

Gregorius 21778:

Good Help is Hard to Find

Flaws for OSR Hirelings and Henchmen



LAMENTATIONS
of the
FLAME PRINCESS
WEIRD FANTASY ROLE-PLAYING
COMPATIBLE PRODUCT

by Kai Pütz © 2018
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How to use this supplement:

Most OSR games allow the PC to hire (or have) retainers for tasks they don't want to bother themselves with, don't have the skills for or simply need a few more hands. Depending on the Referee and the style of the game group, those are either full fledged NPC in their own right or just some rather faceless figures that provide what the group lacks to tackle the adventure ahead.

Everyone who ever hired people to do a job knows that one may end up with a personality that is not... easy. Everyone who has read their share of literature or watched movies knows the "conflict in the group" theme that especially the horror genre (no matter if survival, slasher, fantasy or scifi) tends to toy with so often.

Good Help is Hard to Find features 50 flaws for OSR hirelings, henchmen and retainers. A hexcrawl or long term adventure can gain an additional side plot if one of the important NPC is not easy to get along with. Decisions need to be made then, and "what is right" may be different from "what is wise". Even a short trip to the dungeon may benefit from a little twist when the boy hired to carry the torch has *No taste for Bloodletting* or when the old veteran swordsman that served well on three battlefields in the past finds out that he is *Afraid of Being Underground*. What if the healer is *callous* beyond believe, the local guide turns out to be *inept* or the thief hired to take care of locks and traps turns out to be *insurgent*?

All of this may come into play with this title: either whenever the Referee wishes so or as the result of a failed test during the hiring process. Each of the fifty entries has a description on how the flaw is triggered and what the effects are. Those marked with an [M] the Referee may roll for with a Moral check for the retainer whenever the circumstances may provoke the flaw.

Have fun!

#01 Afraid of Being Underground [M]

The NPC does not know it yet, but he or she has a problem with being deep under the earth. After the first hour underground, the retainer becomes nervous and tense (Moral -1; so the PC may not recognize this change immediately). After another hour profound sweating, jumpiness and other clear symptoms of fear set in. A Moral check is necessary at this point, and another after any further hour. A failure means that the retainer snaps and runs back in panic (with a light or without).

#02 Afraid of Witches and Warlocks [M]

The NPC is not superstitious, as superstition means that somebody is afraid that an certain thing or event may provoke a supernatural response. The retainer does not believe in that, but believes what he or she can see, hear or feel for herself. If any undeniable proof for a wizard's spell or witch's work (be it Elf or Magic-User) is experienced the NPC needs to check for Moral (but not more than once per scene or battle). Monsters do not have this effect, nor do the forces of hell as long as they are "the enemy". It is those who have dealings with such forces on the own side that make him or her worry for the very own soul. Of course, clerics are a different thing. If triggered, the retainer may either quit, turn against the PC (or just the Magic-User) at the very first opportune moment or just end up with the own Moral lowered by 2.

#03 Berserker

The NPC might seem reasonable, steady or even timid. But in a lethal fight he or she will simply *snap* at some point. The first 1d4+2 rounds of combat, the retainer will act normal. The round after, bloodlust and rage will take over, and from that point on the NPC will use the *Press* option in combat (even if the class would not allow it). When all enemies are slain, a Random Reaction Roll determines if the Berserker attacks further NPC or the PC. A PC that tries to calm the character down may add the own Charisma bonus to the roll, but will be the first target if the attempt fails.

#04 Bossy

It will not take long till this retainer will behave like he or she would be the PC's "right hand", and begins to order the others around. The way the NPC carries him- or herself has other retainers not question it. The bossy retainer increases the own Moral by 1, but decrease anyone else Moral by 1. When the PC set things right in regard to "who is in charge and who gives orders" (>> the PC), the bossy retainer will suffer a (-1) Moral penalty instead.

#05 Bully

There are always those that seem to have to push others around. This retainer is one of those types, and a random other NPC will become his or her target. Fighters, Dwarfs and NPC with a Strength of 12+ -not-become the target of the bully. When the PC interfere and call the Bully out on his behavior, he or she will stop but become very disgruntled [(-2) to Moral for the Bully]. Otherwise, the Moral of the Bully will increase by +1 while the Moral of the target is reduced by (+1).

