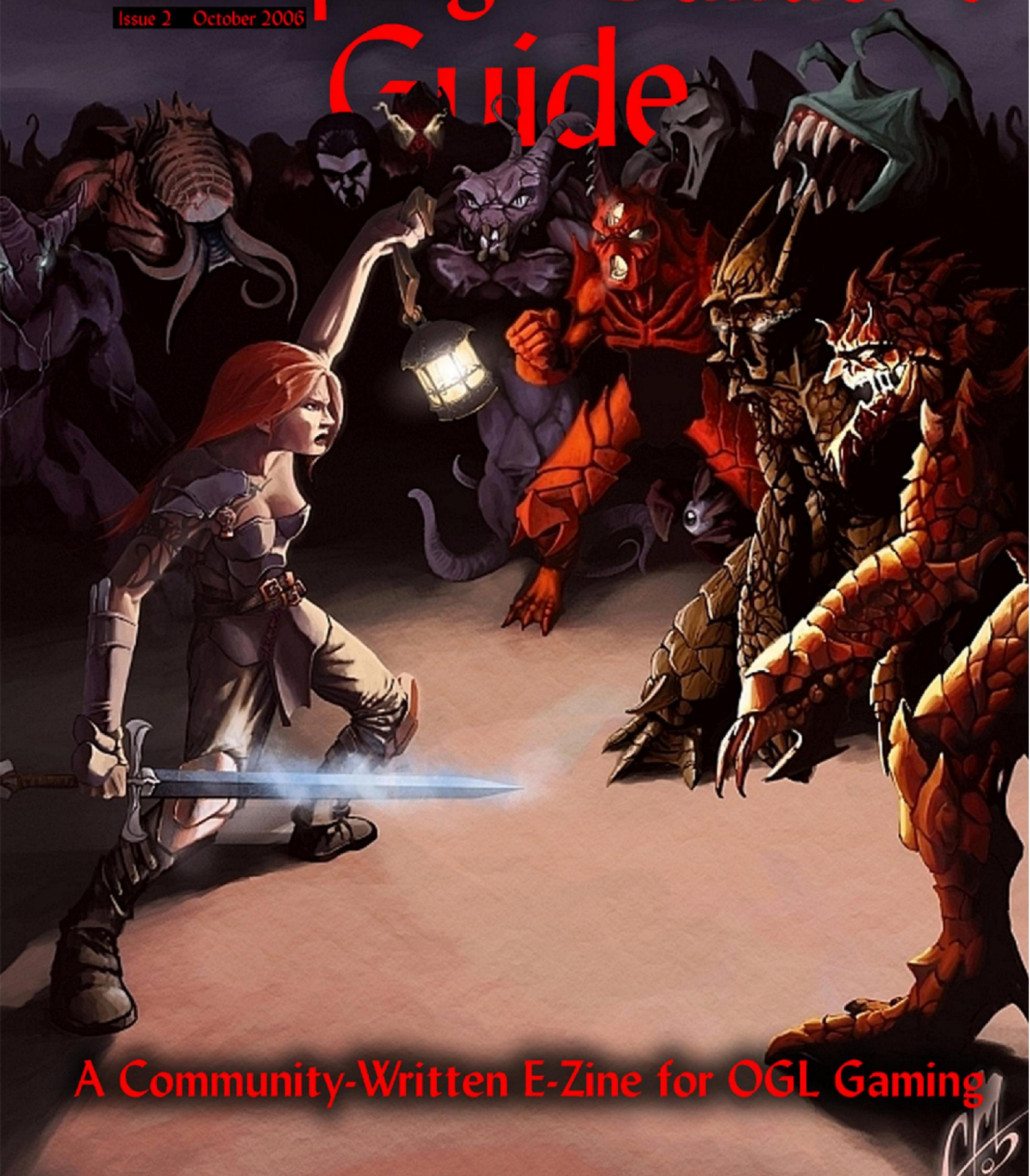


THE HORROR! HELLISH REVIEWS, CREEPY CAMPAIGN ADVICE, AND MORE!

Campaign Builder's Issue 2 October 2006 Guide



A Community-Written E-Zine for OGL Gaming

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OOOPS!

The staff of the Campaign Builder's Guide would like to apologize wholeheartedly for misprinting the author's name for the article "Reinventing Alchemy", printed in the September 2006 issue. The correct spelling of the author's name is John A. Roberson. Once again, we are sorry for any unrest this error has caused, and we hope this statement can rectify it.

~ The Campaign Builder's Guide Staff

THE HORROR!

"The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear."

--- H.P. Lovecraft

Fear and anxiety are two of the oldest, most instinctual emotions we possess. Survival depends on both. It overrides both reason and logic, which make it a powerful thing, especially in the D&D experience. It manifests in several different ways; sometimes as an almost tangible force, such as the aura that emanates from an elder wyrm. In D&D, we have saving throws to counteract fear effects. We have bards to sing songs of encouragement, and paladins to radiate courage. We have spells to help dull the effects.

It's much different "in real life," of course. I mean, obviously, we don't often find ourselves encountering fire-breathing dragons, but we do find ourselves encountering things that make us afraid. There are plenty of things that scare me. I've never particularly been fond of mirrors. Spiders give me the heebie-jeebies. I grew up fearing vampires in the night (and really, who's to say they're not out there, waiting for us to blunder down a deserted alley all alone?).

So with that all being said, what are the best methods of introducing fear into combat in D&D? Combats tend to be the hardest part in D&D to keep scary - once players start dealing damage to the lich, he usually becomes more of a stat block than an actual foe. Preserving a sense of fear through every encounter isn't right for all campaigns, but most games benefit from the occasional infusion of horror and dread.

Introducing a touch of terror into the combat can be tricky. There's a lot of building up to be done, what with the suspense and all, but when it comes time to roll initiative, what do you do? My favorite trick is isolating players. My players usually have the strategy of sending in the heavy hitter first, with the healer directly behind him. That way, the hitter can take abuse while dealing out damage, at the same time being constantly healed. Recently, while investigating a sewers system, the party encountered a vampire wizard for whom they had been searching. The first thing said vampire did was plop a *wall of stone* between the first two members. Suddenly, instead of the heavy hitter being healed by the cleric, the heavy hitter was alone with a very pissed off vampire wizard. Whoops! Needless to say, Mr. Heavy Hitter had a rough evening. What was worse, Heavy Hitter could hear his comrades frantically trying to get rid of the wall while he was taking all kinds of punishment. Plus, the other party members could see nothing, and could do little as they listened to their teammate fight desperately on the other side. Fun, huh?

Once a character is isolated, his sense of vulnerability is heightened, and he's almost guaranteed to get a little scared, but be careful of using this trick too often. A series of bad rolls from that player, and suddenly you've got a dead isolated player. Using the trick sparingly preserves its impact too - the first time a character has to face the vampire alone, it's frightening. The second time, it starts to become routine.

As much as I love scary combats, I need to digress. This editorial marks the debut of the second issue of the Campaign Builders' Guide, and it's a hell of an issue! It's already grown since the first issue, and there will be even more next time. Get it out to all your friends and all your not-friends so they don't miss out.

Happy Halloween!

-Ish

THE GATES OF HELL

A Book Review
by Tom Dougherty



Clocking in at 458 pages, *The Gates of Hell* offers a fresh look at the Nine Hells. As stated by the administrator of Dicefreaks, Serge Desir, Jr. (“The Serge”) “...[the] motivation for the overhaul is to create a cohesive meld between core (1 - 20th level), epic, and divine rules, and to create a coherent cosmology that honors three editions of D&D.” To that end, *The Gates of Hell* touches upon various aspects, from Hell’s mortal servitors, to its Infernal Nobility, to an overhaul of divine rules.

While *The Gates of Hell* mainly focuses on beings far beyond the reach of most players, much of the information can be used by players and GMs, whether they are fighting devils or serving them.

