

The background of the cover is a dark space scene. At the top center, a bright, glowing sun or star is partially obscured by the title text. To the right, a large planet with a prominent ring system, similar to Saturn, is shown in a perspective view. In the bottom left corner, a portion of a blue and white planet, resembling Earth, is visible. The overall color palette is dominated by the yellow and white of the sun, the brown and tan of the rings, and the blue of the Earth-like planet.

The
Campaign Builders' Guide

Issue #6
August 2007

A Community Written E-Zine for Fantasy World Builders

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FROM ATOP THE WORLD (EDITORIAL)

We are world builders. Think about what that means for a moment. World building is a craft--an art--without fixed medium. It is a form of storytelling that goes beyond the tale of any one character, but is still closely woven with each. Storytelling is a very old practice that is ingrained in human society, but world building is much newer, and newer still are writers who are focused on the world itself, rather than treating it as a nothing but a backdrop.

It is because of this that I love the Campaign Builders' Guild, for there are few places that are so very dedicated to our new art. On the CBG we typically express our settings through something I call "active notes," a medium that mimics the encyclopedia (though much more entertaining!) and is called "active" to distinguish it from personal notes. This is not the only medium, however, as depiction of the world is very much a part of fiction of all kinds, even if it usually falls to the background.

This is where the CBGuide comes in. The CBGuide, in my mind, is the collaborative manual of the art of world building. We're about sharing the skill, knowledge and inspiration that is present in everyone who has a creative spark and a love of the fictitious. Whether your skills lie in traditional story, art, cartography, or the many sciences that compose a world, we want your help to produce a magazine that will be an asset to world builders everywhere for years to come.

Thank you.

- Raelifin the World Builder (and Editor)

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The entire CBG

PlotStorming.com Presents
The Winner of the May Fiction Contest:

Madman

by Brannon Hollingsworth

Aaros gritted his teeth as his light axe bit deep into the neck of the guard. A spray of hissing blood painted a gory sigil upon the stone wall as the guard slumped into eternal slumber. Aaros blinked the blood from his eyes and scanned the room – they were dead – all of them. He nearly retched, knowing that he alone had done this terrible thing. He alone was responsible, no matter his reasons, no matter the justification. It was he that would carry the burden of these dead men's stares to his own grave, however distant – or nearby - it might be. New cries of alarm and the continued blowing of horns lent wings to the man's iron-shod boots and he scrambled over two torn, lifeless bodies, tearing one of his throwing axes free from a sternum as he went.

Up moss-slicked, stone staircases Aaros ran, mentally checking his store of weapons: only three throwing axes remained, including the one he'd just regained and only one of his original two bearded battle axes – the other's haft splintered by a guard's well placed sword blow that nearly took his hand as well. Aaros spit a huffed curse as he rounded a torch-lit bend: only four blades, two hands and two arms against an entire fortress of well-armed, well-armored and well-trained men-at-arms. Aaros gritted his teeth again as he heard the coming conflict of clattering armor from ahead him in the hallway. He furrowed his heavy brow and narrowed his once-joyous hazel eyes: it would have to be enough – he was his daughter's only hope.

By the scarce light cast by the flickering torches ahead of him, Aaros could make out six in chain bearing short swords. Aaros chuckled; most men would turn, or at least attempt to parley, given such odds. He was not most men -

Aaros had to get past these guards. Aaros had to get the Key. The Key was the only thing that would protect him against his real enemy - the enemy that held his daughter captive. The mere thought of their rotten hands touching his daughter's pale, unblemished skin – their bony fingers snagging in her curly brown locks – their fetid breath causing her blue eyes to water and cry – forced a roar from Aaros' lungs that shook stones from the mortared tunnel ceiling. At the mere sight of the insane, roaring, axe-bearing man bearing down upon them, one of the six took flight back the way he'd come. Aaros' heightened battle senses noted the sharp scents of urine over the smell of blood, sweat, fire and fear. Aaros leapt towards the alcove that held his enemies, arms outstretched like a bird's wings; cackling like the madman he was.

Aaros saw the silvery glint of upturned blades as he glided downward toward the five that remained. They meant to skewer him, Aaros knew, but he had other plans. Striking the closest torch with the flat of his bearded axe, he showered the men before him in hot coals and hungry flames. Caught completely by surprise, the five lost all thought of the madman before them and began screaming as their cloaks, hair and skin burst into smoldering flame. The first, who had taken the brunt of the shattered torch to the face, dropped his blade entirely, so intense was his pain. Aaros ended it for him and laid him down beside his unused blade without a moment's pause. A wide swipe to his right sent another man tumbling to the stone floor in a heap, his severed head leading the way. The third, to Aaros' left, came in hard and high, slicing down towards Aaros' shoulder. The crazed warrior stepped quickly to his right and spun his throwing axe in his hand, catching the guard's blade in the crook and twisting hard. Too late did the third guard realize his folly: he had instinctively followed his blade inwards towards Aaros and down as the madman

twisted, thus leaving his upper body utterly exposed and off-balance. Aaros swung back across his body with his right hand; the bearded axe dropped the third guard like a young sapling. Aaros felt the burning sting of a sword along his ribs and roared in pain and surprise. The fourth guard, now to Aaros' right, had struck like a snake and backed off, seeking his next opening; he swayed to and fro on the balls of his feet and eyed Aaros hungrily.

"You'll never get the Key, fool!" the fourth guard jeered, trying to draw Aaros out. "Our master refused you once, when you came begging. You're a fool to try to take it by force."

Aaros glanced to the fifth guard – he'd just put himself out and stood with his hair smoking, taking stock of the situation. Aaros widened his eyes and grinned crookedly – what had been called his "madman look" – and fainted. He raised his bearded axe high in his right hand, roaring as if to strike the fifth guard on top of the skull. At the same moment, he whipped his left hand across his chest and let his throwing axe fly. Aaros was a master of the axe – he had spent decades working with them, living peaceably as a woodsman – now, however, his targets were not stumps and trees, but rather bodies and limbs. Without ever taking his eyes from the fifth guard, his throwing axe whirled across the alcove and split the fourth man's leering smile neatly in two.

"Not 'fool' – 'madman'" Aaros corrected as the fourth body thumped to the floor.

Aaros rode hard into the night. He tried to tell himself that he was riding away from the Keep, but deep inside he knew he was running away from his conscience. Twenty-two men had fallen to his blades before he held the Key in his hands. Twenty-two men, their accusing faces trailing behind him in the darkness like iron-laden pennants; ever threatening to drag

him down into true despair and madness. The worst of all had been the last, Kal, the man whom he'd intimidated into leading him to the Key. Aaros' had sworn to the man that he'd let him live – sworn to his face. In different times, Aaros and Kal would likely have been friends; they might have worked or drunk together. Kal had an honest face under his helm and a kind heart beneath his mail; yet Aaros had killed him – killed him to ensure his own escape.

Aaros fought back the tears and the bile that rose unbidden and rode all the harder. He had to get to the Undying Lands before midnight. He had to save his daughter. He tried to tell himself that the things he'd done were not his fault – that the plague of the Undead upon the lands had forced good men into ill roles. Aaros tried, but he failed. He knew that what he'd done was horrible; just as horrible as what the Kings had done when they'd allied with the Undead – hiding away artifacts of goodness and light like the Key that could turn the tide. Just as horrible as what the Undead were likely doing to his sweet daughter. Aaros gritted his teeth and rode on, harder, towards the rising moon.