#06 Brother/Sister

All is fine and well, but for one demand of the retainer: the NPC's younger brother/sister *must* come along. They are both orphans, and the retainer needs to take care of the sibling. Perhaps the PC want to hire him or her as linkboy? No? Well, as long as he or she may come along and will receive board and lodging all is well. Of course, the sibling is not so good at staying out of trouble. And if something happens to the sibling, the retainer will do rash (or next to suicidal) things to rescue him or her.

#07 Callous

This retainer will always come across as a bit uncaring, but as soon as another member of the group dies during an adventure the true depth of his or her callousness becomes known. He or she will talk about the victim in a less-than-friendly way and confront each and everyone with the fact that death may happen all the time. Worse, the NPC points out that neither him, and sure not the PC, gives a dime about who bites the dust. This reduces the Moral of every other retainer by (-1) as long as this NPC is not removed from the group.



#08 Coward

A trait that is more common in hired mercenaries than one should expect (especially in those hired for cheap), but also found in men and women of all walks of life. If a situation in a fight would call for a Moral test, this character will fail it automatically. In addition, a sudden appearance of a monster or a credible threat of pain and violence calls for a Moral check (as long as there is no nearby other character to offer protection or strength in numbers).

#09 Cultist

Aside from the skills that the NPC was hired for, he or she is also a member of secret cult that wanted to get hired to partake in the discoveries of the PC. If the current adventure involves a cult, this will be the one the retainer belongs to. Otherwise, the cultist will happily steal away with a spell book, scroll or magic item.

#10 Curse after Death

When the retainer loses the last hit point, he or she will not perish immediately. Before, the NPC will *curse* the character that has lead him or her to this fate (the PC that hired the retainer) with the last breath. As long as the *curse* is not lifted, the PC will suffer a (-2) penalty on all saving throws to avoid imminent death.

#11 Cursed

A *curse* has been placed onto the NPC that effects him- or herself as well as everybody with him or her. A possible curse would be "bad luck" (-1 to all saving throws), but the Referee may of course come up with any curse fitting for the campaign.

#12 Curious [M]

Curiosity killed the cat, and will likely be the end of this NPC as well. What was this noise? What is in the casket they shall not open? Why does that item glow? Is that a puzzle? If the retainer is unsupervised, he or she may very well fall for to the own curiosity.

#13 Cruel to Captives

When the PC make a prisoner, this retainer is the one that will take the chance to feel superior. If mishandling has been strictly forbidden by the PC [a fact that will reduce the NPC's Moral by (-1)] the character will instead harass the captive verbally, spit into the food, play cruel puns, act obscene or just threat the victim. In a very bad case (Moral Check) the NPC may even manhandle a captive so badly that he / she /it is reduced to 1 hit point.

#14 Cruel to Animals [M]

No matter how common harsh treatment of animals may or may not be in the game world, this NPC is a shining example in cruelty. Especially when in a sour mood or displeased with something, there is a chance that one or more of the animals of the group (if any) will suffer from it. This will always take the form of "necessary discipline" or "the way such a beast has to be handled to do as it should", or because of something that "the damn thing" did.

The results will always be negative (a wound, unwillingness to be handled, problems in handling due to shyness or fear, reduced ability due to exhaustion by unnecessary drills, etc). Characters that cannot stand such a behavior will have suffer a (-1) penalty to Moral if the retainer is not stopped by the PC, and when the PC do it, this retainer will suffer a (-2) to Moral.

#15 Disgusting

It might be the NPC's behavior. It might be the looks and smell, a disfigurement, plain and simple ugliness or a mix of those: he or she is disgusting. When the NPC is around, all PC suffer a (-1) penalty on all Random Reactions by non-monsters.

#16 Doombird

When things go south, there are always those that make it worse. When the situation is -really- bad, this retainer will begin to lament and wail that all is lost, that they all are doomed etc. This will reduce the Moral of him- or herself by (-2) and those of every other retainer by (-1) unless it is 9 or higher.