The Gates of Hell is available free for download at Dicefreaks (<http://community.dicefreaks.com/index.php>).

The Gates of Hell was nominated for an ENnie in 2006.

CHAPTER 1 BEYOND THE GATES OF HELL

The first chapter serves as an introduction to Hell, touching on several key points. The first is on the nature of a new category of creature, Cosmic Entities. Cosmic Entities are the physical manifestation of a particular ideal, whether it is warfare, greed, non-violence, charity, or an alignment itself. It then moves on to briefly describe the relationship between Devils, Gods, and Mortals. Next, it moves on to describe the effect that devils, ranging from the common to the Lords of the Nine would have on the Material Plane if they were called, rather than summoned there.

Next, the text touches upon the relationship between Devils and other fiends. It states that due to their inherent ability to work together, and, ultimately, due to their leadership under one being, Devils are the most dangerous threat out of any of the fiends.

The text briefly touches upon the stratification of Hell at this point, as four later chapters deal with the various kinds of devils individually.

CHAPTER 2 FORBIDDEN MAGIC

In the second chapter, three new epic spell seeds, as well as twenty-four new epic spells, two new invocations, and several magic items. Several of these spells are reputed to have been personally designed by the Lords of the Nine themselves, including four attributed to Asmodeus himself.

The chapter also deals with summoning the most powerful Devils to the Material Plane, through the use of an incantation and two powerful epic spells. In the later chapters, additional information to summon these beings is touched upon.

CHAPTER 3 PRESTIGE CLASSES OF PERDITION

This chapter deals with mortal servitors of Devils. It includes ten prestige classes, nine of which are direct servitors to each Lord of the Nine, while the tenth serves the various deities of Hell. Every prestige class comes with an epic progression, as well as a sample epic and non-epic character.

This chapter also includes 44 new feats, over half of which are epic feats. Many build upon the prestige classes presented, but a good number are stand-alone feats.

CHAPTER 4 DEVILS FOR DICEFREAKS

This chapter deals with several topics related to Devils, including defining the statistics of Cosmic Entities, what happens when a Devil is truly slain, a variant sorcerer, a variant witch, an expansion to the Quicken Spell-like Ability feat, clarifications for several non-epic spells at epic levels, additional sacrifice rules, and clarifications to fiendish advancement.

The chapter then moves on to describe the various statistic changes to devils. Many of the modifications are very slight. Others are large. Five new devils and three new templates are also introduced, including obscenely powerful Maleficarim (CR 33).

CHAPTER 5 POWERS OF THE PIT

The fifth chapter deals with powerful, unique devils that are not necessarily part of the Infernal Nobility. Twenty-five unique devils are presented, ranging from CR 7 to CR 57. Each of these devils has a unique part in Hell's hierarchy, and with their range of Challenge Ratings, they can test the mettle of mid- to epic-level players.

CHAPTER 6 THE DARK MINISTRY

Chapter 6 deals with the Dark Ministry, Hell's military. It covers the ranks of the military (commissioned and non-commissioned), as well as the eight Denominations, each of which has three branches, of the Dark Ministry. It covers the leadership of each Denomination and Branch, from a brief overview of each of the branches' command staff to the Dark Ministers themselves, eight extremely powerful pit fiends.

This chapter also includes information on three new diseases and three new poisons, each unique to Hell.

CHAPTER 7 THE DUKES OF HELL

This chapter details eighteen of the Dukes of Hell (two for each level), the lowest rank of Hell's nobility, as well as the template used to create them. Aside from Martinet, many of these beings are unfamiliar to many players, simply because they were never given a big part in previous incarnations. In this incarnation, they run from CR 29 (Titivilus) to CR 41 (Leonar). Also detailed are the unique things needed to summon each individual Duke.

The beings detailed in include Abrigor, Malphas, Caim, Titivilus, Melchom, Scax, Carniveau, Rosier, Caarcinolaas, Dagon, Amdusius, Aguares, Rhalik, Surgat, Leonar, Murmer, Carreau, and Martinet.

CHAPTER 8 THE ARCH-DEVILS

This chapter deals with the Arch-Devils, extremely powerful beings who straddle the gap between being Dukes of Hell and full fledged Lords of the Nine. Many are either outcasts or divinities, with some holding a unique position in Infernal society. They run from CR 46 (Semyaza) to CR 67 (Eblis). Also included are the unique methods needed to

summon each individual Arch-Devil, a very unwise proposition in the case of Eblis.

The beings detailed include Adremalech, Eblis, Fierana, Gargauth, Geryon, Glasya, Haagenti, Lixer, Merorem, Moloch, Sammael, and Semyaza.

CHAPTER 9 THE LORDS OF THE NINE

The ninth and final chapter deals with the Rulers of Hell, the Lords of the Nine. Each Lord of the Nine rules over their own layer of Hell, each a slightly differing embodiment of Lawful Evil itself. They run from CR 56 up to CR 81. Like the two previous chapters, this one also details the unique methods needed to summon a Lord of the Nine, would one ever be foolish enough to do so. Several of the names have been changed, and two have been completely redone. Also included are appendices on serving Hell, the toll Hell takes on the mortal mind, as well as Dicefreaks' revision of the deity rules.

The beings covered (and their respective layers) are Bael (1st), Dispater (2nd), Mammon (3rd), Belial (4th), Leviathan (5th), Lilith (6th), Beelzebub (7th), Mephistoples (8th), and Asmodeus (9th).



NO REST FOR THE WICKED

A Review of *Libris Mortis*

by WitchHunt

Featuring illustrations by Christopher A. Malidore



Banshees wail in the dark of the night, striking dead travelers who don't even know what has hit them. Vampires drain the blood of brigands and street urchins in dark alleyways of the city, temporarily quenching a thirst that is never truly satisfied. Malevolent ghosts haunt forgotten graveyards and

decaying citadels, literal spectres of the glory that once was. And unhinged necromancers scour the countryside in search of corpses to animate for their legion of the dead. These are examples of the potent undead, which are made even more deadly by the supplement devoted to them, *Libris Mortis*.

CHAPTER 1 ALL ABOUT UNDEAD

Sadly, this great supplement starts out with a chapter that doesn't live up to the overall quality of the book. All About Undead is just what it says, dealing with undead diet, the origins of undead and how they are created and function, how they 'reproduce', their senses, how they may improve, society, psychology, and religion. It ends with some tips on how to combat undead and deal with the burdens they place on the players. While some of this certainly looks like worthy information, a lot of it probably isn't going to be used if the GM in question has been playing the game for a little while. Much of the material presented is obvious or quickly discernable with a little thought on the individual creature, such as a vampire gaining sustenance for blood or a skin kite requiring skin. "Origins of Undeath" is a nice section if you want to rework how undead function or you want different forces animating different kinds of undead.

The most interesting parts of Chapter 1 are the Haunting Presences rules and the deities. Haunting Presence rules (which look kind of like the possession rules in the *Book of Vile Darkness*) allow you to create that exorcism adventure with extra potency, and you can never have too many deific options. There are two old favorites, Orcus and Nerull, who have some additional information and a few extra domains listed under their names, but there are three others perfect for the undead or maniacal necromancers to worship.

CHAPTER 2 CHARACTER OPTIONS

The second chapter of *Libris Mortis* shows more promise than the first, with a multitude of feats being presented for almost every character. There are feats available that protect against the deadly effects of supernatural attacks, whole tech trees with which to drastically improve your undead minions' power, improvements and new options for divinely inclined characters, feats that add new

effects to spell casting, and even a list of feats designed specifically for the undead and other supernatural creatures. Following the feats, there is a section on undead in the party and finally monster classes for playing an undead at any level. This is definitely one of the better chapters, and if you want to design a real undead hunter, you'd be foolish to overlook it.

CHAPTER 3 PRESTIGE CLASSES

Of course, no book on fighting and becoming the undead would be complete without a section on prestige classes, and this section doesn't disappoint. Classes such as the Dirgesinger, Master of Radiance, improved versions of the Master of Shrouds, Pale Master, and True Necromancer, and a host of undead-tailored prestige classes like the Lurking Terror and Master Vampire make this chapter worth a look.