It may have been the steady rhythm of the galloping horse. Perhaps it was the loss of blood from his many wounds. Whatever the cause, Aaros slipped off into a vision of a better time, before the evils of the wide world had befallen him...

"You know, Shara, you're getting to be just like your mother", Aaros called ahead. His daughter was indeed the spitting image of her mother – long, lithe, flaxen haired – and even at eight summers she already looked as if she'd seen twelve or more. She was as beautiful as a cool spring evening and as serene and as majestic as the moon that hung above her head like a halo.

"What do you mean, papa?" she giggled, glancing coyly back over her shoulder.

“You love riding at night, just as she did! I think it was the elven blood that ran in her veins, and now in yours. She could not let a fair moonlight night pass without a ride, or a song, or a dance beneath the heaven’s boughs!” Aaros laughed – a laugh that was full of hope and promise, yet edged by the tint of sorrow for things lost and loved.

Shara reigned her horse and circled back to her father’s side. She looked deeply into the clean-shaven man’s grim face and laid her tiny, smooth hand upon his rough, work-calloused hand. “Papa”, she began, her genteel words like the most beautiful music ever played, “I know you miss mama deeply, but know this – as long as I am with you, she’s here with us too. So, as long as we’re together, we will ALL be together!”

Aaros smiled – a true, genuine smile the likes of which he’d not smiled in many a moon. He could not fault the wisdom of his precious little girl, she who brought such joy, light and peace to his shattered life. He reached to embrace her...but suddenly she was gone! It was then that Aaros first saw the dark, bony hands stretched down from the inky heavens and up from the shadowy ground. Black, cold, clawed hands that cruelly ripped Shara from him. Aaros tried to fight back, tried to reach out for his beloved daughter – but she was simply gone! He screamed her name, but his voice was muffled and he stunned to silence by mountainous waves of laughter. Then came the pale, dead visages, made all the more pale by the stark moonlight; laughing at him, mocking him, denying him that which he so desperately needed. Aaros felt himself falling into blackness – into the gaping, yawning blackness that is madness. Falling...

The horse dropped like a stone. It was dead

before its cooling flesh hit the barren earth. Aaros imagined another intangible chain of death linking itself to the ever-tightening collar around this neck. He fell to his knees and retched - coughing, gagging, and crying. He tried to tell himself that it was the wounds from the battle and the hard ride. He knew better. When it was finally done, he crawled to the saddlebags and fished out a healing draught – one of the three he’d salvaged from the wizard’s body – the disemboweled wizard’s body. Aaros squeezed his eyes shut and gritted his teeth. He had to remember his daughter – he’d made it to the Undying Lands and it was just before midnight. There was still time, but he had to hurry – already, the dead horse was beginning to move slightly – those small jerks and jumps that happened before...before the unthinkable occurred. Aaros knew that it was only a matter of time before the creature rose into Unlife – such was the way of things this close to the Undying Lands. He uncorked the healing draught and choked the freezing, yet searing liquid down his gullet. Aaron readied himself for the pain that came with magical healing: skin and muscle stretching itself and knitting back together, bones forcing themselves back into socket. The spastic pain was blinding, but soon it, too, had passed. Aaros gathered himself, gathered his things and then surveyed the scene before him.

A gruesome parody of what it had been before the arrival of the Undead, the Undying Lands looked much in the same way that it had before: small, quaint towns, outlying farms with roads connecting the two – it was all still there, at least on the outside. Aaros had to fight to keep his stomach in check – this thinly veiled mask – a putrid and hollow attempt at imitation of the living that lay beneath the pale moon. Beneath it all, however, was a horror that could not be hidden, could not be masked and in Aaros’ mind, could not be ignored. The Undead yearned for life – they literally wanted to be alive – but whatever foul force had created them prevented this from happening. In their

unquenchable search for life, the Undead surrounded themselves with as many sources of life they could find – children being their preferred vessels. Though none would admit it, all knew of the dark sorceries the Undead wrought upon these innocent lives until they were finally no more than lifeless, mindless husks.

Aaros was about to change all of that and in exchange, those damnable bony bastards would return his daughter. Aaros held the Key, the Key of Life, the most powerful of all the Vitallis Artifacts in the known world – that which the Undead desired more than all. As he looked upon the Key, he widened his eyes and grinned - his “madman look”; with this, surely, those accursed Undead could bring his daughter back from the dead. And then, they could have their blasted Key for all he cared.

Aaros gritted his teeth, and stepped into the Undying Lands.

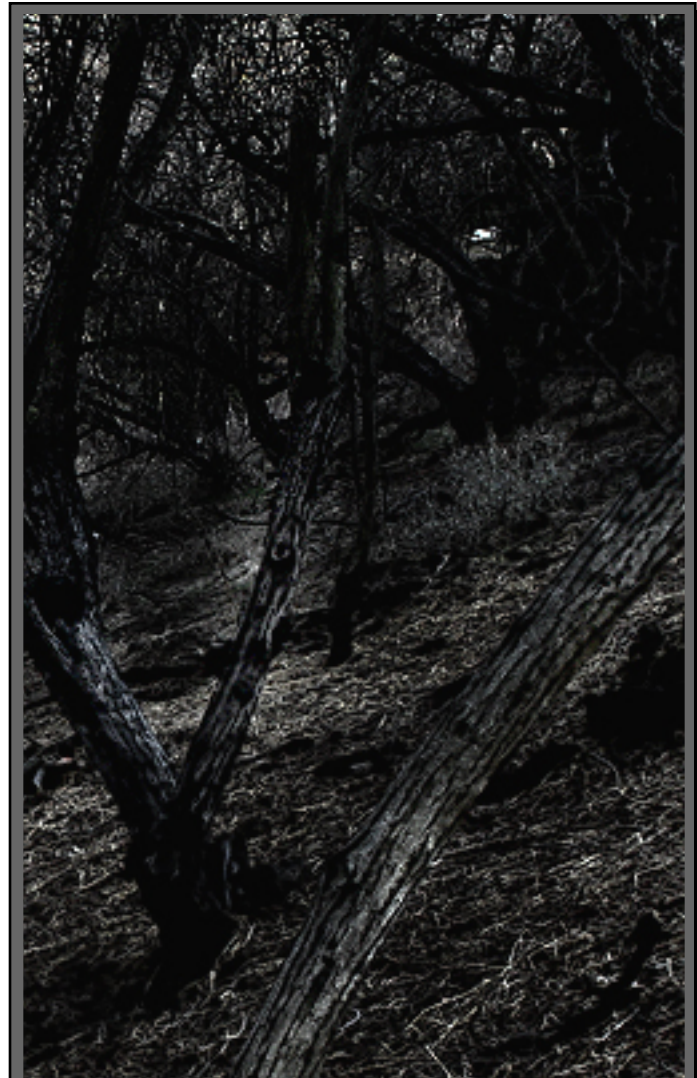


Image courtesy of 'dickuhne' via Flickr

PLOTSTORMING.COM

YOUR DAILY INSPIRATION



A Review of:

EX MACHINA

Tri-Stat Cyberpunk Genre

by Eric Sheely

I saw this at a used bookstore the other day and was just so curious that I had to pick it up. Let me say beforehand that overall, it did not disappoint. The book included those Tristat rules suitable to the cyberpunk genre (as is inevitable in a generic system, some attributes and variants were cut), as well as details on the genre and establishing a setting, four prewritten settings by various authors, and the usual GM advice and "what is roleplaying" material.

