

Campaign Builders' Guide

Issue #5

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A Community Written E-Zine for OGL Gaming

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EDITORIAL

By Rose of Montague/Natural 20

This is the fifth issue of the Campaign Builder's Guide, another step on the path to making something awesome. Our friends from Fantaseum have begun to submit content, and I believe the guide is just waiting to expand in new and exiting directions. Sometimes though, I think people get caught up in looking for the "awesome", and forget to stop and realize how far they have come.

Since I was given responsibility of the Guide, I've done nothing but think about how to make it better. I've changed my name and made fancy speeches in a futile attempt to improve something that's already great. I did recruit two great artists to do work for this issue, Brian Hamner and Melissa Cox, but in the end, it's about the content that you have submitted.

I guess the moral of my rambling is, maybe we should look at how far we've come before we trip trying to move farther. So, everyone reading this can move on now and enjoy the content that makes the Campaign Builder's Guide something special. The readers made it, and now it's time they got their reward.

Enjoy!

Rose Of Montague

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CBGMAX

THE HOME FOR CABBAGE

DUE CREDIT:

As a publication maintained by hobbyists, the Campaign Builders' Guide is prone to an occasional mistake or two, but none have been as grievous as the oversight in the credits of issue #4. Elven Doritos, the editor-in-chief and driver for the Campaign Builders' Guide for many months was not given credit for making issue #4 a success. The Campaign Builders' Guide staff would like to make clear that Elven Doritos should have received credit for that issue, and we apologize for the error. Sorry EIDo!

UNIQUE RACES:

FLORIANS

By Senkenomei



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For more art by Melissa Cox, visit www.melissa-art.com.*

Secluded descendants of the oldest living things, the florians are a true race of the wild. Living deep in the thicker jungles of the world, florians are seldom seen, and even more seldom heard. Many florians adventure out into the world, but very few survive, often due to their frightening appearance. Enigmatic and unfamiliar, the florian race has few friends and is often seen as monstrous by even the most uncultured humanoid.

Personality: Florians are cautious and often skittish, and rarely speak due to their rather painful method of communication they use to speak to other races. Florians are most often passive, but can be ruthless hunters when in their natural element. Florians covet form-fitting equipment such as clothing and light armor, taking enjoyment of filling the insides with their writhing bodies. They fear fire above all else and frequently despise evokers and conjurers for this very reason.

Physical Description: Florians are tall, gaunt creatures which stand straight and appear humanoid, but can move as a writhing mass of vines. In their normal form all florians stand anywhere between 6 to 8 feet tall, and weigh anywhere from 40 to 50 pounds. Florians, in their normal form, are made of tightly constricted intertwining vines which make up the basis of their bodies. The feet and hands of a florian are made of particularly hardened vine, their faces nondescript with two highly fluorescent orbs in place of eyes. Florians, because of their inability to naturally speak, have very low and grinding voices. Climate also plays a large role in florian life: all florians take on a masculine or feminine personality depending on what temper-

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ature the florian grew in. This is also true in determining their coloration. Florians are genderless and reproduce asexually, giving birth to live offspring. Despite their reproduction habits there have been rumors of Florians spending their time with a companion of a different race, but these have yet to be proven. Florians are omnivores, usually hunting down wildlife in their unfurled form before taking on their humanoid shape to feed.

Relations: Florians do not have any definitive positive relationships with any known race. So far the closest thing a Florian has shown to be kindness has been that toward elves, whose patience and respect match that of the Florians.

Alignment: Florians tend to be shifty and unpredictable, leading to chaotic alignments. Chaotic neutral is the most common, as Florians as a whole do not trust anyone and easily switch sides if the opposition is convincing.

Florian Lands: Florians control the dense forests and jungles, where they live in large clans. They dwell on the ground of the forest, even at night, only fearing wildfires or large herbivores that are fast enough to catch them. During the day they venture up to the treetops, resting high atop the branches while they heal any wounds they may have, and then move back to the forest floor to continue to forage for their villages. A typical florian "village," which is really just a group of Florians hunting for food, is assembled in a spiraling pattern, with the oldest of the florian clan, known as the Sacred One, centered in the middle of the group. Florians assemble this shape to make an effective hunting team, where they wait until their prey wanders too far into their clan. On the Sacred One's signal, the entire clan unfurls, surrounding their victim so there is no chance of escape.

Florians encountered in human lands are typically bounty hunters and trackers, dressing in heavy robes to conceal their disturbing appearance.

Religion: Florians do not serve any particular god, each different tribe serving a different deity. The largest tribe currently serves Obad-Hai, the god of nature.

Language: Florians speak their own secret language by simply making smooth, shimmering gestures with their vines. Florians also know Sylvan and Common, but to speak any language other

than their own causes them great pain.

Names: Florian names are usually simple, consisting of one constant vowel or repeating letters. Florians name themselves, but choose simple names to help speed up their native tongue.

Adventures: Contrary to popular belief, Florians are adventurous people, seeking excitement to fill their long, sometimes eternal, lives. Many become effective seafarers, where the fire they so loathe is unable to reach them, and several also go out to become powerful mercenaries and highly disciplined monks.

Florian Racial Traits

- **Plant Subtype (Ex):** Florians are humanoids with the plant subtype. Florians are arguably more plant-like than human in composition, but they combine aspects of both plants and humanoids, as detailed below.

Features: As a plant, a florian has the following features.

- A florian derives its Hit Dice, base attack bonus progression, saving throws and skill points from the class it selects.

Traits: As a plant, a florian possesses the following traits.

- Low-light vision.
- Unlike other plants, a florian is not immune to mind-affecting spells and abilities.
- Immunity to poison, sleep effects, paralysis, polymorph, and stunning.
- Unlike other plants, a florian is not immune to critical hits.
- As a humanoid plant, a florian can be raised or resurrected.
- Florians breathe and eat, but do not sleep.
- Although plants do not need to sleep, a florian wizard must rest 8 hours before preparing spells.
- **-2 Charisma:** As hard as they try, florians have difficulty fitting in to any society.
- **Medium:** As Medium humanoids, florians have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size.
- **Florian base land speed is 30 feet.**
- **Inflicting speech:** Florians are devoid of vocal chords, and in order to speak a language other than sign language they must strip vines in their upper chest cavities. They then rub the stripped vines together, forming words. Any florian speaking in this

way deals 1 point of damage to himself, and 1 point of subsequent damage for every 25 words.

- **Regeneration 1 (Ex):** Slashing weapons and fire deal normal damage to a florian. If a florian loses a limb or body part, the lost portion regrows in 3d6 minutes. The creature can reattach the severed member instantly by holding it to the stump. The rate of a florian's regeneration increases by 1 for every 5 Hit Dice the florian gains (to Regeneration 2 at 5 HD, Regeneration 3 at 10 HD, etc.).

- **Vulnerability to fire**

- **Shifting body (Ex):** Because of the constantly writhing movements their bodies make, whenever a critical hit or sneak attack is scored on a florian there is a 25% chance that the critical hit or sneak attack is negated and damage is instead rolled normally.

