.

Makkald's "Wash of Grief" Power

Makkald gestures at his victim, and a hideous, roiling gray cloud, which writhes and screams and is covered with the smoky faces of damned souls, washes across the character, who is immediately struck with a crippling sense of grief and sorrow (and loses a portion of his END and STUN). Thereafter, any phase that the character makes his EGO roll, he may recover two points each of END and STUN Destroyed by this spell.

Effect: Destroy 2d6 STUN and 2d6 END **END:** 8 **Base Cost:** 45 points.

Advantages: Easy (x1/4), Fast (x1/4), No Magic Roll (x1/4) **Active Cost:** 79 points.

General Modifiers: Reduced END to 1/2 (x1/4) **Modified Cost:** 100 points.

Limitations: Gestures (elaborate flourish, + 1/2), victim may make EGO roll every phase, and with each successful EGO roll recovers two points each of END and STUN (+ 1/2), spell is of no effect against priests of genuine gods, against characters under an AID spell that currently affects either END or STUN, or against characters with two or more levels of Luck (+ 1/2) **Total Bonus:** +1 1/2 **Real Cost:** 40 points.

Makkald's "Smoke Travel" Power

Makkald transforms himself into a billowing cloud of slate-black smoke and can seep through walls so long as they are porous.

Effect: Transport 10" **END:** 9 **Base Cost:** 30 points.

Advantages: Double Range to 20" (x1/4), No Magic Roll (x1/4) **Active Cost:** 45 points.

General Modifiers: None **Modified Cost:** 45 points.

Limitations: Slow (one phase of travel time per 4" travelled, + 1), Makkald still vulnerable to magic while in smoke form (+ 1/2), spell will not transport character through airtight materials (+ 1/4) **Total Bonus:** +1 3/4 **Real Cost:** 16 points.

Second Effect: Clairvoyance **END:** 0 **Base Cost:** 20 points.

Advantages: No Magic Roll (x1/4) **Active Cost:** 25 points.

General Modifiers: Reduced END to 0 (+ 3/4) **Modified Cost:** 44 points.

Limitations: Doesn't allow Makkald to observe, merely permits him to utilize Transport effect (+ 2), Linked to Transport (+ 1/4) **Total Bonus:** +2 1/4 **Real Cost:** 14 points.

Total Real Cost: 30 points.



Makkald's "Wolf Friend" Power

Simply by concentrating, Makkald can call to him a pack of sixteen wolves; he can control them and then send them out to do his bidding.

Effect: Aid (+30 points of EGO) **END:** 0 **Base Cost:** 100 points.

Advantages: No Magic Roll (x1/4) **Active Cost:** 125 points.

General Modifiers: Reduced END to 0 END (x1 1/4) **Modified Cost:** 281

Limitations: Self Only (+ 1/2), Concentrate (+ 1/2), Conditional on presence of wolves in area (Common, + 1/2), + 1 Turn to Cast (+ 1), gestures (+ 1/4), incantation (+ 1/4), Only for Maintaining Domination of Summoned Wolves (+ 2) **Total Bonus:** + 5 **Real Cost:** 47 points.

Second Effect: Summon (16 200-point creatures) **END:** 7 **Base Cost:** 60 points.

Advantages: Invisible (x1/4), No Magic Roll (x1/4) **Active Cost:** 75 points.

General Modifiers: Reduced END to 1/2 END (x1/4) **Modified Cost:** 94 points.

Limitations: Concentrate (+ 1), Conditional on presence of wolves in area (Common, + 1/2), + 1 Turn to Cast (+ 1), Summoned Wolves must physically cross intervening distance to Makkald — extra time to appear, 2d6 Turns (additional + 1/2), gestures (+ 1/2), incantation (+ 1/2), linked to Aid above (+ 1/4) **Total Bonus:** + 4 1/4 **Real Cost:** 18 points.

Total Real Cost: 65 points.

FUTURE USE OF THE CHARACTERS

Once this adventure is concluded, you can use the NPCs and setting in a future adventures if you wish to. Some sample adventures:

Biehn Avenged

Lord Biehn's father, Baron Terenor's volatile younger brother, could get it into his head that the so-called curse was a clumsy deception — that the foul Dardra married his son for the alliance, then brutally murdered him and her own parents in order to achieve power. Having

come to this conclusion, the vengeful lord could muster his troops and march on the Rockhall — leading to a seige adventure where the player-characters defend the Rockhall and try to convince the lord of the stupidity of his ways before a second tragedy occurs.

Trade Expedition

Dardra's character sheet describes her plans for creating peaceful trade with the neighboring outback. If she survives "The Rockhall Curse," she could try to hire or persuade the player-characters to lead the first trade expedition into these lands — an opportunity for an exploration adventure, replete with survival tests in getting through the pass, with wildlife encounters, first meetings with the foreigners, ambushes on the trade caravan, politics with the foreigners, running afoul of assassins or thieves hired by their trade guilds, etc.

One Last Chance

Makkald's demonic mentor could give the Grief Spectre one last chance to redeem himself — in some other mission, in some other place. Therefore, in any future adventure of the player-characters, Makkald might be present — on related or unrelated business. While attempting to carry out his purpose, he will naturally devote a disproportionate amount of his time trying to cause grief to the player-characters who thwarted (or at least inconvenienced) him earlier.

THE CIRCUIT PRIEST

Many backwoods communities do not have priests in residence — the communities are too small, too poor, or too out-of-the-way for every one to have its own priest.

But each community needs the presence of a priest occasionally — to conduct weddings, ceremonies of majority, funerals, religious observances, exorcisms, etc.

Such areas have their religious needs met by an itinerant priest, one who travels from community to community. The circuit priest is usually a holy man vigorous enough to endure the near-constant travelling; circuit priests who have kept their circuits for years, like Eldig, are either dedicated or unambitious enough not to desire the easier life of a settled following, or are newly-appointed priests on their first duty.

Unless his "circuit" encompasses all the area where the campaign's adventures will normally occur, a player-character should not be a circuit priest. However, in any backwoods stretch, the circuit cleric is a likely NPC encounter.

