

THE CRUSADER™

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The Journal of the Intrepid Adventurer

How It All Happened

Variety is the Spice, by Gary Gygax

ALEA IACTA EST

A Long Note on Brevity:
Confessions of a
Game Master
by Stephen Chenault

KEEPER'S NOTES

Wasting Time, by Davis Chenault

PLUS:

The History of the Shield,
Steve's Convention Blog,
Hammer & Anvil,
and more!

THEM'S FIGHTING WORDS

I'm Only in the Game Industry for the
Hot Chicks and Booze, by Joseph Goodman

TROLLS
INSIDE!



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How It All Happened by Gary Gygax

The Inspiration for the D&D Game, its Creation, GenCon's Founding, How TSR came into Being, and its Early Days...

Variety is the Spice...

All of this personal detail is supplied so as to assist the reader in getting into my mindset, that being what brought about the various items noted. A combination of reading and action were instrumental in forming that mindset, and the reading was the basis for it. There were plenty of books at home, most of which were not mine.

In the long living room was the library table with an 1890 *Webster's Unexpurgated Dictionary* and an assortment of Magazines—*Bluebook*, *Life*, *Reader's Digest*, *Saturday Evening Post* (in which I read my first "Horatio Hornblower" novel). Nearby, against either wall were Grandfather's bookcases filled with mainly classic series and reference books. So there in the mix of history, orations, poetry, nature books, in them with the excellent Eleventh Edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, the Oxford University edition of the *Complete Works of Shakespeare*, like sets of Balzac, Emerson, Poe, Twain, etc. Beside several P.G. Wodehouse novels stood a couple of recently acquired volumes Churchill's history of WWII.

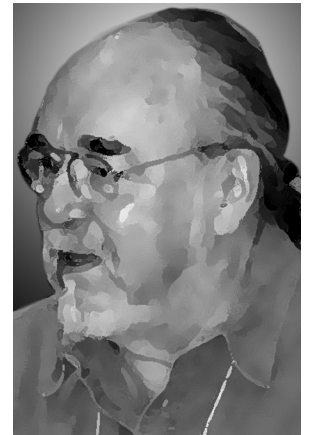
At the far end of the room near the upright piano was a lawyer's bookcase. It was placed in front of the door into the closet in the sewing room (formerly the maid's room), as that storage space had an open side in the latter room, it being screened off by a pair of drapes. This bookcase, as well as a like one in the attic, contained a marvelous miscellany of song books, hymnals, WW I field manuals, novels such as *Topper*, *Topper Takes a Trip*, and *Anthony Adverse*. These repositories contained mainly books left by my two maternal uncles, various cousins, my mother, and my older sister and brother. From *The Mercer Boys at Woodcrest* and *Tom Swift and the Giant Cannon* through *Jerry Todd and the Waltzing Hen*, *Tarzan and the Jewels of Opar*, and the *Life of Brigadier General George Armstrong Custer*. The fanciful Western tale was not neglected, and I read *Kit Carson and the Golden Canyon* with much enthusiasm. My greatest treasure from these works was the *Boys Own Book* (1890 ed.), whence I found the boards and rules for "Double Chess" and "Circular Chess," and formed a lasting love for variants of the game of chess.

After reading about a great conqueror such as Hannibal in one of grandfather's books, I might retire for the night to delve into one of the adventure books mentioned above or enjoy some light comic book reading. My bedroom was the first on the left at the top of the stairs, and in it were many a book, stacks of comics ranging from *Airboy* and *Planet* through every title published by EC. When I hit age 13 the comics were displaced by fantasy and SF magazines and books. Comic books were stored with loving care into a huge cardboard carton in the attic. (Later, when my nephews Jeff and Steve Davis were reading them, my sister took it upon herself to destroy the lot, including *Mad Comics* No.1 and many like first issues, comics from the early 1940s.) Somehow I managed to wedge into my small bed chamber a five-tier lawyer's bookcase for pulps, a drop-front desk with a side bookcase for hard- and soft cover books, and a big armchair. Finding a place for my radio was not easy!

As much as I hate to mention it, there were also some books in the upstairs bathroom that I recall reading with considerable pleasure. These included *Tim Tyler in the Jungle*, a pop-up book I read at about age 9 that featured black panthers fighting bull gorillas, *The Specialist*, an hilarious story about a carpenter who built only outhouses, and Edgar Rice Burroughs *Cave Girl*—thrilling reading for a 10-year old!

With inspiration from so many written works, radio dramas and motion pictures too, it was no wonder that I found little on the new television set to interest me...aside from *Victory at Sea* and wrestling. Don't laugh, I was just a boy and prized my autographs from Verne Gagne, Waldek Kawalski, Leon Hart and others gained from the locker room at Marigold gardens in Chicago.

The books at my house were most influential in forming my mind set, one of non-conformity and love of adventure. But the house itself introduced me to some pretty exciting times. The two most outstanding incidents will be the subject of the next installments of this autobiographical account of my contributions to the hobby of gaming.



GARY GYGAX

has written and had published over 70 games, game products, and books since he began creating in the 1960s, when he founded the world-renowned GENCON gaming convention.

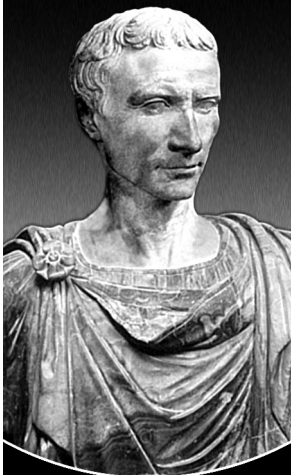
His first professional gaming work was published in 1971.

He co-founded the game publishing company Tactical Studies Rules (later TSR, Inc.) in 1973 with his longtime friend from Lake Geneva, Don Kaye.

His best known game and fiction credits include co-creating and authoring the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Role-Playing Game, creating the AD&D game, WORLD OF GREYHAWK Fantasy World Setting, and the Gord the Rogue novels. He is often referred to as the "Father of Role-Playing."

Gary is currently living in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, his childhood home.

WHEN CAESAR
STOOD UPON THE
BANKS OF THE
RUBICON LOOKING
SOUTH TO ROME,
HE HESITATED.
BEFORE HIM STOOD
THE VAST, COMPLEX
MECHANISM OF THE
PAST, GLOWING
WITH A HOST OF
INTRICATELY WOVEN
STRATAGEMS.
WITH HIM, HE HAD
BUT ONE LEGION,
WEARY FROM EIGHT
YEARS OF BRUTAL WAR
WITH THE GAULS.
BUT WHEN CALLED
TO SURRENDER
HIMSELF TO THE
SENATE AND CERTAIN
EXILE, HE DID NOT
HESITATE.
HE CALLED HIS
LEGIONARIES TO
CROSS INTO ITALY,
TO CROSS
THE RUBICON.
AND AS HE DID SO,
HE SAID ONLY THIS:
ALEA IACTA EST!



JULIUS CAESAR

ALEA IACTA EST



"The Die is Cast" – An Editorial by Stephen Chenault

A Long Note on Brevity

CONFESSIONS OF A GAME MASTER

Brevity is the forgotten hero of our genre. From the table to the shelf brevity has become a victim of long-winded "adjecrocrats." These people are possessed of so much knowledge, much of it trivial, some of it useful, that to impart a thought consumes a paragraph. Expressing a concept becomes a soliloquy of biblical importance only to the speaker. It's a soliloquy no one really listens to, as like minded adjecrocrats are anxious only to amend it, and to people more inclined to response and action it becomes a mill stone of such weight that sleep is the only cure. Brevity has been lost in games, in their conception, design and inception. Brevity is a victim of knowledge. Get to the action. Get to the fun. This is a concept that has made Castles & Crusades a successful game, it is a concept that plays over into Lejendary Adventures, and a concept that I will strictly adhere to so long as I am at the forefront of the Crusade. It is the duty of all of us caught up in the Crusade to remember that these two games are rules light and simple, because we understand that the game is designed to be fun and people like the fun to begin... well, *now*.

When I look at various role playing games in stores today, and when I go to trade shows and listen to my learned peers speak on the various selling points of this game or that game I cannot help but be a little overwhelmed. I am presented with games that are amazing works of art. Graphic design is through the roof – full color spreads, glossy pages, art that boggles the mind. And then, pages and pages of rules. Concepts explained, described, exemplified and repeated. There are no gaps in the game's fabric. It's a flawless work of art that is should be well worth the full \$49.95 price tag blazoned on the back. The tag alones becomes a heraldic symbol. "Did you see that thing! It's beautiful! It costs 50 bucks!" And it must be worth every penny of it.

Or is it? Almost everyone agrees that our market has noticeably dwindled, and contin-

ues dwindling. A host of reasons are given for this, many of them valid, but most of them with the realization that our select club is aging and we are losing more gamers every year. There are fewer and fewer young people joining the table. Why is this? Bunches of reasons are given. There are no advertising dollars being spent to bring in new gamers. The market is overcrowded. The audience is changing. Competing with video games is too hard. Video games give people the instant gratification that the younger people today must have.

All of these statements are wrong to one degree or the other. But the last comment, and those like it, always crack me up. Kids don't play role playing games because they don't have the attention span to learn role playing games. It couldn't have anything to do with the role playing games... *No, we're creating 96 page adventures filled with dozens of maps and hundreds of cool things that happen. They are beautiful. Sure they may take 10 days to read, and cost four weeks worth of allowance, but after those 10 days, what an experience...* No, that has nothing to do with it. It's more complex than that. Its generational, the new technocratic culture panders to the quick fix. In this fast moving world the table top is a dinosaur, and that audience of fresh faced, newbie gamers will never be tapped because they don't have what it takes to stay focused. They get bored to easy. "When I was 10 I loved coming home from a long school day and read rule books, now that was fun."

This is perhaps true, because I remember when I was 10 years old and went down to the Piggly Wiggly to get my *Green Lantern* and *Warlord* comic books, I would always chuck those to the side if I found a treatise on the practical applications of statistics and the statisticians who use them. I always loved sitting down as a kid and studying ponderous texts that explained on page after laborious page how to enjoy myself. The books had to be expensive of course and filled with such verbosity that it would make an Oxford English professor blush. Because when I finished

sitting in class reading text books and learning the three R's for eight hours there was nothing better than coming home and sitting in my room reading books and learning how to play.

I'm being sarcastic of course — and a little verbose as well. I never read that stuff when I was 10. *Never*. I read adventure books — anything by Burroughs (Davis was a Howard fan, go figure) or any other cool fantasy or science fiction book. When I was 10 I read the aforementioned comic books. When I was 10 I loved to play... anything *adventurous*. I loved Dungeons & Dragons because it let me play out those fantasies. But I loved playing army and cowboys and Indians and so on and so on. And today I watch and listen to game designers, game manufacturers, fans of the games and the retailers complain about the market and why so few young people want to join in. Their solutions are always interesting and usually involve somehow teaching young people how cool these games are and how fun they can be. *We have to write the rules that explain how to role play*, they say. To this I only shake my head and spare not a thought for how we have gotten where we are. Every kid I've ever met *knows how to role play*. They do it all the time. My six year old just spent the last half hour punching the air with his fists and pretending he was Jackie Chan. I didn't teach him how to do this. I didn't write nor give him a manual. He figured it out all by himself, because it is in our nature.

You can't teach someone how to have fun — you have to make something that *is* fun.

Now let me set aside any concepts of brevity and belabor this point.

"People prefer video games not because they are more exciting, cheaper, and far more engaging, but rather, because people are lazy and over-indulged in the quick fix." I think these observations are about as revealing as a congressional subcommittee. People aren't suffering from attention deficit (with all due respect to those so clinically diagnosed) but rather from an acute sense of boredom brought about at the long-winded, never-ending, pointlessly-rambling, overly-controlling text and subtext that role playing games are written in. When I bought my truck some 11 years ago and took it home I had a gander at the manual. It was/is some 250 pages long and filled with such utter nonsense as to explain to me how to turn the air conditioner on or roll the window down. I tossed it in the glove box and haven't looked at it since, save to write down the last time I changed my oil. This is, I'm afraid, the fate of most role playing games and the major reason for their decline amongst young people. Multi-volume rule books that verge on 1,000 pages of rules is not anything that can attract young people, casual gamers, people with children, people with jobs, people with lawns to mow. Throw in a high, steep price on top of that and you've pretty much slashed and burned any market growth you may have had. And if that didn't put a damper on the new potential gamer then go ahead and take 300 of those pages and explain

to him how he should be playing a role playing game and you've pretty much salted the fields of your market. Role playing is a simple concept. Gary Gygax understood this, and that's why the original books didn't try to teach people how to role play — because he knew the concept is so natural and simple it is akin to rolling down a window.

There's something to be said about brevity.

But its not just games, you see — it has happened to comics and novels as well.

I worked my way through college. I worked in a meat market at a grocery store, flipped hamburgers, ran a comic shop... all kinds of jobs. In those days I read voraciously. I spent a good part of my time and money in Waldenbooks shopping for fantasy novels I hadn't read but that sounded interesting. I have boxes of them somewhere. Some are good, some not so much, but most of them are just books, stories that begin on the first page of the book and end on the last page of the book and promise only that nothing more is to come. As the '80s gave way to the '90s books got bigger. More pages, more sequels, more investment. I suspect this was due in no small part to publishers asking for more content so they could raise the prices a smidge more. But the books expanded so much

that they pushed me right out of the fantasy market. I stopped buying them as they required too much time investment. Comics went in an even worse direction. In an attempt to keep their market they matured their content and cast their characters in the roles of frail humans with fears and emotions. Gone were the days that a super-hero fought a super villain and saved the world. Those concepts aren't real anyways, right? Short adventures — good vs. evil. We all know

that the real world is a long, grueling contest of suffering and struggle within which the roles of good and evil are ambiguous at best? Such simple concepts... well those are for kids anyway.

Indeed they are.