- **Unfurl (Ex):** As a full-round action that does not provoke attacks of opportunity, a florian can "unravel" its body and become a large tangle of thick, living vines and leaves. Unfurled florian traits are described in the following section.

- **+2 racial bonus on intimidate checks:** Florians can partially unravel their vines at will, making them look very imposing to others.

- **Automatic Languages:** Florian Sign Language, Common. **Bonus Languages:** Draconic, Elven, Gnoll, Sylvan.

- **Favored Class:** Monk. A multiclass florian's monk class does not count when determining whether he takes an experience point penalty for multiclassing.

Unfurled Florian Traits

Each florian has the innate ability to assume a natural form at will. As a full-round action that does not provoke attacks of opportunity, a florian can unfurl, transforming into a thick mass of living vines. The unfurled florian can reassume its humanoid shape as a full-round action that does not provoke attacks of opportunity, and possesses the same traits as above except as mentioned here.

- **Large size:** As large creatures, unfurled florians gain a -1 size penalty to Armor Class, a -1 size penalty on attack rolls, a +4 size bonus on grapple checks, and a -4 size penalty on hide checks.

- An unfurled florian's base land speed is 40 feet, and his climb speed is 40 feet. He has a +8 racial

bonus on Climb checks and can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks even if rushed or threatened.

- While unfurled, a florian is incapable of making any unarmed or special attacks except noted here

- **Smothering Grab:** An unfurled florian may move at its full speed into any space occupied by an opponent size large or smaller without provoking attacks of opportunity. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action that provokes attacks of opportunity. On a failed attempt, the florian must continue to move through the space to the opposite adjacent side, provoking an attack of opportunity. The florian may continue to move beyond the threatened space if it able, provoking the appropriate attacks of opportunity. If the attempt was successful, on any subsequent successful grapple check an unfurled florian deals damage as an unarmed large creature. On a failed check, the creature breaks free of the florian's grasp and is left prone on the ground until its next turn. If a florian has the Improved Grapple feat, it gains a +4 bonus on grapple checks made this way in addition to its size modifier, and does not provoke an attack of opportunity when making a touch attack to start a grapple. Unlike other grapple checks, a Florian may continue to move at its full speed while grappling one large creature, four medium creatures, or four small creatures. Any creatures colossal or bigger are immune to this ability, and creatures tiny or smaller can be moved over, but not grappled.

- **Feral Form:** While unfurled, a florian is incapable of bluff, intimidate, diplomacy, and gather information checks. They are also incapable of speech.

- While unfurled, a florian is incapable of wearing armor, gear, or equipment: these simply sink into the mass of vines until its humanoid form is reassumed. This does not prevent magic items that were activated on the florian before the unfurling from functioning.

- If a florian reforms while grappling one or more creatures, those that were grappled are dropped prone in one or more adjacent squares to the reformed florian.

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THE CAMPAIGN BUILDER'S GUILD IS PROUD TO PRESENT!

Wizardly Gag Gifts

by Stargate525, Snakefing and Pheonix Knight (Winners of the April Contest)

Trollhammer Toys proudly presents:

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The Little Merlin's First Alchemy Kit comes in a wooden box the size of a small chest. It opens to reveal a number of shelves containing potions, reagents, wands, and instructions.

The product includes, but is not limited to:

Dust of Disappearance: This amazing dust disappears as soon as the bag's seal is opened!

Manual of Hit Points: Anyone that reads this manual will bright-colored targets over their vital organs, each clearly labeled with how many points a hit is worth!

Potion of Burning Hands: Not for ingestion! May cause inflammation.

Potion of Burning Heart: This potion gives you heartburn!

Potion of Confusion: Made with top quality shrooms!

Potion of Growth: This potion of *enlarge person* may sometimes only work on the subject's ears.

Potion of Invisibility: This potion sometimes only affects the user's clothes. Mileage may vary.

Potion of Reduction: This potion of *reduce person* works perfectly! Results may be limited to only certain body parts.

Potion of Summoning: When opened, this vial conjures up a giant, eight-foot long stuffed rhino!

Tasha's Hideous Laugh Track: High Wizard not impressed with your *prestidigitation*? With this laugh track, no one will know it's not him rolling on the floor laughing! Open with care; this jewelry box emits continual laughter and cannot be closed.

Wand of Dance: First inspection identifies the kit's wand as a wand of *Otto's Irresistible Dance*. On activation, however, the wand targets the intended target, the caster, and all his allies, causing them to river dance.

Wand of Zeus's Temper Tantrum: This wand appears to be a *wand of lightning bolt*, but really it just makes sounds of thunder. Batteries sold separately.

Order now and you will receive the Skillet of Ares at no extra cost!

Skillet of Ares: This amazing skillet is made of shiny black metal. It appears to only grant a +3 bonus on cooking checks, but it does so much more! Any food cooked in it becomes so spicy it would leave a dwarven barbarian in tears! And it never needs polishing or cleaning!

Elat's Everfull Mug

by Snakefing (2nd Place Winner)

To normal investigation this appears to be a standard issue everfull mug. On command, the mug will fill with a fresh, tasty pint of ale. However, if the ale is not consumed within two rounds, it becomes flat, stale and unappetizing. After four rounds, it turns bitter and distasteful. The mug will not refill until the previous drink is consumed. If the contents are spilled or dumped out, the mug deactivates and will not function for a full 24 hours.

Ioun Stone of Celebration

by Stargate525 (1st Place Winner)

When inactive, this item appears to be an ordinary pink and green ioun stone, and indeed it does function as normal (+2 to the user's charisma). However, when the user first places the stone to orbit around his head, the 'curse' comes into effect. Whenever the user performs a common, ordinary task (the actual task is up to the giver of the stone, see below), the ioun stone emits large amounts of streamers and glitter while whizzing around the person's head playing celebratory music. The effect last only a few seconds, but is enough to attract the attention of everyone around, and usually gives the user a bit of a shock the first time as well.

In addition to the above effect, the user cannot deactivate the stone by any means except by giving it as a gift to another. At this time the giver is free to whisper to the stone a new action for it to celebrate, but it is not required. This stone is often given as a joke gift among wizards and bards who

can afford it, and is great fun at parties.

When not celebrating or not in use, the stone looks like an ordinary ioun stone (pink and green, marble-sized, and spherical). When celebrating, the stone sprouts a 1-2 foot streamer and several small flags, both in the wearer's favorite colors.



FLORIAN'S CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

RANDOM FLORIAN STARTING AGES

	Barbarian, Rogue, Sorcerer	Bard, Fighter, Paladin, Ranger	Cleric, Druid, Monk, Wizard
Adulthood 30 years	+1d4 years	+1d6 years	+2d6 years

FLORIAN AGING EFFECTS

Middle Age 100 years	Old Age 200 years	Venerable Age n/a*	Maximum Age n/a*
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Middle Age: Take a -1 to Str, Dex, and Con; gain a +1 to Int, Wis, and Cha.

Old Age: Take an additional -2 to Str, Dex, and Con; gain an additional +1 to Int, Wis, Cha.