MERP CONVERSIONS

See **Converting MERP and Fantasy Hero Statistics**



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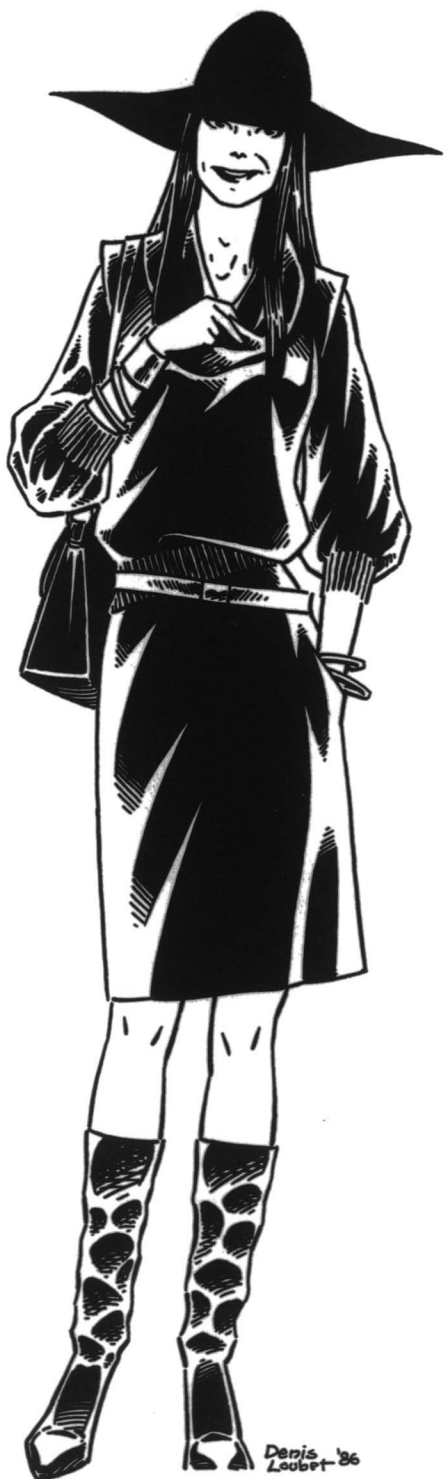
CROOKS AND CRUSADERS

"Crooks and Crusaders" is a regular column featuring character designs. Heroes, villains, talented normals and monsters of all varieties from **Champions, Justice, Inc., Fantasy Hero, and Danger International** will be printed. Readers are encouraged to contribute, but please don't send in every PC and NPC from your campaigns to give us a lot to choose from; send only the most interesting and successful characters you have so far encountered.

Special Note: In AC #5, we ran a contest — submitters were supposed to write up the villain from the original covers of Champions and Enemies. The winner was to be printed in Crooks and Crusaders this issue. Unfortunately, because of scheduling problems, most people didn't see that issue until the contest deadline was past. We received five entries; of them, none was contest-winning material. So we're calling the contest on account of rain... perhaps we'll try again some other time.

LENORE FOR CHAMPIONS

Val	Cha	Pts	Pts	Powers	END
18	STR	8	15	Luck	0
20	DEX	30	10	Danger Sense, 11-	0
18	CON	16	5	IR Vision	0
13	BODY	6	5	Persuasion 14-	0
23	INT	13	5	Stealth 13-	0
18	EGO	16	5	Deduction 14-	0
20	PRE	10	9	Shadowing 14-	4
20	COM	5	3	Photography 12-	0
10	PD	6	4	City Knowledge, campaign city 13-	0
10	ED	6	3	Superheroes Knowledge 12-	0
5	SPD	20	5	Vehicle (Corvette)	0
10	REC	4	2	Carry Concealed Weapons permit (Nora Page)	0
36	END		36	Gadget Pool (Champions II), 30 active	0
31	STUN		40	Multipower	
Disadvantages: 100 +		Pts.	4	U Teleport 15", 2x Mass, 1 floating location	8
Prankster (very common, irrational)		20	4	U Desolidification	8
Compulsive Snoop (v. common, irrational)		20	4	U Invisibility (basic), 0	0
Code vs. Killing (common, total commitment, x1/2)		10	4	U 4d6 EB, NND (EGO Roll)	8
Spoiled; Disregard of the Law (v. common, x1/2)		8		Elemental Control: "Angel" (Unaware, 3/4)	
Hunted, Foxbat, 8-		20	11	+2 Speed	0
Hunted, various villains, 8-		25	5	20 INT (separate from Lenore's INT)	0
Secret ID		15	5	Active Sonar	0
2x STUN, Light Attacks		20	5	Telekinesis, STR 10, Invisible, 0 END	0
2x STUN, Physical Killing Attacks		30			
Hero/Villain Bonus		61			
(CHA Cost) 140 + 189 (Power Cost) = (Total Cost) 329 = Disadvantages Total					



Origin:

Lenora (Nora) Page's mutant powers began manifesting soon after her 13th birthday. She began sliding through floors and walls and popping from place to place without walking the intervening distance. She found out that people occasionally couldn't see her. She didn't question these abilities — she just learned to use them. Always a mischievous and inquisitive child, she used her new powers to pry into other peoples' affairs, play pranks, cause trouble, and humiliate those who offended her.

She grew up basically good-natured, but thoroughly spoiled — by her luck and her powers, which brought her anything her heart desired. After one unutterably boring year at college (grudgingly done to please her parents), she could no longer resist the glamour — and potential mischief — the big city promised, and she moved there.

She found that causing trouble for ordinary human beings soon lost its appeal; but if she poked her head through enough walls, she'd discover something entertaining to play with. She might find minor supervillains dividing loot from a recent bank holdup, which would lead to Lenore having walking-around money for several weeks, and to several villains attacking one another, accusing each other of having stolen all the cash. She might find a superhero changing into his super identity, in which case she'd take a snapshot and lead the poor man on a harrowing chase as he strove to retrieve the evidence — which she'd eventually let him have. She might

find the HQ of a villainous agency, in which case she'd epoxy the agents' equipment into their lockers before calling UNTIL and ringing the alarm bell.

She always left notes taking credit for her deeds, signed "Lenore" — the name of the lamented lady from Poe's "The Raven." When performing her mischievous activities, she adopted black outfits and dropped false hints here and there as to the origin of her abilities, her favorite line of innuendo hinting that she might be a vampire (she liked the mystique of the *nosferatu*).

In recent months, she stumbled across the inadvertently abandoned headquarters of the villainous Foxbat and ran amok there, giving away or hiding the man's gadgets and vehicles, tying together the shoelaces of the fearsome Centipedemobile, writing confusing replies to all his supervillainous correspondents, and creating an amazing mess before departing that poor, abused HQ.

Campaign Notes:

Adventures involving Lenore could have her discovering something about a player-character — for example, finding his favorite focus — and leading him on a merry chase to retrieve it. She might do the same thing for a villain — for instance, hiding Dr. Destroyer's fearsome new ultra-weapon in the bathroom of the superteam's HQ. If she tells the supers where a villain group's HQ is located, they're sure to arrive at a hornet's nest of confusion — never to leave well enough alone, she will have backed the sewers

up into the HQ, arranged for the delivery there of twelve million ping pong balls, or done something equally reprehensible.

She can be persuaded to investigate a particular villain or agency — her Deduction roll being a good guide as to how much she can find out — but will want to trade favor for favor, and may ask the heroes to help her bring off some massive practical joke.

She can also appear in adventures in her secret identity. As Nora Page, she wears jeans and biker-style leathers, pink tinted non-prescription glasses and an outrageous multicolored punk hairdo wig, and runs the "Nora Page Private Detective Agency" — a one-room office with an answering machine on the telephone, necessary for an office she almost never visits. Nora Page charges outrageous sums and gets no business whatsoever, as normal folk will not pay astronomical sums to someone as disreputable-looking as Nora Page. Obviously, the office is a blind — she doesn't *want* any business — but if someone were actually to hire her, she would indeed investigate, and is licensed to do so.