Tri-Stat:

The rules given in the book are fairly simple. The task resolution is resolved by rolling under a target number on 2d8. There are three vital statistics (hence the name), and the point-buy system is fairly easy to grasp. I should mention that character creation is a little slow, but templates are provided in order to help handle this. In any case, once you know where to find things and what is available, things speed up rather quickly. Templates cover most things necessary to handle cyberpunk and not much else. Attributes cover everything short of magic (and there's online support for that), and are easily customizable using PMVs (power modifier values), restrictions, reductions, and other methods of customization.

Cyberpunk:

The materials explaining the cyberpunk genre are as complete as they need to be as near as I can tell. I should note at this point that the depth of my reading on this subject is limited. In any case, it seems that the major bases of near-future politics, the environment, the technological timeline, etc. have all been delved into. Also of note is that the chapter on technology and equipment is extremely well written.

Settings:



The settings, I think, is where Ex Machina falls behind. The first is Heaven Over Mountain, a setting that centers on an elevator into space and lots and lots of bioengineering. The second is Underworld, a dark and heavy setting focused on some kind of industrial prison complex arrangement. The third is Ioshi, which concerns the consequences of electronic education and some kind of odd societal organization based on subcultures. The fourth is Daedalus, which focuses on some kind of identification chip that becomes intrusive.

The first, Heaven Over Mountain, has some good concepts (like a tower into space could be anything but a good idea) with some mediocre justifications. The biotech looks like it could be fun, and using it architecturally is a neat twist. All in all, there are a few things I might lift, but the setting I'll probably leave on the shelf.

Underworld, the setting that focuses on the industrial prison complexes, seems a bit too dark for me. Keep in mind, that's saying a lot. It might be your thing, though. If you're into the darker side of human nature, with a focus on restrictive government and the criminal underworld, it might just be your thing.

Ioshi is my favorite of these settings for whatever reason. The odd societal organization I could do without, but the whole bit about electronic learning and the librarians and all that was pretty well awesome. There are plenty of ideas worth lifting in this one.

Lastly comes Daedalus, with its universally functional ID chip. What it amounts to is a chip that can track you, keeps you a happy suburbanite, and gives you spam email in your brain. To be perfectly honest, I can't think of a use for it, except as some flavor to be folded into Ioshi.

Epic Planar Adventuring: Finding Inspiration for Amazing Locations

by Nathan Ellsworth

The planes are supposed to be awe-inspiring and epic -- they are mortal dreams, hopes, and fears made manifest and the abodes of the gods. But how are you, a mere mortal GM, supposed to devise heavens and the abodes of gods Find inspiration here on earth, and steal it! Numerous cultures have rich mythologies to explore, and the world is full of natural wonders for you to draw ideas from.

I say steal tongue-in-cheek, what I truly mean is take the inspiration and adapt, re-imagine, and improve them. When it comes to real wonders, man made or natural, the UNESCO World Heritage Sites (<httpwhc.unesco.orgenlist>) is a list of 800+ global sites that the UN has decreed attest to the beauty of the natural world and the ability of past and present civilizations. Hillman Wonders of the World (<httpwww.hillmanwonders.com>) is also a useful site, and it has a list of proposed top 100 and 1000 travel wonders. Only the top 100 get an information page, but that's where Wikipedia (<httpen.wikipedia.org>) is helpful.

If you are concerned specifically with the gods and their demesnes, Encyclopedia Mythica (<httpwww.pantheon.org>) is a good one stop shop for researching deities. While Wikipedia has a Mythology Portal (<httpen.wikipedia.orgwikiPortalMythology>) that is also useful.

In conjunction, since the GM's goal is to entertain their players, involve them in the process. If you're group is amenable, ask them to write down the five most amazing things that they've ever seen on an index card or scrap of paper. When they ask why, just give them the most devious GM smile you can and provide the traditional reply Oh, you'll find out soon enough. Take the inspiration at hand and

modify and add -- permeate it with you own style.

The challenge now becomes describing the scene correctly to generate the proper emotion -- awe, wonder, fear, or perhaps even disgust. Write down the adjectives that come to mind when you browse the web or read over the cards. When you narrate scenes to your players refer back to the list of adjectives. They should help create the description you're looking for.

And when you're trying to portray mythic vistas, its best to get in the right mindset.

Remember your first visit to the ocean -- water as afar as they eye can see How about when you saw a skyscraper, and had to crane your neck to take it all in Have you ever climbed or hiked to the top of a mountain and viewed the world from on high Those are the types of feelings you need to harness and channel. Convince yourself, and you'll convince your players.

Taking a party of adventurers into the planes can be daunting, but it can also be exhilarating as a story teller. In the land of the god's nothing is impossible. With the resources at hand there's enough inspiration for your own 1001 amazing adventures.



Creating Fantasy Names

by Sdragon1984

All the way back in the first issue of the CBGuide, R. D. Heesen provided us with a decent article on naming fantasy characters. This article is hopefully going to be an extension of that. This is for those of you who seem to always run out of creative steam when it comes to getting the right name at the right time.

For me, the first step in creating names is journaling; gather up all the names you can remember using in a campaign, and writing them all down. At this point, some of you may find it easier to separate the names into categories, such as "people", "towns", "lakes", etc. Personally, I find this unnecessarily limiting; a name such as Saigrat can work for a major villain (BBEG) or a canyon by appending "-the Vile" or "-Chasm", respectively. The only separation names ever needed would be when the name specifically refers to a place, such as the Screaming Hills.

Once you've got a humble selection of names down, feel free to add anything you come up with in your spare time. If you know any websites that randomly generate names, take down a few that sound nice to you. Heck, while you're at it, take down a few that might even seem unusable.

For those of you who don't know multiple languages, this is incentive to learn. For example, when you need a name for the overtly feminine princess (elvish prince?), you could settle for Lovella, or you could use variations of foreign words- Aiette has a very similar effect, with less obvious inspiration (Aiette, in case anybody didn't catch, was a blending of Ai, the Japanese word for love, and the French suffix -ette, for little. Aiette, then, literally means "little love" in this blending of languages).

Think you've got enough names yet? Okay, good, but why stop now? The list is going to stay endless, and you never know when you will find that one new guy who wants the names for each individual tree in Skarga forest.

Grab your list of names and try thinking up subtle variations of them; where does Saigrat the Vile live? Well, in the Saigatra tower, of course. Where is Saigatra tower? Where else but atop Mt. Sugutre? Keep in mind that linguistically, when there are multiple names and words that are so obviously related to each other as Saigrat, Saigatra, and Sugutre are, they're either close in vicinity, referring to something of great importance, or most likely, both.

Be careful, though. Not all names are good names. Sure, Noxekolovoketizhinagog might have a nice sound for a Russian-based setting, but it's certainly too long for the taste of most. Remember, names in the real world are very rarely any longer than three syllables, and even then, are oftentimes shortened. Nicholas and Gabrielle are two examples that come to mind. Tzut-Tiet Mun also would not be very well-suited for a Russian-based setting; although, if it was an Egyptian-based setting, it might work wonderfully. Also, no matter how far away from the archetype you get, never use a pre-existing fantasy name that's commonly known. You don't want an NPC that is constantly stating "No, not THAT Aladdin...".