* Florians do not age past Old Age, and can live indefinitely if they so choose.

RANDOM FLORIAN HEIGHT AND WEIGHT

Base Height	Height Modifier	Base Weight	Weight Modifier
6' 0"	+2d6	38 lb.	Height Modifier x (2d6)

BORDER PATROL

Part 3: 'Tis Black Magic

by Stargate525

For most borders, the physical outposts and patrols are the only elements considered in their design. These defenses, however, do little to protect against a teleport or a fireball. To counter this weakness, borders should utilize magic in their own design and staffing.

Magic has its drawbacks. For one, it is rare. It lacks longevity; a wizard will run out of spells before the fighter has to stop swinging his sword. Magic in the form of items are also expensive, but do defeat the limited use drawback. Because of these major obstacles, it should be a rare and wondrous border that relies entirely on magic.

A well-stocked border should incorporate at least one arcane caster, although the size of the border may require more. When choosing a caster type, consider the situation. Is he the only caster in the area, unlikely to be reinforced? If so, then a wizard's versatility is most likely the best option. If you intend on placing two or more casters in the area, one can afford to be a specialist wizard or a sorcerer, as the other caster can cover his gaps in ability. A bard would be unfeasible at most small borders, but if you can spare the body, his services are both versatile and useful.

A divine caster is always a must, as he provides a much needed healing and support role, leaving others to fight. A cleric performs this role admirably, although he should avoid combat and focus on support. Paladins can perform this role in a pinch, but are ill-suited for the task; rangers and druids even more so.

The exact spells that a caster knows will vary wildly both due to location and the caster's preference, but a few spells are so well-suited for borders that they should be included. First, a certain number of defensive and alarm spells should be employed. Obviously, *Alarm* is a good choice. The auditory alarm version of the spell would work best in this situation; a caster with several of these up cannot easily ascertain which one was tripped with only a mental ping. To prevent this taking up a large portion of a caster's daily spells, this should be made permanent whenever possible. *Arcane*

Eye might also be considered useful to scout beyond the walls or to serve as a very light patrol in its own right, but due to its long casting time, relatively high level, and short duration, this spell is not terribly effective. *Prying Eyes* is more useful here, although it suffers from an even higher level. *Whispering Wind* could act as an effective relay system, although this would require either several relay stations or a few higher level casters.

In addition to these three, any spells that allow your men to detect and respond to things either beyond or along the border should be considered, as well as spells that allow warnings and messages to be sent faster. An early warning means more time to call for reinforcements or ask for instructions, which can make all the difference if a border must be defended.

The above spells will warn you of impending attack, but do little to actually avert said attack. For those you need spells that damage or incapacitate a foe. There are far too many to list here, but general guidelines in selecting them can be made. First, try to avoid any spells with a touch or close range, as the enemy is best stopped long before they get close enough for these. Long range spells are preferred.

Second, an enemy is likely to send large numbers of low-level soldiers, so area of effect spells are excellent choices; even if they don't completely stop their enemy, weakening or reducing their numbers can only be good for your soldiers. Widened spells become useful in this regard.

Finally, include a number of battlefield control spells in your arsenal, which can slow and weaken the enemy often far better than direct damage. In fact, these spells are so powerful that you can break the first rule and include a few with close range.

Finally we come to magic items. The sheer number of them makes selecting good ones a dizzying task, but there are a few that would serve well when used in a border's defense.

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GARDEN GARGOYLE

By Trevor Gamblin



This statue of a wicked creature with a smile too wide for reality. Its gray and black stone form is entwined with still-living vines and riddled with small branches. Its wings seem massive for its body, and its face unlike the others around it is not a mockery of some human gaze. Massive teeth are carved into its mouth, and the gaping hole that is that orifice oddly seems to have no end.

Garden gargoyles (also called green horrors or syndeti [syndet plural]) are wicked and sinister fey that take pleasure in causing trouble for those they happen upon, and when they have the opportunity, they enjoy kidnapping, torturing, and murdering lone people (especially children).

While they share the appearance of larger earth-based creatures, they are actually very different from them. Smaller, more inherently evil, and definitely more powerful, a garden gargoyle is a very unfortunate presence for the common person and a terrifying foe for an adventurer, because of its abilities and its decent intelligence. Unlike their larger, unrelated counterparts, garden gargoyles also can take an immobile, unrecognizable stone form, but they cannot come out of it by day (see below).

Always CE Small Fey **CR 5**
Init +7; **Senses** Darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +12, Spot +12
Languages Common, Gnome, Goblin, Sylvan

AC 20, **touch** 14, **flat-footed** 17
 (+5 Dex, +6 natural, +1 size)
hp 51 (6 HD)
DR 5/cold iron
Fort +6, **Ref** +8, **Will** +7

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares); Fly 50 ft. (good)
Melee 2 claws +6 (1d3+2) and bite +4 (1d4+1) and gore +4 (1d4+1)

Ranged Shortbow +6 (1d6)
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +5

Atk Options power attack, rend
Special Actions Spells, spell-like abilities
Druid Spells Prepared (CL 4th):

2nd — *heat metal* (DC 15), *soften earth and stone*, *summon swarm* (usually bats)

1st — *entangle* (DC 14), *faerie fire* (DC 14), *obscuring mist*, *produce flame*

0 — *flare* (x2, DC 13), *know direction*, *mending*, *purify food and drink*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th):

At will — *diminish plants*, *plant growth*

Abilities Str 15, Dex 16, Con 18, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 10

SQ Garden magic, musical obsession, potion brewer, stone shape

Feats Brew Potion (B), Combat Expertise, Improved Initiative, Multiattack

Skills Bluff +8, Hide +12*, Jump +11, Knowledge (local) +5, Move Silently +10, Listen +12, Perform (sing) +9, Spot +12

Advancement 7-10 HD (Small), 11-15 HD (Medium)

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Garden Magic Garden gargoyles are very skilled at wielding plant- and nature-related magic. They cast spells as if they were druids of a level equal to their HD - 2 (the garden gargoyle described here casts as a 4th-level druid). They do not gain any other druid abilities such as wild shape, animal companions, or the like through this.

Musical Obsession Garden gargoyles have a strange addiction to sound and skilled music. Some call it their major weakness, and despite the gargoyles knowing of it they do not seem to care. Green horrors love to sing but are not as skilled in its ways as creatures of other races, and so they are envious of other voices and of musical instruments. Anyone who plays any form of music competently (succeeding at a DC 22 Perform check) automatically affects any and all gargoyles nearby with an effect like that of a *Hypnotism* spell for as long as the music is played and 1d4 rounds thereafter. After this a garden gargoyle will not attack the musician unless provoked, though they will eventually become hostile again if the person does not play them music when they ask. Any requests made to the gargoyle(s) during this time it is very willing to complete, which includes being asked to leave the area and bless any crops as they do so. They are also eager to make potions, but if one is asked to make potions for anyone who asks them in such a situation, it will automatically leave the area after the items are given. No amount of music can bring one back; it must be found again.