Powers:

Lenore's physical stats, while not beyond the realm of ordinary human development, are a result of her mutant physiology. Her Multipower constitutes her "conscious" psionic/mutant powers, all abilities fairly common to powerful psionics and mutants.

Her most unusual power is what she calls her "Guardian Angel" — the combination of her Elemental Control and her Luck.

Her EC is unconscious — she cannot consciously control it (for which the world can be grateful) and all it does is to get her out of danger.

The EC has its own phases in which to act. You can either list Lenore as having Speed 5 (Segments 3, 5, 8, 10, and 12) and list the Guardian Angel separately (Segments 6 and 11), or you can list Lenore with Speed 7 (Segments 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12) and circle Segments 6 and 11 to be the Guardian Angel's.

When Lenore is endangered, her Guardian Angel uses its phases to trip up, inconvenience, and harm those who would harm her. STR 10 Telekinesis isn't much, but it's quite enough to wrap bedsheets around attackers, trip them, pull rugs out from under them, turn out the lights (her IR vision can compensate), put nails into car tires, throw pies (one-phase Flash attacks), etc. Since the Guardian Angel has its own intelligence and senses, it can detect foes Lenore hasn't noticed; an enemy might be tumbled down a flight of stairs before she knows he's there. Additionally, her Luck adds to the effect of divine intervention in getting her out of scrapes.

Her acquired skills all reflect her relentless curiosity; she learned photography in high school and picked up the other skills since reaching the big city.

Equipment:

Lenore's normal equipment includes a small 35mm camera and the late model 'vette she stole from a stylish supervillain (use the Corvette stats from **Champions II**).

She does have a Gadget Pool, mostly strange little gadgets she has picked up in her adventures, especially from Foxbat's HQ. Most of the gadgets she has are bizarre and foolish — she prefers broken or useless devices, such as heat-propelled ice skates, opaque personal force fields, UNTIL blasters with pop-out flags that says "Zark!" and so on. She hands these out at every opportunity to unsuspecting supers, especially supervillains.

Nora Page is licensed to carry a firearm but doesn't.

Weaknesses:

Lenore's primary weakness is her fondness for mischief. It leads her into all sorts of trouble and makes enemies — mostly of short duration (who needs to bother with a prankster when there's a world to conquer?) but some of greater stubbornness. She can get into trouble that even her Guardian Angel can't extract her from... though it's not a common occurrence.

Lenore takes extra STUN from physical killing attacks (it's psychological shock — she never expects to be hurt, and is doubly stunned when it happens) and from light-based attacks (her psionic powers seem to resonate with light frequencies, and she "overloads" when attacked with such powers).

Costume:

She has no regular costume, but dresses in a variety of black outfits — pant suits, evening dresses, and stranger attire seized from costume shops and elsewhere.

GADGETS & TREASURES

"Gadgets and Treasures" is the column for gadgetry in the Hero System. We present gadgets and vehicles for **Champions, Justice, Inc.**, and **Danger International**, and magical treasures for **Fantasy Hero**.

If you have a gadget, vehicle, or treasure that you think is particularly useful, write it up and send it in. If you want to make a gadget for use with several Hero System games, you should include multiple sets of stats if the stats differ from game to game.

The Life Sensor is by Andrew Robinson.

LIFE SENSOR FOR CHAMPIONS OR SUPER-AGENTS

The Life Sensor is a small, hand-held box whose delicate detectors can pick up the weak electrical emanations of higher-order nervous systems. The device works well within limited ranges for most mammals and other large creatures (sharks, alligators), but cannot pick up many lower classes of animals, such as most reptiles, fish, birds, and insects. Plants do not register at all.

The device is carefully calibrated for terrestrial life forms, and thus will not pick up aliens visiting the earth.

The detector is easily blocked by the interference of strong electrical fields.



The Life Sensor: Sense & Detect Life (**Champions III**). OAF, only within 60 degree cone (+ 1/4 disad), activates on 14-.

Cost: 8 points.

Notes for **Super-Agents:** 8 points, SIZ 3.

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THE HERO SYSTEM™



THE AVERAGE CHAMPIONS CHARACTER

BY GEORGE
MACDONALD

In *Adventurers Club #6*, the feedback card asked AC readers to give us the average stats of their **Champions** characters. This was an important questionnaire because it helps Hero Games establish an average value for the heroes that players are using. When Hero publishes scenarios, it bases the average villains around the average hero's abilities.

We received 39 feedback cards, or about 1% of the AC's readership. I hope in the future that more readers send in their feedback cards; they are the easiest mechanism most readers have for making their voices known at Hero.

Below is listed each question along with the average value and a percentage spread of the values received to show how the results divided up.

-
- (1) In your campaign, what is the average number of dice of attack?

Average of 39 answers: 10.90 dice
Percent less than 10 dice: 25.65 %
Percent 10 to 12 dice: 58.97 %
Percent over 12 dice: 15.38 %

- (2) In your campaign, what is the average number of points in a defense?

Average of 38 answers: 24.83 points
Percent less than 20 points: 18.42 %
Percent 20 to 25 points: 52.64 %
Percent over 25 points: 28.94 %
(An average of 2.28 points of defense per die of attack)

- (3) In your campaign, what is the average number of EP per adventure?

Average of 38 answers: 2.56 points
Percent less than 2 points: 10.53 %
Percent 2 to 3 points: 81.58 %
Percent over 3 points: 7.89 %

- (4a) In your campaign, what is the average Strength?

Average of 32 answers: 22.84
Percent less than 20: 18.75 %
Percent 20 to 25: 46.88 %
Percent over 25: 34.37 %

(4b) In your campaign, what is the average Dexterity?

Average of 36 answers:	22.76
Percent less than 20:	11.12 %
Percent 20 to 25:	72.22 %
Percent over 25:	16.66 %

(4c) In your campaign, what is the average Speed?

Average of 33 answers:	5.19
Percent less than 5 points:	15.15 %
Percent 5:	51.52 %
Percent over 5:	33.33 %

(5) In your campaign, what is the base points you start a character on?

Average of 39 answers:	102.44
Percent at 100 point base:	92.31 %
Percent over 100 point base:	7.69 %

(6) What is the average number of disadvantage points your characters start with?

Average of 38 answers:	143.49
Percent under 125 points:	34.21 %
Percent 125 to 150 points:	44.74 %
Percent over 150 points:	21.05 %



Some games were damage-intensive, like one that had 15d6 attacks and 15-point defenses. Other games were defensive battles with 10d6 attacks and 32-point defenses. All of these games work, but all have different combat styles. Ambush and the first shot would be very important in the 15d6 offensive game, while special maneuvers to increase damage or reduce a target's defenses would be important in the 10d6 defensive game.