CHAPTER 4 SPELLS

Featuring new spells for every spell casting class but the ranger and bard, the Spells section is also a great new series of tools for the GM and the players alike. Clerics have three new domain options (Deathbound, Hunger, and Undeath), and clerics, sorcerers, and wizards get a fair-sized list of spells added to their possible spells for each level. New spells integrated include altering the states, capabilities, and restrictions on undead, new ways to protect yourself and others from undead attacks, spells particularly devastating to them, and a series of related spells that inflict grievous penalties and pains on a person implanted with a necrotic cyst.

CHAPTER 5 EQUIPMENT

While Chapter 5 is useful, it doesn't really give anything to the game that you wouldn't expect from

a book like *Libris Mortis*, except “Positoxins”. These special substances are like poison to undead and only undead. Their effects are usually draining of ability scores, something very difficult to do to undead otherwise. Other material found within the Equipment chapter includes new alchemical substances, magic items of nearly every type, and grafts that are specifically undead-based.

CHAPTER 6 NEW MONSTERS

This is my favorite chapter in the entire supplement. Many of the monsters here have been heralded as filler material, creatures that aren’t really that useful, or have already been presented elsewhere. With the occasional undead creature this is true, but the majority of them are very cool. It begins with the Angel of Decay, a grotesque mockery of life that spells evil with every inch of its existence, and continues with other creatures such as the Bone Rat Swarm, Crypt Chanter, Dream Vestige, Entropic Reaper (one of my favorites), Forsaken Shell (a very chilling concept), Necropolitan (this one’s your chance to create that nation completely composed of undead), Raiment, Skin Kite, Slaymate, Visage, and Voidwraith, as well as several others. Also included are a few new templates, including the Half-Vampire, Mummified Creature, and Swarm-Shifter. Anyone with a love for undead creatures cannot miss out on this chapter.

CHAPTER 7 CAMPAIGNS

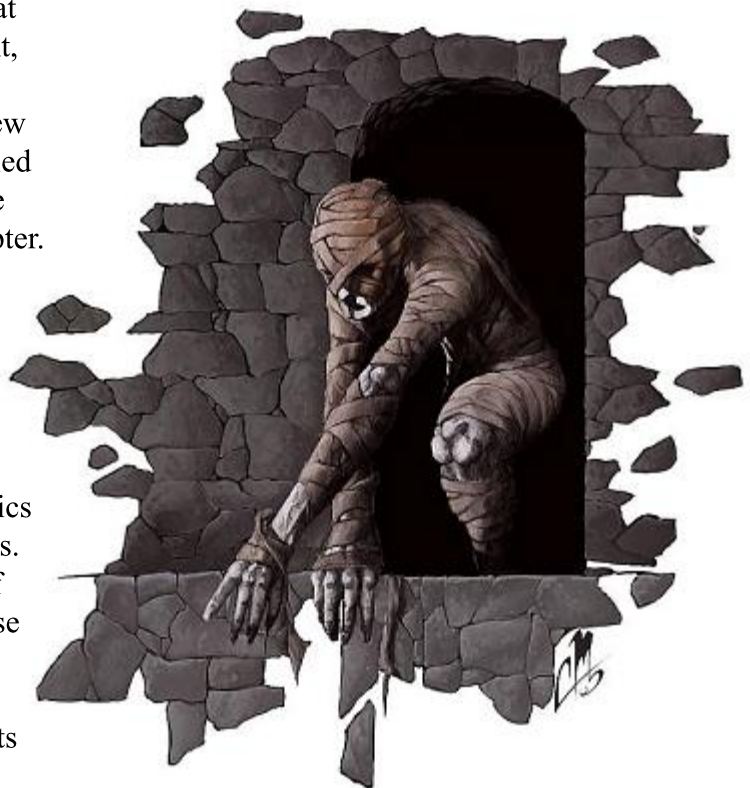
The final chapter to *Libris Mortis* is a decent finisher, containing plenty of info on the mechanics of undeath and even a few short adventure locales. Chapter 7 gives a GM ideas for different types of undead-based campaigns, tactics for undead to use based on their type and abilities they possess, a large section that helps clear up any questions on incorporeality, an even larger section on variants of undead and sample NPC’s to insert into any game, sample cults related to the walking dead, five

adventure sites, and a full-blown adventure for you to use. The Undead Variants added in this chapter are a great way to surprise your players when they think those skeletons or zombies that are approaching them in the darkness are the usual breed. My favorite of the adventure sites is the Warlord’s Subterfuge, though all of them are very promising as short little escapades.

THE VERDICT

Though it has its downsides, *Libris Mortis* is definitely a worthwhile purchase if you’re a fan of using the undead in your D&D games. It contains just about anything you could want to improve the quality of a game where restless spirits and malevolent corpses reign, and though it may have been released long before this year, it’s perfect for Halloween gaming.

Trick or treat.



NIGHTMARES COME ALIVE

Horror Games
by WitchHunt



You stumble over a fallen log and land face first in a thick puddle of mud and rot from the forest floor, your heartbeat as audible as a beating drum next to your ear. Panicked beyond possibility, you struggle to get back on your feet and run from what lies behind you. Something out there is hunting you.

You know not what or why, but you know that it is, and it will catch you if you stop. For that reason, you must run.

Or perhaps there is nothing at all? Your eyes have fooled you before, as have your other senses.

Perhaps you are imagining a nightmarish beast of supernatural design bearing down upon you through the thicket. Yes, that is exactly it. You need only rest, and look back towards where you came from, and you will see there is nothing. Those shadows about you are cast by tree boughs and your unfaithful eyes only. At least, that's what the shadows want you to believe.

In a role-playing game, using a horror theme and using it effectively can be troublesome, if not near-impossible. Many people simply don't know how to implement it properly and keep it from becoming dull, but this isn't the only factor. In this article, I will make an attempt at providing useful tips and methods of making horror more than just a fragment of a monster's name.

HORROR: OBVIOUS, OR SUBTLE?

In his approach to horror, a GM must first determine what kind of horror is present in his campaign world. Is it an apparent kind of horror, or a hidden one? Both types use the same approach; the major difference is how and where the resources with which to build fear and horror are present.

OBVIOUS HORROR

Games featuring obvious horror are set in worlds where things are obviously not ‘right.’ Unnatural people, places, and things exist and frequent everyday life. A game that features obvious horror can most easily be seen as a nightmare dreamscape, where players adventure through an ever-shifting world of fright and insanity. This type of world is usually easier to create than the subtle type. In an obvious horror game, the horror present is more likely to show itself as a monster of legend or warped reality, such as the presence of werewolves and vampires or a journey through a place where the laws of physics have been warped and no creatures or objects behave or appear as they should.

SUBTLE HORROR

Subtle horror takes a more, well, subtle approach to the game. Whereas many of the horrors in an obvious horror game may be out in the open, in a subtle horror game, fear and anxiety slowly breed in the shadows as events take place and players are slowly immersed deeper into the setting. Subtle horror focuses more on the psychological aspect of dread as opposed to the supernatural breed. Events that players witness may not seem particularly shocking until said events come together and some awful truth is realized, or until the chain of occurrences slowly drives characters mad. Some of H.P. Lovecraft’s writings, such as *The Rats in the Walls*, or almost any murder mystery, can be seen as subtle horror because it isn’t always clear what the terror is and where it’s coming from, or who is causing it. For the longest time in these games, it seems as though everything is normal. Subtle horror creeps up on players, and is probably the type of horror that a GM is going to use if the existence of elves, dwarves, dragons, and orcs isn’t an alien concept.