#17 Drunkard [M]

The NPC drinks to much and -always- has a flask or hipster with strong alcohol with him or her. When there is a chance that the NPC may drink more than he or she should, a Moral roll determines if the retainer ends up drunk. Possible reasons may be a stay at a tavern, a boring evening on guard, the night before a battle, a recent brush with terror or death, etc.

#18 Envious

The NPC is fine with being below the PC ("know your place"), but actually looks up to them and cannot stand it when they pay some other retainer more attention. If this happens, or when a different retainer seemingly receives a favorable treatment, this retainer's Moral will drop by one or two (depending on the situation).

#19 Insurgent

Some are natural born rabble-rousers and calamities in their own right. When this NPC fails at a Moral check, all other retainers with a Moral below or equal his or her own must check as well (or: check again).

#20 Godless

The character has renounced all gods. Not because he or she would not believe in their existence, but because the NPC sees them as cruel, arbitrary and unjust. The presence of a cleric or other reverent believer will reduce the retainers Moral by (-1). Any miracles, clerical magic or faith-fueled altruism during the adventure will have the same effect (or increase it). When a faithful character acts in an outspoken or missionary way, the retainer must check Moral or will start an argument.

#21 Grasp of the Unknown [M]

When the retainer is confronted by something unique and unknown to mankind at large (e.g. relics and ruins of lost civilizations, alien artifacts, works that are not from the hand of men or demi-human, art of bygone ages, etc.), the character may end up so fascinated by and focused on the find that he or she would automatically count as *surprised* by any sudden attack or harmful event for the next turn. Obviously and immediately dangerous finds (like a unique slaving monster) are an exception to this rule.

#22 Greedy

Whatever the retainer gains for his efforts, he or she always wants more. When there is a point in the adventure where the skills of the NPC are REALLY important, said NPC may try to bargain for a better share. If this is rebuked by the PC, the Moral of the retainer drops by one and a Moral check is rolled. If successful, he or she grudgingly continues with the agreed upon duties. Otherwise the retainer will leave the group as soon as possible.

#23 Inept

No matter which claims were made, no matter what recommendations the NPC was able to produce, he or she is simply inept in regard to the task. If the job is simple, the retainer is unbelievably clumsy.

#24 Heart of the Group

There is nothing wrong with this one. In fact, the retainer is very amicable, a good sport, jocular and merry company (+1 to the Moral of every other retainer). But if the retainer dies, it will darken the mood of everybody, as even the toughest hound in the pack will have liked the NPC. Now, with this good soul lost, all come to think if this is really worth it... (-2 Moral for any current retainer for this and the next adventure).

#25 Haunting Ghost

When the retainer meets an untimely end in the PC's service, the ghost of the NPC will from then on haunt the one that employed him or her: in the depth of sleep, in moments spend alone or when a saving throw against any kind of magic or spell-like ability is made. The PC suffers (-1) to all such saving throws, and always the ghosts appears to ask "Why?". One way to banish the ghost and to stop the haunting is to feel true and deep dolor for the death (which means that the PC will lose 50xp per current level, from current and future xp rewards).

#26 Intolerant

Woman or man, those of a different religion, race, nation or local region, or just a certain profession or way of life: this retainer has a certain group of people that are his or her personal "no-goods", and will suffer a (-1) to Moral if he or she has to consort with them. If another retainer belongs to this group, both of them suffer a (-1) to Moral. If a character in charge (like a PC) is part of the "target group", the intolerant NPC will suffer a (-2) to Moral.



#27 Larcenous [M]

The retainer has a tendency to take other people's belongings whenever he or she may get away with it. It would be foolish to steal from one's employers, but the retainer may try to slip minor finds into the own pocket, or steal minor things from others the group meet. Last but not least, when a new retainer joins the group while the larcenous NPC is already with it... well, it is always the new member that gets blamed when suddenly things disappear, right?

#28 Lazy [M]

There are always those that will dodge their duties or any other work whenever they can. When it is not an immediate life-or-death situation and the NPC is not supervised by a PC, this retainer may very well do the current job only halfheartedly.

#29 Lecherous [M]

The guy (or gal) cannot help it when there is somebody pretty (or "available"). When it is possible that the retainer may fall for a sexy lure (or spend a night with a streetwalker) a Moral check is in order. If the group contains other retainers the lecherous NPC may fancy (everybody of the matching sex and a Charisma of 12+), said target may either suffer (-1) to Moral due to unwelcome attention, or the two will have every other retainer suffer (-1) on Moral. Having -one- lucky couple in the midst can sour the mood of everyone else on a trip.