Potion Brewer (Ex) A garden gargoyle has a strange knowledge that its entire race seems to share that allows it to create any kind of potion it wishes. It never pays an XP cost for creating one.

Stone Shape(Su) Garden gargoyles have the ability to become so still that they appear like statues. Those observing them must succeed at a Spot check (DC 18) to determine they are more than stone statues. If the garden gargoyle is among large amounts of stone or against thick brush (as they usually are), this DC increases to 23. Green horrors automatically enter this form at daybreak, and cannot leave it again until dusk. They are effectively helpless in every way while this lasts. If attacked, they take damage as normal during the day, though they have no way to retaliate or protect themselves. This gives an advantage to anyone

who can locate one during the day if they wish to be rid of it, though there are less violent methods (see below).

GARDEN GARGOYLE LORE

Garden gargoyles are mischievous, wicked creatures that enjoy causing all sorts of suffering for mortal folk. They also will do so to other creatures (including fey) when they get the chance, and do not concern themselves with the fates of creatures they terrorize and affect. They enjoy peeking into the windows of nearby homes at night, watching people and looking for children to harm. They are also fond of rigging devices such as cart wheels and doors to become jammed or to fall apart. Their favorite passtime, however, is spending long hours of the night slowly helping the plant life grow and surveying the land in order to determine the most devastating places for thick growth to approach.

Though they are wholly evil and usually considered nothing more than terrors of the night, adventurers sometimes seek out green horrors for information and their ability to create magical brews. Though they have limited nature abilities, they have a special knowledge and study that allows them to craft potions out of any magical spell that could be created in the form of a brew. This makes them a creature of legend known for making agreements with people they are not likely to keep, or twist with a hidden purpose. Many stories tell of green horrors that are sought out by people in need of brews that cure strange ailments or protect people, but at a terrible price. Sometimes the green horror grants them a potion and follows them home, only to steal away the sick ones and do wicked things to them after they are cured. Clever folk are wise enough to betray the gargoyles in the same manner, tricking them with promises of musical instruments only to captivate them and destroy them as they are helpless.

Legends tell that the garden gargoyle has one major weakness: it is enthralled by the sound of music in sharped or flattened keys. They say that these creatures love to sing and have a strange obsession with music, but by some curse cannot hit sharp notes with their voices. This curse has left them very envious of creatures that can sing other-

wise and obsessed with any musical instruments they find or see. They never attack those who can play them or sing them music competently, and oftentimes at night will follow those who they hear playing music they like for long periods, and it is not unheard of that one that is enthralled by such sound will not follow all night and accidentally be caught in the rays of the sun far from its dwelling.

STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

Garden gargoyles enjoy using their spell-like abilities upon the places where they dwell, causing trouble for those who live around homes and hindering anyone who would seek to destroy them. When they first arrive in an area, they use these abilities to vastly increase the rate of growth of plant life all around. They use this cleverly so that it appears that their day-statues have always been there or were recently left there by others, and so that they are protected. If the local family the gargoyle seeks to terrorize has children, it will stimulate their crops or any plants nearby that have the potential to produce something valuable to the

people, but if the family does not have children and are not expect them, the green horror will diminish the productivity of any crops and other plants until the people are forced to leave.

ENVIRONMENT

Gargen gargoyles can live anywhere, though they prefer backyards and clearings near farmhouses or cabins.



BORDER PATROL CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

Wands, potions, and scrolls cannot be overstated here. If possible, every border should have a number of potions easily accessible that aid or bolster your men. Wands and Scrolls are a little bit more difficult, as it is doubtful that your basic soldier will be able to use one of these with any sort of reliability. Instead, these should be loaded with a variety of spells for emergency use if the caster is out. There should also be a complement of wands with close-quarter spells that a caster may use in case of a breach. This frees up his spells to be invested in the long range, large effect spells.

Unless you plan on handing out expensive magical weapons to your soldiers, the only other type of magic item of use is wondrous items. But these items suffer from expense; you might only be able to use items off the minor items list, if at all. Among these there are still a few useful items.

A *Horn of Fog*, for instance, makes an effective smokescreen, which can come in use if the border is breached. Of course, an *Eversmoking Bottle* does the job far better, and a *Wind Fan* should be

on hand to prevent this same tactic being used on your own men. *Eyes of the Eagle* should be distributed to all of your sentries, if possible. If not, splitting up each pair and spending for eye patches will make them go twice as far. A *stone of alarm* could find use in a border, but a permanent *Alarm* spell is probably better. Similarly, *Marvelous Pigments* might find some use in the field, but that use is limited.

Those are only the items on the minor list; many more items could be found if you have the cash to look in the medium and major lists. In general, any item that can emulate an area-control spell or gives you a large-scale advantage is fair game. Personal use items should be avoided, since those will apply only to a few people and are a less effective use of the money.

Despite its drawbacks, magic is an important part of any well-defended border. As exiting and important as magic may be, it is nothing without the people using and benefiting from it, which is the topic of next month's installment.

"FOCUS ON STUFF YOU MIGHT ACTUALLY USE"

An Interview with Martin Ralya

by R.D. "Túrin" Heesen

In this interview, we leave the CBG, pushing for new boundaries. For this occasion we found Martin Ralya (writer of a weblog for GMs called [Treasure Tables](#)) willing to provide us with the ultimate advice on becoming a great GM and worldbuilder. In addition, we talked about his own experience as a gamer, his website, what to do if your players only want to play in a campaign that revolves around giant space hamsters and, of course, cabbage. Martin must have guts, comparing cabbage to brussel sprouts in this Guide, but let's not hold it against him.

RDH: I'm very excited to have you here. If you will, please tell us a bit about yourself and your personal life, so we know who's talking to us.

Martin: Glad to be here! I was born in France in 1977, grew up in NYC, went to college in Michigan and moved to Utah for my job. My folks are from Britain (mom) and the U.S. (dad), which makes for a confusing Fourth of July. My wife, Alysia, and I live in West Jordan with our beagle mutt, Charlie. Except that it's not possible to have too many books, we have way too many books. Apart from writing *Treasure Tables*, I love RPGs, movies, reading, computers, writing, video games and games in general – my hobby cluster is pretty typically nerdy. (I'm terrible at math, though, which isn't so nerdy. I've always been an English guy.)

RDH: So how did you get started playing RPGs?

Martin: As a kid, I was always big on "Let's pretend" games. In 1987 I happened across a copy of Avalon Hill's terrible old RPG *Lords of Creation*, and I think I mainly liked that it looked cool and came in a box – I didn't entirely understand what it was. I introduced it to a few different friends, always one-on-one, and we basically just bought equipment and ran around in a shared story that I narrated – definitely not gaming in the traditional sense. It's not hard to see how enjoying GMing grew out of that, though.

I really got into RPGs when a friend of mine introduced me to red box D&D a year or so later – my first character, Vlagranras, was a dwarven fighter. After playing with my friend a couple of times (again, solo), I decided I wanted to get more into it – but I didn't know anyone else locally who played D&D, so I figured I'd have to be the GM. I went out looking for D&D, and found that my LGS didn't carry it – but they happened to have copies of AD&D 2nd Edition. I spent my Christmas money on a PHB, DMG, *Monster Manual*, the excellent Dragonlance boxed set *Time of Dragons* and a set of Armory poly dice. It rocked, and I've never stopped loving gaming.