FEAR: YOUR ALLY, AND YOUR ENEMY

One of, if not the, most important aspect of a horror game is fear. Fear is the reason people do not walk

alone at night, why they shy away from ‘creepy’ people, and why they do things for others when asked. It is without question that you should seek to add a strong degree of fear into your game. But how? If not done right, it may seem too bland or too forced. Players won’t automatically be afraid of something because you give it an especially chilling description, or because the townsfolk said it was terrifying. The most daunting part of including fear in a game is making sure that it is not too great or too little.

TOO LITTLE FEAR

If the fear of the antagonists or situations you send against the players is dim or absent entirely, keeping the players truly afraid is going to be impossible. They may role-play with you as you go through an adventure where unimaginably grotesque things take place, and may act out their characters’ phobias when they make themselves apparent, but in general they themselves are hardly worried. A clear sign of lack of dread in your game is when your players act particularly courageously in the face of any danger, as if they can’t be killed. Maybe the players aren’t really attached to their characters, or perhaps they just don’t think you’ll really let them die. Regardless, it just isn’t there.

OVERABUNDANCE OF FEAR

On the other end, we have the situation where the players are too scared of losing their characters to do anything. They run from conflicts unless they’re completely sure of the surrounding area and what their foes are capable of. They might be hanging precariously off the cliffs of each word you speak, but the fact that they are hesitant in most situations isn’t good. It may actually be harder to bring players out of a game where there is too much fear than it is to bring them out of one with too little fear.

HOW TO BUILD DREAD

Terror among the players cannot often be developed quickly in the game. It is important to set

the atmosphere and make clear the general mood in the world you are gaming in, but going beyond those basics can't be rushed. There are three major points to doing this:

USING SUSPENSE

Suspense is a vital tool. Often times waiting for something that may or may not happen creates paranoia amongst the players and the fear that arises leaves them less confident about charging blindly around that corner. Abnormal silence after chasing down a person or beast with a price on its head, a mystery that continues on and on for an extended period, and lack of conflict as opposed to frequent combat are all examples of this method. It is important to remember that it is just as commonly what isn't there rather than what is (or in this case, what doesn't happen as opposed to what does) that can incite fear. This goes the same for your own actions and words during the game, since the players can be just as alarmed by what you aren't saying about the situation as what you are.

USING THE UNKNOWN

The approach to the unknown is similar to that of suspense. Not knowing what awaits you, what your foe is, or what secrets have been hidden from one's eyes and ears are good bases for dread. It's important to use what the players don't know against them, because they aren't usually prepared for it and may be shocked when they encounter it. It doesn't have to be in the form of some undiscovered or unrevealed enemy, either. Learning of a coming apocalypse or that a place they once thought was a safe haven is actually tainted with evil can lend surprise to players, and exercised in greater levels, players will start practicing much more caution.

USING MONSTERS

Monsters can be an important part to adding that atmosphere of dread to the game, but they aren't required and should be used very sparsely as

primary reasons for horror. They are great additions to the grand scheme of horror, and the wide variety of them leaves plenty of opportunity for them to be used. Important things to consider when using monsters in horror games are:

- Playing monsters as their Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma suggest
- Using monsters that best fit your GM style and your world's history
- Changing monsters so their capabilities surprise the players
- Changing monsters so they are not as easily recognized

It is also a good idea to be careful with how powerful an enemy you throw against your players, and how often. In any game, it is alright to use monsters that the characters cannot defeat from time to time, and while this can be used to create a degree of horror as well, it gets old fast. A game where players are constantly running from things they cannot defeat is no fun. Even in a game where the players are frightened, the objective is still to have fun. Enemies should generally be more disturbing than they are dangerous, though the opposite has limited use.

USING GORE AND THE DISTURBING

Sometimes when you're looking to generate horror in your players, it's best to be downright revolting with the amounts of gore and unnatural sicknesses and diseases you use. Destruction, mutilation, torture; all forms of brutal punishment and wounding to people or certain things, or the appearance of warped figures that defy the laws of the universe and mock the sights of normal beings only add to horror if used in the proper amount.

AVOIDING OVERUSE

While a horror GM must be aware of the key methods of running a good horror game, he must also know how much to use and when to stop. It can be difficult to truly designate how much a

certain method should be used in any game, but there are still some standard guidelines. Firstly, not every encounter has to be one related to the main elements of the game that make it horror. It is perfectly fine for a game to seem as though the characters are living their everyday lives from time to time. In fact, this actually can help add to the horror (see Giving to Take, below).

In general, a GM's primary concern is to make sure that each element is used enough to keep the feeling of terror going, but sparsely enough so that it doesn't become expected or dull. Monsters are the biggest threat to a game becoming repetitive, as they can become boring the quickest. Occasionally, overpowering monstrous enemies may be effective in creating fear (such as the Ringwraiths of *The Lord of the Rings* or my own Fallen Angels in *Vilydunn*), but it's best if something similar is used only occasionally, and even then at particularly pivotal points in a campaign. The nature, appearance, or habits of the creature should be the main reason for fearing it as much as anything else.

GIVING TO TAKE

Another important element of a GM's successful conquest on the fears of players is making sure they have something to lose. Being afraid of losing someone or something requires it to first be there, so a GM must be able to give the players things they'd like their characters to have. Obviously, the easiest part of the player's possessions and relations to threaten is the character itself. Players can quickly be attached to the improvements made to their characters through adventures, whether they be a series of feats they love to use, a legendary artifact that his background and character goals have been related to, or the spells they learn as they uncover long lost libraries, and one of a character's biggest worries is losing these things. If they're fans of heavier role-playing, you can also use family, friends, and personal concerns against the players as they make acquaintances, develop friendships, and become attached to residences. Though this type of fear (the fear of losing loved

ones) is different, it serves the same purpose. A necessary factor in making sure that a game (and the world it's set in) is horrific is adding beauty, peace, and a calm atmosphere to a game. Even if you're in a nightmare dreamscape, there has to be a sense of happiness and safety to be broken in order to awaken fear in players and people. In order to wield grotesque mockeries of life against players, they have to have a sense of beauty and get used to that pleasurable idea. If there isn't anything that players can become attached to in this way and identify as 'good', then your horror game is going to end up looking more like an adventure in Hell.

PATIENCE

One of the biggest pitfalls of trying to run a horror game is rushing into it. A GM has to understand that he probably can't produce the feelings associated with the genre in his players within the first few sessions, or even the first adventure. It takes time to develop that sense of dread even when the world the game is set in is a nightmare. For this reason, it is best to simply run your game mostly as you would any other campaign, but change it enough so that the disturbing undertones are there and you and your players are reminded of what the world is like. Let your game grow into something where the players are afraid of what you have in store for them.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

My views on horror presented here are very likely to be different from the views of others, so these basic ideas might not seem quite right to the reader. It's also difficult to give a clear example of how to put these different aspects of horror together to make an effective horror game. In the end, it's up to the GM's own judgement and method of using the resources available to them that determines what kind of horror their game uses and how it is seen by others. That being said, I hope the information presented here helps someone run a better horror-themed game, or inspires them to start one.

DEVELOPING SCALE

by Raelifin

I've met a lot of world-builders who don't use maps at all. When I ask them why, the underlying answer is usually that they don't want to screw up. They're not sure they know how big their world is, or how far apart their mountains are from their oceans, and though text can be changed and removed, lines on a map somehow seem more permanent.

Map making does require some detailed decisions about the size of your world. Once those decisions are made, though, you have a world that is richer, more complex, and yet easier to understand.

Maps of an entire planet are the hardest to scale, so I recommend that you draw the world in chunks, scale the chunks and then position them on the globe.



Approximate Circumferences

Earth: about 25,000 miles
Earth's Moon: about 6,800 miles
Eberron: about 16,000 miles

* * *

More often than not, when I've seen a map of an entire world and I bring up the subject of gravity, the creator shrugs and changes the topic. Though a world's gravity might be influenced by magic, or the mass of its internal metals, it will still be hard to explain a world that can be sailed around in a matter of days.