I have a confession to make. I've been playing Advanced Dungeons & Dragons since the 1970s and I have never read the rules. I have never read the Dungeon Masters Guide or the Players Handbook. To be sure I've read portions of it, but those portions amount to less than 25% of the Players Handbook and 10% of the Dungeon Masters Guide. The attack charts are on the screens and the monsters and treasure charts are in the Monster Manual — what more did I need? I didn't read those rules when I was 10 because they bored the crap out of me and I didn't need them. The game was *simple* and it was cheap. I didn't need to know the speed of a dragon on a windy day. I just needed to know, when I opened that dungeon door, which direction I should turn, left or right. I was 10 and filled with energy. I built forts, I had fights, I had a new 10-speed bike, I played soccer and had a room filled with cowboys and Indians that gave me instant gratification when I played with them. If Dungeons &

You can't teach someone how to have fun — you have to make something that *is* fun.

Dragons hadn't engaged me quickly, I would *never have played* and I would not be droning on about the nature of brevity in this article.

Children today are no different than we were yesterday or the day before that. They get bored easily. They want to do things that are fun. They get bored easily. They want to be engaged quickly because they get bored easily. In short, they want to have fun because *they get bored easily*.

So where does all this leave us? As I listen to my peers and watch them publish more, expanded, larger material with an ever greater price increase I cannot help but think that they are not working to create free citizens of a gaming utopia but rather creating a feudal caste system of gaming elites. The great egalitarian days of Pax Gygaxia are gone, replaced by the hordes of adjectocrats who are building castles in the wilderness and commanding ever smaller estates.

Well obviously, those of us involved in this Crusade see it differently. It is our intent to drive the engine that is Castles & Crusades away from this siege mentality and expand our audience by making a game that is both fun and inexpensive. I think we have done that. The rules are brief. At worst you have to read about a dozen pages to learn the game, and it takes little more than a few minutes to do so. We have struggled hard with the price point, keeping the game far less costly than any other. And we have worked to make the game sound fun, hopefully to a younger audience. By keeping the entry barrier low it will encourage young people to look, stay and play.

We fight a daily battle to keep ourselves in check and to maintain the concept of having fun with this engine, of how to expand it, make it more useful, powerful but all the while not lose its simplicity. This philosophy will be carried over into the forthcoming Castle Keepers Guide and the

Adventurer's Backpack. There has been much talk of what is going to be in these books, and though I will not go into much detail here, suffice it to say that they will not be exhaustive studies on how to role play in a role playing game, but rather how to have fun with a role playing game. The value in a role playing game is not the intricate architecture of its conception, but rather its malleable nature and ability to appeal to a huge and diverse audience that no video game can ever hope to capture. Castles & Crusades and Legendary Adventure are both games that participants are able to tailor to their own design, through role playing — no video game or movie allows you to do that. People know how to role play, our job is to give them a game that lets them role play to their heart's desire. The only trick for us is that we have to do it quickly, briefly, because people who want to have fun don't want to *wait* to have fun. They want to get to the action as fast as they can.

Brevity.

It was said of Caesar that he spoke very simply but commanded his audience. His manners were simple as was his speech. Indulging one's intellectual vanity with sentences equipped with algorithmic expressions was not his style. He spoke simply. He imparted his ideas quickly. He conquered the Roman World. He was brief. He did not bore his audience, he captured them. He did not consume his audience, he convinced them. When you run a game of Castles & Crusades or Legendary Adventure, make it fast and fun, challenge your audience, engage them, lead them, but whatever you do, never bore them. And when you see us here at Troll Lord Games begin to lose our vision and create books that expand the game needlessly, it is your duty even as it is mine, to call us out and put an end to it. We cannot let brevity be the victim any longer.



STEPHEN CHENAULT

was born into a world with a bewildering array of worthless "life choices" and meaningless "life options." As a youth, it was with great insight and eagerness he took to examining those options and pathways, promptly ridiculed them and dumped them into the wastebin that would become other's lives.

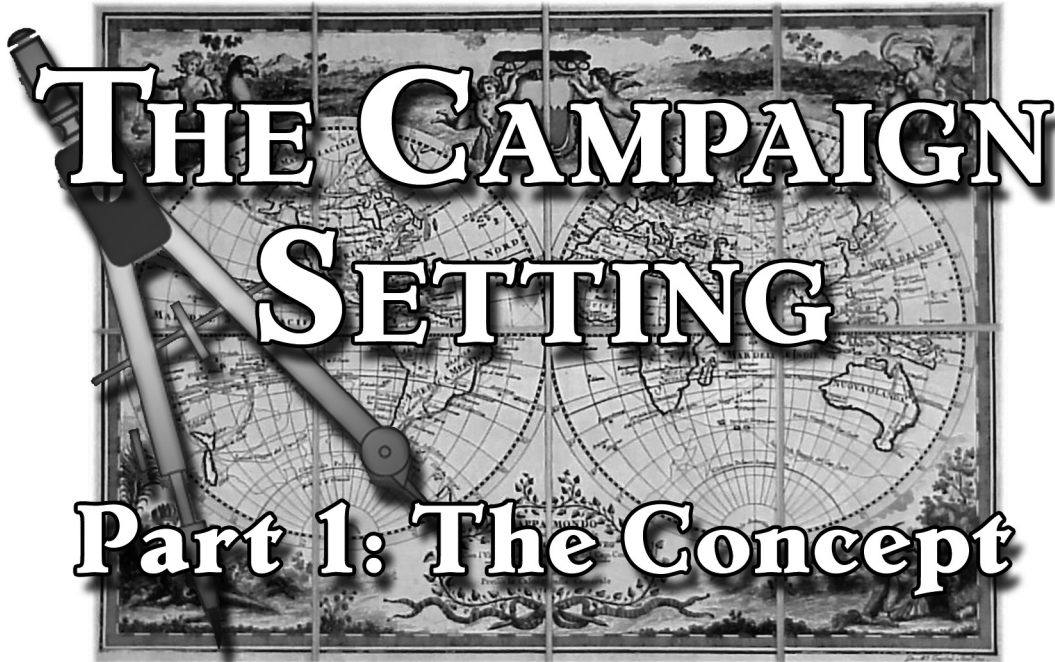
Stephen chose the path of brutal verbal assaults which, on occasion, lead to brutal physical rebuttals. Brittle teeth in hand, Stephen chose an academic path to lengthen what was about to become a shorter than average life span. He wasted years of his life pursuing a higher education in history before realizing that we all are, no matter what, doomed to repeat it.

Forsaking those noble causes rife in academia (such as bra burning, speech filtration, self-aggrandizement and longer summer breaks), Stephen foundered for mere moments before, in a dollar bill induced stupor, deciding to strike it rich by creating a company that sold games. He has since gone on to create such luminaries as the Codex of Erde and Troll Lord Game's best selling adventure module, The Lion in Ropes. He is also well known for his curt phone conversations and one word emails.

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THE CAMPAIGN SETTING

Part 1: The Concept



CASEY CANFIELD

*has been playing and
game-mastering RPGs
since 1983.*

*Casey currently plots the
deeds of nefarious characters
and creatures from his lair
just outside of Endicott,
New York.*

Hammer & Anvil, as the name suggests, is a column meant to supply building blocks. The goal of each column is to provide some insight, idea, philosophy, approach, or even just a seed of thought that will help players and referees alike improve their games.

Beginning with this issue, this column will present a solidification of many of the concepts I have discussed in prior issues. Starting now, Hammer & Anvil will present a technique of wrapping the underlying concepts and assumptions of prior articles with some philosophies and techniques that I have not yet covered. When taken as a whole, these successive columns will provide a functional, mini-campaign setting for use in your Castles & Crusades games, as well as insight as to how this setting was developed.

Preparation and Expectations

So, I've decided I want to create my own custom campaign setting for my players to explore. Before I get started, I had better understand what I'm getting into.

First, creating a campaign setting is a lot of work. It's hard enough to remember details of published settings, but I'll have to create all of those details myself **and** remember them. Second, I need to consider the scope of the project. I should expect to spend a lot of hours writing, revising, evaluating, and rethinking. The preparation doesn't stop at Castle Keeper's notes. It extends to information packets to be supplied to players, maps, adventure hooks, fleshed out adventure keys, hooks to published adventures to be used in the campaign, monster conversions or creations, rules adjustments, and many other potential changes.

In other words, it's a tremendous creative rush, but it is work. As such, I need to approach the time I spend on this project as an investment that will hopefully pay off. The reward is an entertaining campaign, but more than that, it's a campaign for which you can take all of the creative credit. As a CK, you'd be hard pressed to find a better jackpot.

The Flicker of a Concept

Now that I have formulated reasonable expectations, I have a large, empty table in front of me. I have infinite options.

The easiest place to start is to formulate several lists of ideas. Brainstorm these lists from different points of view. Get several sheets of paper, or open several files in your word processor. Put a single question in each one, and then spend some time answering the question as clearly as possible.

Here are some sample questions you might ask:

- If I were playing in this campaign, what would I hope to get from it?
- What do I think my potential players will want to get from this campaign?
- What ideas have I always thought would be fun to try?
- What styles of campaign interest me?
- What styles of campaign would interest my players?

You may decide that you want to ask some questions of the players in your group, as well. There's nothing wrong with gathering player input, but it's just as legitimate to design the campaign around your own expectations and desires. You are putting the creative energy into this project, and you are entitled to do it in your preferred manner.

Once you have several lists of ideas, go through each list and think about the items that are most striking to you. If possible, narrow down each list until you have between one and five items that rank above everything else listed.

These items can literally be anything. I developed the following list of ideas that were most important to me. They are not presented here in order of importance, though, as they all have an impact on the design.

- 1) "I've always wanted to let assassins be of good alignment."
- 2) "I want to change 'how magic works.'"
- 3) "I want a gritty campaign with a 'local' feel."
- 4) "I want to use the knowledge of experienced players to challenge them."
- 5) "I want death to be a central cultural theme."

The table in front of me is no longer empty. I have five chunks of inspiration that I can combine to create a campaign with a unique and personalized flavor. These will eventually be a binding that holds the campaign together. These pieces form the basis of the concept.



Where's the Map?

In the past, I would begin designing adventures or campaign areas with a map. Once I had a map, I could put numbers on it, create a key to correspond to those numbers, and plot out a series of encounters or areas.

An interesting map is a great starting point. It may even be one of the items on your brainstormed list. I grew to realize, though, that I don't have to begin with maps, and I am more creative when I leave mapping for much later in the process.

Mapping later allows me to tailor the map to the atmosphere I wish to convey. It's possible that many maps would work for my goals, but I can ensure I get exactly what I imagine by waiting a bit longer to draw the areas on paper.

Rome Wasn't Built in a Day

Neither is a campaign setting. I cannot spend centuries imbuing my setting with a rich history, but I can approach the design so that the campaign **feels** like I did. I don't have to go to great lengths to accomplish this, either. To do this, I'm going to stick to the following set of guidelines:

Campaign Lasagna: Cultures, attitudes, science — all of these things build from layers upon layers of history. Consider the political systems of ancient Greece and Rome. The influence and impact that these systems had on the political systems in use around the world now is immeasurable. It's important to remember that my campaign might be in the present, but forces like this have worked upon the entire environment for a long period of time to produce what is there now.

Start Small: Beginning my design on a local scale and working upward gives me several advantages. One, it allows me to finish the more immediate adventuring environment so that the campaign can begin without the less-needed planet-scale details. Two, this allows the details of the greater campaign world to change dynamically as the campaign unfolds. If I haven't revealed the information to the players, they won't know the difference if I feel the need to change it later on. Third, starting with a "world design" is problematic because it creates a massive amount of detail that must be applied consistently from the first game in the campaign. Starting with a local orientation allows more of those details to come out in small batches over time, as the game progresses. This helps them to be easier to remember, and to have a more organic feel.

This isn't to say that there shouldn't be some "global" design in place before the campaign begins. It's helpful to determine the overall theological system to be used, for example. However, in the past, I've tried a top-down approach where I began with a planet and worked my way down to the town that acts as the base of operations. Needless to say, most of the detail I worked on either wasn't used, was changed because of better ideas that came along, or was simply difficult to remember.

Nature or Nurture: A powerful question in behavioral studies becomes a focal point in campaign design! Just as layers of the past are important in developing the characteristics of the present, it is just as important to consider how natural or environmental tendencies in the present shape the campaign environment.

The general area of my mini-setting, "The Valley," is geographically isolated, primarily due to my goal of keeping the focus localized. To the west, a "badlands-like" region of rough and barely habitable terrain, "The Mounds," prevents easy movement of travelers and merchants. To the north, a vast series of plains creates a barrier of another kind — extreme distance. To the east, mountainous woodlands stretch for hundreds of leagues. The settlement nearest to the campaign area but just outside of it is on the western edge of the badlands. This town is mainly inhabited by trappers and by hunters of the humanoid raiders that live in the caves and recesses located throughout the Mounds. It is a place of some mystery to those living in the region, as few make the trek through the humanoid-infested terrain that lies between the towns.

Considering these natural influences on the populace, I decide that isolation and mystery breeds fear and contempt. Cities are dark places, full of predators and amorality to the local residents. Adventurers wishing to travel will be warned away from cities, and anyone claiming to be from them would simultaneously be shunned and scrutinized.

With the natural influences on the area so profound, it stands to reason that the general theological beliefs of the Valley residents would match. One of my goals was to use death as a central cultural theme. With this in mind, the predominant religion in the area is developed as a belief in three sibling deities, each of whom guards over a specific aspect of the spirit. These gods protect the dead and prevent their desecration. The residents in the area engage in a peculiar form of ancestor-worship, and feel as though desecration of the dead tarnishes the meaning of the lives lived. More populous and "civilized" areas might consider this religion to be dogmatic, strict, and primitive, but the Valley residents would claim it is the cities that are corrupt, disrespectful, and of dubious moral character.