RDH: How often do you actually get to play, and what systems do you use when you do so?

Martin: I've been incredibly lucky for the past couple of years, and have played more or less uninterrupted since I moved to Utah. Before that I ran a long (for me, at 18 months) D&D game in Michigan, and unfortunately the two campaigns I started since moving here both died early, ignominious deaths. For someone who writes about GMing every day, that feels pretty odd!

We've been playing D&D 3.5e and *d20 Modern*, but I'm to the point with d20 that I'm really itching for something else. *Burning Empires* grabbed me by the throat at last year's GenCon, and hasn't let go since – when one of our two current campaigns ends, I'll be pushing it hard. In terms of overall experience, I have the most time put in as both a player and a GM with AD&D 2nd Edition and D&D 3rd Edition (and 3.5), followed by *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay*, *Shadowrun* 1st Edition and *Call of Cthulhu* (mainly 4th Edition).

RDH: While prepping for this interview, I almost got lost in the wealth of great advice on your site ([www.TreasureTables.org](#)). What circumstances led to the creation of this weblog for GMs?

Martin: Thanks! It's been a lot of fun writing TT, especially since I committed to posting once a day –

and it's been great to watch the site grow into the community it is today. That sense of community, and the knowledge that folks actually enjoy coming there every day, keeps me jazzed about running the site. I wouldn't have predicted where it is now when I first got rolling, and I'm sure there are plenty of other changes still to come.

I got the urge to create my first website back in college, around 1999 or so. I've had sites off and on ever since (I enjoy web design, and can quite happily fuss for hours until some minor design element is just right) but with the exception of the past three, none of them have really clicked with me (or anyone else, for that matter). A few years back I ran 3oni.com, an index of (at the time) every d20 feat, skill, class and prestige class, and more recently I ran 3d6.org as a campaign site for one of my games (it's now my personal photo site).

The thing I took away from all of those early attempts was that I liked running a site that people actually used. When I started doing RPG freelancing in 2004, something fell into place in my brain and made me decide it'd be fun to combine two things I love to do – write and GM – into a website that wouldn't just be fun to run, but would be useful to gamers. Apart from RoleplayingTips.com, I didn't see too many regularly-updated sites specifically for GMs, and a friend of mine had been having a lot of fun writing a personal blog, so starting TT as a weblog sounded interesting to me.

RDH: Tying in with a recent post from your blog, what was *your* weirdest GMing experience?

Martin: I hate to have such a boring answer, but I've never had a really weird GMing experience. That was part of why I asked that question on TT – so I could vicariously enjoy other people's weird experiences.

RDH: That's weird in and of itself: you've been gaming for twenty years! Surely there must have been some things that stood out (but weren't necessarily weird)?

Martin: There've definitely been plenty that stood out -- just none that stood out as weird. I'll go with most immersive; I don't think I've talked about this one in an interview before.

I love Call of Cthulhu, and back in high school I picked up my first issue of *The Unspeakable Oath*, Pagan Publishing's excellent CoC magazine. (I'm pretty sure it was issue #11.) There was a scenario in that issue called In Media Res, and it remains one of my all-time favorite scenarios for any game. Fair warning: I'm going to spoil a couple elements of the scenario, so if you're planning on playing this you might want to jump to the next question.

As the title suggests, it starts in the middle. The PCs are all escaped convicts, and the scenario opens with them in an empty house, standing around a prison guard's corpse. His tongue has been cut out and his face has been peeled off. One of the characters, who has no tongue of his own, has the guard's tongue stuffed in his mouth and is wearing his face. The first dialogue is spoken by this character, who instantly loses the ability to speak as soon as he's done reciting a few ritualistic lines. I decided to run this for my then-girlfriend, who had quite a bit of gaming experience, my best friend (ditto) and another friend who had never gamed before. We had my parents' apartment to ourselves for the evening, and I turned off every light in the house except the one over the dining room table. The dining area was actually one side of our fairly large living room, which made it feel that much emptier. Before the game, I asked who was up for playing a challenging character, and my friend who'd never gamed before said he was game. I gave him the mute PC, and walked him through the opening scene (since he needed to recite the opening dialogue). Then I turned all three of them loose -- he recited the lines, I described the opening scene, and they were off.

The game was fucking amazing. Everyone was really into it, and played their characters to the hilt. As you've probably guessed, the PCs weren't nice people, and my players really got into that. There was a scripted flashback for each character, some of them pretty disturbing, and I got to take two of my players aside to share those with them. There were lots of other peculiar elements, too, but I don't want to spoil them all. By the end of it, everyone was thoroughly creeped out but exhilarated, one PC was dead, one was irrevocably insane and the third ran off into the woods. It was one of the best gaming sessions I've

ever run, and completely immersive for all four of us.

RDH: What's the central theme you try to convey in your advice for GMs?

Martin: Try new things, don't be afraid to make mistakes and focus on what's fun for your whole group.

RDH: Does every group have something they all enjoy? What if you (as a GM) are not interested in running a game focused on that?

Martin: Absolutely. There's the baseline stuff, of course -- the core of gaming: roleplaying your character, doing thrilling stuff you can't do in real life -- as well as more specific aspects of the game that players enjoy to varying degrees. The trick is finding what falls into the latter category, and focusing on it. So if all of your players enjoy combat, let's say, but one of them prefers diplomacy, everyone will get good mileage out of a tactical encounter -- which you can then follow up with a social scene for your player who digs combat, but doesn't dig it as much as everyone else.

To answer the second part of your question, if your whole group wants to play a campaign themed around giant space hamsters, but you can't stand giant space hamsters, you have two options. The first is to give it a shot anyway. Let your players know that you're not usually a fan of GSHs, but you want to run the game that interests them most. Throw yourself wholeheartedly into the first couple of sessions, and then take your own pulse: if you're hating life, you need to switch games; if not, all is well. A lot of times, if your players are really jazzed about something, that enthusiasm will rub off on you. The second option is to say no, and explain that because you're not excited about GSHs, the game won't be nearly as good as it would if the theme were something you were really into. Just as player enthusiasm often leads to GM enthusiasm, the reverse is also true: if you're pumped about a particular campaign, that will rub off on your players.

RDH: What websites, magazines or publications do you read regularly?

Martin: The list fluctuates every few months, and there are lots of sites I read a couple of times a week but not really on a regular basis. I'll limit it to the "I feel weird if I don't go here every day" list: TT, of course; for comics, PvP, Penny Arcade, Real Life, Gunnerkrigg Court, Order of the Stick and Achewood; for blogs, Kottke, Boing Boing, Apartment Therapy, Gawker and Defamer; for humor, Something Awful. In the dead tree realm, I read Wired, Newsweek and occasionally OXM. In terms of gaming sites, I spin through most of the ones on TT's links page periodically, but most of my day-to-day online reading doesn't involve gaming (with the exception of TT).