With a smaller map it is important to determine the size of the terrain itself. To figure out how long 100 miles is, or how large a mountain should be, there is no better way to learn than to actually spend a week doing overland hiking. But that would require actually going outdoors and probably getting a sunburn. So how *do* we figure out the right size of our kingdom, mountain or landmass? When I build maps, I often use the places I know to determine the size of an area. "This continent is about twice the length of California... This island is about the size of Maui..." This technique gives you a starting point, but though it is easy and quick, be careful not to accept your first idea and move on to finalizing the scale. There are at least two other factors you should consider when you are deciding the size of an area. You need to be sure that travel times are reasonable, and that there is enough land to support the people you place there.

With cars, planes and global communication, it's easy to forget how large the earth is. In a fantasy world, most travel involves walking or riding, and a

town in the next valley might take days or even weeks to reach. Though walking speed and stamina vary from person to person, a good rule of thumb is that a healthy individual can walk about 20 miles a day on a rough road. Highways (roads that are well-worn or paved) can speed this up to about 25 miles a day, and a trail (rough paths and old roads) can slow it to 15 miles a day. Overland travel with no path is much slower, averaging at 10 miles a day for plains or hills and even 5 miles a day in forests and jungles.

A common misconception is that mounted humans and races known for their speed can move faster overland. While speed is important over a short distance, stamina is far more important for overland travel. A person walking two miles per hour will be able to travel twice as far on the same energy as someone walking three miles per hour. Furthermore, mounts and large creatures will have a harder time traveling through rough terrain, such as a forest. Before deciding that your kingdom is "about as large as the US" remember that the Oregon Trail (the 19th century trail across the western two-thirds of America) took as long as half a year to travel.

Next it's important to think about the people that will live in this land. If you've already decided on the population of your kingdom, you can work backwards from there, determining how many square miles of farmland it would take to support that many people. If you prefer to build the land first, and then place the people where they can live, you might want to wait and size your landmass before populating it.

In either case, the website Medieval Demographics Made Easy (<http://www.io.com/~sjohn/demog.htm>) will be an excellent resource. Besides learning how

Quick Reference

| <i>Path Type</i> | <i>Travel Speed</i> |
|------------------|---------------------|
| Highway | 25 miles per day |
| Road | 20 miles per day |
| Trail | 15 miles per day |
| Off-road | |
| Light terrain | 10 miles per day |
| Heavy terrain | 5 miles per day |

Why does the SRD give higher rates for overland travel? Well, like a lot of things, travel speeds vary. Where one person might need to stop after six hours of hiking, another might be able to make 30 miles in a day. This article doesn't delve into specific land speeds as much as give an "average" which can be used as a rule of thumb. If you prefer using the SRD's overland speeds, that is fine. They only differ by about 5 miles per day.

many acres are needed to feed a given population, you'll find answers to questions like "How many blacksmiths would there be in this town of 3000?" and "How many little towns will I find sprinkled throughout the countryside?"

* * *

Once you've figured out how large you want to make your world, you'll need to finalize the scale by drawing a key on your map.

There are two ways to accomplish this. If you don't have a map drawn, you can easily print out a map of a real-world area you know. Using tracing paper, draw in the landmass, even if it's small, and copy the scale from the reference map. Re-scanning the map will let you digitally re-size it to your liking. Just be sure you resize the map and the scale key at the same time.

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<http://www.d20srd.org/>

If you've already drawn out your map, but still need to scale it, you can paste it over a real-world map in a graphics program like Photoshop or the GIMP. Make your map slightly transparent and then scale it until it matches the size you want, as compared to the reference map. Copy and paste the scale onto your map, delete the reference map, and then resize your map and scale key to the size you want. (If the map with the scale has lost quality, you can overlay it on the original and “trace” the scale onto the nicer version.)

If you make sure you actually understand the size of the Earth location you choose, these techniques will give you a scale you can live with.

* * *

It is a sad day when the GM of a game is forced to improvise travel time. It's much better to have a map to work from! But remember that if you find a mistake in your geography, there is *nothing* wrong with fixing it. It won't kill anyone if it suddenly takes four days to reach Stormkeep instead of two.

World building, like all creative arts, takes refinement. Experiment, practice, and don't let fear of mistakes keep you from learning this important aspect of world building.



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THE ART OF CHRIS A. MALIDORE



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CALLED SHOTS

Adding Spice to Combat
by Xeviat

Jared - This guy is fast, I can't get away. Can't I just cut his leg to slow him down?

DM - No, the rules don't cover that.

Jared - Fine, I'll just full attack again.

How many times has this sentiment come up in games you have played? The internet is abound with countless variant rules to allow characters to target a creature in a specific spot, yet the core rules offer little to cover this: trip could represent an attack to the leg if it weren't a touch attack and if it dealt unarmed damage, while Power Attack could be described as a precise attack if it weren't for the Strength requirement and the name implying that it is a "powerful" attack and not a "precise" one. The lack of this mechanic leaves a small hole in the rules set, one which can be ignored, but perhaps shouldn't be; such attacks are a part of the fiction and film which inspires this game.

The question then is simple: what would a Called Shot system (meaning a mechanic that will allow you to determine where your attacks are aimed) add to the game? On the surface, one might think a Called Shot is done to a vulnerable location in order to deal more damage (I want to shoot him in the slit of his face mask, since it is unarmored); while this might make sense superficially, it would not be balanced as a base mechanic. The second notion is to have Called Shots impose penalties upon the target, such as reducing their ability to fight with an arm wound or their ability to move with a leg wound. It is this second notion that these rules will explore.

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By introducing this maneuver into your games, combat should become more tactical. As with all new mechanics, combat may be slowed down the first times this maneuver is invoked, but it should eventually become as second nature as trip, grapple, and sunder. The effects of the maneuver have been balanced against spell effects; in fact, many of the effects mimic those of first or second level spells. With these rules, a warrior will be able to debilitate their foes rather than simply killing them, a trick that was normally reserved for spellcasters.

CALLED SHOT

You can make a called shot as a melee attack, or an adjacent ranged attack. When you make a called shot, you attempt to wound your target, hampering their abilities, rather than simply damage them. If you are performing a called shot against one of the limbs presented below, follow the steps outlined here. If the body part you are targeting your attack against is a natural weapon, you may have different options (see Sundering a Natural Weapon, below).

Step 1: Attack of Opportunity. You provoke an attack of opportunity from the target that you are attempting the called shot against. (If you have the Improved Called Shot feat, you don't incur an attack of opportunity for making the attempt; see below.)

Step 2: Target. Choose a target for your Called Shot: arm/hand, ear, eye, foot/leg, and head. Once chosen, make a melee attack roll against your target's AC, with a penalty to hit determined by the target chosen: -2 to hit for arm, and leg; -4 for head; -8 for ear or eye.

Step 3: Consequences. If your modified attack roll is successful, roll damage and deal half to the defender. In addition, the defender must succeed a Fortitude save (DC 10 + damage dealt) or be dealt a minor wound, suffering a -2 wound penalty to certain rolls, saves, and checks (as shown in the table below; also see below for secondary effects). If the defender fails this save by 10 or more, they instead are dealt a severe wound, suffering a -4 wound penalty to these rolls, saves, and checks (in addition to secondary effects; see below). Wound penalties do not stack with other wound penalties, but this wound penalty applies to a defender's Fortitude save if they are dealt another wound in an already wounded area.

This penalty lasts until the character heals, either magically or by resting. For a minor wound, a DC 15 Heal check, 1 point of magical healing, or a day of rest removes the penalties. For a major wound, natural or magical healing that brings the character to full hit points removes the penalties.

Caltrops: Caltrops deliver a special foot/leg wound instead of their normal effect (PHB pg. 126). Use the penalties for a foot/leg wound instead of the normal caltrop penalty, except that no Fortitude save is required and caltrops cannot deliver a severe wound.