There are two more things that you should be very careful of, although both can be used, if done intentionally. The first is adding suffixes to English adjectives to create location names; although, one of my personal favorite books takes place in Fantastica, it managed to have the perfect tone needed. The second is phonetic homonyms of potentially humorous words; in a very light-hearted session, you could name the

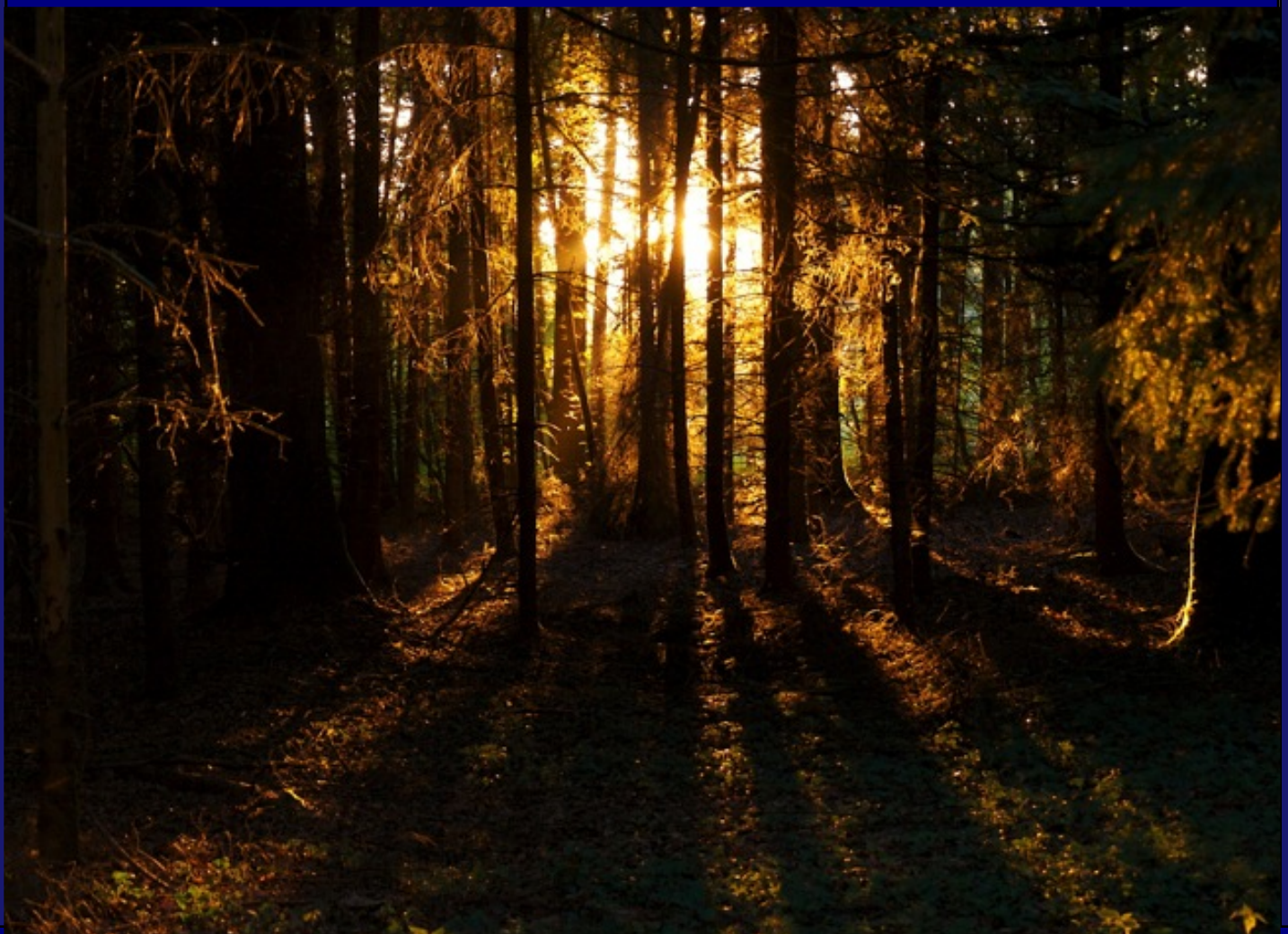
princes as Penas the greater and Penas the lesser, but dont ever expect those name to be taken seriously. As an extension of not using homonyms of potentially humorous words, is to never- capital N-E-V-E-R - use a homonym of Earth. No, not even Yrth.

So remember- take out one of the hundreds of spare notebooks you have floating around (If you are reading this, then you're most likely a DM; I don't want to hear that you don't have any spare notebooks), and start writing down names. If nothing else, you should have plenty to do in your spare time now.



Happy journaling!

Sdragon1984



Seraphine Harmonium's

THE DOOR

Prologue:

He walked through a long corridor for what seemed like an eternity. At the edge of his vision at the culmination of the path lay a door. Through this door lay something he could not name nor describe, yet he had a dreadful understanding of its significance. He drew closer and closer to his destiny when along the corridor he came upon an archway leading off to his side. Beyond it lay a wooded clearing and a circle of trees through which an emerald glow cascaded down upon the grassy earth. A stag pranced into sight standing in the clearing, craning its head down to graze on a tuft of tall grass. It looked up and his and the animals eyes met in a painful stare. Writhing and jerking in agony he struck at the archway striking blows into its supports that shattered rock, and the ground shook and the ceiling fell in great round boulders sealing up the passage one by one. He could now continue.

He walked on. Closer and closer he came to the doorway without making progress. Always it remained beyond his reach. He came upon an archway along the way, much like the last, but beyond it lay a dark, craggy cavern of blackish rock and a terrible pit. Standing at its edge looking scornfully satisfied was an elderly man who seemed despite incredible age to have surprising vitality and energy. He was clad in white and red, the vestments of The Church. As he arrived, the old man beckoned to him genially to join him looking over the precipice. He did. He looked down at the scene beneath them both. He saw a void that stretched to nothingness, and a ring around it that faded round the void in the depths. But in the nearer regions could be clearly seen fire and brimstone and anguished figures bent and broken, in one place tugging on ropes that attached to nothing and pulling with all their strength to move that resolute nothingness, lashed by horrendous

barbed whips when letting up, in another place boiling their flesh off in bubbling pools of molten rock. As he looked he saw one hundred faces that he knew, having been the one to send them there. And looking back up he saw the elderly man smiling back at him. The elderly man placed a hand of camaraderie upon his shoulder and he returned the gesture for a moment before pushing the old man off over the edge. He watched the man flail as he fell into the inky black abyss screaming silently curses lost to the void.

He walked away back to the corridor and turned back to the pit and its archway. For reasons yet mysterious he could not bring himself to shut that arch. And so he walked on ages forth and forward. He saw his destiny loom larger before him. Its size now increased notably and its distance was in measurable decline. With each step he drew closer, an excitement at the mystery that somewhere in his mind was fully known grew ever greater.