Hero will redo the character survey occasionally to try to keep up with what your characters' stats are like. If your characters are significantly different than the average listed here, they're not wrong; they're just different. You may have to modify the scenarios and characters Hero publishes to make them fit into your campaign. If your characters look a lot like the average, then you obviously have a lot of company in your own style of **Champions** campaign.

Several interesting things come out of these figures. First, the "average character" has an 11d6 attack, defenses of 24, is DEX 23 and Speed 5. Second, in the beginning he was built on about 245 points and gets 2 or 3 EP per run. Finally, all of the characters have about 2 1/4 times as many points in defense as they have dice of attack.

AS interesting as the average of the responses were some of the high-powered and low-powered games represented. Several games were in the 13d6 attack, Def 30, DEX 26, Speed 6 range. There were also several 9d6 attack, Def 20, DEX 20, Speed 4-5 games.

Some games had similar power levels but very different balances.

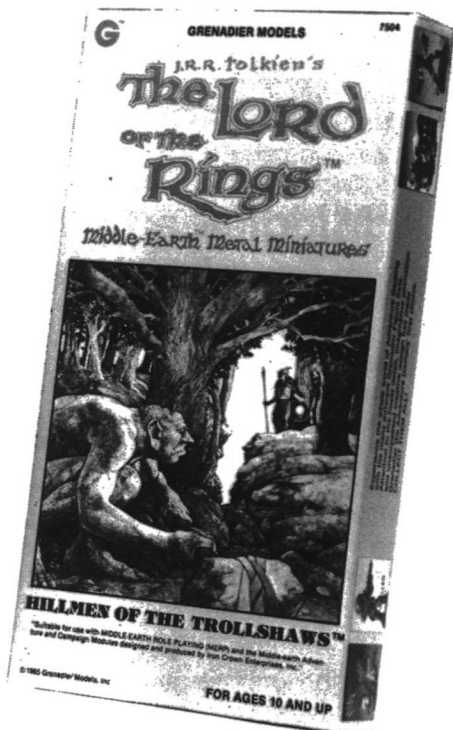
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IFFGÛLD'S KEEP: AN ADVENTURE ON THE ETTENMOORS



**A Middle-earth Role Playing Scenario
by Jessica M. Ney**

**Edited and Introduced
by John David Ruemmler**

The following mini-adventure is the first in a series which will appear in upcoming editions of the **Adventurers Club**. Some will be set in J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth, others in different fantastic worlds. We at ICE hope you enjoy them; let us hear what you think!

Setting: An ancient keep once belonging to a Dúnedain knight, now in the possession of a Frost Giant. The action takes place more than a century before the War of the Ring.

Requirements: A small, wily band of Scouts and Warriors eager to fight or outsmart a Giant. A cart (or sleigh) and pony would be helpful.

Aids: Knowledge of lockpicking, sharp swords, and an acquaintance with the Ranger, Crisgalen.

Rewards: 20 to 200 silver pieces and the chance to seize the Giant's treasures.

THE TALE

Along with the barren greyness of shortened days, the Fell Winter has brought to the rugged hills north of Rivendell an iron chill, stern enough to crack rock. Ruined castles loom on craggy hilltops, and few people, save strange folk, roam the snow-driven wastes. After the fall of Rhudaur to the Witch-king of Angmar, keeps and towns were abandoned to Trolls, Orcs, and wolves. (The crowning of Aragorn II as King Elessar has yet to occur.)



ADVENTURER'S CLUB



Some years before the advent of the Fell Winter, a Frost Giant descended from the Misty Mountains, where increasing swarms of Orcs and Wargs crowded his once-solitary realm. The forsaken, wind-scoured reaches of eriador drew him to a ruined outpost once occupied by the Witch-king's dread soldiers. Located on an island in the middle of a small lake, the stone tower radiates a vast chill brought by the Giant, Iffgûld.

A powerful entity towering thrice the height of a man, Iffgûld wields a colossal sword and works perilous enchantments with his sorcerous mastery over the forces of cold. His fierce, selfish heart drives him to rule the Ettenmoors as his own private fiefdom. Toward that goal, the Giant schemes to bring an unending succession of arctic seasons to the frosty region and to freeze out any rivals for the land.

THE TASK

The Rangers of the North have established a watchtower near Iffgûld's keep to watch the Giant's activities. Crisgalen, a friend and companion of chief Argonui, has noticed icicles growing from the Giant's lair and ice covering the lake year-round. Crisgalen is intrigued but busy with other duties; he will prove eager to help (and reward!) those who are bold enough to scout the Giant's keep and report their discoveries to him.

The Ranger has a rough map of the terrain near the keep and knows of the two white wolves which prowl the area. He offers a reward based on the value of the information uncovered.

Those who choose to ignore the Ranger need not go unrewarded: Iffgûld's hoard of magical weapons and treasures is considerable. The very brave — indeed, the foolhardy — may care to take on the Giant in battle and perhaps win fame as well as wealth.

THE KEEP

An ancient Dúnadain road, tangled with weeds and wild grasses, winds north through the Coldfells. After crossing the river Mitheithel (at a ford shadowed by the mountains), it turns west to travel through the hills. Fifteen miles north of this great bend in the way lies the icy lake from whose surface thrusts Iffgûld's keep.

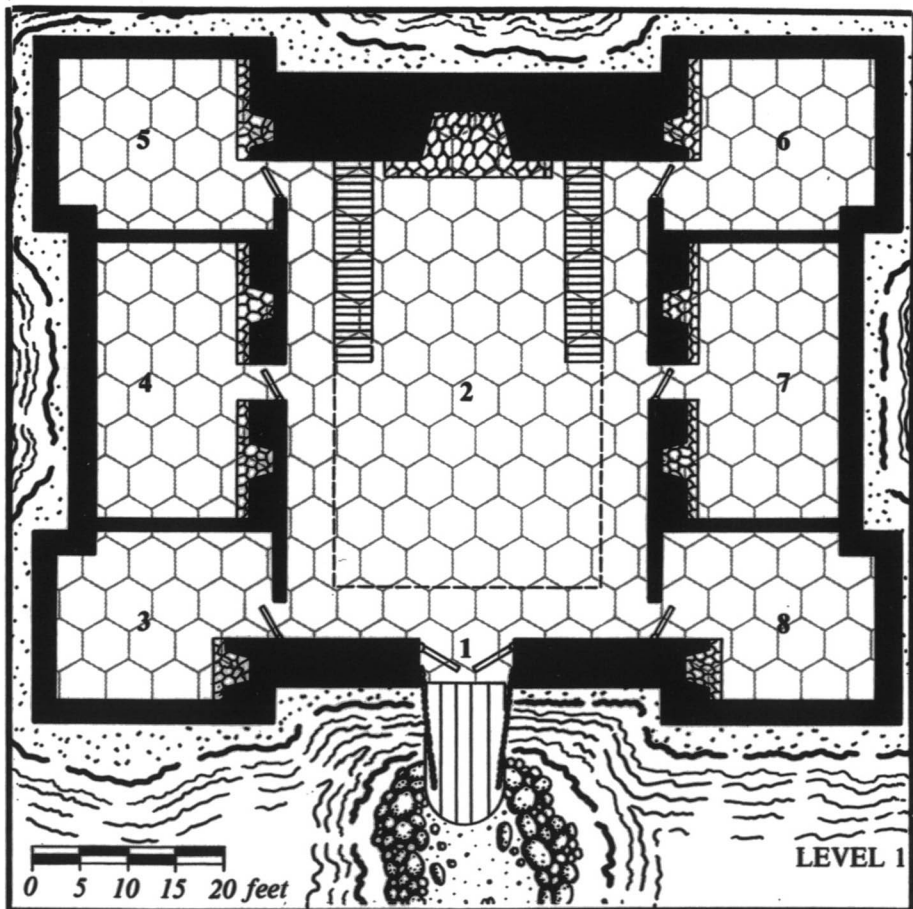
Originally constructed to protect a Dúnadain knight and his lady, the tower's grey stones were quarried locally, cut and dressed to be set without mortar. The sturdy granite has well endured the lash of time, the shadow of Angmar, and the erosion of neglect, yielding little of its integrity. A short causeway con-