#30 Love Fool

The NPC's flaw is that he or she tends to passionately fall in love, and rather often so. Whenever the retainer meets a new character of the sex her or she is attracted to that also has a Charisma of 12+, the Referee rolls 2d6. On a result of doubles, the retainer falls in love with that character. If this happens with a PC, the retainer will increase his or her Moral by (+2) if not rebuked (-2). If it is a character outside of the group, a Moral Check determines if the retainer leaves the party (or perhaps even turn against it).

#31 Marked by Death

Through a curse, an ill-omened birth, bad karma, a cruel whim of fate or the gods the character is marked by Death itself, and the reaper just waits for a fitting occasion. When a die should be rolled to determine the amount of damage the retainer would receive, he or she will receive the maximum possible damage instead.

#32 Not been hired for THIS

The first time the NPC has any encounter with something supernatural, his or her Moral is reduced by (-1). A death of one of the groups other characters at the hand of something supernatural calls not only for a Moral check but will also reduce Moral by a further (-1).

#33 No Initiative [M]

The retainer will do what he or she has been told to do, but will not do anything else or beyond this (even if it would seem like a good idea to do so), nor report anything "irrelevant" unless specifically asked. This may either be due to a "ya don't pay me 'nuff" attitude or because of a rather simple mind.

#34 No taste for Bloodshed

After being witness or part of a fight that ends with one or more (demi-)human casualties, the retainer's Moral is reduced by 1 for the rest of the adventure. The NPC might have been a stranger to violence in his life, or perhaps had already seen too much blood spilling.

#35 On the run

The retainer had other reasons to join the PC but money and adventure. He or she is wanted, possibly for murder, enormous debts, rape, accusations of witchcraft, being a deserter, a runaway serf, etc. Whatever it is, there is a (small) bounty on his or her head, and when the group visits villages or towns there is a chance that they have an encounter with 1d4+1 bounty hunters (a mix of fighters and specialists, all 1st level) that are after the retainer, or that somebody recognizes him or her (2d6: doubles mean that bounty hunters show up, 5 or less means that that somebody identifies the retainer as wanted. BOTH may happen).

#36 Outsider

The retainer has something about him that identifies him as a stranger, outsider or foreigner on sight. He could be a Scot in 14th century England, a Turk, Jew or Arabian in western Europe before the 18th century or any other member of a generally disliked or distrusted minority. When the NPC is around, all *Neutral/Indifferent* Random Reactions of non-monsters are treated as *unfriendly* instead.

#37 Puritan

The retainer was raised to belief in hard work and discipline, and to value seriousness and sincerity. Good traits all in all (especially in somebody who is to serve), but the same upbringing made him or her despise any kind of “undue frivolity and hedonism” (which seems to include a merry evening in the tavern as well as a flirt with a milkmaid). The retainer’s Moral suffers a (-1) to (-2) penalty when confronted with (and forced to work with people who enjoy) anything raunchy, frisky or immoral. True acts of debauchery and obscenity call for a Moral check.

#38 Religious

While the NPC in question may not uphold ALL (or perhaps not even most) of the virtues and standards of his or her faith, he or she sees faith as something very important. Direct actions against holy sites or representatives of “the faith” are out of question for the NPC, and having to work with “heathens” or “godless” folk will reduce the retainer’s moral by (-1).

#39 Righteous [M]

The NPC may not be a zealot, but is rather close to this mindset. Whenever the party does something that is simply *not right*, the retainer may object.

#40 Sickly

The overall health of the retainer is not good (CON: 9 or below), and the NPC may easily become infected (-3 on all Saves vs. Diseases) or the victim of parasites or poisons (-2 on those saves).

#41 Something Special

For one reason or another the retainer sees him- or herself as the PC’s equal, or at least as somebody worth of their attention and regard. When the behavior of the PC demonstrate that it is not so, the NPC’s Moral will be reduced by (-1). When they snub at him or her in front of others the Moral is reduced by (-2).