RDH: Do you read the Campaign Builder's Guide? If so, what are your thoughts on it?

Martin: I looked through an issue back when I first linked to the CBG, but I confess to never reading a whole issue. I was impressed with the overall quality, particularly for a free product -- I've seen "professional" PDFs that weren't half as professional as Volume 4, which was the one I checked out.

RDH: Can you relate some of your personal experience with worldbuilding/setting-creation?

Martin: My worldbuilding has always been pretty hodgepodge. I enjoy it, but I've never been a hardcore homebrewer -- I tend to draw some maps, start detailing an area, get lost in the scope of the project and give up. My best worldbuilding gets done when I fill out the corners in published settings, and when I write RPG material as a freelancer.

With the former, the pressure is off: I can do as much or as little as I need to, and I know what I'm doing will have a pretty high likelihood of actually seeing the light of day. With the latter, I have a definite goal in mind (write a great book) that helps to guide me as I work out the specifics. In both cases, the process usually starts with an idea -- or even just the seed of an idea. Once I start writing, it develops almost on its own, sometimes in weird and unusable directions (which subsequently get scrapped) and sometimes in directions I really like. I jump around as much as I need to, working on the stuff that grabs me right then and coming back to the bits that aren't quite as appealing.

RDH: Do you have any advice for our worldbuilders?

Martin: The oldest worldbuilding advice in the book: "Start small." To that I'd add "and focus on stuff you might actually use." Personally, I always spend too much time on things that wind up not being use-

ful during actual sessions. That's bound to happen to a certain extent, but I seem to have a special knack for it.

RDH: I know some people in the Campaign Builders' Guild have more settings than they'll ever have campaigns. Can a GM go too far creatively, even if he enjoys creating stuff for its own sake?

Martin: Yes, but not by virtue of just enjoying worldbuilding. Create as many settings as you like -- if it's fun for you, that's a hobby unto itself. But there can definitely be a major disconnect when it comes to creating settings that are actually going to be fun for your players, and hold up well during play. In those cases, I recommend focusing only on the stuff you think will a) be fun for everyone and b) come up in play.

As a player, I don't care if you wrote your world's equivalent of *The Silmarillion* for your setting -- I care if the prep you did translates into a fun game. For some groups, that may involve knowing that Eredo'odle begat Ar'del'dingle (whose lineage continues for another five pages), but for a lot of folks that level of detail doesn't have much connection to what happens at the gaming table. In that respect, you can definitely over-create. As long as you've created the most important stuff, though, and aren't giving your players short shrift, any other details you add to the setting are gravy -- and there's nothing wrong with gravy.

RDH: GM or player?

Martin: GM.

RDH: Fluff or crunch?

Martin: Fluff.

RDH: Inside-out of outside-in?

Martin: Inside-out, I suppose.

RDH: Theme Wars: Ethocentric or DivSet?

Martin: DivSet. That's an interesting breakdown. I find that in general Ethocentric worlds make better reading material than they do settings for actual play.

RDH: What's your favourite RPG-related product?

Martin: Both as a thing (with all the memories and nostalgia that accompany my copy) and as a gaming product, the original *Forgotten Realms* boxed set. It inspired me the moment I opened the box, and it's continued to inspire me ever since -- I've gotten more awesome out of that box than I have out of any other gaming product I own.

RDH: Cabbage: vile Fiend or exalted Deity?

Martin: Fit only for the lowest ranks of Hell, right alongside mushrooms, parsnips, brussel sprouts and cauliflower. Except in coleslaw, where it's excellent. And sauerkraut, which is great on hot dogs and corned beef sandwiches. But the way it comes out of the garden, it's nasty.

RDH: Thank you for this interview. As a parting thought: if readers are interested in your work, where can they find more of it? Any new work from your hand coming up?

Martin: Thanks for interviewing me -- you asked some great questions, and I always found myself saying more than I expected to. I've got a handful of projects I worked on still awaiting publication, but only one of them has been announced: *Destinations: Spaceport Black Orchard*, from *Tabletop Adventures*. It's a system-neutral spaceport, suitable for use in a wide range of sci-fi settings and specifically written to be easily dropped into an ongoing game. *Black Orchard* is the third space mini-setting I've written for TTA, and all three of them have been an absolute blast to write (I'm a huge sci-fi geek). All of my other work is listed on TT (www.treasuretables.org/published-work) -- personal favorites include my *Dragon* article, "Excursion: Four Ways to See the World," my chapter of *Almanac of the Endless Traders* (Highwater) for the drop-dead awesome *DragonMech* setting, *Destinations: Repair Station 7-Osiris* and my bits of *Mother of All Treasure Tables*. I've also got a secret project in the works (cue dramatic music), but my business partner and I aren't ready to announce it quite yet.

Keep up the kickass work on the CBG, and it's been great talking to you.

CAMPAIGN BUILDER'S DAIRY

Part 1

By Ishmayl

Welcome to a new series of articles on creating and maintaining a campaign for your RPG. What I hope to accomplish here is a description of how some campaign settings come to be. To do this, I will be writing – in diary form – a campaign setting from scratch. Along the way, I will be explaining my methodology for all the decisions I make. Before we jump into it, there are a few things I would like to establish.

First, this will be a campaign setting, not an entire world. The differences between setting and world vary from author to author, but for our purposes, we will say that a world is a planet with multiple continents, and a setting is a place in a world, grouped with various adventure ideas and NPCs, that doesn't necessarily encompass an entire planet. Of course, the two are not mutually exclusive, but we will be focusing on the setting.

Second, I will be doing my best to present the material here in a way that can be used with any fantasy setting (GURPs, d20, Exalted, Agone, etc), but because of my familiarity with Dungeons & Dragons (D&D)[™], if stats are needed in any part of this series, I will be using d20 as my base, and most likely D&D[™] will get referenced a few times.

Finally, I would like to offer my thanks to a few people. In particular, Ray Winninger, who wrote a diary known as Dungeoncraft from 1997 – 1999, and laid a foundation for what I'm about to do. Also, the various members of the CBG who have helped with this, Crit, Rael, and Meeps for publishing the Campaign Builder's Guide. Saying that, I would also like to thank Eldo, who got the Guide to where it is today, and without him, we wouldn't have it to begin with.

The question that comes up most often when talking about creating a campaign is, "Why not just use something already made?" It is a pretty legitimate question. After all, when there are entire worlds with quite literally encyclopedias-worth of information on them, what's the point? In a world as large as Faerûn, aren't there plenty of places to run a campaign? There are already stories, NPCs,

racess, classes, kingdoms, and conflicts to fill your plate with. Why not just use Forgotten Realms (FR), or Dragonlance, or Eberron, or any number of published settings?