His heart beat faster in his chest and he heard voices, screams of terror that filled him with glee, saw faces that filled him with disgust, and fearful eyes that filled him with desire. Finally it lay before him, in reach of his hand, a door of simple wood design. Its handle was a tarnished bronze, now dark. He reached out grasping the handle, caressing it lovingly, and twisting it to allow himself to enter. He pushed the door open.

Proditus sat in bed coughing and wheezing, drenched in a cool sweat. He strained his mind to remember the dream of last night. It was a great difficulty to him to recall his dreams in the morning. Proditus was prone to dreams, and prone to awaken hacking and choking on the air when he awoke from a particularly stimulating one. But Proditus was also prone to forget such dreams in the wake of his waking wheeze. He would occasionally recall a glimpse at the tormented face of a heretic getting what they deserve, and in such moments he would smile in satisfaction, but it always

annoyed him that he could never keep the dream in its entirety locked up in his skull. He felt, though, a distinct feeling that with each heretic caught and executed that he came closer and closer to the completion and the fulfillment of his dream. The very first time he had had a dream of this sort was long before he had even become an inquisitor. It was before there was such a thing as the inquisition. That was the first time he knew carnage. That was the first time he knew how it felt to be truly happy.

Part 1:

"Tell me again why I chose you Proditus?"

"Because you saw potential, Solarus Tyrolean."

"And why have I not seen that potential made manifest into results?"

"The elves sneak through the forests attacking from the branches and spinelessly retreat before we can launch a successful counter-attack."

"I will not tolerate failure Proditus. The pagan elves have harried the expansion of the Holy Empire of Bizhentluus for too long. Our inability to deal with the pagan problem reflects poorly on the Church. Your success or failure dictates the reputation of the Church as a potent organization. What's more, it dictates my reputation among my fellow clergymen. If you fail me, I look the fool. Do you understand?"

"Yes my lord Tyrolean."

"Why you yourself tolerate failure in this escapes me. You know first hand the evil of our foe. Your own honor lies at stake Proditus, do not make me revoke it."

Proditus took his leave, feeling a mix of shame at his failure, and the slightest resentment at his scolding. He was part of a war band, a group of Knights of Bizhentluus crusading for the True Faith. The heathen elves had rejected the One

God and chose to practice idolatry, worshipping animals as gods. Then they had dared to brutally murder innocent woodsmen living on the edge of the forest. This was not the first time this had happened. As a priest of Bethor, the Angel of Retribution, Proditus had been chosen to be the representative of the church and its voice in the war against the pagans.

This was quite momentous, as Proditus was at this time not yet twenty and fresh out of his studies, entering into his services as a daykeeper. To be given so great a task at so early an age was all but unheard of. The post would not have gone to him, had it not been for the influence of Solarus Tyrolean. Tyrolean was well respected among the Solari, so that with some debate it was decided that his recommendation should be honored.

A young boy sits with his father as they rest.

His father has the thick, heavy arms of a lumberjack and has his shirt sleeves rolled up to facilitate his work. His father discusses with his boy the dream of a future lived in a noble, honest, and religious life. His father says that he is helping to work towards that goal by helping the Church to spread the light of God into uncivilized lands, expanding the glory of the Faith by expanding the empire. The boy listens obediently, without any real interest or care. He has heard this on several occasions and had always felt that piety had been imposed on him. What he is more interested in now is the movement of a branch at the edge of the area cleared by the work of his father and the other lumberjacks. He almost thinks he sees a man in the branches, a deep mossy color against the bright sun-pierced leaves, then passes it off as a trick of his wandering imagination. He notices of a sudden that his father is no longer speaking. He looks to his father and screams audibly at the brown fletching of an arrow embedded in his father's now vacant-looking skull, pale and red with bleeding. The commotion is all around him now as lumberjacks take up their axes against foes hunched over with spears, falling to hidden

archers in the trees.

After his mother and father were killed a congregation of priests made their way out to the site to perform the funereal rights for the slaughtered many. The bulk of the settlement had been killed in the attack and it was required for their bodies to be blessed so as to show their souls the way to the top of Mount Achron in the land of the dead that they may ascend into Paradise. But there they found a young boy orphaned by the attack and took him in, teaching him from his youth the ways of the Church, the service of the One God, and the functions of his angels. The young boy took an early inclination towards the angel Bethor as his patron and studied his worship under his superior of the time, Heliox Tyrolean. As yet, Proditus had no ranking in the church; he was but a student, and Tyrolean was his mentor, teaching him the way of achieving purity by the purging of sin. When the sinful abandoned the One God there must be Retribution, and through Retribution would come Cleansing.

Early in his time as a protégé his tutor was forced to leave him due to his promotion to the standing of Solarus, and in time Proditus too would matriculate; he into the office of Daykeeper, at which point his old master selected him to voice the will of Bethor against the pagan elves in the woods east of Bizhentluus.

The war band had little success for some time.

The elves were evasive creatures and quite skilled at striking without warning from the trees. It occurred to Proditus time and time again the cowardice with which they fought.

They would hide in their trees laying in wait for the Bizhentlan knights and ambush them, taking cheap shots at them from afar before fleeing the battle. Proditus knew from experience that the best way to draw out the elves was not to attack them, but to attack the forest; it was bait they could not resist, and so he laid his trap. Proditus sent word to Shardmoore; to The Church and King Menclar

Flameheld that the surest way to ensure success was to increase the pace of deforestation. To draw them out in vengeful fury and thus ensnare them; doomed to fall to the superior warriors of the Empire. Regarding the incident, his personal log contained the following entries:

Day 4 of the 7th month

Year 986 of the Lunar Epoch

The simple-minded elves could not help but fall for my trap. Their precious forest is their weakness and they came like moths to a flame. I admit that I was surprised by their bravery once properly roused. I expected vengeance but even in the sight of defeat they fought on. They were a sight to see, though, a throng of naked savages in war paint. Their blind dedication to heathen gods has kept them quite primitive. They fight with spears whose tips are made from stones—they haven't even metals. A few have animal hides for protection, but most run naked, or close to it. When they descended on us, we were ready. Shields deflected their quaint spears and swords would run them through. When I caught one of them and prompted him give up his heathen ways and accept the grace of the One God he refused and so I cut his throat. It was the first time I have taken life. The blood ran down his chest and on my hands, filling me with a strange exhilaration. I hardly remember anything after that moment.

Day 5 of the 7th month

Year 986 of the Lunar Epoch

I woke up wheezing this morning. I wonder if one of those dirty pagans cursed me with their vile magicks. I think I had a dream last night. I don't remember it, except for the sight of a stag chewing a tuft of grass. I know not what it might mean.

Day 6 of the 7th month

Year 986 of the Lunar Epoch

I can't seem to get the image of the heathen's blood all over him and me out of my head. I keep thinking I see blood on my hands that isn't there. They say that is a sign of guilt and insanity, but I don't feel guilty. Perhaps if he were a faithful God-loving human, but he was a pagan elf. Such creatures deserve to die. In fact I shudder in ecstasy at the sight of the blood of heathens. I want so badly to see another's blood. I want to cut all of their throats just like the last one so that I can watch the blood gush from their necks as they squirm in those last few seconds of life. That is Bethor's way.



It's not the end!

The Door will continue as a serial for the next few guide issues as part of an effort to include a broader look at the world building art. The Editors of the CBGuide would like to thank Seraphine for the continued support.