#42 Spiteful

All is well as long all is well. But when things go wrong and somebody is to blame, this NPC will do so. On and on and on. If another retainer is to blame, this will reduce his or her Moral by (-2). When the PC are to blame the snide remarks of the NPC will reduce the Moral of every retainer (including him- or herself) by (-1).

#43 Slow on Foot

It might be bad constitution, a lag of training, age, an old wound or minor deformity of the legs or feet: the character travels slow on foot. The regular distance he or she is able travel in a given time is reduced by 20%.

#44 Suicidal [M]

He or she may not even fully realize it herself, but the character has a death wish. That is one of the reasons that the NPC joined the PC, and it will come to the forth sooner or later. The retainer will always show a daredevil’s behavior when push comes to shove, and on a failed Moral check he or she will do something truly suicidal (perhaps for the benefit of the group, perhaps only to end the own existence).

#45 Superstitious [M]

Superstitions are widespread in the populace during the times prior to the Age of Reason (whenever THAT was supposed to be or to come). If the retainer becomes witness to an occurrence that he or she takes for a bad omen, the Moral of the NPC is decreased by one for the rest of the adventure. When the contrary happens it is increased by 1 till something bad happens.



#46 Trophy Taker

Due to a cruel custom or a sadistic streak, the character takes trophies from slain enemies. In case of beasts or monsters, nobody will object to it, but the retainer will do so with slain humanoids, demi-humans and humans alike. In the latter cases, a Moral check for all other retainers that are not Fighters is in order: those who fail will have their Moral reduced by (-1) as long as this retainer is employed. If ordered to stop this, the Trophy Taker will rather end his employment with the characters (or: not prolong it further).

#47 Urge to Kill

The retainer is rather quiet, and often seems tense. There is a struggle within him or her, with a dark and sinister urge. Whenever stress or inner conflict overwhelms the NPC (as during a failed Moral check) the retainer will neither flee nor forsake his employer. Instead the retainer will murder somebody within the next 1d4 days. The voice wills it so.

#48 Vivid Nightmares

After any stressful experience (anything that justifies a Moral check), the NPC will suffer from vivid nightmares for the coming 1d4 nights. Aside from a disturbed sleep, the retainer must check Moral after each night: a failed check means a reduction of Moral by (-1) till the end of the current adventure (or until the retainer had at least three nights of sound sleep).

#49 Weak Stomach [M]

When confronted with scenes of carnage or things that are gross or horrible, the character may have to puke and will be stunned (no action possible, no chance against surprise) for 1d3 rounds. Immediate danger is enough to suppress this reaction for a while.

#50 Wicked [M]

The NPC is not only Chaotic in alignment, but has a mean streak and a taste for harm and other people's suffering. The retainer may not want to watch the whole world burn, but has no qualms about bringing misery, misfortune or harm to others for the sake of his or her own entertainment. Of course it would be unwise to take this out on the employers, but at some point the consequences of the NPC's action may cause trouble for the group.

Further releases of mine....

20 Encounter in the Ruins of the Elder Beings

A set of linked encounters, that may be turned into a little scenario. Pay-what-you-want.

Beware of the Spirits of the Woods

Half a dozen supernatural encounters for an eerie forest. Pay-what-you-want.

Ye Ol' Mad Monk

Meet Wilbur. Pay-What-You-Want

Works & Misfortunes of Ye Alchemist

Meet Howell. Marvel about his wares. Become part of his own little life through regular visits to him between adventures.

Boarswood

Welcome to Boarswood, a small Barony somewhere in England. Visit the town of Calvenhill or the Abby of St. Gytha. Make yourself at home between adventures.

Beneath Unhallowed Ground

Face the ungodly terrors that took hold in the graveyard.

The Crypt of Baron Vraszek

Can you slay a vampire in its own lair...?

25 Encounters in the Eerie Barbaric North

..and you hoped you would encounter not a soul here...?

20 Encounters on a Haunted Road in the Carpathians of Old

In a region besieged by vampires, even a travel during the daylight might not be as expected.

Almanac of Animated Skeletons

Your players know all about skeletons, don't they...?

Names for Elves

Bother yourself not...

Strange & Cruel Personal Titles

...for my mind is your servant.

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