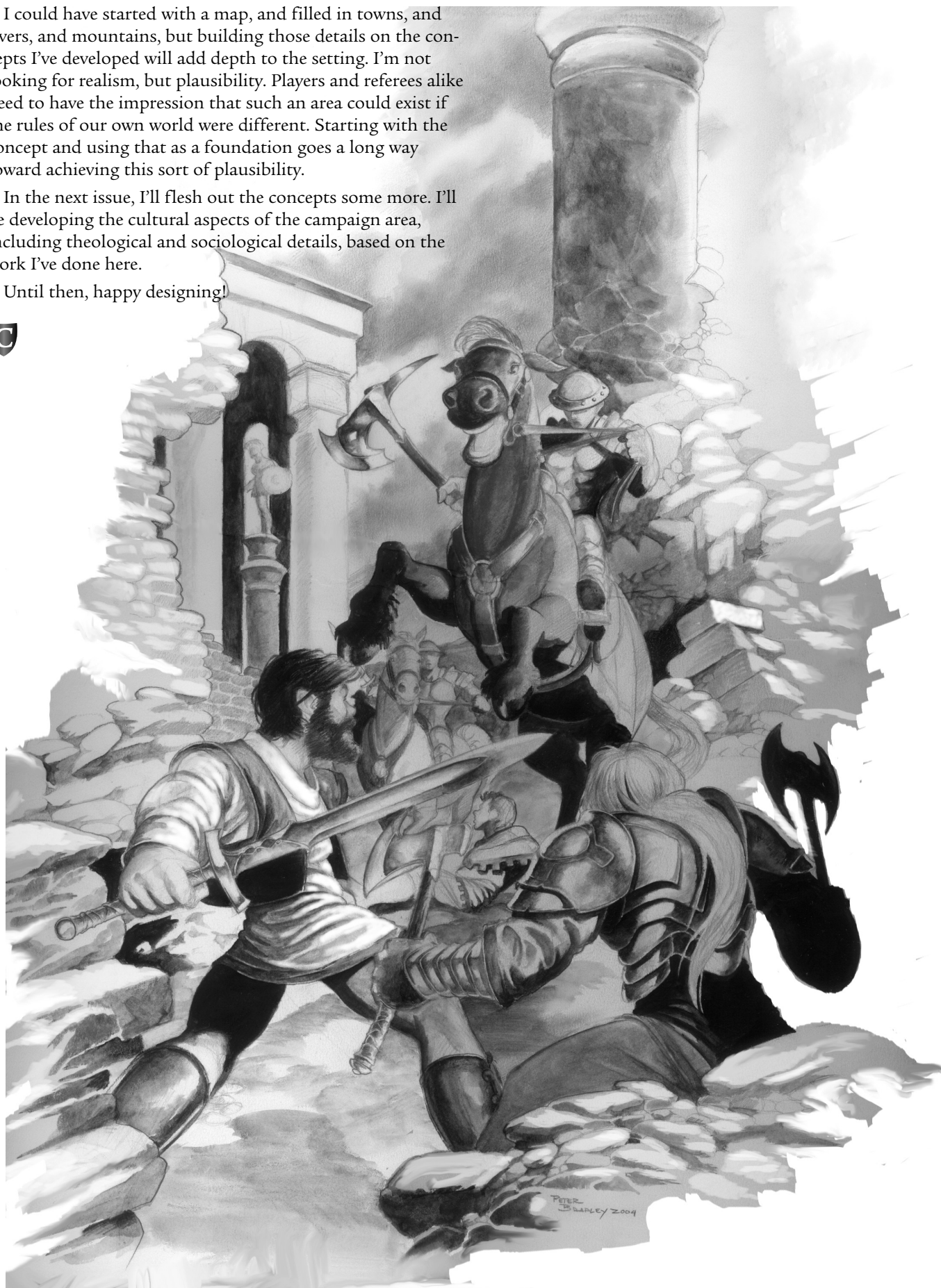
So, I've taken the geographic and cultural goals set forth during my brainstorming sessions, and have created some unique elements for the setting. What I've done so far is set the stage for the larger, more detailed developments to come. Soon, I'll be able to take my geographic ideas and develop a map, naming the towns in the isolated valley, and providing details of those areas. I will also be able to develop ideas about the surrounding areas, including possibilities for adventure. Finally, I will be able to make an informed decision about any changes to the rules that I would like to make, and I will be able to ensure that those changes reflect the character of the campaign accurately.

HAMMER & ANVIL

I could have started with a map, and filled in towns, and rivers, and mountains, but building those details on the concepts I've developed will add depth to the setting. I'm not looking for realism, but plausibility. Players and referees alike need to have the impression that such an area could exist if the rules of our own world were different. Starting with the concept and using that as a foundation goes a long way toward achieving this sort of plausibility.

In the next issue, I'll flesh out the concepts some more. I'll be developing the cultural aspects of the campaign area, including theological and sociological details, based on the work I've done here.

Until then, happy designing!



THEM'S FIGHTING WORDS

BY JOSEPH GOODMAN

I'M ONLY IN THE GAMING INDUSTRY FOR THE HOT CHICKS AND BOOZE

The one thing a publisher has to fight hardest to avoid is burnout. Burnout comes in many forms, and the role of fan-turned-professional carries its own special burden: losing the love. Right now it's 8:39 PM on a Monday night, and I'm still slogging away in the gaming industry's own version of Sisyphus — roll the rock uphill to Gen Con, relax, get crushed as it careens downhill and next summer you have to roll it up again. When it comes to Gen Con, I have lost the love.

Gen Con for the fans is a fun, energizing experience. You meet other people like you, you discover new games for your favorite hobby, and you get a four-day trip to what is essentially an adult version of summer camp. If you're a Goodman Games fan, you'll probably play in our open tournament, and if you're lucky you'll make it to round three and win a trophy. Even if you bomb out in round one with a TPK, you'll get your name in next year's tournament module, along with your official score and ranking. You'll get a chance to pick up the latest new releases, and maybe snag a con special to lord over those poor saps back home who couldn't make it to the show.

Gen Con for the publisher, on the other hand, is an awful lot of work. Somebody has to plan the booth layout. Somebody has to coordinate getting all the fixtures, tables, chairs, carpet, and displays. Somebody has to decide how much inventory to bring, then physically lug it along. Somebody has to fill out lots of forms to list events, then proof the event listing for the inevitable mistakes. Somebody has to produce the signage, design the convention tee shirts, and order the giant "Xcrawl is #1!" foam hands. (And, before ordering them, somebody had to figure out where the hell you buy giant foam hands. Whose idea was that anyway?) Somebody has to assemble that Ikea

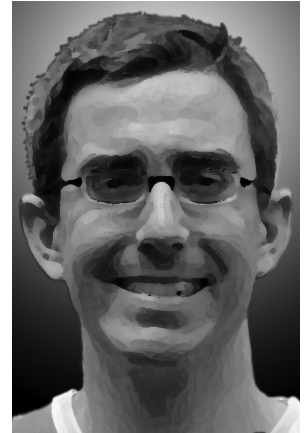
glass case to display the miniatures. And somebody has to handle all the preparations for BeerCon. (If you don't know about BeerCon, it's the annual Goodman Games thank-you party for all our volunteers and friends. BEER-CON!)

After all of that, there's the product itself. I just sent DCC #51: Castle Whiterock to the printer. It's a 700-page-long boxed set that represents one product release this year. 700 pages is an awful lot of material. It's greater than the sum total of all Goodman Games products released in my first two years of business. Chris, Adrian, Harley, Ken, Aeryn, Jeremy, and Jeff did a phenomenal job putting this puppy together, but man... it was a lot of work. And it's one of several new releases I'm hoping to premiere at Gen Con. Every one of them is an awful lot of work.

So while you're at home brimming with excitement because Gen Con is only a month away, we publishers are fighting to stay motivated as we work against ever-closer deadlines, rushing to get all this stuff off to the printer in time, hoping that we didn't forget anything (like those tournament maps I was supposed to follow up on yesterday!), and praying that the printer doesn't have an electrical outage that causes all our blood and sweat to miss Gen Con (which has happened to me before).

It's a fight to stay motivated. Every year.

But every year, some fun little star comes along, some twinkling glimmer of interest that reminds me why I got into this in the first place. The event changes every year, but the feeling is the same. It's a feeling we all know. It's the feeling of being a kid and deliberating for nearly an hour over which 40K miniature to buy with my meager allowance, until my exasperated mom told me I had 5 minutes and that was the end of it. It's the feeling of how



**JOSEPH
GOODMAN**

*president of
Goodman Games, who was
burned out from Gen Con
prep until he saw the cover
art for Dungeon Crawl
Classics: Saga of the
Witch Queen*

THEM'S FIGHTING WORDS

cool it was to discover a new supplement that sent my mind spinning with ideas. It's the feeling of The Dark Library #1, my first published product, when I finally had it in hand.

This year, that feeling came about with Saga of the Witch Queen. It's a fun little con special we're putting together that has an old-school monochrome cover, black and orange and white. It feels just like the 1970's printings of the Giants module series and man, it's awesome. I just got the cover art in my inbox and it makes me feel the love again.

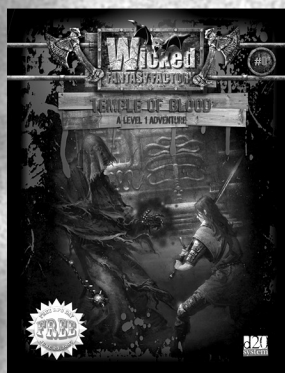
Yes, Gen Con is a lot of work. It's a fight to stay motivated. It's a slog to get all the work done in time. But this is an industry built around games. I don't need to stay motivated all the time. When I get down, the product itself will bring me out. It happens every year. And it's happened again this year.

The one thing a publisher has to fight hardest to avoid is burnout. Burnout comes in many forms, and the role of fan-turned-professional carries its own special burden: losing the love. Right now it's 8:58 PM on a Monday night, and I'm still slogging away. But I don't really mind anymore. It's no longer a fight. Because Brad did an awesome job on this cover art. It looks awesome. Wait till Gen Con... I think you'll agree!



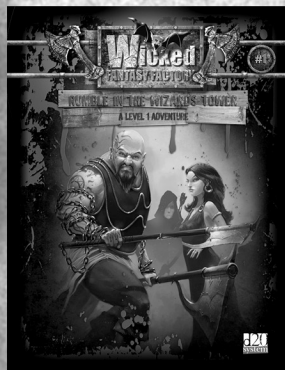
<http://www.trolllord.com/newsite/zagyg/index.html>

Try Something A Little WICKED



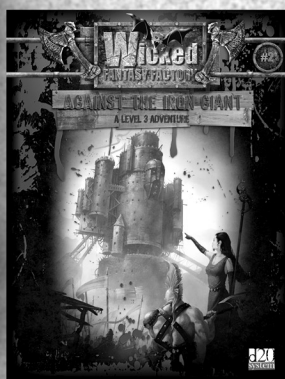
WFF #0: TEMPLE OF BLOOD

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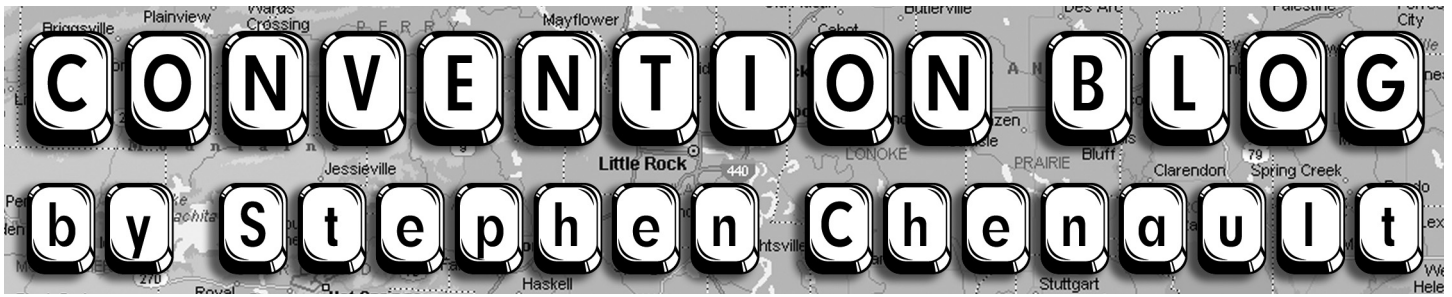
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hurt on a gigantic,
iron-shod, town-
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DUNDRACON 31

San Ramon, California, February 16-19

DunDraCon officially begins on a Friday, but the dealer room (where I usually am, and by usually, I mean *always*) doesn't open until Saturday. So my flight was set to arrive on Friday evening, with "set up" planned on Saturday morning. The show runs through and including Monday (President's Day GO GEORGE) and is usually a good one, so I was looking forward to it. Always lots of folks out in the Bay Area who like to check out the latest games and DunDraCon is a good show. It's organized, priced to fit, and located on the north side of the bay in Oakland, offering a nice draw from the vast pool of folks who dwell in those rolling hills.

I worked a good step on Friday morning (Breakdaddy came over and salvaged some 400 emails from my email account that had crashed the night before... er, yeah, hoorah, go Breakdaddy! LOL) and then headed off to the airport. My wife dropped me off and I trundled off to my flight. My first flight over to Salt Lake City in Utah put me over some amazingly beautiful countryside (very game inspiring if you know what I mean). I hadn't flown that way in a long time and forgotten how stark that country is. I spent much of my time reading the third volume of Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* and peeking out the window. Volume three of *Rome* is a good book, stronger than the first two volumes, but then again it is concerned with the actual fall of the Western Empire, right up my alley. At any rate I had a bit of a delay until my next flight so I wandered around looking for some food. Finding nothing appealing I settled on a Coke and some M&Ms and returned to *Rome* and read for a good while. At last they called my flight number and I boarded. This flight was a small puddle jumper and the ride to San Fran was long and bumpy... so I spent most of that time reading a shaky version of *Rome*. Flying into San Fran I marveled at the long rivers of light pouring from the city into the brightly-lit environs of suburbia.