nects the 50' keep to the lake shore.

Within thick walls, the lofty great hall occupies most of the ground floor. A minstrel's gallery runs around the perimeter, giving access to guest rooms once full of bright comfort and ease, now dusty and bare. Iffgûld relaxes before the massive hearth in the great hall or in the spacious solarium above, the lesser rooms being too confined for his Giantish size. The fires burning in both these apartments give forth not a gentle and warming heat, but only the bittersweet cold,

consuming a bluish-grey wood named Helvorn.

By day, often accompanied by his two white wolves, Iffgûld roams the heath, placing a sorcery of ice between the rocks and the earth, between one blade of grass and the next, behind the voice of the everblowing wind. Exhaustion sends him home to lounge beside chill flames and to send the Trolls, who act as guards and servants, tromping about the keep in service to his comfort.



Level One

1. Entrance. A stone causeway jutting from the lake shore ends in deep, icy water, 10 feet short of the keep. The drawbridge spanning the gap remains down while Iffgûld roams far from home, but is withdrawn after his return at night. The foolhardy risking a short swim will find that the slippery, ice-coated foundation stones (waterlevel is 10' below the keep portal) allow little purchase for climbing, and death by exposure comes quickly in the frigid waters (2-5 minutes). Stout double doors of ironbound oak further secure the Giants's abode, and they remain locked at all times (hard, -10), barred at night (very hard, -20). A simple pulley and counterweight mechanism, just inside the doors on the right, operates the drawbridge.

2. Great Hall. Mighty wooden beams, their smoke-darkened surfaces bearing intricate carvings of native flora and fauna, support the shallowly vaulted ceiling. Flanked on either side by stairs leading up to a balcony, the massive hearth occupies one wall. Cold, white flames that leap from bluish wood bring winter indoors, acting as a Coldball (MERP, Ess. ICE LAW, +35 add). Storerooms and kitchens occupy rooms along each side of the great hall. By day, one or both of the wolves, Frekka and Gherri, might (50% chance) be discovered lounging in this chill apartment; but the Trolls pass frequently through it (75% chance of an encounter) with shivering haste as they complete their daily chores. In early evening, Iffgûld sits in a large chair before the hearth, issuing commands to his servants and reviewing his strategies for domination of the Ettenmoors. Later at night, the drawbridge is retracted and the doors barred. The Trolls doze fitfully in their quarters, while the wolves prowling at will throughout the dwelling (30% chance of encountering them in any one spot.). Iffgûld slumbers in the solarium on the top floor.

3. Trolls' Quarters. Rogga and Dûrth, brothers, make this chamber their lair. Old bones and 50 bronze pieces lie strewn across the floor. A hot fire burns in the hearth to counteract the chill that seeps from the great hall, but the rank air renders the room uninhabitable to all except the Trolls.

4. Trolls Quarters. Bokka and Giffa, parents to Rogga and Dûrth, inhabit this room. Appointed with the same ordure found in their offsprings' lair, a second hearth and 50 silver pieces indicate their superior position. A

ring of keys to rooms #10A-F can also be found amongst the dirt.

5. Storeroom. Smoked meats and fish hang from rafters, and bins of dried fruits and vegetables line the walls. The hearth never holds a fire, allowing constant low temperatures to preserve the foodstuffs.

6. Storeroom. Casks of wine, mead, and honey, interspersed with bags of flour and salt, cover the floor. Huge whells of cheese sealed in wax load shelves along the walls. As in the other storeroom, flames never warm the fireplace.

7. Kitchen. Several wooden tables provide working space in the center of the room. Cooking implements hang on the walls among pots and pans. The hearth area houses a bread oven and drying racks for kindling as well as trivets and braising spits for cooking directly over the flames. Since the Trolls do all the cooking, the room is not very tidy.

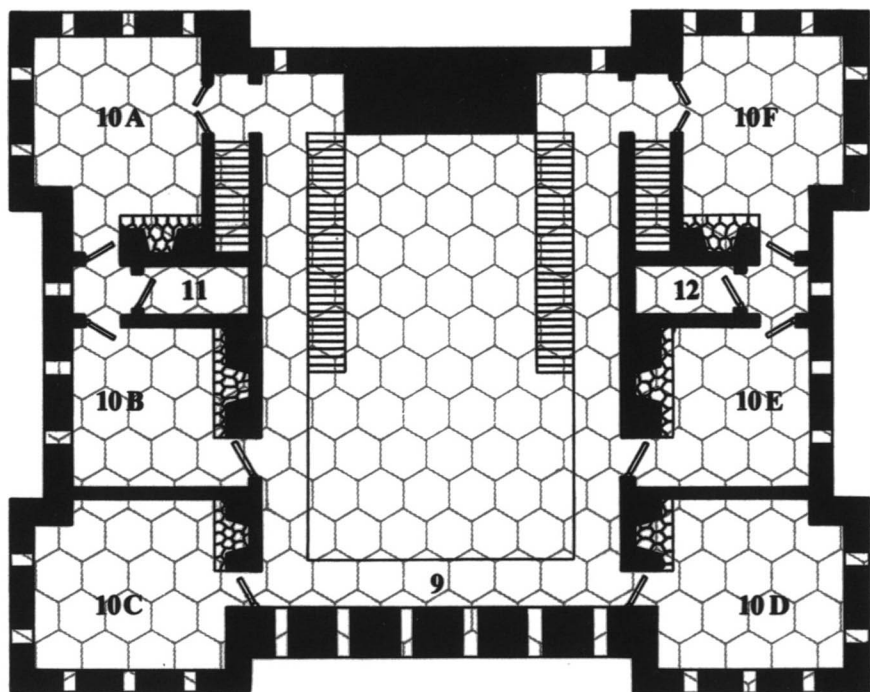
8. Wolves' Den. Frekka and Gherri, the Giants's pet wolves, relax here on fresh-cut rushes during their infrequent moments of leisure. By day they must guard the keep during Iffgûld's absence or accompany him on his extended rambles. By night, they remain alert while the Giant sleeps. Only a minute here or an hour there can be snatched for rest (20% chance encounter in the den), but luckily this pattern parallels closely the wolves' natural inclinations.