Non-Humanoids: Performing a called shot against a non-humanoid requires special considerations. For example, a called shot to the arm normally imposes a wound penalty on all attack rolls the defender makes, but this penalty would not apply to a natural attack made with a different limb, such as a bite or a tail slap. Quadrupeds generally treat all of their limbs as feet/legs. Certain aberrations (such as an infamous floating eyeball) may require many special considerations; as a generality, a limb which is half the length of the total body imposes a -2 attack penalty to hit, limbs half this size impose a -4 attack penalty to hit, and very small organs impose a -8 penalty to hit. Effects of wounds not covered here are up to DM discretion.

Sundering a Natural Weapon: You can perform a

called shot against a natural weapon, such as a claw or a bite. You may use either the called shot rules, or the sunder rules (see Players Handbook pg. 158) for performing the attack. No matter which rules you use for the attack, use the consequences for a called shot. If the defender fails their Fortitude save vs. a called shot against a natural weapon, they suffer the penalty to attack and damage rolls with that natural weapon (in addition to the penalties associated with the limb, such as hand for a claw).

If you direct a called shot against an unarmed strike, the target does suffer the penalty to attack and damage rolls, but may choose to use a different unarmed strike; for instance, if an attacker performs a called shot on a monk's fist, the monk may choose to substitute kicks instead. If you direct a called shot or a sunder on a worn weapon like a gauntlet, both the defender and the weapon suffer damage (the weapon suffers full damage), and the defender must still succeed on a Fortitude save to ignore the wound.

Resistance and Immunity to Called Shots: Any mundane or magical ability that increases your Armor Class vs. critical rolls also increases your Armor Class vs. called shots. Creatures that are immune to the extra damage from critical hits are immune to called shots.

NEW FEATS

The following new feats relate to called shots.

IMPROVED CALLED SHOT [FIGHTER, GENERAL]

You are skilled at targeting specific areas of an opponent.

Prerequisites: Int 13, Combat Expertise

Benefit: You do not provoke an attack of opportunity when you attempt a called shot against an opponent. The DC to resist injury from your called shots increases by 2.

Normal: See the normal called shot rules (above).

Special: A fighter may select Improved Called Shot as one of their fighter bonus feats.

RANGED CALLED SHOT [FIGHTER, GENERAL]

You are able to perform called shots at a range.

Prerequisites: Dex 15, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, BAB +4

Benefit: You can make called shot attempts with a ranged weapon as long as your target is within range for precision damage (normally 30 feet).

Normal: You can only make a called shot with a ranged weapon if you are adjacent to the defender.

Special: A fighter may select Ranged Called Shot as one of their fighter bonus feats.

VARIANTS

The following optional rules relate to called shots.

IMMUNITY TO CALLED SHOTS

Because a called shot is a precision-based attack (much like a sneak attack), convention dictates that creatures immune to the extra damage from critical hits will be immune to called shots. If your game focuses on realism over simplicity, you may have thought that a called shot could represent structural damage rather than only wounds. With structural damage as a guiding principal, certain creatures that are normally immune to critical hits may have limited (or no) immunity to called shots. DM discretion is required; use these generalizations as guidelines:

*Creatures lacking Constitution scores (Undead and Constructs) are immune to called shots to the ear, eye, or head, as their sensory abilities tend to be magical in nature (a skeleton has no eyes, yet it can see and even has darkvision). Called shots targeting the arm/hand and/or foot/leg have their full normal effect, though such a creature is still entitled a Fortitude save.

*Amorphous creatures (Oozes, Elementals, and some Plants) are immune to all wound penalties; even though a Magmin, for instance, has arms and legs, it is an elemental and its wounds will still be

sealed by the fires that comprise it.

*Most plant creatures can be affected by called shots normally, as they are living organisms with structures and organs of sorts. Most plant creatures are immune to head-shots, because they generally lack an analog of a brain.

*A creature whose immunity to critical hits is provided by magic, such as a human wearing fortification armor, automatically succeeds their Fortitude save vs. called shots. This ability may not be immediately apparent; the initiator of a called shot should be lead to believe that the target merely succeeded their saving throw. This sort of immunity to critical hits prevents wounds from occurring, rather than allowing the wearer to ignore wounds.

DESTROYING LIMBS

If your modified attack roll scores a critical hit, roll critical damage and deal half to the defender. In addition, the defender must succeed a Fortitude save (DC 10 + damage dealt) or be dealt a major injury (as noted above); if the defender fails their save by 10 or more, the targeted limb becomes so injured that it is destroyed (such as being severed with a slashing weapon, the bones and tissue crushed with a bludgeoning weapon, or severe nerve damage with a piercing weapon). This variant does not allow you to destroy the head of a single-headed creature. (Severing the head of a single-headed creature can only be accomplished with a coup de grace, by reducing the defender to -10 hp, or if the defender fails a Fortitude save vs. massive damage).

Aside from the obvious (such as not being able to wield a weapon in a destroyed hand or arm, use a natural weapon connected to that limb, or being permanently blinded with destroyed eyes), a character with a destroyed leg or foot has their speed reduced to 5 feet (unless they have more than two limbs for locomotion, in which their speed is merely reduced by 1/2, until 1/2 of their limbs are destroyed). A destroyed limb cannot be healed, except with spells or abilities such as *regeneration*.



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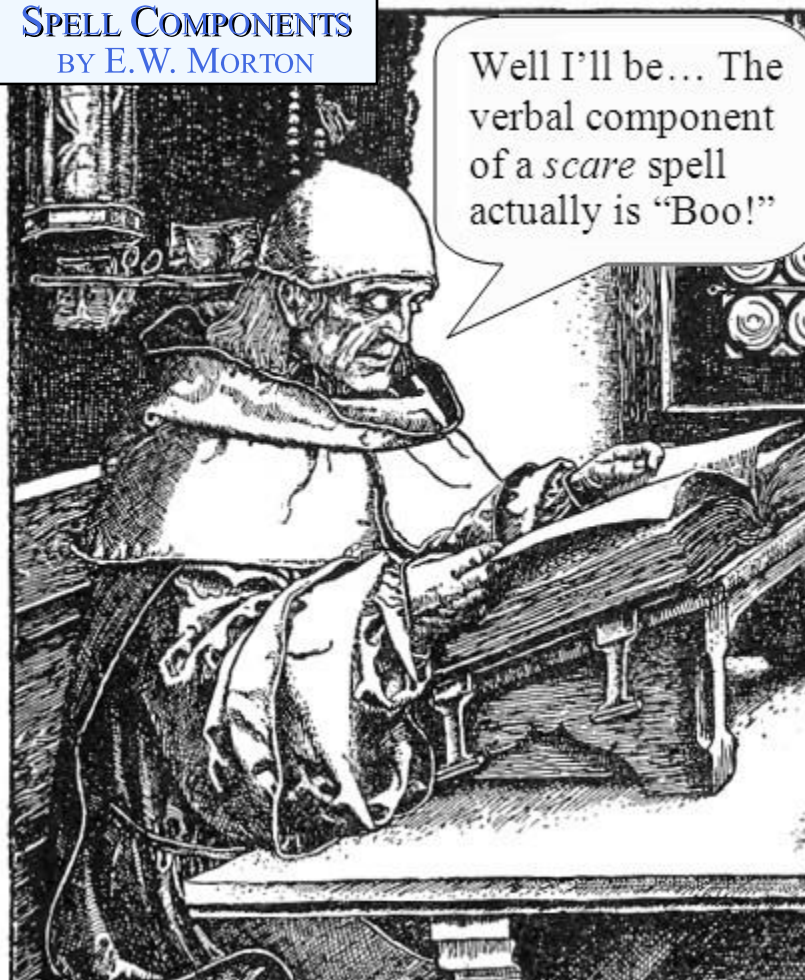
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SPELL COMPONENTS BY E. W. MORTON



WORLDWALKERS

THE STRAY ARROW

by Elven Doritos

Duncan Masters was having a very bad day...