At last I arrived in Oakland where Joe Goodman (of Goodman Games, www.goodmangames.com) and Aldo Ghiozzi, (of Impressions Advertising and Marketing and FreeRPGDay.com), awaited my arrival. The three of us have become pretty tight and always attend DunDraCon together and hang out at the GAMA Trade Show, Gen Con, or whatever other show we happen to link up at. We saddled up and boot-scoted to Aldo's house, where we were staying, way out

in the 'burbs somewhere. We talked business and other sundries for the most part on the hour-long drive out there. Interestingly, we spoke of nothing that concerned our joint ventures, but more of what concerned the industry as a whole. Got a hamburger at Denny's as I recall, and arrived at the house in time to wind down a bit and get some shut eye — we were all pretty tired and had to get up early in the A.M. to make it to the show and set up before the dealer's hall opened.

Saturday saw a quick breakfast and we hit the road. It's always a pleasant drive out that way. We avoid the traffic because it's a weekend and the sun is always shining, the skies a baby blue and the temperature mild (Joe marveled at it as Chi-town had been below freezing for many weeks and it was something like one degree in the Windy City whilst we were piddling along through sunny California). We arrived at the con with plenty of time to set up the tables before the hall opened. As usual I failed to prepare for these things and didn't bring or ship any good racking system, so the Troll Lord Games books were stacked in organized piles of chaos all over the table. I did manage to front the brand new Castles & Crusades screens rather nicely, though.

The first day at DunDraCon is always hopping and the folks came in droves. They overwhelmed Aldo's booth and bought a lot of the games he sells (mostly older stuff from his collection) and then wandered on from there. We had a good bit of foot traffic and a lot of questions, still a lot of folks didn't know about Castles & Crusades or Lejendary Adventure so many sales pitches found me tired and loopy. By late in the day, several of Aldo's racks emptied up and he tossed them my way so by day's end the booth was looking pretty enough to take to the county fair. All in all though Saturday was a fair day, sales were not what we were hoping for... but then, they never are. Aside from that, the most eventful moment of Saturday in our booth was Joe's painful attempt to explain to Aldo that generic peanuts are not as good as Planters. After a secret taste test Aldo was convinced, though much to Joe's frustration he continued to eat the generic brand. Somehow I think that might be a metaphor for what is wrong with the industry...

After the hall closed Joe cut out to get some dinner and Aldo and I wandered around a bit to see what the show had

to offer. Talked to some folks we had met the previous years and then wandered over to Room 156 to give our seminar on what is coming soon from Troll Lord Games and Goodman Games. We chatted for awhile with a very sparse crowd and rambled on about this, that, and the other. Joe showed up and announced some cool new games they are developing, most noticeably the Wicked Fantasy Factory series (check out his website for more info).

After that, Joe and Aldo joined Erol Otus in a game of classic first edition Advanced Dungeons & Dragons and I wandered off to poke my nose into various and sundry places. I'm a bit of a people watcher so I like to drift about and see what people are doing and playing. My only real complaint about DunDraCon is the lack of some type of costume contest or some such that draws out the interesting folks! But then again, it is a game-playing convention. We headed home about 11 or 12 or some such and crashed pretty quickly.

Sunday brought much of the same. The dealer's room was slower but folks were spending more so Troll Lord Games made a little more progress toward moving the game systems along. I spent a good deal of the afternoon in "on again" and "off again" conversation with Darren Watts from Hero Games, discussing politics and history. I was surprised to find out that we are of the same mind on many of today's pressing issues, as many of our peers are not. The most noticeable event on Sunday was the conversation I had with games retailer Darren Layne of Gamescape North. He is the manager/owner of a game shop in the Bay Area that has just launched a game room, wherein they will be running free games for the public twice a month. They were looking for support and listening to his professionalism and enthusiasm for spreading the gospel of games lead me to give him a complete set of Castles & Crusades material, modules and screen included. This to make sure that Castles & Crusades sees some table time in his shop and we spread the Crusade a bit better in that neck of the woods.

The day closed with another seminar "State of today's RPG industry." Joe, Darren from Hero Games, Aldo, and I plowed into the subject with gusto. The room had a good turn out and we talked a bit and then opened it up for questions. Very good participation all along the front and we had a good time. We all agreed that the market was fluctuating violently, but not necessarily in a bad way. It required that the manufacturers and retailers shift their business styles to adjust to the changing circumstances. I listened to several theories and some deep in the mud doom and gloom, but had to take a contrary position. Seeing the success of Castles & Crusades and even Lejendary Adventure (the box set is sold out and headed for a re-print) and knowing Goodman Games' success with the Dungeon Crawl Classics line I see things a little differently. I talked in depth about a philosophy near and dear to Davis and myself (though I grumble more than Davis of course), and that's price point.

The industry experienced a boom with the d20 System. This boom created a large bubble and saw the creation of a lot of stores and companies and a slightly expanded customer pool.

Production qualities went up, fees and costs went up and so did prices. Troll Lord Games maintained a reasonable price point on products but we were always looking at it askance. When the boom ended and the fall out began, companies saw their unit sales drop and they floated toward bankruptcy. Many reacted by increasing prices to offset the lost sales. We did this to some extent, overpricing the Book of Names specifically. However when Castles & Crusades entered its final development and price became an issue Davis pushed hard to have the price reduced to \$19.95. I fought it some, wanting something a little more easy on the financial books, like \$24.95. He was adamant. I would have gone with Davis' scheme one way or the other, that's just how we Trolls work, if you really want something we give ground... but it was a comment a friend of mine who is elbow deep in the industry made that pushed me into the low price point camp. I was told, go with \$29.95 on all your core books because the "market can bear it." The market can bear it? I don't want something the market has to even think about 'bearing' I want something to grow the market. If higher price points don't grow it (Book of Names) then lower prices are worth a shot.

Our unit sales dropped on d20 products, so we dropped our price on Castles & Crusades. And it worked. We shot through the first printing of the Players Handbook and are soon to be out of the second printing of the Players Handbook and the game is only just 2 years old. [Editor's Note: This was written in early March; the second print is now history, and the third printing is now in stores!] We price just about everything this way — in fact our revised versions of the Gygaxian Fantasy Worlds series will all carry a \$19.95 or \$21.95 price tag.

I explained this ad nauseam at the seminar, arguing with a number of folks about the state of the industry, basically holding the belief, that if the industry is imploding then we should not award the loyal fans of games with more expensive games. The seminar ended well and I felt vindicated as a number of folks came up and enthusiastically took the free modules I offered to attendees (Joe gave some cool Etherscope modules away as well).

We retired from the show to eat and had dinner with Darren, Gary from Black Diamond Games, and Heather from Alliance Game Distributors where we continued the discussions from the seminar. All in all it was a fruitful evening and a good convention. We retired back to the 'burbs, tired and in need of a bit of sleep.

Monday was uneventful for the most part. I was anxious to hit the road and get back to office and to work, as many projects were beginning to stack up. Joe and I caught a cab and jabbered a bit on the way to the airport, had some lunch at a gourmet burrito place (what is a *gourmet* burrito anyway?) and then headed to our various flights. I made it to Dallas at about 7 in the evening and rushed to the terminal for the connecting flight to Little Rock. It was delayed by an hour so I settled in *Rome* again and satisfied my hunger on a Milky Way and a Coke. The flight was delayed until 9:30 when it was promptly canceled. The airline could and did little to offer me

assistance in making it home, promising to have me on an afternoon flight Tuesday and home that evening. They would put me up in a hotel. That's really not a route I can take. I had been gone almost four days and I have kids, dogs, a wife that works and a company to run. So I boot scooted to the car rental and got an affordable car from Avis and hit the road a little after 10:00 p.m. on the 5-6 hour drive to home.

I was a little tired but have always enjoyed the open road, especially at night. I stopped for supplies just outside of Dallas, got a hamburger, a Dr. Pepper, and some Lynn Anderson and Merle Haggard discs and headed out. I shot through the Texas plains at about 70+ mph and listened mostly to Anderson (the Haggard wasn't that good) and have to say I love it. My folks used to listen to her back in the 70's and many of the songs captured those feelings of youth and innocence (when I started gaming, too) and my childhood. It was a good ride and comfortable and I felt good. Then the prettiest blue lights on the planet shown in my mirror and the Texas Highway Patrol wanted to have a talk. I pulled over and he cautiously approached from the passenger side and

tapped the window. I fumbled for the window switch as the car was a rental I didn't know where a blessed thing was. He took my license and the rental agreement and questioned me for awhile. I was going seven miles per hour over the speed limit. I answered his questions with respect (I've had *lots* of tickets) as he was wondering why I was alone, no luggage, in a van, with tinted windows claiming to be coming off a flight that canceled. A lot of mules use interstate 30 from Dallas to Little Rock in their "trucking" routes and he had every right to be suspicious. But I came back clean (my fishing license warrant and arrest was off my record, thank goodness) and he let me go with a warning and a "please slow down."

I trundled off on the road and cruised at a more cautious speed, figured out the cruise control at my next stop and hit the road. Of course it was there, while at the gas station that I noticed the rental had New Jersey plates. Who in their right mind rents a person a car with New Jersey plates on it in *Texas*???

Steve Chenault

LAKE GENEVA GAMING CON. III

Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, June 15-17, 2007

This year's Lake Geneva Gaming Convention was the best by far. We saw a substantial increase in attendance, had more guests, and a little more time to enjoy games and visit. We sadly noted the departure of Tami and Fred whose personal lives caught up with them and did not afford them the time to come up and hang out. We missed them, but, in typical Trollish fashion, we plunged on.

The con began for us a few nights before, Wednesday to be sure. We were planning on setting up on Thursday and hanging out at Gary Gyax's house for the now traditional pre-show porch party that the Gyax's are so very kind to throw for folks coming out to the show. But that meant that we had to leave late Wednesday night, drive the 10-12 hours in order to get there the next day at any kind of reasonable time. Peter Bradley came down from Oklahoma to ride with us, as he hadn't an easy mode of transport. He got there in the nick of time, saving Cleaver the Pit Vol. 1.0 from a horribly flat layout job by yours truly.

We were trekking off in my wife's Tahoe this year, so had more comfort and a slightly easier drive (with no disrespect intended to my good old truck). We were plagued with the normal loading and packing problems as Davis, Mark, and I try to jam as much as we can in the vehicle before we go. "Think we'll need this?" "Doubt it, but throw it in anyway. Never know." And of course we had last minute things to print, cards, badges, *etc.* as well as the aforementioned Cleaver game. And so it went until several hours past our departure

time. Somewhere around midnight to one in the A.M. the four of us — Davis, Mark Sandy, Peter, and I — hit the road, lumbering out of the driveway in style... Beverly Hillbilly's style, that is.

We shot through the dark at a pretty good pace, across Interstate 40 to Memphis, north on 55 until just south of St. Louis. We had a few stops along the way but nothing to until daybreak to slow us. We cut across the great state of Illinois on Interstate 55 switching to the northbound on 39 in Bloomington. From there we crossed over to 90, into Wisconsin and down 45 until we hit the Lake Geneva turn off. Ten miles later, we were in the heart of game country. It was a good long drive, but we filled the hours with game plans for our various games and inane arguments.

We headed to the Plaza Motel first, as we always do, to check in, drop off our bags, regroup, and clean up. It was later than our intended arrival, mid-afternoon at this point, and our planned early visit with Gary and family was long since passed so we waited a bit and headed over to Gary's. The Gyax's greeted us with the normal warmth and we all had a good time, Gary getting a few stabs at the usual punctual Trolls (that of course is a joke as we are always late). We met up with some old friends and compatriots, Kerry Bourgainé was there and some other folks. We all spent a relaxing afternoon with the Gyax's, leaving only for a little while to set up the hall in the new XXX room at the Cove. Once done we went back to Gary's for the porch party. It was quite a showing, and we began to realize that this Gyax fellow might be

someone famous as Tim Kask (former Dragon magazine editor during the early TSR days), Ed Greenwood (designer of the Forgotten Realms), Frank Mentzer (Ex-TSR Grognard) and all manner of folks. Even the boys from Kenzer & Company stopped by for a beer and a chat.

The party wound down after a while and we retired to Fat Kats for some late night conversation and after that wandered back to the motel, know that Friday would bring an early day — filled with set-up without Tami and Fred. Somewhere in my distant memory, I thought the show started at 8:00, so I had to be there early.

The next morning I jolted out of bed about 7 in the A.M., showered and headed over to the hall. I let everyone sleep in as we had set up the day before, but I still needed to organize the registration desk and set up the computer and printer. After getting set up I headed over to Office Depot to get some signage for out front — something to direct the folks to the show. I purchased a sign, stencils and the like. I dropped them off at the motel for Peter or Davis to do up a good sign as my artistic orientation isn't so hot. I headed over to the show and got busy. A little after 8:00 Mark Sandy wandered in to help, which is good for about that time people started coming in and we found ourselves much busier than we thought we would be that early. We were quickly overwhelmed, actually, as people came in to get their pre-registered badges and still others came to sign up cold. Davis showed up about 8:30 or so with signs in place.

The show kicked off pretty quick as folks came in and wandered about. It took a while for people to orient as the hall was not that large and some people no doubt were looking for game rooms and the like. The only booths were the Troll Lord Games booth, Peter's art booth, and a table set aside for Frank Mentzer's wonderful baked goods (check it out at www.thebakershouse.com)! Friday's showing was a good one, with a good turn out and lots of friendly faces. Gary wandered down for awhile and harvested the players for his Lejendary Adventure porch game. Frank came in as did other notaries like Tom Wham and Rob Kuntz. We missed Ernie Gyax at the show, but knew we would meet up with him later.

I was much busier than I thought I would be and I wasn't able to get a game going or even jump into game. A bunch of folks from the Troll Lord Games online boards came down and visited and gamed. And the morning and afternoon wiled away with plenty of games and lots of fun. The hall was full and it seemed to generate its own energy, so the Trolls were very happy. Paul Stromberg and crew assembled a great set-up for the fast-becoming traditional "Battle of the Moat House" (based on the classic adventure module, Village of Hommlet). It was rocking and I noted that Tim, Rob, and some other notaries joined the fray. The afternoon wandered by into evening and we headed out to dine with the Gyax family. Gail filled us up with some great food, as she usually does, and Gary regaled us with stories of his childhood, while Davis made fun of us all and we had a blast and Kerry tried to figure out why he's looking to publish a card game through the slap-stick Trolls. We left there to join up with Ernie at the

watering hole and returned to motel in the wee hours of the morning.