Well, gentle reader, the reason is very simple: I love to create settings. If you've ever spent hours a day researching cultures to include in your world, if you've ever had debates over the merits of including elves in a campaign, if you've ever lost yourself in drawing a map and filling in the details, then you know what I mean. You can become immersed in the history, the legends, and the stories of a world. If you don't enjoy researching ancient cultures and languages, if the thought of spending hours over a piece of drawing paper detailing out a map gives you a hand cramp, if Greyhawk (GH) has everything in it you need, then chances are this series will bore you. But if you've just not been able to find what you're looking for while browsing the shelves of Barnes and Noble, and you've ever thought, "Man, I could make a world that would have everything in it I need," then get out a pen and paper and let's get down to business.

There are a few things I would like to accomplish today, so I'm going to spell them out, and we'll go from there.

First, I would like to set the foundations for the variety and premise of the setting. These two words are fundamental in designing a new setting, so I'll make sure to describe them as accurately as possible.

Next, I want to talk about what we should include and not include from your typical core material. The last thing we'll talk on today is what to be preparing for in the future, as well as some things you can be thinking about.

Two Very Important Words

So, let's talk variety and premise. These are two very important words, and in the RPG industry, mean two very different things. I don't know if I'm using the words the exact same way you would use them, so I'll put out some definitions here: **Variety** would loosely be defined as the differences in-

volved in the campaign, and comes in two forms: internal and external variety. Internal variety describes all the various concepts within your campaign that make the setting fit together in a believable world. External variety is what makes your campaign different enough from another campaign to make it worth working on for hours on end.

Your **premise** is an amalgam of the tone (or mood) and the theme (sounds like we're going to need more definitions! We'll get to that...) of the campaign that gives your campaign texture. If we were to take a common setting, such as FR, we would say, "Forgotten Realms' internal variety is one of hundreds of different cultures, races, and peoples. In terms of external variety, FR differentiates itself from other settings by having extremely active gods, numerous (several dozen) races and subraces to choose from, and a *massive* sprawl of land to play in. The premise of FR is one of high fantasy, mystical creatures, powerful magics, and almost overwhelmingly of 'Good conquers Evil.'"

There are many things you can do to add some internal variety to it. Think, for instance, of our world, Earth. Earth has almost 250 of what we would call countries. Over two hundred of these are sovereign states, thirty-eight are dependent territories, and five are areas of "special sovereignty." Now, those words mean little to both you and me, except for the fact that it means this planet is *extremely diverse* in terms of different peoples and different ways of life. That means that there are almost 250 different countries here that you could model nations of your world off of. Of course, you may not like *any* of Earth's nations, and that's a great reason to create a kingdom from scratch, but we'll talk about that in a later issue. The point I'm trying to make here is, your setting can be as internally varied as you want it to be.

To spice up the external variety of your setting, you'll have to do some thinking outside the box. For instance, it's well-known that most fantasy-based role playing games have at least a bit of Tolkien influence; most are so Tolkienesque that they could just be easily inserted into Arda. So, one thing you could do to make your setting different is to stray away from the more Tolkienesque constants. A small list of these constants could in-

clude:

- *Elves live forever and are the natural caretakers of the world.

- *Humans tend to be the source of evil.

- *The races of the world will unite together unerringly to face off against the Shadows of Darkness.

- *All small farming communities produce heroes and saviors.

Obviously this list is not all-encompassing, and barely even scratches the surface, but it's a place to start.

The premise of your setting is extremely important right up front. Most likely, this premise will determine the majority of the decisions you make, in particular those of class, race, religion, and history. Let's talk about the different aspects that come together to create the premise of your setting. I promised you some definitions up above, so I'll do that first.

Tone/Mood – The tone or mood (both of which can be used interchangeably) of your setting is essentially *how you want the players to feel* while playing. Similar to a fictional horror story, where the author wants to convey a constant state of fear, your setting will have a tone that is constantly being felt and understood by players. There are many different options here, and you can definitely combine options as well, but the overall tone will always be present.

For instance, let's say your campaign is going to be about a world where all the humans have been captured and/or are born into slavery. In such a situation, the adventures and stories would most likely revolve around trying to escape to freedom, or simply trying to survive. There's a feeling of hope on the horizon, but most of the time, it is covered by a feeling of desperation and doubt. The tone of this setting would be one of darkness and despair, splashed with a bit of hope for a better tomorrow.

On the other hand, your setting could take place in a world where all the nations are democracies, with each country vying for some political gain. Perhaps there is a puppet democracy nearby that is (secretly) under the rule of a terrible dictator. Adventures could spawn from the PCs spying on the nearby democracy for their own gain, or for their nation's sake.

Or perhaps the PCs are simply mercenaries for hire, and don't know what's going on in the neighboring kingdom. The tone and mood of this campaign would be one of political intrigue, mostly light-hearted, but with a looming sense of urgency as things begin to unfold. There are obviously nearly infinite possibilities with either of these examples, but the point is, the tone gives the campaign a certain feel.

Theme – The theme(s) of your setting is basically *what ties everything together*. Now, that's an extremely broad, and relatively grandiose statement, but is important nonetheless. Themes can almost always be spoken in 3-5 word phrases, and typically sound pretty general, such as "Good versus Evil," "Order versus Chaos," "Redemption of the Fallen." What they do though is they set up a basis for what your adventures and setting will be about.

Take the first one, "Good versus Evil." It's a classic. It's been used in Tolkien, Lewis, Jordan, Williams, Goodkind, Donaldson, and many others. There's a reason it's so popular: everybody understands it! In this kind of campaign, it's "good" to defend a poor, helpless lady against a thieving orc bandit, and it's "evil" to be an orc bandit, preying on defenseless old ladies. It's stereotypical, it's cut-and-dry, it's black-and-white, but it makes a very simple sense. There are obviously different levels of this kind of theme, but the core of it is, "There is Good in the world, and there is Evil in the world, and it is important for the Good to fight the Evil and be victorious."

There's the second one, "Order versus Chaos," which has tendencies towards following the trends of "good versus evil," but some subtle differences. Very few authors dwell on this particular theme, but one in particular to take a look at, if you're interested, is L.E. Modesitt, and his *Saga of Recluce*. His stories deal *solely* with "Order versus Chaos;" in his world, good and evil are *secondary* to Order and Chaos. In RPGs like D&D, where the alignment system is based off both good-and-evil, and order-and-chaos, it makes both themes extremely viable.

The third example, "Redemption of the Fallen," is one that has played a vital role throughout our own history, but is much subtler than the previous

two. In an above example, I mentioned a world where all the humans are slaves. This could easily be a "Redemption of the Fallen," campaign, since it is about bringing the human race back to grace. The Midnight campaign setting, by Fantasy Flight Games uses this theme, and in a sense, Dragonlance does as well. Now, these were just examples, but they are relatively common themes in the fantasy genre.

Something worth noting is that many settings contain more than just one theme. Sometimes there is one overall theme and then some underlying themes that can lead to other types of adventures and stories in a setting.

I think that for the setting I'm going to create here over the next few months, I should play it safe. I hope that this campaign can be used with many different systems, and in many different groups, so I'll try not to alienate too many people. With that in mind, my premise will be:

"In a very old world, very old beings once ruled, but have slept now for many millenia. These beings have recently awoken, and through both politics and warfare, they now plan to once again become the lords of the world. The people of the world must find a way to stop them, or become slaves to a race more ancient than the sun."