Early in the day, he had learned that his companion from the previous evening was in fact the Countess Irana d'Metria, a fact that Duncan would normally have considered a point of pride. The problem, however, was the Count d'Metria, who, rumor had it, was the jealous type.

That rumor was now firmly out of the realm of speculation and into the spectrum of fact as Duncan attempted to outrun the third battalion of the Count's personal guards. Garbed in a heavy viridian cloak that whipped behind him, Duncan spurred his horse onward as he tightened the grip of his leather-gloved hand over the hilt of his blade.

"Halt, ye black-blooded scoundrel," was the cry of one of the pursuing soldiers. "Our lord would be wanting a word with ye!"

With a half-grin, Duncan leaned in further, his mount increasing speed accordingly. After rounding a street corner and frightening several bystanders, the cloaked man hopped from his steed to the gray-bricked street, tumbling into a perfect somersault.

When the Count's guards rounded that same corner, however, they could only find the horse, sans rider; with a disgruntled shout, they dispersed to search the street for their quarry. Overturning carts and breaking windows and doors, the guards grew more frustrated with each passing minute. Suddenly, a call came out from the sewer grate, and an angry guard grabbed an empty green cloak, bringing it to his fellows. After a moment's consideration, the troupe lifted the sewer grate, begrudgingly continuing their search in the depths below the city.

Leaning against a statue, a man with a short coil of raven-black hair and a matching goatee chuckled lightly. Garbed in a scarlet coat and matching trousers, the young man picked up a stray head of cabbage that had rolled from one of the toppled carts with a black-gloved hand. With an ever-widening grin, the handsome young man muttered, "As if I, the famed swashbuckler Duncan Masters, would ever soil my new boots by going into the sewers," before taking a deep bite into the vegetable.

--

Duncan stumbled into an alleyway as dusk began to settle, feeling a slight buzz as his vision began to blur. After the successful evasion of the Count's guards earlier in the day, the dashing swordsman had decided to celebrate his successes with a drink. About five mugs of ale later, he came to the riveting conclusion that, to avoid blacking out in the middle of a city where he was a wanted man, it was in his best interest to continue his game of hide-and-go-seek with the Count. Due to his inebriation, however, Duncan was entirely unprepared for what was about to come- where his day had been bad, this night would prove to be far worse.

The charming scoundrel leaned back against a cold brick wall, his eyes fluttering as he tried to retain consciousness. Attempting to stand to his full height once again, he felt his knees buckle. Before he plummeted to the frozen dirt beneath, Duncan could have sworn he saw a flash of movement out of the corner of his eye-- a sudden burst of scarlet. Rolling onto his side to get a better view, he was now sure of one thing; he was either in more trouble or far drunker than he previously believed.

Emerging from the shadows of the alleyway was a heavily-cloaked individual, crimson-cowl and scarlet mantle billowing in the swift city gale that was gusting through the alleyway. Concealing the stranger's face was a mask; a curious thing, ivory in color, looking as delicate as porcelain, yet no features were carved excepting two narrow slits from whence a pair of fierce blue eyes peered. An uncovered left metallic hand, moving seemingly of its own volition, twitched and spasmed until a wet, hacking cough issued from the carmine-clad intruder. The metal hand stopped moving suddenly, as if deadened, as the interloper drew an ash-black longbow of the highest quality.

Duncan gazed blankly at the red-garbed traveler in honest and sheer terror, and attempted to summon his typical levity. When he opened his mouth, however, he could only squeak out, "I d-d-d-did not know she was the Count's wife..."

The metallic hand now moved with purpose as it drew forth an arrow with a blood-red shaft and black fletches. Curiously, Duncan managed to notice the scintillating, crystalline material the arrowhead was crafted of; an uncut, bizarre blood-red shard that appeared to be made of a delicate crystal. As the ivory-masked attacker drew back the arrow, those deadly, fierce eyes narrowed with conviction. The masked assailant growled quietly, "You are a pathetic, wretched creature, Duncan Masters of the Seventh World. You have squandered your time in this place, spending every passing moment in service only to yourself. You are guilty of being a fool." The growl quickly became a low yell, as the arrow was drawn even further backward. "And this is your sentence."

With a streak of scarlet, the arrow seemed to burn the air around it, lodging deep into the drunken Duncan's chest. In a scream of sheer agony, the wounded warrior reached, attempting to draw his blade; to no avail. As he felt the cold arrowhead settling amongst his insides, he gritted his teeth, snapping the shaft and fletching off as he stood to

face his would-be harbinger.

Then, much to the swashbuckler's surprise, his masked attacker vanished in a flash of scarlet light, leaving behind both a wispy red smoke that smelt of the sea as well as a loud, rumbling noise akin to the shifting tides of the ocean.

The spectacle had been enough to alert the Count's guards, and when they turned the corner to enter the alleyway, their eyes widened with a mixture of joy and genuine surprise. As they drew their weapons and approached Duncan, the injured adventurer closed his eyes tightly, wishing with every fiber of his being to escape. He started to black out, at first it seemed in combination of the pain and the alcohol still coursing through his veins. But then, when the world around him seemed to vanish, Duncan realized that he was still conscious- and to top that, he was glowing a brilliant shade of scarlet!

Energy seemed to flash around him, and Duncan felt his organs twist inside out, his limbs flailing in inconceivable directions. Reality seemed to unmake itself around him as the laws of nature twisted and writhed; it felt as though he was being torn to a million different points all at the same time.

As soon as it had begun, it ended, and Duncan found himself in another alleyway. Red dust seemed to blow from all angles as Duncan stood, leaning against a grit-stained steel wall. He coughed heavily as he rubbed his eyes, hearing noises around him.

As his vision became less blurry, Duncan found himself surrounded by five or six squat, bearded figures: dwarves.

With a growl, one of them drew a dagger from his belt and stormed towards Duncan, muttering, "This here is our ground, human... And you will learn to respect the dwarves of Yolek Ja!"

Next month — the Jade Stage!

"I STARTED THE GUILD ON A WHIM"

An Interview with Jason Graybill (a.k.a. Xeviat)
by R.D. Heesen (a.k.a. Túrin)

This is the first official Campaign Builders' Guide interview, kicking off what will be a regular feature of the Guide. For this occurrence, who else than Xeviat, original founder of the Guild, would be a better candidate? To get to the essence of Xeviat, your interviewer had to travel to the lands of the Three Worlds campaign setting, where he enjoyed a divine cup of tea with its overdeity. Other than Three Worlds, they discussed RPGs and their rules, the Campaign Builders' Guild and, of course: Cabbage. Your interviewer brought back some interesting results, including confessions about RAW games (he does play them!), his childhood and, of course, founding the CBG. Naturally, the parts that would utterly destroy your sanity, were you to learn of them, have been removed.

RDH: Who are you in the dreaded world known as Real Life?

Xeviat: My name is Jason Graybill, and I'm currently 23. I'm a full time student at Cal State University of Fullerton, where I am studying literature (with a focus on legends and mythology). Outside of that I'm a wage slave. Of course, D&D is my number one hobby, with video games (especially RPGs and Action-Adventure games) coming a close second. I'm lucky to be able to share my hobbies with my girlfriend, who does much to keep me sane.

RDH: How did you get into gaming?

Xeviat: I got into gaming through video games; my first game system was an NES way back in 1988. I was never the lucky kid who had all the greatest games, but my cousin was spoiled rotten so I always got to get my hands on games I otherwise wouldn't have heard about. Skip ahead to 1998 with the release of Baldur's Gate, which represented my first experience with the D&D rules. When Baldur's Gate 2 was released, it came bundled with a character generator for 3rd Edition D&D; after I fiddled with the character generator long enough, I found a hobby shop and picked up the PHB.

On a side note, I find it quite ironic that, in middle school, I had been preconditioned to think all the bad things about D&D people in the 80's thought of it. The only time I had ever even seen D&D was through ads in the comics I read, so go figure. My mom told me awful things about the game, even though she made me read Lord of the Rings ... Hah.