Morning came far too soon and I staggered off about 8:00 in the A.M. to open the hall. Folks were waiting and we all spent a few pleasant minutes chatting while we waited for the Cove folks to open up. Once in, we settled into the routine of gaming like we had spent the whole season there. There was a bit of a panic on my part as the bus tour we had advertised had filled up to capacity — and we had no bus. Gary arrived as the tour guide, in a good humor as usual, but with this many folks and Gary in the forefront I figured something had to be done. I hollered at the Cove folks and they began working on the problem, trying to find me a replacement bus. About that time the yellow school bus came into the lot. The concierge laughed at me and actually called me a Nervous Nellie. Ha! I've been called many things but never that!

Games kicked up all over the place. People came and went and the hall rapidly filled up. Attendance exceeded expectation and we were very happy, even by noon. We did a brisk business at the booth, offering folks a nice discount as we always do at conventions (it's like I tell people, if you are willing to spend your money on travel, hotel and food, the least we can do is cut a little slack on the prices). The hall was even busier than the day before and filled up so quickly we had to bring in four more tables. The mood was fun and the hall a constant buzz. Tom Wham had a bunch of his games and a full table, Frank Mentzer ran a bunch of games including a 1st edition D&D game. Gary, fresh from the tour, harvested another crop of players and took them off to his porch in the early afternoon. The day was again so busy I again couldn't get into any games.

Dinner found Mark, Davis, Kerry, and I joining Gail and Gary on their front porch. Peter heroically offered to watch the booth for us, along with two young ladies who were helping us out. We were all a little tired, and Gail bowed out of dinner at the next door pub, so the guys fell out and headed over there. Gary asked if he could smoke on the way to dinner and Mark told him that my wife (Kathy) had only said, "Tell Davis he can't smoke in the car!" And that seemed plausible enough to give the rest of Lake Geneva permission. Gary opted to respect my wife's wishes, and I only soured over a chance of getting Davis in trouble. We had a pleasant dinner that seemed to be overwhelming about the pranks of youngsters and the never-ending value of bacon in cooking. We returned Gary to his domicile for some late-night drinks and headed back to the show to rescue the beleaguered and quite hungry Peter Bradley.

As he headed out to get some food, we took a gander at the huge pile of bodies around the Tim Kask's table of Circus Maximus. It seemed to be over flowing with folks and everyone was having a good time. Though the gamers had thinned out from our 110-odd participants from the afternoon there was still a lot of energy.

But there was noise as well as a wedding was underway in the hall above us. The halls were trashed and the bathrooms a mess as the merry makers were having a go at it. They were all

young for the most part and apparently had infiltrated the hall as Peter directed me over to a table that was being disturbed by a couple of drunks. I hollered at Davis for some back up and we roused them out. It took a great while and lots of noise and threats from them, especially when a third joined the fray. By this time Mark and Kerry joined us and we had managed them out the door where they were gathered up by other party goers.

We hung around a bit as games wound on and eventually left Mark as door warden against other possible incursions and Davis, Kerry, and I headed over the watering hole to hook up with a bunch of folks for late evening conversation and our own rowdiness. We returned to the hall about 2 A.M. and met up with Rob Kuntz and crew. They were closing the hall for us, which was kindly done. We jabbered for a bit and were heckled by some young female wedding-goers; all in good fun. They shouted from a balcony "We want to meet the Trolls!" to which Davis and I sparred with them for a bit. It was all great fun. I later told Gary that I felt I had come of age as a game manufacturer since I was heckled by teenagers! Ha!

We retired to the motel where Rhuvein (a friend from the Troll Lord Games online boards), Davis, Rob, and I, and some other fellow who I never formally met, sat around talking and joking until we were hushed by a neighbor. We continued on a bit until the door opened and a young woman shouted at us. We ran like a bunch of 1st graders, ducking for cover and hiding to avoid trouble. Great fun!

That ended the evening and we staggered off to bed.

Sunday began as the other days did, with lots of gaming, and with only a slightly smaller crowd. Many folks had headed home or caught flights out of Milwaukee and Chicago and couldn't be there for the day. Even so we had a good day and lots of hanging out, gaming and joking. Late in the afternoon I joined a fun game of Castles & Crusades and then ran a huge table of Castles & Crusades. It was a hard-core, heavy-pipe-hitting game that pitted the gang against a troop of orcs. Through bold moves and an unflinching devotion to the attack they broke through the wall and slaughtered my orcs and only lost two characters. Lots of fun, laughter and good times.

We quit the hall soon thereafter, packing the boxes and loading the truck. Once put together we headed over to the Gygax's for some fond farewells. We met up with Elisa and Bill and had a good time. I didn't get to visit with them nearly as much as I wanted to, but Elisa had to work as did Bill. We loaded them up with some T-shirts and mouse pads from the show and said our farewells to the Gygax's after much thanks for the wonderful hospitality.

Soon thereafter we were headed for Arkansas and home. And I have to say that LGGC III panned out exactly how Davis and I intended the con to — calm, easy going, and a good place to go, where friends gather and play games.

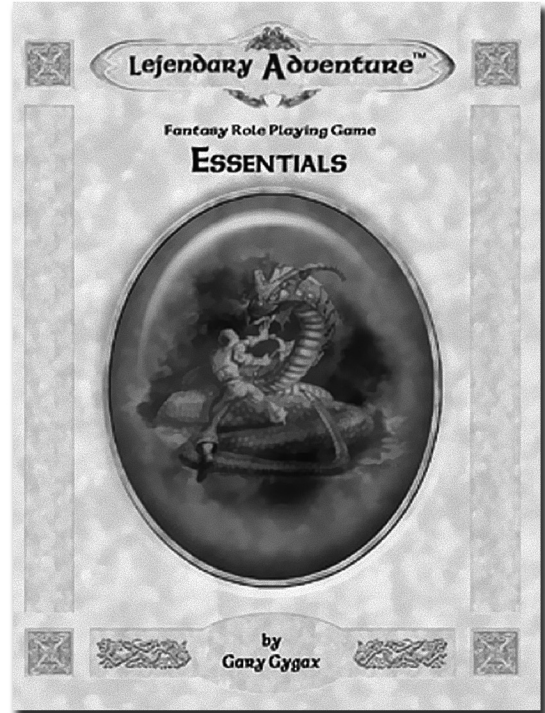
See you next year.

Steve Chenault



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The Aihrdian Chronicles

The Poverty of Want

Fiction by Stephen Chenault

The Elven Warlord, Meltowg-Aet-Ohd, Prince of Lothian, has wandered the world in the Shadow of the Long Centuries. Bitter and filled with rage his life is one of unceasing war against the tower of Aufstrag and its great horned god. Long ago his elven kin fled into the ether, leaving the world to its slow demise. It has been his quest to exonerate the name of his folk and kin in the blood of their enemies. In this unceasing war his love had died, most of his friends have fallen and he shares his hatred with all the people's of the world. Lately Meltowg has learned of the Castle of Spires and its elven guardian and he seeks that magical place, to force his kin to return. To find it he has sought out the Fair Lady of Gilgum and come to the doorsteps of Aufstrag. Attacked and wounded, he lies in the mire of the swamps, bleeding ...

Meltowg bound his wounded arm with pieces of tattered cloak and gathered himself together. His armor had taken many a hard hit and wore more weighty than it should have. He discarded it, keeping only a chain shirt and his helm. His shield too was missing, lost in the muck and mire of the Gausumland. But his horse, after some searching and calling, he found upon a hillock. It stood beneath the overhand of a large, dead tree, its massive frame outlined against the gray-green country. Meltowg pulled himself up by the saddle horn, and sitting at last back in his saddle, leaned forward. "Old friend, we must be off. We have many days journey ahead of us for we have yet to find the Fair Lady."

"You have found me, Prince of the Dire Heart."

Meltowg started and at his sudden motion he felt the blood ooze anew from beneath the tattered bandage. He swooned a little for his arm ached and he had no rest from the day's previous battle with the living the dead. But despite this he reached for his blade.

"No need Prince. I mean you no harm."

"How then lady? How am I supposed to judge you, coming from the dark of the swamp upon my trail. Some fiend more like than the object of my quest which lies many hundreds of miles from here." He dropped from his horse but held the reigns in his hand.

"A fiend indeed. It is for fear of a fiend that I have come to you. Do you really suppose that I have lived here, beneath the shadow of the horned god for these many years without detection by luck? I am the Fair Lady of Gilgum and I heard your approach despite the distance. I have watched you for many days now, over sea and land you have traveled for me to reveal the object of your desire. I am no paltry kitchen witch Prince."

Meltowg looked upon her as she approached from the gloom. She was beautiful and clad in gowns that passed through the water without the damage of stain. Her hair was long, reddish in hue and fell about her shoulders in gentle

rings and wide curls. Her eyes were green and reminded him of the sea grass of the Oddine Oceans, deep and gentle. She laid a hand upon his arm and ran it the length of his biceps to the wounded shoulder. Her long fingers, were alabaster and strong. "Ah nue el thul," she muttered.

The wound closed and the tired muscles were refreshed. "I am the Fair Lady of Gilgum and I have lived in these swamps for all these years beneath the rage of Unklar. Before him these were hills, warm and beautiful, with talls trees and grasses that my folk merried over. But they are no more, lost in the cavity of the Winter Dark."

"It is but one of the many sorrows inflicted on our world by his lust."

"Lust? Lust is not a word I would use to describe our enemy. Not lust but envy. He is born of the envy of all things he cannot be and cannot have. He makes himself and his followers empty promises of a life of wealth and power. But they are foolish and follow a foolish god, for he brings them nothing but suffering and a poverty of spirit that we cannot imagine ... or perhaps I cannot imagine."

"I do not suffer from a poverty of spirit if that is what you imply my Lady. But rather I suffer from a defect of my birth, being born to a race of men who haven't even the courage to allow other men to fight for them. I suffer from a life time spent in the company of philosophers who cherish an idea more than their own lives. These tyrants of the mind are weak and they think they are strong, the have empathy for the unknown but none for the suffering of their kin ..."

"I know." Her voice was calm and her eyes cast him upon a sea of calm waters where the wind was fair but not hard and the air was warm but not stifling. "Your road is a hard one, Prince of the Dire Heart, Meltowg, the cursed. And sadly I may not offer you refuge from your hard road or a place to rest for your rage would attract the enemies I hide from so well and I would be no more. But come, we have bantered enough here, what would you have of me? What thought or desire has driven you to me."

She was hopeful, but sad and he wondered at her. "I have come for I had it from a soothsayer that you could unravel my heart's desire and aid me in this war."

"Your heart's desire," her eyes washed over him again. He saw himself in a different place and a different time, when comfort defined his being, when unfulfilled desires were unknown. But the fleeting moment was gone, the memory like dust in a dry desert. "You have matured, Prince. You have evolved. You have come into contact with the secret of sentient creatures."

"What secret Lady?" He was growing impatient of the banter.

"Never mind. You will learn it in time as we all must. But suffice it to say we cannot forget our history, for in the dusty pages of "long ago" are the true riddles of not only *who* we are, but *what* we are."

"But my desires are not for the past, but the future. Tell, Fair Lady of Gilgum, what is my deepest desire."

She smiled and turned from him to walk only a short few feet up the hillock. Kneeling she found a small nook in the roots of the tree, cleaning it of debris in a moment she had before her, and him, a small clear pool of water. Small bubbles trickled from under the root, denoting a spring of some sort beneath the water. "There used to be a fountain here, it tapped into a spring that watered a small town in the days of the Aenochians. It was very peaceful. White cobble stones and clean gardens. I used to come here from time to time for the peaches were delicious. It is no more of course. And the trees are all gone, but the land breaths a little through this water."

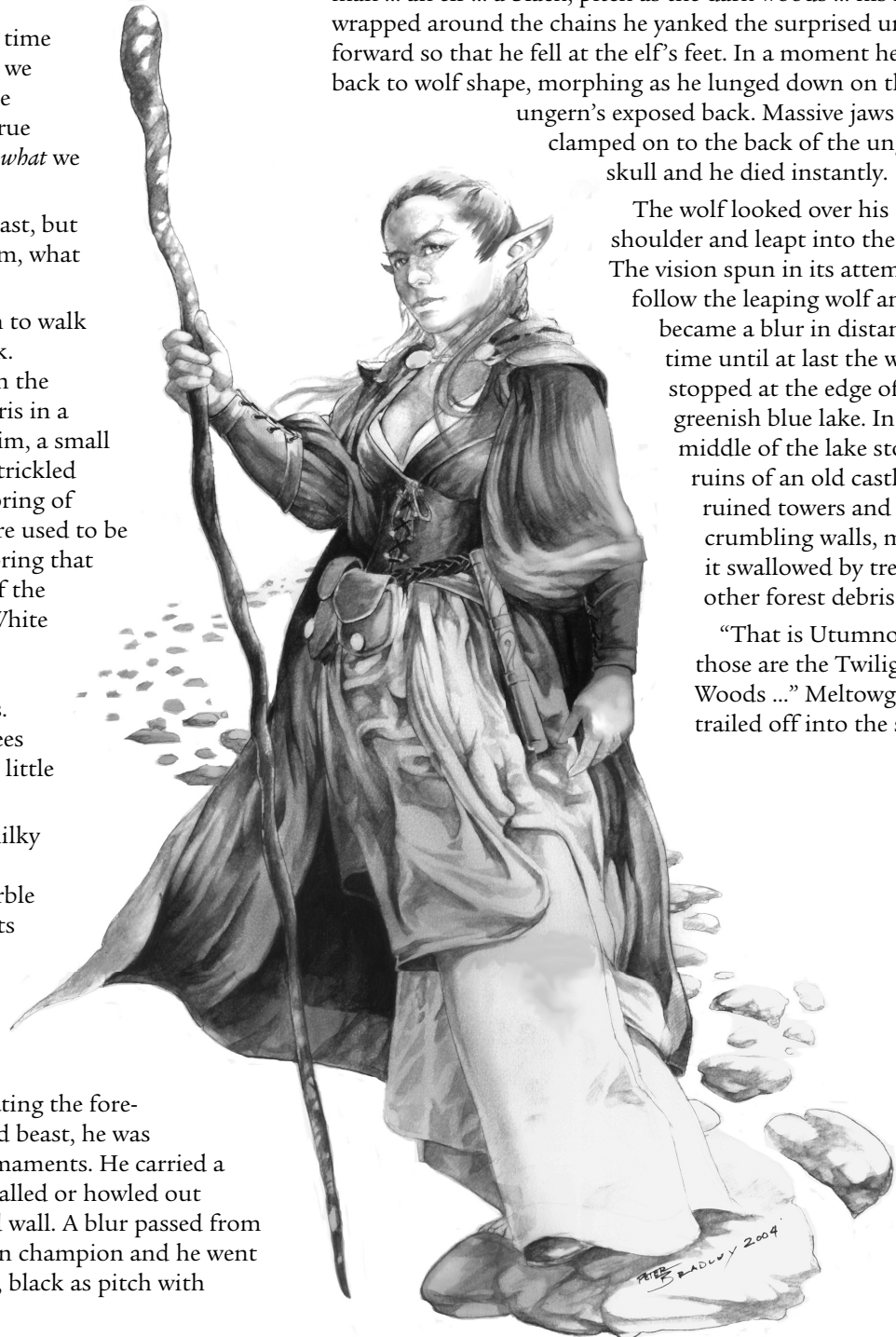
On sudden the water turned a milky white and for a fleeting moment Meltowg saw streets and white marble houses. But that was gone and in its place stood a dark forest, trees tall and straight, but whose roots were woven together in knots, like corded ropes. In the deeps, darker shadows moved. Lunging into view, dominating the foreground was some large wolf headed beast, he was bedecked in chains and strange armaments. He carried a cleaver with serrated edges and it called or howled out some barking shout to the wooded wall. A blur passed from the woods and fell upon the ungerm champion and he went down, upon his breast a huge wolf, black as pitch with green eyes.