Do you have a bit of fantasy or sci-fi which you're dying to express? Send it to campaignbuildersguide@gmail.com!



BORDER PATROL: BORDER MEN

by Stargate525

Now that many of the essentials of your border have been laid down, it's time to talk about the heart and soul of any border patrol; the people actually patrolling the border. The most expensive, complex, and impenetrable border is nothing more than a conglomeration of buildings and items without people to use and maintain them.

The first consideration when manning your border is the main fighting force. How many there are and their average strength are the first two questions you need to ask yourself. The answers to these questions will be based on the territory that they're guarding and the complexity of the border.

The size of the normal garrison is completely dependant on the facilities that are at the border. A single watchtower every few miles will have significantly fewer men than a fort, and a fort will house fewer men than a fully manned wall. The numbers don't have to be exact, but there should be enough men there to do what they need to do (patrolling, watch, messenger service, etc.).

As far as composition of the army, all fighters might be appealing, but in all probability the main army will be comprised mostly of warriors and commoners from nearby; the country's main army has better things to do than garrison an out-of-the-way border wall. The strength of these men (their class levels) would be dependant on several factors. If the border sees a lot of barbarian incursion or invasion attempts, the garrison will be more experienced than if the border is safe. A border that sees action often will most likely have a greater percentage of its army be fighters, but they would still be the minority.

With your main layer of men established,

you need to consider whether your border uses casters. The most common casters to see on the border would be adepts for the same reason you see more warriors than fighters, but there should be a presence of wizards, sorcerors, and clerics among large numbers of men. Bards are a must among any border, their ability to buff a large number of people fitting perfectly with an army. In small groups, however, it may be better to replace the bard in favor of a different caster, such as a wizard or sorceror.

The other classes have specific niches in regards to borders, and their presence is based on the presence or absence of those factors. Barbarians are an interesting alternative to fighters at a border, and would be better equipped to handle remote or less-established borders where their enhanced mobility and skills come into play. On a wall or in a tower, the barbarian is less effective, and should be done away with in favor of a fighter.

Druids, although in possession of useful spells and abilities, are best utilized at borders that are mostly terrain, with few structures. Like the barbarian, many of their abilities become moot when confined to siege warfare.

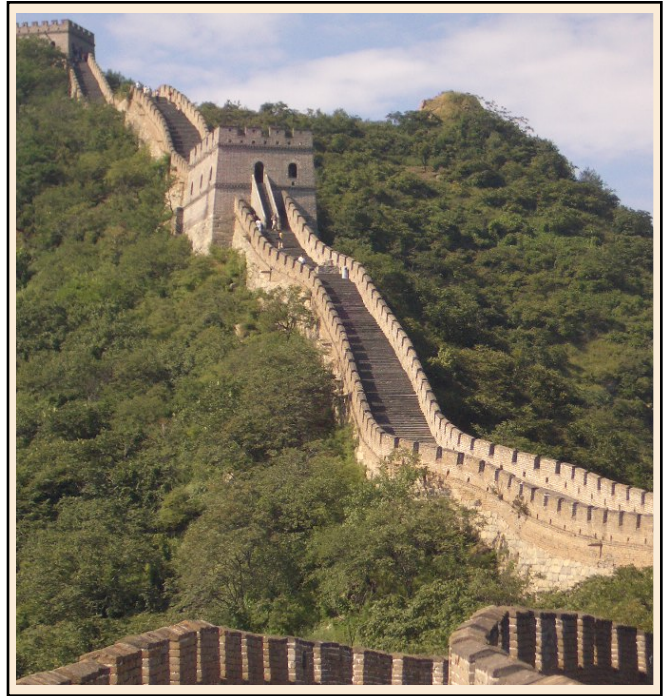
Monks and Paladins are classes with no real distinction. Monks would do decently in combat, but lack the staying and fighting ability that a fighter would have at low levels. Paladins are essentially pre-flavored fighters, but could use their talents as a cleric replacement or an outpost commander. If you have the space and want to spice up a border, use these classes. Otherwise, leave them on the shelf.

Rangers are invaluable in non-structured borders. Their large array of survival abilities and affinity for multiple styles of combat make them perfect guerilla fighters, and their favored enemy ability can provide an extra edge on

border that face a regular enemy, even on a wall or similar defensive structure.

Rogues, even with their multiple skills and sneak attack, are the only class that really doesn't belong on a border. Their stealth abilities can be matched or bettered by a ranger, and their trap sense and sneak attack will not see enough use on a border to warrant their presence.

Now that you have all the tools to build a border, it's time to see a few examples of the various borders, which is the topic of next month's installment.



THE CAMPAIGN BUILDERS' DIARY

- Part Two -
by Ishmayl

Welcome back, fellow Campaign Builders. I hope you've had some luck getting started on a new campaign setting for yourself. Here's a little recap of the last session before we jump right in. Last article, we spoke of how to add some variety (both of the external and internal nature) to your new campaign, and we also talked about how to set up a premise for your setting by establishing a tone and a theme. We also went over the various rulesets you can use for your creative purposes.

We left off with two important pieces of information. The first is that we will be using an assembled ruleset for our mutual campaign.

The second was a statement which went something like this:

“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.”

That statement includes a little bit of our tone and theme, and thus sets up our premise. We also decided that for some internal variety, the main campaign area would consist of three separate nations: a European-influenced, feudalistic kingdom, a desert empire, possible with Middle-Eastern flair, and a large city-state of the Greco-Roman persuasion.

Now, let's get going.

There is a lot of discussion on various message boards, in magazines, and amongst creators as to what the best method is for creating a new campaign setting. The points I made in the previous article are all – for the most part – not really very debatable. They seem to be staples in the setting building community. The next step, however, is very much up for debate, and

these debates sometimes end with hurt feelings, bruised egos, bleeding noses, and broken limbs (well, maybe not the bleeding noses...). That step is deciding whether to build your setting “inside-out,” or “outside-in.”

An “**inside-out**” setting is a setting that starts with a particular campaign area and spreads out from there. For instance, you would start by defining a campaign headquarters, and get just the right amount of information in that headquarters to run successful games. Then, you expand as needed. If you know you'll need a few ruins, and a few extra towns and cities within the next few sessions, you go ahead and start planning those out. Then, if the PCs decide to keep heading outwards, you keep designing in the direction they're going. In the meantime, you will have figured out what the local government consists of, and how it interacts with other governments, thus giving you answers to questions which may arise. At this point, you may start designing the neighboring kingdom, knowing that the PCs will be heading that way soon. Most likely, that kingdom would be designed similarly to how the headquarters was designed: starting with the first city the PCs visit, and spreading out from there. This style of campaign building can lead to inconsistencies in the surrounding world if you're not careful, but on the other side, it's much easier, and takes much less work right up front for the Campaign Builder.