RDH: What's your chief interest in RPGs?

Xeviat: That's a heavy question; I'd have to say everything about it. It is a good excuse for my friends and I to get together, which I try to make my number one reason for gaming. As a budding novelist, I also use the game to develop my world and to create stories with vibrant characters (using my PCs as inspiration). Aside from that, the escapism and vicarious heroism are great too. Oh, and don't forget the rules tinkering; I'm a devout house ruler.

RDH: You are known as the original creator of the CBG. How did you get the idea?

Xeviat: The Wizards.Community boards was the first place I began to display my campaign setting. After months, I noticed that many replies were just "good job", or "awesome"; they weren't really constructive. For a while then, I started getting heavy into reviewing other settings, but I held back on asking people who I reviewed to review my setting; I hoped that I could be a good example and things would catch on.

After a year of this, I started the Guild on a whim; I thought it would be a good way to get serious world builders together to seriously critique each other's work. It kind of ran away from me there, and before long we had our own boards. I'm doing my best to get back into the thick of things currently.

RDH: Initiatives like the Setting of the Week show attempts at reviving the original purpose of the Guild (reviewing each other's campaign settings). Do you think the CBG still serves its purpose?

Xeviat: Answering that is difficult for me; I don't feel like I've been keeping up with my duties as founder. One strength the Guild has, though, is that the active members are extraordinarily active; the Setting of the Week is a great example of the drive these active members have. In fact, I've been told that a certain Elven Doritos' setting has been played by members of the guild. So yes, I think the Guild is serving its purpose, but we can always do more (and I could do much more).

RDH: What would you like to see from the CBG?

Xeviat: I would like to see everyone review my world and give it as big of a place in their hearts as it takes in mine. Just kidding ... well mostly. What I mean is I'd like to see more involvement between writers in the Guild. There have been several intimate collaborations on the boards, and these have been quite successful. In my experience, the greatest work is accomplished when a writer feels that someone will appreciate it.

RDH: An interesting feature of your campaign setting, Three Worlds, is that it consists of multiple material planes, each geared to a specific type of campaign. Why did you decide separate worlds were necessary?

Xeviat: Careful now, you're going to get an essay out of me with questions like that. My setting grew from ideas I originally had in 8th grade, after I started reading fantasy literature (I believe I started with *Sword of Shannara* and *The Hobbit*). Alternate planes always interested me, and during high school I realized that alternate worlds would allow me to play heavily with alternate genres; one world for High Fantasy, one world for Horror, and one for "Realistic Fantasy".

There were certain themes which simply wouldn't fit in one world or another. Sylphenhest, for instance, is a world of dread horror, where the PCs must fight against nature and even the deities, where survival is often the primary focus of the game. Avalon, on the other side, is a world of high fantasy, where magic is taken to its fullest and grand battles take place on a regular basis.

Having separate worlds allows me to worry less about why certain things aren't affecting each other. Additionally, many of my stories are grand in scope, and having three worlds allows them to be even grander.

RDH: Can you tell us something about other interesting features of Three Worlds?

Xeviat: The one element that excites me the most about my world is the blending of cultures; a major goal of my literary studies is to be able to make *Three Worlds* a blending of world legend and myth, with my own original twists, so that all readers will find something new and exotic. This can be seen best with my use of an animistic spiritual system along with angelic and demonic forces.

Another feature I am especially fond of is that the creation story the people of *Three Worlds* believe is mythology in the truest sense of the world; it isn't real. Elements of it are true, but enough loose strings exist to draw attention from the most perceptive readers. The *Three Worlds* has history longer than its believed lifespan, giving me an endless variety of plots to explore.

RDH: You are also known for creating excessive amounts of crunch. Why do you make your own rules?

Xeviat: I'm known for that? That's great! My desire to tweak the rules as much as I do grew from my experiences with the first game I ran, which ran for about two years before it was put on an unfortunate hiatus. In this campaign, one PC constantly outgunned and outplayed another PC, neither of which made particularly great or poor decisions. So, my primary motivation with altering the rules is to make them as fair and balanced as possible.

Aside from that, I have a running theory that the more realistic the game rules are, the easier it is for players to suspend disbelief and play their characters as if they themselves were a part of the world. Of course, a large part of my rules changes were done simply for preference, or to help the rules better synchronize with the way I envisioned my world for my novels.

Contrary to popular belief, I do play RAW (rules as written) games from time to time. As a matter of fact, I'm running Red Hand of Doom currently, with no rules alterations. As a side note, running the rules without my house rules has made me appreciate my house rules all the more.

RDH: One of your most famous works in this area is a magic point system, which basically makes magic work like psionics (with magic points and augmentation and everything). Why are magic points better than preparation slots?

Xeviat: Objectively or subjectively? Objectively, they're better because they are a better representation of the way magic works in the fiction the game was based on (Vance withstanding). To me, such a system allows a caster to have more variety and more adaptability. I've also found that it is easier to balance spells against each other in such a system. Mostly it is a matter of taste; I played with spell slots for years with little problem, but all of my players agree that my MP system makes more sense, and is easier to use in game.

RDH: If you were allowed to use only one houserule, what would it be?

Xeviat: Oh my, that's a tough question. I'd have to say I'd use my versions of PHB feats, especially my modded Two-Weapon Fighting and Weapon Finesse rules (interestingly, the source of the weakness of the previously mentioned PC in my first games). I think all characters should have a level playing field, and no one should be left behind.

RDH: To sketch a quick profile of you, I'm going to ask a few simple questions to gauge your character and preferences. Here we go: D&D or 3rd-party system?

Xeviat: D&D all the way.

RDH: Favourite non-core book?

Xeviat: *Unearthed Arcana*; it's what gave me the courage to consider heavily modifying the system.

RDH: Wizards of the Coast or Campaign Builders' Guild?

Xeviat: CBG; there's less arguing and more discussing here.

RHD: fluff or crunch?

Xeviat: Both, with a preference for crunch: with perfect rules, all a DM needs to create a great game is inspiration.

RDH: Inside-out or outside-in?

Xeviat: Inside-out; it makes a world an organic creation, and gives it a life of its own.

RDH: Theme Wars: Ethocentric or DivSet?

Xeviat: Ethocentric. My worlds are my worlds, and while I try to create them organically so that they are realistic, I hope that everything I place serves a purpose.

RDH: Cabbage: vile Fiend or exalted Deity?

Xeviat: Depends on how it is prepared: freshly chopped with fish or added to salads is great; boiled in any form is stink in its purest form.

RDH: Thank you for this interview. As a final question, please give us a sneak peek at one of your latest projects.

Xeviat: If crunch is what you're after, I'm intending on modding the level-up system of the game to have characters spend character points (earned along with XP) to purchase ability score increases, skills, and feats. I've begun to talk about this a little on the boards, but it hasn't gone past its infancy yet.

If fluff is your thing, I've recently found the motivation to begin writing my first novel in earnest. I've already posted the short that begins Xeviat's tale: You can also find it at <http://www.fictionpress.com/~jasoncravenbuel> if you're interested.

ETHOCENTRIC VS. DIVSET

Ethocentric: A world or setting that is intended as art in its own right. The concept here is that art always has a unifying vision and this vision becomes the “central ethos.” Everything in the setting is designed to work toward that ethos and thus has unifying theme. Ethocentric worlds are thought by most to have more focus, depth and potential.

DivSet: A “diverse setting” meant to house a variety of works and provide a solid foundation for gaming. DivSet worlds work hard to make sure gamers and authors have a world that fits their style by being varied and flexible, without an underlying purpose. DivSet worlds are thought by most to have more options, breadth and opportunity.

These words were coined by myself during a debate with Cymro. To see the entire debate or talk about themes in world building, see the THEME WARS thread at the CBG. (http://www.thecbg.org/e107_plugins/forum/forum_viewtopic.php?10371.0)
-Raelifin

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