The ungerm rolled about throwing chains wide and looping them about the beast's neck. With a massive surge he flipped the creature over onto its back and rolled to his feet. The ungerm was filled with rage and lust and laughed as he, with one hand, pulled on the chain keeping the beast at bay and with the other chopped down with his cleaver. The wolf howled in rage and though no sound came through the small windowed pool Meltowg thought he could hear the creature's pain.

In his turn the wolf rolled over, planting his feet in the hard earth and pulling back upon the chains he morphed into a man ... an elf ... a black, pitch as the dark woods ... his hands wrapped around the chains he yanked the surprised ungerm forward so that he fell at the elf's feet. In a moment he was back to wolf shape, morphing as he lunged down on the ungerm's exposed back. Massive jaws clamped on to the back of the ungerm's skull and he died instantly.

The wolf looked over his shoulder and leapt into the woods. The vision spun in its attempt to follow the leaping wolf and all became a blur in distance and time until at last the wolf stopped at the edge of wide, greenish blue lake. In the middle of the lake stood the ruins of an old castle, ruined towers and crumbling walls, much of it swallowed by trees and other forest debris.

"That is Utumno and those are the Twilight Woods ..." Meltowg's voice trailed off into the swamp.





AFTER WINTER'S DARK THE EPIC BEGINS

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GREAT HITS & TERRIBLE MISSES

BY JEFFREY P. TALANIAN

The goblin chieftain jabs his spear into Lockbeard's thigh. The dwarf grunts, then cries out to his ancestors as he retaliates, bringing down his battleaxe with unbridled might. The axe knocks aside the goblin's shield and bites clean through the crook of the humanoid's arm, severing it at the elbow. The goblin chieftain collapses to its knees, stunned, a jet of blood spurting from its remaining stump. The wound is critical. Lockbeard grits his teeth and prepares to deliver the coup de grâce . . .

It was over 27 years ago that Carl Parlagreco's *Good Hits & Bad Misses* article appeared in the pages of *Dragon* #39, introducing role-players worldwide to the controversial concept of the critical hit and the fumble. At once combat was made more dramatic with these optional rules implemented.

"Crit!" and "Fumble!"

were cried out by gamers everywhere whenever the casting of the die resulted as such. And lest we forget that pang of dread felt when the referee looked up from his screen with a smug smile and said, "Crit," for even the lowliest kobold javelineer could effect your favorite character's most unfortunate demise.

So, just what are critical hits and fumbles? They are indeed the greatest of hits and most terrible of misses, as the title of this article suggests. An attacker who scores a critical hit deals extra damage, sometimes with other debilitating conditions resulting. An attacker who fumbles has lost control of his or her attack — a complete blunder, if you would.

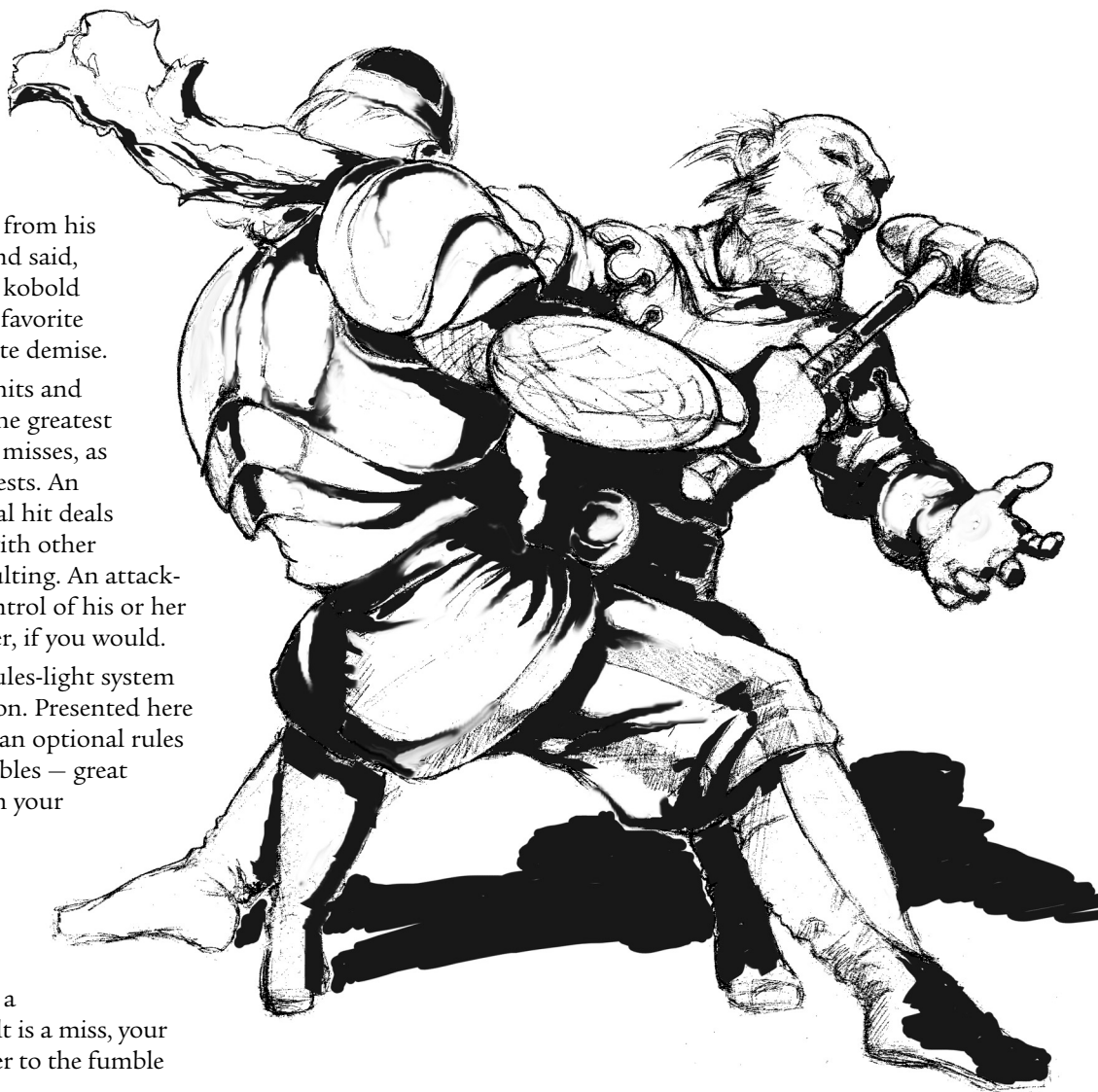
Castles & Crusades is a rules-light system that facilitates customization. Presented here is one such customization, an optional rules set for critical hits and fumbles — great hits and terrible misses — in your C&C game.

How to Roll a Fumble:

If you roll a natural '1' on a d20 attack roll and the result is a miss, your character has fumbled. Refer to the fumble chart and roll a d%.

How to Roll a Crit:

If you roll a natural '20' on a d20 attack roll and the result is a hit, your character has scored a critical hit. Refer to the appropriate crit chart (i.e., bludgeoning, slashing, piercing, animal) and roll a d%.



CRITICAL MISS EFFECTS TABLE
(FUMBLES) — ALL WEAPONS

d%	RESULT
01-50	Slip, lose action
51-80	Stumble, lose footing, -1 AC penalty for 1 round.
81	Trip, fall, and bang head, dazed for 1 round. No effect if wearing helm.
82	Lose grip, drop weapon (no effect if no weapon), roll 1d8 for direction, 1d12 for feet.
83	Weapon or shield tangled with opponent; lose 1 round to disentangle or let go of item.
84	Weapon breaks (base 100%, -20% for each “plus” and/or weapon ability)
85	Poke self in eye; 1d4 damage and blinded for 1 round.
86	Hit own head for 1/2 damage (no effect if helmed).
87	Stumble; genitals slammed, dazed for 1 round.
88	Helm slips over eyes (no effect if no helm); blinded for 1 round.
89	Armor malfunction (no effect if no armor); -2 AC penalty.
90	Sprain ankle; lose action. 1d2 subdual damage, -2 dexterity until healed.
91	Jam toes; stumble forward 5 feet. If in melee, opponent gets a free shot at +2 “to hit.”
92	Slip, fall, break leg; 1d6 damage and prone for 1 round.
93	Slip, fall, bang head; knocked out (defenseless) for 1d2 rounds (no effect if helmed).
94	Hit self; normal damage
95	Hit self; normal damage +2.
96	Hit closest ally; half damage. Ally must be within weapon range.
97	Hit closest ally; normal damage. Ally must be within weapon range.
98	Hit closest ally; double damage. Ally must be within weapon range.
99	Hit closest ally; crit! Refer to appropriate crit chart for weapon type and roll d%. Ally must be within weapon range.
00	Freak accident. If using a blunt weapon, you smash your own face to pulp — immediate death! If using a piercing weapon, you fall on your weapon and impale yourself — immediate death! If using a slashing weapon, you behead yourself — immediate death! No matter how you look at it, you’re toast.

CRITICAL HIT EFFECTS TABLE —
BLUNT (BLUDGEONING) WEAPONS

d%	RESULT
01-50	+1 damage.
51-80	+2 damage
81	Groin bashed; +2 damage, dazed for 1 round.
82	Ribs bruised; +2 damage. Wind knocked out (dazed) 1d2 rounds.
83	Fingers bashed (no effect if gauntlet or shield); +2 damage. 1d4 fingers broken.
84	Arm injury; +2 damage. Arm is numb and useless for 1d4 rounds.
85	Nose broken (no effect if helmed); +2 damage, dazed 1 round.
86	Ear mashed; +2 damage. If no helm, stunned 1 round.
87	Brained; double damage. If no helm, Constitution save CL 3 or fall and prone 1d6 rounds.
88	Leg injury; double damage. Leg is broken, fall and be prone 1d4 rounds; -2 dexterity until healed.
89	Hip injury; double damage. Pelvis fractured; fall and prone for 2d4 rounds, -4 dexterity until healed, no movement until healed.
90	Rib injury; double damage. 1d4 ribs broken; stunned for 1d4 rounds.
91	Arm injury; double damage. Arm is broken; -2 strength until healed.
92	Shoulder injury; double damage. Clavicle is broken; -3 strength until healed.
93	Knee cap shattered; double damage. Fall and prone for 1d4 rounds; -4 dexterity until healed.
94	Throat bashed (helm torn away); double damage. Stunned 1d4 rounds and larynx is damaged: voice forever reduced to raspy whisper unless <i>regenerated</i> .
95	Chest crushed, ribs broken; double damage. Knocked back 10’ and stunned for 1d4 rounds. Constitution save CL 5 or broken ribs perforate internal organs: death in 2d6 turns, unless <i>magically healed</i> .
96	Arm shattered, multiple fractures (shield torn away); double damage. Anything in hand is dropped. Permanent -1 strength loss, unless <i>regeneration</i> is cast.
97	Face smashed (helm torn away); triple damage. Nose and cheek bones shattered, 1d4 teeth lost; -1 charisma. Constitution save CL 5 or knocked out (defenseless) for 2d6 rounds.
98	Neck broken (helm torn away); triple damage. Unconscious (defenseless) for 3d6 rounds. Constitution save CL 10 or subject is permanently paralyzed from the neck down.

- 99 Skull fractured (helm destroyed); triple damage. Constitution save CL 10 or die; otherwise, subject is knocked out (**defenseless**) for 3d6 turns and suffers permanent intelligence loss (-2).
- 00 Skull crushed (helm destroyed). Brain squashed like a ripe melon. Immediate death!