Level Two

9. Balcony. Elegant, curved moldings shape the wood bannister of this narrow gallery where minstrels once enlivened a knight's banquet.

10. Bedrooms. Far too small to accommodate the Giant's bulk with ease, these rooms are now used to house Iffgûld's wealth. All doors are made of sturdy oak and have stubborn iron locks (very hard, -20) and rusty hinges. (NOTE: A GM might keep in mind that the weight and bulk of the Giant's treasure presents a very real obstacle to its removal by would-be thieves.

10A. The floor of this chamber is kept polished to a mirror hue. At its center stands a harp carved of white, fine-grained wood and set with pearls. It is semi-intelligent and speaks Westron, High Elvish, and Sindarin.



LEVEL 2

It plays itself upon command and can cast each of the spells on the CONTROLLING SONGS list (MERP, Bards list) up to 10th level, once a week. It is devoted to its possessor and will call out melodically, "Master (or mistress), I'm being stolen" three times if moved by anyone else. The word Ithillain (S "Moonthread") appears in runic script at its base. Iffgûld values this harp above all his other possessions, and will exert considerable effort to recover it, should it be stolen. An unlocked door in a corner of the room opens onto a connecting hall.

10B. Bolts of silk, velvet, wool, and brocade (worth a total of 2000 gold pieces, 10-25 gp per bolt) fill the floor-to-ceiling shelves that line the walls of this newly dusted chamber. An unlocked door opens into a connecting hall.

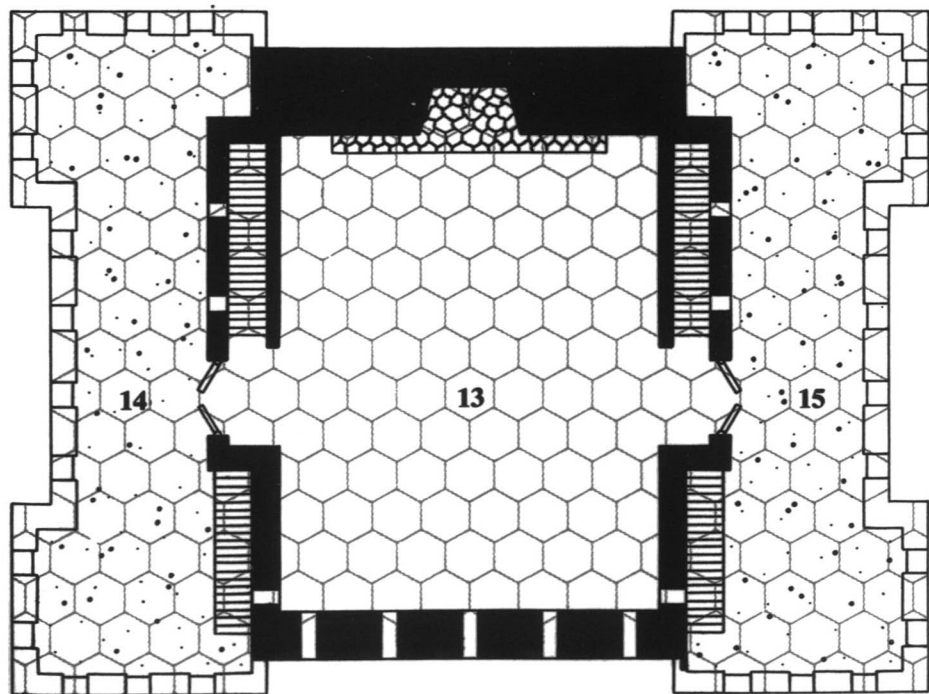
10C. A poisoned needle (very hard, -20, to disarm) guards the lock on the door. Victims who fail a resistance roll (RR) against a level 2 poison become immediately blind for 1-5 days. Those who make the RR remain blind for only 10-60 minutes. Within the room, six small chests rest along the walls pierced by

window slits. A sturdy iron padlock secures the 100 gp that fill each of them. Three roundshields hang from the wall adjacent to the fireplace. The leftmost is empossed with silver and allows its wielder to cast Shadow (MERP, Chan. NATURE'S GUISES, level 8) twice per day. The rightmost is engraved with gold and allows the wielder to use Windwalking (MERP, Chan. NATURE'S MOVEMENT, level 9) once per day. The middle shield is unembellished and the wielder may use Long Door (MERP, Ess. LOFTY BRIDGE, level 8) three times per day.

10D. A poisoned needle (very hard, -20, to disarm) protects the lock on the door. Victims who fail an RR (level 1 poison) take 10-50 hits. Those making the RR take only 5-25 hits. Six large chests, positioned as in room #10C, occupy the room. Each holds 1000 bronze pieces and is secured by an iron padlock (hard, -10). Three broadswords hang on the wall adjacent to the hearth. The leftmost is engraved with silver and delivers a "C" cold critical along with any normal critical result. The rightmost bears gold filigree and delivers a "C" heat critical. The middle one is unadorned and delivers two critical results (rolled separately on the slash

critical table) when any critical result is indicated.

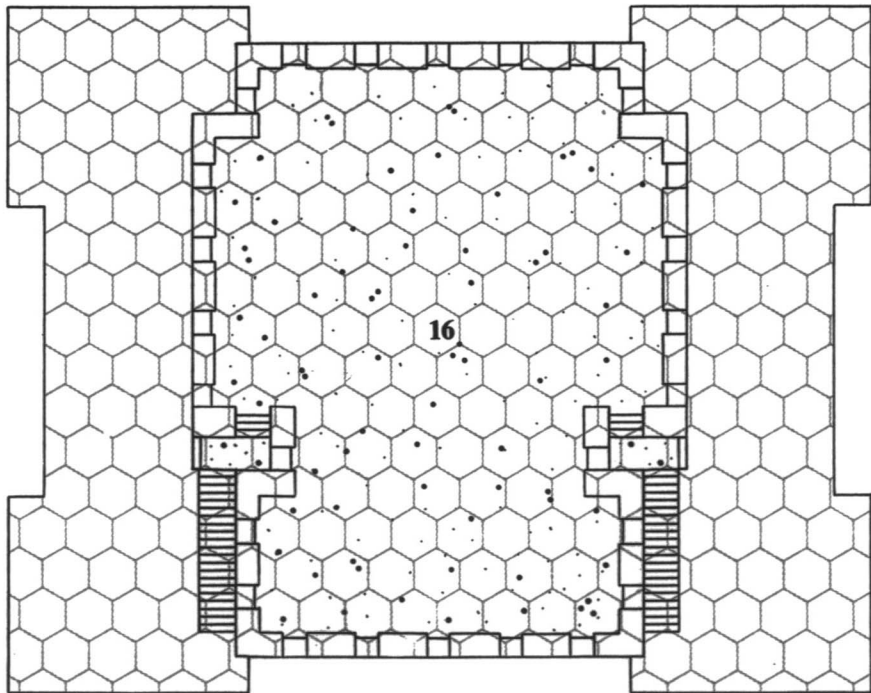
10E. A poison gas trap (very hard, -20, to disarm) defends the lock on the door. It affects all within a 10' radius. Victims failing an RR (level 3 poison) fall into a deep sleep for 1-5 hours. Those making the RR slumber for only 1-5 minutes. Six medium-sized chests occupy the room. Each is secured by an iron padlock (very hard, -20) and holds 500 silver pieces. One wall displays three composite bows, beside each of which hangs a quiver of arrows. The leftmost, ornamented with silver tracery, has a base range of 200 feet (MERP, table CST-1). The matching quiver holds twenty +10 arrows. The rightmost, etched with gold, allows the wielder to shoot one arrow and to nock another each round without penalty. The matching quiver holds twenty +15 arrows. The middle bow, of plain and undecorated construction, adds +20 to any critical result rolled on the Physical Criticals for Large Creatures Table. Unfortunately, any result rolled on the Puncture Critical Table is subject to a -20. The matching quiver holds twenty +5 arrows. An unlocked door opens onto a short connecting hall.