An “**outside-in**” setting means a campaign setting that starts on a macroscopic scale, and eventually narrows down to a particular headquarters. Often, outside-in settings begin with a world (or even an entire planetary system), then work out the tectonic plates and shifts, which leads to the creation of continents and mountain ranges. Then, each continent is given explicit detail in terms of interactions with each other and history, which in turn leads to the descriptions of all the various kingdoms, countries, nations, municipalities, city-states, untamed wastes, and ruined empires in the

world. This is also all given a historical backdrop, which leads to all the various villages, cities, towns, hamlets, thorps, and metropolises in every single nation. Each of these is then given a racial demography, history, relationships with other communities, and explicit time line. Every inn, tavern, blacksmith, duke, and fair maiden that a PC could even *hope* to run into is detailed out. I've even seen these worlds with the weather patterns, ocean currents, and specific volcanic activity planned. It's a lot of information, very time consuming, and takes quite a bit of research. However, on the “good” side, if you're taking a class on World Construction and planning on writing an entire series of encyclopedias, then designing the inner-and-outer workings of an entire planetary ecosystem is probably quite fun for you, and good experience to boot!

I'm sure you can see why these two different methods cause a lot of sparks in the Campaign Building communities. Outside-in builders often see the other as lazy, and they see their worlds as potentially full of holes. Inside-out builders often see their counterparts as having way too much time on their hands, and having more information in their setting than could possibly ever be used. We're not here to debate the merits of either, though. We're here to build a campaign. After careful consideration, I believe that the inside-out method will be more useful to us. With that being said, it's about time to begin working on our base of operations, or Headquarters (HQ), but first, let me bring up something extremely important.

Now, I assume you've heard the old adage, “Don't bite off more than you can chew?”

Well, for our goals, and taking into account the inside-out method we will be using, that saying applies very well, and we'll use it to craft our First Rule of Campaign Building: “**Never force yourself to create more than you must.**”

This is an extremely important rule to keep in

mind. If you must, write it on a note card and stick it in your shirt pocket. You *need* to remember this rule at all times. All too often, fledgling GMs and Campaign Builders feel that to make their setting believable, they must have an answer for absolutely everything.

They draw up dozens (or hundreds!) of maps, and have a score of notebooks filled with page after page of encyclopedic-like information.

This has been the downfall of numerous would-be Campaign Builders for ages now, for several reasons. First, it has a tendency to tire out the Campaign Builder *before he even runs his first session in the setting!* Second, more often than not, new players just simply won't be interested in hearing (or reading) that amount of information at first, and that can be extremely disheartening for you, as the creator, if you've put a lot of time into it. Trust me, I have a lot of experience in this. Believe me when I say that too much information for new players will turn them off much more often than it will excite them. It is the extremely rare player who actually appreciates the amount of work you put into your setting.

Taking into account our First Rule, let's start planning a HQ for our new campaign.

Remember the three main areas of influence our campaign will have? Well, over the last month (or two), I've done a bit of pondering, thinking, and soul-searching on this subject, and I believe that for our purposes, our HQ should be set in the feudalistic kingdom, influenced strongly by what we know of as European Feudalism. This government will have everything to do with the way the players react to particular situations. Knowing what kind of government the HQ is set within gives the players access to a ton of information right up front. With the appropriate knowledge given, players know who their friends and allies are, who their enemies are, who their lords and superiors are, who the important officials are, and quite possibly, who the important not-quite-so-official people are.

To players, government consists of basically two different levels. There's the national level government (Nation X is ruled by King Bob, and all taxes, laws, etc go through him), and then there's the local level (Lord Alfred Tennyson rules the small Long Keep, and administers his own form of rules, laws, punishments, fines, and taxes). Most likely, few of these names and laws will have an impact on play for quite some time, but it's useful to have some things handy (we'll get to that in a bit).

Headquarters, or Home Base

Local politics is going to be the biggest influence on players for the first few sessions, and these influences will show up more often than anywhere else at the Headquarters. For our purposes, a **headquarters (HQ)** can be defined as the place where players go between adventures where they can rest, recuperate, sell treasures, get new adventures and quests, and most importantly, feel safe. Usually this HQ is the site of the PCs' first meeting with one another, as well as the site of their very first mission (or at least the acceptance of said mission). This HQ can interact in many different ways with the other local communities and wildernesses, and it's up to you to determine these interactions on a general level before the very first session. Below, I'll list a few different HQ templates you may be interested in considering.

Large City – In the large city (say, 5000+ inhabitants), there are many opportunities for good adventures. Due to the variety available in a city, it is one of the most popular HQ templates to use. There are thousands of NPCs to interact with, dozens-to-hundreds of bars, taverns, and taprooms to socialize in, many craftsmen to purchase wares from, and constant traffic flowing through the city – which can be an excellent source of rumors, plot hooks, and information gathering. Of course, there are definitely some disadvantages to using a large city as the HQ. One of the largest

disadvantages is the fact that there *are* so many people to interact with. Cities in fantasy worlds, especially large cities, are usually extremely important, and extremely rare. They are information hubs for activities going on around the entire kingdom, or world! This means that it will cause you to create a lot more information up front than you may be interested in creating. Inevitably, the players are going to eventually ask about these outside areas in the campaign, but if they are asking about them (or being exposed to them) right up front, it means more work for you detailing parts of your campaign that may not see adventures for quite some time. Plus, cities are extremely time-consuming to detail and map. You may get hand cramps!

In terms of the politics of cities, you have one of two options (most of the time). The first, and most common, is that the city is of high importance – economically and strategically – for the nation as a whole, and is thus regarded as such in terms of its layout, policies, and defenses. There are probably several well-supplied garrisons and barracks, all run by higher-up military and bureaucrats. Above them are the various rivaling factions and parties that constantly bicker and fight, worming their own agendas into the policies of the city. Then, above them, usually is the lord of the city, often some duke or earl, who is often a relative to the monarch. Within the city, there will most likely be some sort of highly organized constabulary serving as a sort of medieval police force, with even more bureaucrats to head and govern the “goon squads.” Because the cities in this society are often major trading hubs for the rest of the kingdom, the governing officials are often in charge of such trade functions. That's where you get titles like Master of the Docks, City Treasurer, Head of Foreign Affairs, and Opal Council... hmmm, I think something slipped in there that shouldn't have been. Most medieval cities certainly did *not* have a Head of Foreign Affairs. How silly!

The second option that one would have when creating a city as HQ would be to make the city as a possible outpost to the nation of its allegiance. King Bob may have sent a few ships, carrying mining supplies and all the comforts of home – coal, chamber pots, rusty utensils – to a small island where it is reported there are piles of gold, just waiting to be harvested. This outpost is going to need to have all the amenities of home, such as some bureaucrat running things, some well-buffed men (and women!) guarding the gold mines, and some priests, craftsmen, and farmers to keep people alive. Plus, as all of us know, bored people equals violent people, so there will undoubtedly be some taverns and brothels set up for “entertainment.” This type of city is governed similarly to the one mentioned above, however, there tends to be a bit of the ol' “iron fist” element involved. Because of the inherent dangers involved with not having an entire nation only miles away to back you up, certain policies may have to be in play, for the “protection of the people,” (but most likely for the protection of the gold!).

Fortress or Stronghold – Another excellent tried-and-true HQ option is that of the stronghold. More often than not, strongholds and fortresses are built in a defensive position along an important border. Perhaps there is a river in Kingdom Y that constitutes the border between it and the Barbaric Nation of Frenzified Berserker Barbarian Hordes of the Abyss. It would be well within the best interests of Kingdom Y to make sure that the BNoFBBHotA didn't have an easy way of getting into their kingdom and plundering the lands for women and goats and such. Being that these fortresses and strongholds are often 'between nations,' they provide an excellent stopover for various local outsiders (hunters, druids, rangers, adventurers, etc). Plus, they are very often on the fringe of some great wilderness, or at least dangerous area, thus

making great opportunities for adventures. Not to mention, they are often well-enough secluded from the rest of the nation that you don't have to spend quite as much time detailing surrounding communities, towns, and cities! Yay! On the downside, because of their distance from other places of importance, you may have to come up with some pretty creative reasons as to why there is a priest of high enough level just chilling, waiting to resurrect your sorry players' corpses.