- 96 Arm run through; double damage. Dexterity save CL 7 or arm severed at elbow and bleeding 1-6 HP per round for until cauterized or well bandaged (wisdom check required).
- 97 Lower abdominal perforation; triple damage. Constitution save CL 10 or die in 2d4 turns, unless magically healed.
- 98 Throat stabbed; triple damage. Dexterity save CL 10 or jugular vein and/or carotid artery severed; death in 1d4 rounds unless magically healed. If dex save is successful, subject is **stunned** 1d4 rounds and **bleeding** 1-4 HP per round until bandaged..
- 99 Head stabbed (helm destroyed); triple damage. Dexterity save CL 10 or brain impaled, immediate death. If dex save is successful, permanent brain damage (-2 intelligence) and **defenseless** for 1d4 rounds.
- 00 Chest impaled. Complete run through. Heart skewered like a coney on a stick. Immediate death!

CRITICAL HIT EFFECTS TABLE — THRUSTING (PIERCING) AND MIS- SILE WEAPONS

d%	RESULT
01-50	+1 damage.
51-80	+2 damage
81	Achilles tendon poked; +2 damage, 5 foot movement only until healed.
82	Knee punctured; +2 damage, fall and be prone.
83	Hip poked; +2 damage. Subject is turned 180 degrees.
84	Ribs pierced; +2 damage. Dexterity save or stunned for 1 round.
85	Hand punctured (no effect if gauntlet or shield hand); +2 damage; anything in hand drops.
86	Ear ripped (no effect if helmed); +2 damage, dazed 1 round.
87	Chin gouged (no effect if helmed); +2 damage, stunned 1 round.
88	Forehead lacerated (helm torn away); double damage. Blood seeps into eyes causing temporary blindness for 1d4 rounds.
89	Leg impaled; double damage. Fall and prone for 1d4 rounds.
90	Wrist impaled; double damage and bleeding -1 HP per round unless bandaged. Any in-hand item is dropped.
91	Lower back punctured; double damage. Internal bleeding 1 point of damage per round for 1d4 rounds, followed by death (sepsis) in 3-12 days if magical healing not administered.
92	Arm impaled; double damage. Major artery severed; bleeding 1-2 points of damage per round until bandaged.
93	Eye gouged; double damage. Dexterity save or eye is destroyed.
94	Skull perforated; double damage. Subject is knocked out (defenseless) for 1d4 rounds.
95	Chest perforated; double damage. Possible run-through; Dexterity save CL 5 or immediate death. Even if dex save succeeds, internal bleeding of 1d4 damage per round for 1d6 rounds, followed by death (ruptured spleen) in 24 hours, unless magical healing administered.

CRITICAL HIT EFFECTS TABLE — EDGED (SLASHING) WEAPONS

d%	RESULT
01-50	+1 damage.
51-80	+2 damage.
81	Leg slashed; +2 damage. -2 AC penalty for 1 round.
82	Stomach slashed; +2 damage. Bleeding -1 HP per round for 1d4 rounds unless bandaged.
83	Chest gashed; +2 damage. Subject is knocked back 1d6+4 feet.
84	Arm slashed (no effect if shield); +2 damage. Dexterity save or brachial artery cut; bleeding -1 point of damage per round for 2d4 rounds.
85	Forehead slashed (no effect if helmed); +2 damage. Blood seeps into eyes causing blindness for 1d4 rounds.
86	Face slashed (no effect if helmed); +2 damage, dazed 1d2 rounds.
87	Scalp slashed (helm torn away); double damage, stunned 1d2 rounds.
88	Achilles tendon lacerated; double damage. Fall and prone for 3d6 rounds; half movement and -3 dexterity for 3-6 months unless magically healed.
89	Abdomen slashed; double damage and bleeding 1 point of damage per round until bandaged.
90	Chest slashed; wind knocked out, stunned 1d4 rounds.
91	Hand slashed; double damage. Dexterity save CL 3 or 1d4 fingers removed and bleeding 1 point of damage per round until bandaged.

GREAT HITS & TERRIBLE MISSES

- 92** Skull sliced (helm torn away); double damage. Constitution save CL 5 or knocked out (**defenseless**) for 1d2 rounds.
- 93** Neck slashed (helm torn away); double damage. Bleeding at 1d4 damage per round until bandaged.
- 94** Leg deep-slashed; double damage. Dexterity save CL 5 or leg is severed at the knee and bleeding 1d6 damage per round until cauterized or proficiently bandaged (wisdom check required).
- 95** Arm slashed (shield destroyed, unless magical); double damage. Dexterity save CL 5 or arm severed at elbow and bleeding 1d6 damage per round until cauterized or proficiently bandaged (wisdom check required).
- 96** Lower abdomen slashed; triple damage and **stunned** 1d4 rounds. Constitution save CL 7 or die (pancreas perforation) in 2d4 hours (unless magically healed).
- 97** Chest ripped open; constitution save CL 10 or immediate death (aorta gashed). Otherwise, triple damage and bleeding 2 points of damage per round until bandaged.
- 98** Throat slashed (helm torn away); triple damage and bleeding 1d6 damage per round until bandaged. Dexterity save CL 10 or carotid artery severed resulting in death in 1d4 rounds, unless *magical healing* administered.
- 99** Skull caved in (helm torn away); triple damage. Constitution save CL 10 or die. If con save is successful, permanent brain damage (-2 intelligence) and subject is **defenseless** for 2d4 rounds.
- 00** Decapitated. Head lobbed off body. As the head of this sorry victim hurls skyward, its body crumples to its knees, then plops chest-first to the ground. Finally, the head lands with a thump. Immediate death!
- 87-88** Eyes struck; +2 damage, **blinded** 1d4 rounds.
- 89-90** Ear struck; +2 damage, **stunned** 1d4 rounds.
- 91-92** Head wound; double damage. Constitution save CL 5 or **stunned** for 1d4 rounds.
- 93-94** Abdominal injury; double damage. Constitution save CL 5 or **stunned** for 1d4 rounds
- 95** Chest/torso injury; double damage. Dexterity save or internal bleeding; -2 HP per round.
- 96** Snout injury; double damage. Constitution save CL 10 or knocked out (**defenseless**) for 1d4 rounds.
- 97** Throat injury; double damage. Dexterity save CL 10 or bleeding 1d6 damage per round unless bandaged.
- 98** Head struck; triple damage; knocked down and **prone** for 1d4 rounds.
- 99** Head struck; triple damage; **defenseless** for 1d6 rounds.
- 00** Decapitated; immediate death.

Condition Summaries.

The following conditions are noted in **boldface** in the above charts:

Dazed: no actions possible.

Stunned: no actions possible; foes get +2 to hit.

Prone: no actions possible; foes get +5 to hit.

Defenseless: no actions possible; foes get a +10 to hit.

Blinded: suffer -10 to attack rolls, lose dexterity bonus to AC, movement speed reduced by 1/2, and suffer a -4 penalty on strength and dexterity checks.

Other Debilitating Conditions

Broken bones. Broken bones can be healed by a simple spell such as *cure light wounds*, though a resulting soreness may be imposed by the Castle Keeper. Broken bones not healed by means magical should be handled judiciously by the Castle Keeper. I suggest a lingering movement penalty (if involving the legs or hip) or strength penalty (if involving the arms or chest). Hit points may of course be naturally restored with proper rest, but the effects of broken bones can linger for weeks, perhaps months or years sans magical treatment.

Bleeding. Bleeding can at once be stemmed by means magical, which of course renders the orison *first aid* far the more valuable when using these optional rules. Note that some extreme forms of bleeding can not be stemmed by normal bandaging. It is reasonable to assume that any adventurer is capable of bandaging a bleeding wound if clean bandages are readily available; however, if one is attempting to shave off a piece of a dirty, old cloak, or the conditions are otherwise difficult, a wisdom check should be required, the challenge level of which is the purview of the Castle Keeper. The CK need also determine case by case how many rounds such bandaging takes.

CRITICAL HIT EFFECTS TABLE — ALL WEAPONS VERSUS: ANIMALS, BEASTS (MAGICAL AND NON-), AND DRAGONS.

Also may include some Aberrations, Extraplanar, Shapechangers, and Vermin.

d%	RESULT
01-50	+1 damage.
51-80	+2 damage.
81-82	Abdominal injury; +2 damage. Constitution save CL 3 or dazed for 1 round.
83-84	Chest/torso injury; +2 damage. Strength save CL 3 or subject is pushed back 10 feet.
85-86	Snout struck; +2 damage; dazed 1d2 rounds.

Other Options and Considerations:

On damage multipliers. Damage multipliers (double, triple) should be applied to base damage only, or else players will be rolling up new characters routinely, which can sap the fun out of gaming.

Qualifiers. The Castle Keeper should always decide whether the fumble or the crit is appropriate to the situation at hand. The CK should also arbitrate whether certain creatures can possibly fumble at all. For example, a swarm of insects will not fumble; rather, they will simply miss their respective target. Likewise, some creatures should never be subject to a crit: Constructs, elementals, oozes, plants and undead should all be immune to critical hits for lack of any vital areas to their respective anatomies.

Crit to Hit. There are some cases where even a natural '20' is not enough to strike an opponent's AC. Lenient Castle Keepers may use an optional "crit to hit" rule in which any combatant has a chance to strike their respective target on a natural '20' roll. A follow-up d20 attack roll should also be used, and if a second natural '20' is rolled, then the result is a crit; otherwise, normal damage applies.

Dealing with armor. Exploring the minutia of combat does not always suit a fantasy role-playing game; determining the integrity of armor is one such detail often avoided, and justifiably so. Remember, combat in C&C is an abstraction, not a simulation. That said, there will be instances in which the subject of a critical hit is, say, wearing a chain shirt when he is slashed across the chest for extra bleeding damage. It is the Castle Keeper's option as to whether such physical damage also implies armor damage. Mike Stewart covers this concept admirably in *The Crusader Vol 1, #2*. Damaged armor often leads the characters to seek a local smithy, which can add to the flavor of the game; I know my players always enjoy such exchanges.

Finally, the Castle Keeper should modify any of the above rules and optional extensions thereof as suits the individual campaign. Remember, Castle Keepers, the rules are your servant, not your master, and this applies to great hits and terrible misses as well!



JEFF TALANIAN

hails from the land where folks "Live Free or Die!"

He began gaming in 1981 when one day his pal brought to their 5th grade class a blue box called Dungeons & Dragons.

So it began! Jeff is the author of four of the upcoming Castle Zagyg: Yggsburgh expansion modules, as well as Gary Gygax's co-author of Castle Zagyg: The East Mark Gazetteer Folio.

These days he is at work on another rather large project, also being co-authored by the esteemed Mr. Gygax.



In Development Now: CLEAVER THE PIT

Players create characters that fight in an arena. The characters are represented by a series of stats from which to extrapolate combat. The stats are generated randomly. Combat is conducted through a series of dice rolls and counter rolls to determine if one character hits another. Armor, weapons and skills can effect the outcome of each dice roll. Once a hit is scored, damage is determined. Once a character has exhausted his life points, the character is dead.

<http://www.trolllord.com/newsite/games/7750.html>

KEEPER'S NOTES

BY DAVIS CHENAULT



DAVIS CHENAULT

was born way back during the 1960s, when free love and happiness reigned in a world seemingly without consequence. A product of a military upbringing he managed to jettison all the cultural baggage that bogged down the whole host of anyone who lived in that era. He wandered the trackless wastes of life spending precious hours trying to decide what to do with his precious hours, until he at last found a home amongst the dead, digging up the debris of other, long dead, people's lives and examining and comparing their relative value to his own world.

"Archeology," Davis is known to have claimed, "is the well-spring of all my knowledge of social-drinking houses!"

After a decade of cultural anthropology, Davis gave up the good life for gardening, in between which he designs and writes games for Troll Lord Games. His most notable achievements: Castles & Crusades and a cast iron out-door stove, acquired from his neighbor.



Time is a valuable thing. Perhaps it is not the most valuable of things but it is close. So why, oh why do we waste time? I say, quit wasting time since it does have some value and comes in limited amounts to us. (And spare me the quantum physics. It is limited.) In gaming we spend a lot of time. There is time used to in playing, the time used in preparation, the time used in reading, the time used in discussion, the time used pondering and the time used to get the money to buy the books. There is a lot of time being spent gaming. Add it up. Don't think about it though.

But I don't really care about that time. That time is your time do dispense with it as you choose. I care about another time - game time. Or, more accurately, the time that passes within the game as understood by the characters.

Their time is what I am concerned with. This time has no real value and comes in unlimited quantities. Yet, game time is squandered and wasted. The real life valuation of time intersects with game time valuation. Remember, one is limited the other not. One effects us, the other not.

Quit wasting game time, it is an unlimited and valueless resource. Eat it all up.

This is what I am getting at. In too many games, the players want to labor through each day of their characters lives nary wasting a moment of it. Even if nothing is happening, players want their characters to be doing something. Sometimes this devolves into sight-seeing, wine tasting (actually happened), tree examination etc. This can be aggravating at times, especially if, as the person running the game, you want time to move forward or

KEEPER'S NOTES

the characters to move on to a different local. It can be very difficult to bore players at times as they believe adventure lurks around every corner.

Well, maybe it des and maybe you run your games like that. That's fine, as long as everyone is enjoying themselves. However, if your games are like this, both the players and Castle Keeper are missing out on an underutilized aspect of the game -time. Let some time pass. Perhaps a day or two, maybe a week or month, dare to pass a season, and bravely move one year along or, if you are really a risk taker, pass a decade.

Why? Why? Why? Simply put, so things happen. Many things can happen as time passes, empires on the verge of collapse could fall into ruin, wars started and finished, new territories found, evil arises etc etc etc. So many more things can happen in a decade than a day it is phenomenal. The changes that occur keep the game environment alive and vibrant. It can seem as if the world the characters occupy is actually a living one and not one just made up to amuse them.

Pass some time.

Now, on to another point. With the passage of time, the characters age. Oh how players loathe to have their characters age. Or seem to anyway. (As a side note, I believe that as we actually age, this becomes less and less of a problem.) Everyone starts their character young and, after perhaps a years worth of playing (real time) have aged, maybe, lets see, TWO minutes. OK, I'll be fair, a few months if one is lucky.