LEVEL 3

10F. The room is very clean and , at first glance, empty. A shelf fastened over the hearth holds three objects: A thorn-bearing spray from a bramble thicket, a smooth, grey stone, and a full waterskin. To activate the power inherent in any of these things, the object must be thrown to earth beneath the open sky. (Neither the dirt of a shadowed dungeon nor the stone paving of an ancient road is sufficient.) When the proper conditions are met, the bramble spray transforms itself into a dense thicket (covering 1000 square feet; movement through it at 100' per hour) that grows larger to become an impressive forest (covering 75 square miles). It remains for a day. The stone becomes a steep, stone hill (covering 2500 square feet high). The water, when splashed from its skin, turns into a small, chill pool (1500 square feet, 25 feet deep) and enlarges to become a deep, frigid lake (25 square miles, 200 feet deep). Natural terrain features the expansion of these artifacts. (They grow at a rate of 100 square feet and 25 vertical feet, where applicable, every minute.) Whenever possible, each orients itself to provide a formidable barrier against anyone seeking to encounter the individual who cast the item to earth. An unlocked door in the corner of the room opens onto a short connecting hall.

11. Privy. Long disuse makes this small chamber hazardous to anyone entering it. The floorboards around the drainage chute are badly rotted, and will give way beneath any weight over 25 lbs. The chute narrows quickly, stopping a fall after 10 feet; but the



LEVEL 4

experience could still be a painful (and smelly) one.

12. **Privy.** Same as #11.

Level Three

13. **Solarium.** A gracious chamber with ancient tapestries covering the walls, the solarium soothes the Giant's slumbers while the stars shine. Another chilly, white fire exudes icy cold from the hearth (Coldball, MERP, Ess. ICE LAW, +35 add). White bearskins cushion the floor.

14. **Fighting Terrace.** The crenellated keep walls border a wide expanse of stone tiles. A stone staircase leads to the rooftop.

15. **Fighting Terrace.** Same as #14.

Level Four

16. **Rooftop.** Surrounded by the walls of the keep, archers ensconced here could safely thin the ranks of any attacking forces.

MASTER NPC CHART

Melee Missile

NAME	LVL	Hits	AT	DB	Sh	Gr	OB	OB	MM	Notes
Crisgalen	12	95	RL	65	Y10	A/L	120bs	95cb	20	Ranger. +15 Leather breastplate and greaves for arms and legs, +15 broadsword, +15 compound bow, x3 ring. 72PP (2x12x3), knows four base Ranger lists to level 10 and Detection Mastery and Surface Ways to level 5.
Iffgüld	15	365	RL	40	N	-	150gs	90ro	5	Frost Giant. No armor save his tough hide, +15 greatsword. Knows MERP ICE LAW list to level 10. Youthful ambition (a century ago) separated him from his father's castle in the Grey Mountains. use large creature criticals.
Frekka	4	120	NO	30	N	-	70LBi	none	30	Wolf. Immune to cold. Intelligent and loyal to Iffgüld.
Gherri	4	120	NO	30	N	-	70LBi	none	30	Wolf. Same as Frekka above.
Bokka	5	110	SL	15	N	A/L	70cl, 100CL	none	10	Half-troll. Dislikes sunlight but is not turned to stone by it. +5 Leather jerkin, +20 stone club. Father to Rogga and Dürth. Born into a Troll clan from the Misty Mountains.
Giffa	4	90	SL	20	N	-	40cl, 75MCI	none	15	Half-troll. Same qualities as Bokka. +5 Leather tunic, +10 wooden club. Mate of Bokka. Born into a small clan of Trolls from the Trollshaws.
Rogga	3	100	SL	15	N	A/L	40Cl, 75MCL	none	15	Half-troll. Like parents above in dislike for sunlight. +0 Leather jerkin, +5 wooden club. Like Dürth, born into service under Iffgüld.
Dürth	2	100	SL	10	N	A/L	35Cl, 70MCI	none	10	Half-troll. Same background and weapons as sibling Rogga.

Note: bs = broadsword; gs = greatsword; ro = rock; cl = club; LBi = large bite; cp = composite bow.

Note: LVL = level; Hits = hit points; AT = armor type (NO = no armor, SL = soft leather, RL = rigid leather); DB = defensive bonus; Sh = shield (Y = yes, +10); Gr = greaves (A = arm greaves, L = leg greaves); Melee OB = melee offensive bonus; Missile OB = missile offensive bonus; MM = movement and maneuver bonus.

FANTASY HERO CONVERSIONS

To run this adventure in **Fantasy Hero**, follow these guidelines:

THE SETTING

If your campaign doesn't take place in Middle-Earth, locate Iffguld's Keep in your own campaign world in any desolate region located in a temperate or subarctic zone. It would be best if the region were a long-abandoned area of legend. Substitute a unit of the nearest kingdom's royal guard or the Royal League of the Arcane for the vigilant rangers here.

THE CHARACTERS

The monsters in this adventure are sufficiently powerful that, if you play this adventure for inexperienced characters, you should play it as a stealth-heavy scenario, and encounters with the monsters should be hit-and-run guerilla encounters instead of stand-up battles.

CRISGALEN

For the leader of the observation outpost, use the Leader character sheet from **Fantasy Hero**; give him Tracking, Hunting, and Survival on 14-, and Knowledge Skill: Local Area on 12-. He wears a full suit of leather armor and carries a broadsword, a heavy long bow, a quiver of 24 arrows, and a dagger.