The governing of a stronghold or fortress tends to be in the hands of a very high-up military official – probably a major or captain, sometimes a marshal or warden, and possibly even a colonel or general if the position is important enough. The laws of these places tend to be more in line of the laws of the military than standard civilian law.

Punishments are often harsh, but protection of the boundaries – and as such, the civilians – is the foremost priority. There are often strict rules on disorderly conduct, and very often, there are curfews and limits to social miscreantism such as being drunk in public.

The military officer in charge usually uses the soldiers for his policing, if any needs to be done, but realistically, with all those soldiers hanging around, law-breaking is pretty low.

An interesting thing to keep in mind with these strongholds is that they often have small villages and towns spring up around them outside the walls, filled with people eagerly wanting to service those inside the stronghold.

This economic peculiarity provides some new faces, as well as some exotic options for the players to encounter.

Small Town or Village – Small towns and villages can occur all over the map in a kingdom. They usually just pop up wherever good farmland is, or wherever a river splits, and sometimes in defensible locations if it is close to a border. These smaller communities are often under the protection of an appointed

mayor, baron, etc, who in turn answers to a local prince or duke who oversees the entire region of the kingdom. Sometimes they are directly in line between cities and strongholds, and sometimes they're off the beaten path.

They tend to be filled with commoners and merchants, trying to make a living in an under-waged economy. They provide a rich tapestry and variety of NPCs for the players to encounter, and often have a hodge-podge of cultures, demographics, and niches for the players to become a part of and interact with.

Being more rural, a lot of the mysteries and adventures are based on superstition and myths and legend, rather than internal politics and war. On the other hand, just like the stronghold or fortress template, it is often hard to explain exactly what a high level priest or sorcerer (who, one would argue, is typically a necessary cliché for most HQs) is doing just 'hanging around.' Sure, maybe the epic level wizard is in retirement after centuries of constantly defending the world against the evil forces of the Zhent - *ahem*, the **Bad Guys**, but if that's the case, why does he still charge you for services and constantly go gallivanting across the planes of existence to save the day? (Oh, as a Note - In medieval times, often tiny villages would form around the base of a city wall as the city overflowed, but for our purposes, we'll consider those villages part of the city.)

Unique Location – There are a lot of ways that one could incorporate a unique location of some sort into an HQ. Perhaps the adventurers first met in front of the tower of Sage Gilbert, after having read the “Adventurers Wanted” sign at the local tavern. Maybe everyone first met in a small glen in the Dark Forest while trying to escape the Bandits of Thievery. It's even possible that all the characters met by happenstance as they were all searching for the Sacred Treasure of Snobbery in the Icky Ruins of Despair. All of these locations could become the players' HQ, providing some sort of respite in between adventures. These kinds of HQs are somewhat harder on the GM, and *much* harder

on the players, due to the fact that common services that are usually available to players are not generally available in these locations.

However, if done properly, these unique types of bases can lead to very good adventures and campaigns, well away from the norms and clichés of many other campaigns.

So I guess this means it's time for us to decide on our own HQ. But before we go on, it is time to introduce the Second Rule of Campaign

Building: With every new area you create in your campaign, always create at least one secret related to the area. This means, when you create a forest, create a secret. When you make a new town, create a secret. When you create a plane of existence, create a secret.

When you create a new set of ruins... you guessed it. Create a secret. Role playing is often about exploring and unearthing ancient mysteries and legends, which means you need to have plenty of mysteries and legends ready to unearth. Entire adventures or campaigns can be based around one of these secrets, so it is very important to have secrets ready and at your disposal.

With all that out of the way now, we can determine which will work best for our campaign. As I'm thinking of this, I'm also constantly reminding myself of the First Rule, to make sure that I don't overexert my poor campaign building muscles. I'm thinking that, to keep things simple at first, but to also allow us plenty of adventure opportunities, the stronghold/fortress method is going to be our best route. This allows us to have plenty of access to NPCs and services, while at the same time having numerous wilderness-type adventures. Of course, a little bit of background and history may be in order now...

This stronghold was built around forty years ago to serve as a final outpost in our feudalistic nation before encountering a stretch of rocky, hilly land known as the Barrens. The Barrens stretch on for several dozens of miles before

reaching the looming Hornridge, a mountain range to the north. The Barrens are known to have many roaming beasts and monsters, as well as some other denizens who claim to have lineages back to some very ancient civilizations. The stronghold is currently the home to the second son of the king, who often sponsors hunting events into the Barrens.

Rumors have it that the king and his second eldest son are not in the best graces with each other at the moment, but few voice these rumors aloud. The stronghold actually has a second purpose, and that is how we're going to use our Second Rule of Campaign Building from above. The stronghold is actually built atop a very mystic piece of ground. Over a thousand years ago, an ancient cult realized that very powerful ley-lines of magic crossed over this spot of land. The cult built a powerful magical device that harnessed the magic of those ley-lines, but the device, as well as the cultists' shrine, were destroyed when an opposing religion destroyed the cult. Parts of the magical device, as well as the shrine, are actually now embedded in the stonework and foundation of the stronghold. This will hopefully come in useful later when we get more into the mythology of the world.

You will have noticed that I have very specifically not named anything or anyone yet (other than the Barrens and the Hornridge).

Names are extremely important, and within the next couple issues, we'll get around to naming everything. I may even have an entire article on the naming conventions we use.

I hope you've enjoyed this second article. We accomplished a good bit this time, including defining the first two (and most important) Rules of Campaign Building, as well as determining different methods of building the campaign. We also went over several possible HQ templates. Here are a few things you can think about while awaiting the next article.

1 – Outside-In or Inside-Out? List as many

pros and cons as you can about each of these methods, *in your own words*. Think through it carefully. You may decide that the Outside-In method works much better for you than it does for me, which may change the way you think about your campaign. If this is the case for you, have no fear, a few issues from now, I will be taking a giant step back to talk about cosmology and the planet the campaign is set on, so that will be of use to you.

2 – Unique HQ Templates. Try to come up with at least five “unique HQ templates” to consider when determining the HQ of your players. Think of novels you've read, movies you've seen, stories you've heard, and games you've played in. All will have elements that can help inspire you to create a new, unique template. When you have five, compare them (once again, listing pros and cons) against using more standard templates, such as large cities, small towns/villages, or strongholds. Once you have this determined, it should be pretty easy to set up your HQ.

3 – A Secret. With your HQ now being devised, develop a short, uncomplicated background story for the HQ. Then, create at least one secret that your players will not know about for some time, but that can be used in an adventure in the future.

Good luck, and happy writing! We'll see you in a month (or so).

Cheers!
-Ish

PS – For those of you interested, there is a thread at the Campaign Builders' Guild for discussion on these articles. The first post will also be updated with information on our campaign in development.

Here is the thread:
http://thecbg.org/e107_plugins/forum/forum_viewtopic.php?33507

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