Well heck, let those characters age, let them become gray bearded and wizened. The time has no value, the adventuring world is still there and as an added benefit, in Castles and Crusades there is no penalty for aging. A character essentially stays young forever. The only thing which change are the adventures and the appearance of the character. Boom. Who cares if a year passes and the character is one year older. Whoopee, there are still orcs in them thar hills, still mounds of treasure piled up somewhere and there are no tangible drawbacks.

Consider this as well. As some time passes (say after a particularly fame worthy adventure) the character can earn a reputation which can spread far and wide. How cool is this scenario; the characters undertake some arduous task and save a region of a horde of nasties. Afterwards they go into semi-retirement. After five or so years and the characters have become comfortable a new evil arises and a beleaguered young man comes to them for aid. They pick up rusty swords and scurry to find old wands before heading out again to defeat some malignant force.

In any respect, time can be used to enhance any game. Allow it to pass and change the world a little (characters and environment). Once you start down this road, you will not regret it. At least give it a try. Who cares, the time has no value and you can actually give it back. So quit wasting time.

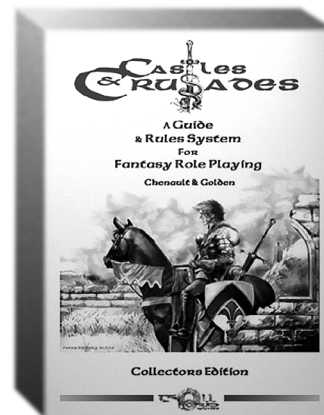


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**TROLL
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the Angry Gamer

A Column by A Troll & An Aquatic Troll

How College Ruined My Role Playing Game

The sky is clear, only a few clouds drifting lazily across the pale blue expanse. A breeze rolls off the plains, carrying with it the smell of summer grass and a recent rain, probably nothing more than a shower in the late hours of the morning. Far to the west, a hedge of dark green, no doubt the Twilight Wood, dominates the horizon. The river is slow moving here, broad and flat, almost featureless and its slow, lazy current makes working the barge poles seem almost effortless. Here and there, clustered in small groups, you spy alligators, mostly large adults, but a few juveniles sprinkled amongst them, sunning themselves. They watch your almost torpid movements with half-closed lids, some few growing interested enough in the strange object to slip into the muck along the riverbanks and vanish beneath the water. Soon, you find the going a little more difficult as the river, slowed now to a crawl, becomes tangled with all manner of water fauna. Soon the grasses turn the river bed into muck and the going is slowed. The alligators become a little..."

Did you say Muck?

Yes.

What? Muck? I thought we were still in the river.

You are. Its just got muck in it, slowing. . . .

No. It can't have muck.

What?

Muck. It can't have muck.

Why can't there be muck in the river?

Because muck isn't found in rivers.

What?

Muck is not found in rivers.

What are you talking about. There's muck in rivers.

No. Not muck. Muck is only found in wetlands.

Muck is just a bunch of crap, mud and the like.

Where in the world did you get that idea? Muck is made up primarily of humus from drained swampland. It is also known as "black soil," as in The Fens of eastern England.

Well there's muck in this river.

You can't have muck in a river. Drained swampland is not a river. You might have something in the river, an organic substrate of the right mixture, that a layperson might incorrectly describe as "muck," but

any true muck dumped in a river would be pushed downstream and deposited elsewhere. That's like you saying there's sand in a river.

But there's muck in this river, because I'm CKing and I want muck in the mucking river! And what your talking about? There IS sand in rivers?!?!?

The proper term in this context would be silt, that is, soil suspended in a water column. Although with all this muck talk being flung about, I supposed that logically there is no water column...

I'm the bloody Castle Keeper I can have sandy muck if I want to!

When you say there's muck in a river it doesn't make any sense because there can't be muck in a river. I know it's a fantasy game but how am I supposed to imagine something stupid?

Its just MUCK!!! I just said MUCK. MUCK. MUCK. MUCK.

You can repeat it all you want but there is no muck in a river! Why don't you say "drained sampland" instead of "muck" and see how your flavor text sounds then Mr. CK high-and-mighty! "Look at me, I'm rowing a boat through drained swampland! Loody loo! I'm not a cleric, I'm a bloody archmage!"

Muck! Muck! Muck!

(From across the table) Hey if we aren't technically in the river anymore I'm going to put on my banded mail.

?!?!?!? What are you talking about? HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO TELL YOU THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS BANDED MAIL!!!

THAT'S IT, EVERYONE ROLL INITIATIVE!!!

College Ruined my Role Playing Game.





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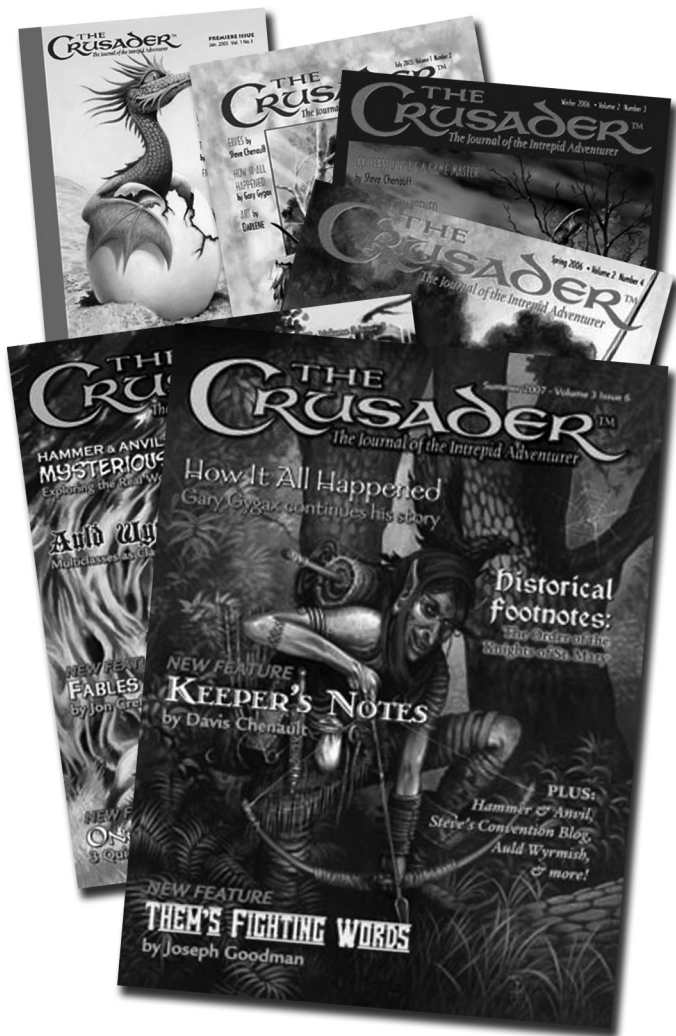
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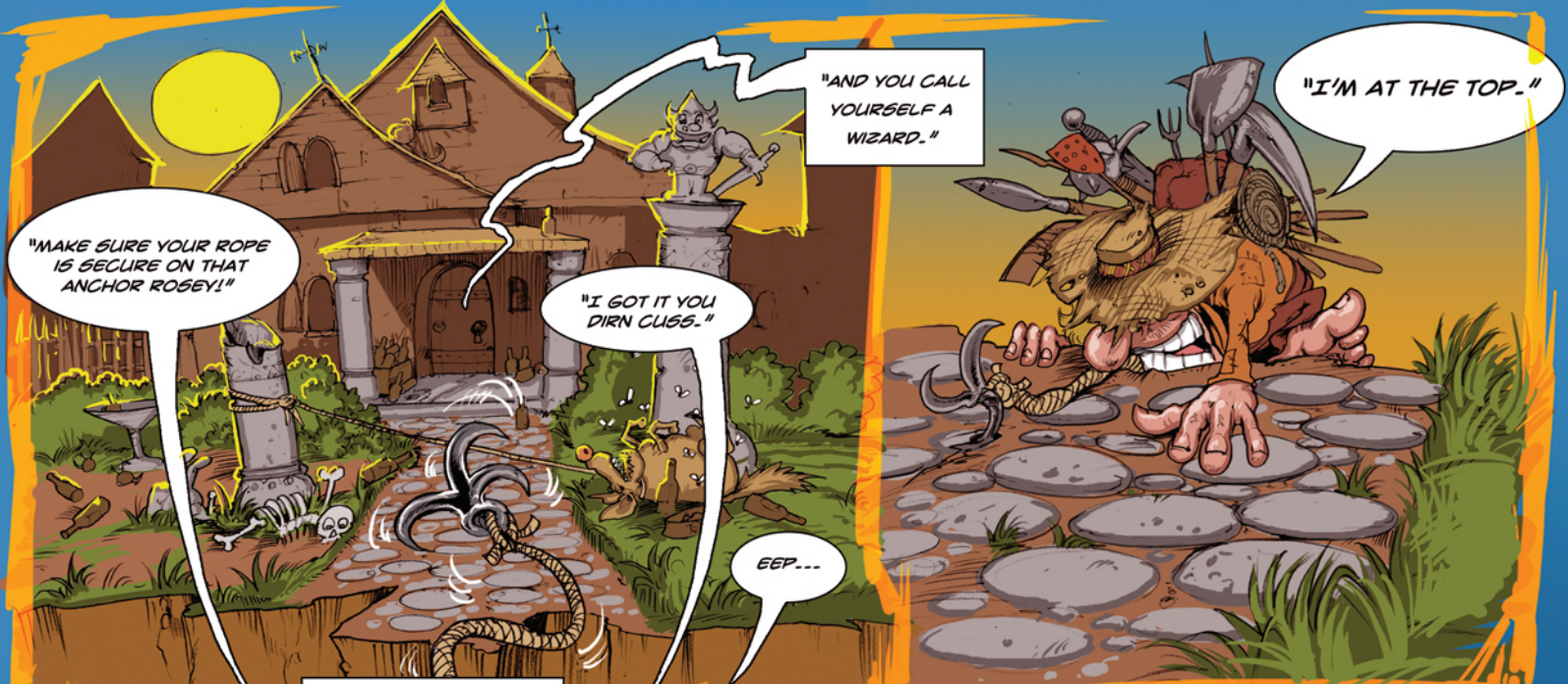
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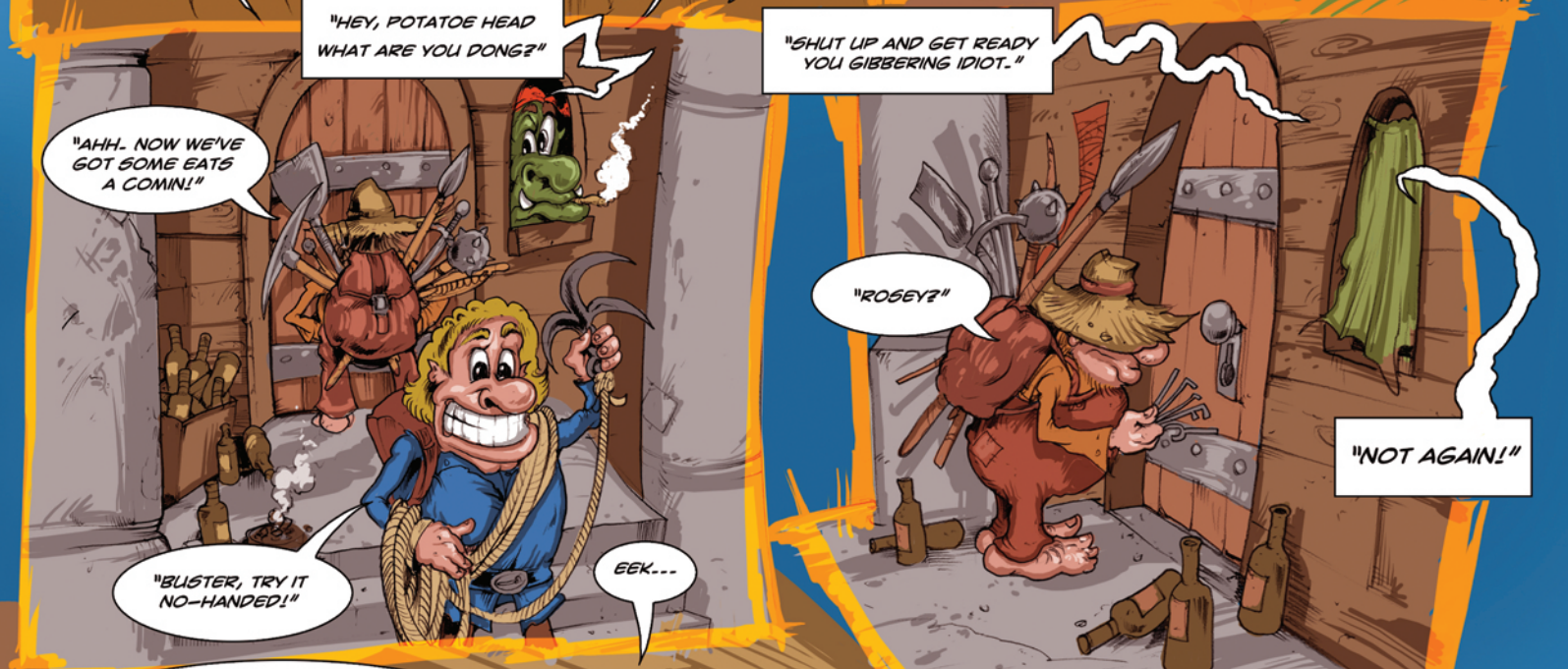
"MAKE SURE YOUR ROPE IS SECURE ON THAT ANCHOR ROSEY!"

"I GOT IT YOU DIRN CUSS."

"AND YOU CALL YOURSELF A WIZARD."

"I'M AT THE TOP."

EEP...



"HEY, POTATOE HEAD WHAT ARE YOU DONGZ?"

"SHUT UP AND GET READY YOU GIBBERING IDIOT."

"AHH. NOW WE'VE GOT SOME EATS A COMIN!"

"ROSEY?"

"NOT AGAIN!"

"BUSTER, TRY IT NO-HANDED!"

EEK...



"WE HAVE SKOBBITS ON THE FRONT PORCH!"

BAM!!

ROSSSEEWY!

WHAP!

WHAP!

WHAP!

EEK?

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