IFFGULD

For the giant, use the Demon sheet from **Fantasy Hero**, with the following modifications: +2

levels of Size Increase (but lower his stats appropriately so that the stats increased by the Size Increase remain the same); replace the 4d6 claws with a 4d6 sword (2d6 basic to the sword, 2d6 for STR); eliminate the Flight and Transport; change the 2d6 Killing Blast to a 4d6 Normal (Cold) Blast around him.

THE WHITE WOLVES: FREKKA, GHERRI

These creatures are monstrous — use the Lion sheet from **Fantasy Hero**. They have a +10 energy Shield vs. cold only.

THE TROLLS: BOKKA, GIFFA, ROGGA, DURTH

Use the Troll sheet from **Fantasy Hero**.



THE TREASURE

MERP makes use of vastly more treasure than **Fantasy Hero**, so you should adjust all treasure

values in the adventure downward accordingly. We recommend you devalue all gold piece values in the adventure down to at least silver pieces, and more appropriately to copper pieces; all bronze pieces mentioned in the adventure should be copper pieces.

As for the magical treasures — use the harp as it is, but eliminate its spell-using ability; for all magical weapons to be found in the adventure, substitute similar weapons with only a +1 or +2 magical Accuracy bonus; eliminate all strange magical items from the adventure altogether.

THE ADVENTURE

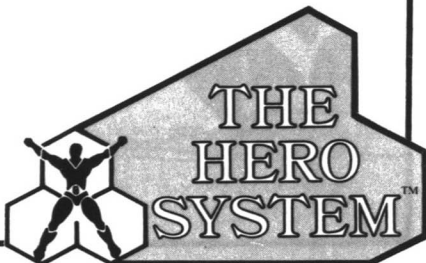
The flames from the cold fire should be considered a Blast, doing 3d6 (Cold) Energy damage per phase to persons in the room.

Fantasy Hero adventurers, conditioned to more plot-heavy adventures, will probably expect to find Iffguld constructing some sort of plot, since Crisgalen has primed them to be looking for evidence of such a thing. Perhaps you should assign his wanderings a purpose: Restlessness while waiting for a messenger from some other giant, signalling the beginnings of a conspiratorial alliance, for instance.

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CONVERTING MERP AND FANTASY HERO STATISTICS

Fantasy Hero (FH) from Hero Games is part of the Hero System family of role playing products. It uses a significantly different combat and spell system from those found in *MERP* and *Rolemaster*. The conversion of characters and creatures from one system to the other requires some mathematics but, if you play *MERP* or *Fantasy Hero*, the task should not present a great obstacle.

TIME

During combat or other situations where game time is precisely reckoned, *Fantasy Hero* uses twelve second "turns" which are divided into one second "segments." *MERP* and *Rolemaster (RM)* employ one minute "turns" which are divided into ten second "rounds." For time conversion, we recommend the following:

- 1 *MERP* Round =
3 *FH* segments
- 1 *MERP* Turn = 18 *FH*
segments or 1.5 *FH* turns

Due to the way the various game mechanics work, our suggested time conversion guideline is not exact.

STATS (CHARACTERISTICS)

The *MERP/RM* system uses percentile values (1-100) to describe a character's stats (characteristics).

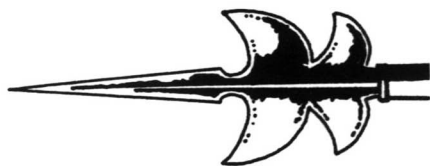
FH uses an open-ended system with most values falling in the 5-20 range. We suggest the following conversion guideline:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{MERP stat} &= \text{FH stat} \times 5 \\ \text{FH stat} &= \text{MERP stat} / 5 \\ &\text{(with a minimum value} \\ &\text{of 8)} \end{aligned}$$

Thus, a *MERP* character with a stat value from 01 to 42 would have an 8 value for his *Fantasy Hero* characteristic. The following conversion table shows how *MERP/RM* stats and *Fantasy Hero* stats relate.

<i>MERP/RM</i>	<i>Fantasy Hero</i>
ST (Strength)	STR (Strength)
AG (Agility)	DEX (Dexterity)
CO (Constitution)	CON (Constitution), BODY
IG (Intelligence)	INT (Intelligence)
IT (Intuition)	EGO (Ego)
PR (Presence)	PRE (Presence)
AP (Appearance)	COM (Comeliness)
QU (Quickness)	DEX (Dexterity)
RE (Reasoning)	INT (Intelligence)
ME (Memory)	INT (Intelligence)
EM (Empathy)	EGO (Ego)

When two *MERP/RM* stats correspond to one *FH* stat (i.e., DEX, INT, and EGO), use the highest stat. Average *FH* STR and BODY to obtain the equivalent *MERP/RM* CO.



SKILLS AND SKILL BONUSES

MERP skills can be translated to *Fantasy Hero* skills by simply comparing the name of the skill. Bonuses may be converted by using the following conversion guideline:

$$+ 10 \text{ MERP bonus} = \\ + 1 \text{ FH bonus}$$

ARMOR AND WEAPONS

RM weapon skills are keyed to specific or individual weapons (e.g., a rapier) rather than a grouping of weapons. In order to convert to *Fantasy Hero*, simply turn to the chart on page 78 of the *Fantasy Hero* guidelines to determine where to assign the weapon in terms of the appropriate general weapon skill category.

Where weapon skills are broadly defined in terms of *MERP's* weapon categories, conversion is even easier. *Fantasy Hero's* weapon skill categories are fairly close to those found in *MERP*, so simply use the following guidelines to find the equivalent label:

<i>MERP</i>	<i>Fantasy Hero</i>
1-hand Edged	Swords
1-hand Concussion	Axes, Maces, Hammers, etc.
2-hand Pole Arms	2-hand Pole Arms
Missile Thrown	Missile Thrown, Javelin

SPELL CONVERSION

There is no room here to list each of the spell lists and the myriad spell descriptions found in *MERP/RM*, nor is there space to demonstrate how to construct *Fantasy Hero* spells which correspond to them. The easiest approach is to use the following guideline to relate *MERP/RM* spell lists "learned/picked" to *FH* spell-caster Character Points spent on spell construction:

- 1 *MERP/RM* spell list
"learned/picked" = 10 to
15 *FH* Character Points

Note that the common themes of the character's spell lists and spells (e.g., "fire" in the *Fire Law* list) should be retained when converting.

CREATURE CONVERSION

Use following equivalences as guidelines for creature conversion:

MERP/RM

Offensive Bonus (OB)/15
Offensive Bonus (OB)/10
Defensive Bonus (DB)/7
Armor Type (AT)/2
Armor Type (AT) x2
Base Movement Rate/10
Hits/10

Fantasy Hero

OCV
Damage Class
DCV
resistant ED and PD
total ED and PD
Move in inches per phase
BODY (min. 10)

When two *FH* stats are given for one relation (e.g., ED and PD for Armor Type), average them before converting to *MERP/RM*. When there are two relations given for one

MERP/RM characteristic (e.g., OB and AT), calculate both resulting values and then average them for the final value.

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