Flowery and fluffy... I'm keeping this as brief and general as possible, because I'm likely to add things and take out things as I see fit, but I think it's a good way to start. It covers the theme (old beings are trying to take over the world, someone must stop them), and the tone (political intrigue, a decent bit of gloom - but definitely not too much - and a strong sense of hope).

For some internal variety, I'm thinking that the main campaign area will have three main kingdoms. One will be heavily based on European feudalism, one will be a desert empire with some Middle Eastern flair (or possibly Mesopotamian – I'm undecided on this), and the third will be a very tiny, fledgling democracy. All three will be surrounded by a few independent city-states with a bit of Greco-Roman persuasion. That should do for now.

"You're In, You're Out!"

The next first step (no, that's not a typo) we're go-

ing to take is figuring out just what exactly we're going to keep, and what we're going to throw out. And by this of course, I mean, do we go with standard/core rules, or do we completely make our own? First, let's talk about the pros and cons of each.

Standard Ruleset – There are a few things we should think about when determining how to do the rules. Pros and cons are very important, of course, as well as, *do these standard rules fit our needs?*

Of course, before we get started, I'm going to throw out some definitions again. A **standard ruleset** is one that is described in an RPG's manual. For instance, in D&D, the standard rules are the Core rules, those outlined in the Players' Handbook. All the classes, races, skills, feats, and spells listed in the PHB are Core rules, – and thus, standard rules - meant to be used in literally any campaign setting ever created. They're (mostly) properly balanced, and (mostly) have a good variety. In White Wolf™, all the rules outlined in the World of Darkness book would be considered standard.

There are a few very obvious benefits to using a standard ruleset, one of which is the ease of use. If you're creating a D&D campaign, then most likely, your players (not to mention, yourself) are already very familiar with the rules involved. Using the rules already published makes the game play much easier to follow, and makes the setting much easier to swallow. Also, there's *already* a good variety to choose from; very seldom does a player feel as though his character is misrepresented by using the races and classes provided.

However, there's a good possibility that the standard rules just simply won't work. There could be many reasons, or just one reason. Maybe there simply aren't enough classes and/or races to choose from. Maybe there are *enough* races, but they have to be altered in such a way as to make them into a new race. Maybe the magic system just doesn't fit your needs. For instance, maybe you want to use a magic system that's completely based off of harnessing the wind. Well, you'll most likely have to create your own system to accomplish that, because there are very few (read, zero) magical systems in any standard rulesets already

out there that will do exactly that.

These would be the cons of using a standard system. If the standard system won't do what you want and/or need, then it's going to be hard to find joy out of using said system.

Created Ruleset – A created ruleset is one that is *created*, or *built* by the campaign setting author to offer specific advantages over using a standard ruleset. The pros of using such a system are pretty obvious. First, you get to put in the setting *whatever you want*. There are no limitations based on the fact that elves are skinny, frail creatures that don't fit your world. In your created ruleset, *there are no elves*, and perhaps instead, there is a powerful race of Klingon-type beings who rule most of the world. In a created ruleset, there are no issues with paladins being too powerful, for *there are no paladins*, and are instead different divisions of fighters, with no magical powers, all of which have their own skills and abilities. These aren't necessary changes, they're just examples, but with a created ruleset, the scope of your campaign is *endless!*

But there are cons. Creating a new ruleset from scratch is both time-consuming and tough. All that time you could be spending on writing beautiful battle stories will instead be spent hovering over a calculator, and lurking on various message boards while hoping that someone there will playtest your new rules and let you know what you can keep, and what you should change. And it's not like you can just use the Will and the Word and your new rules will exist in all their splendor. No, you have to type out pages and pages of ideas, most of which you will scrap, and then you will have to find some way to combine them into readable form, after which, you'll still need to find someone (or *someones*) to playtest the rules. And the first time, your rules will most likely be *terrible!* You'll have completely unbalanced all the classes and jobs in the game, the magic system will be full of holes, and the races will make absolutely no sense with each other. It will be a nightmare! That's why there's a third option.

Assembled Ruleset – There is a third option that a majority of setting builders go with, and that's an assembled ruleset. An **assembled ruleset** takes what works from the standard ruleset, and changes

just what doesn't work. It's somewhat of a combination of standard and created rulesets. You will have to do some work, but most likely, it will be in the form of adjustments instead of complete creations.

Instead of wiping out the halflings and creating a new race from scratch, you'll keep the halflings, but change their favored class to better suit you. Instead of scrapping the monk for being too magically-inclined, you'll find a good martial artist class that's been created by someone much better suited for designing classes. But most of the rules in the standard ruleset, you will keep. You'll just change the flavor text to better suit your particular setting.

I think it's going to best serve our purposes here to use an assembled ruleset. I say this for two reasons. First, I'm just not capable of creating a campaign from scratch without inventing some of my own rules. Call it a hobby, or call it a self-indulgence, but I like to have a hand in how my players will play the game. Secondly, because I'm trying to make this series system-neutral, that allows me to add things that could be added in *any system*, without taking something out that would denote a specific system. If I said, "I'm taking out race-X," then this article has become about a specific system. However, if I say, "I'm adding race-Y," then that can be thrown into just about any system in some way or another. Petty? Possibly...

Where Do We Go From Here?

We've gone over quite a bit today, and there is still a lot to cover. But that will happen in later issues. There are quite a few paths open to us from this point.

To really get into things, we'll need to develop a headquarters or Base of Operations, where most adventures (at least, in the beginning) will be held. We need to flesh out the three nations, and the city-states where the campaign will take place, and also need to work on various conflicts. But there's something we're going to do first, which will be covered in the next issue. That is, we have to define (more definitions!) some rules for our building. I don't meant rules like, "All gnomes eat frogs for breakfast" (although, that *does* sound cool), but rather rules that help us create the setting and the adventures.

So, what should you do in the meantime? Well, how about some homework? Here are three things that can keep you occupied and get you started.

1 – Come up with a tone. How do you want people to feel when they play in or read about your setting? Do you want them to go to bed afterwards, crying from the overwhelming despair? Do you want them to have pleasant dreams of rainbows, bunny rabbits, and leprechauns? Somewhere in the middle? List your ten favorite movies, and determine the tone of each of those movies. See if there's a common ground – you'll most likely find that there is! Then, determine if that's what you want your setting to feel like, or if you want something completely different.

2 – Come up with a theme. This shouldn't be too hard; I've already gotten you started with three. Come up with five to ten good thematic ideas. Once you have them, read them over in your head once a day, and after one week, choose one (or two, or three!) that best suit your goals for a campaign.

3 – Come up with a reason to be different. This is where external variety comes to play. What kinds of ideas can you come up with that will make your setting different from Eberron, Exalted, or Freedom City? Make a list of features, goodies, and hooks that you would like to employ in your setting that will make it stand out. You probably aren't familiar with every single published setting out there, but you should be able to come up with some original, unique ideas.

Good luck, and see you in a month or so!

-Ish



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