

May 2008 Volume 4 Number 9

# THE CRUSADER™

*The Journal of the Intrepid Adventurer*

HOW IT ALL  
HAPPENED

BY GARY GYGAX

AT LOOK AT  
4TH EDITION

BY STEPHEN CHENAULT

HAMMER  
& ANVIL

BY CASEY CANFIELD

THE AIHRDIAN  
CHRONICLES

BY STEPHEN CHENAULT

THE ANGRY  
GAMER

BY A TROLL

THE  
DWEOMER-  
CRAFTER'S  
DEN

BY JEFFREY P TALANIAN

WITH GARY GYGAX

SLIPPERY  
SLOPE

AN ADVENTURE

BY JOE DAMINAI

AULD  
WYRMISH

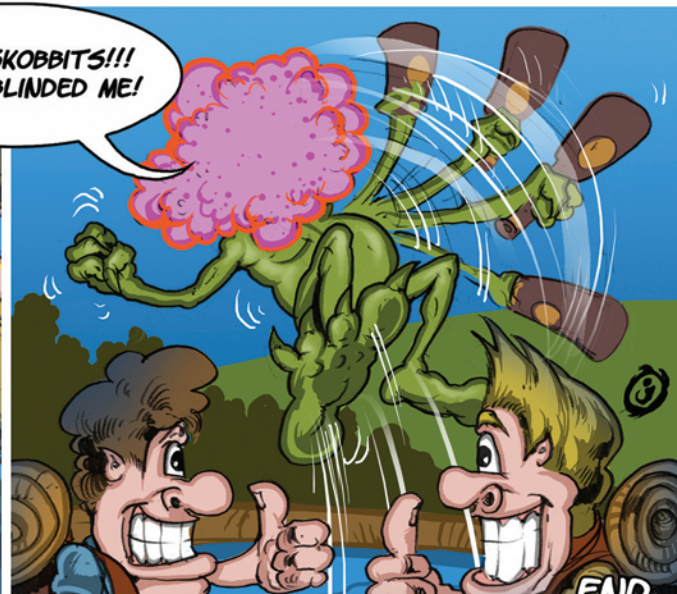
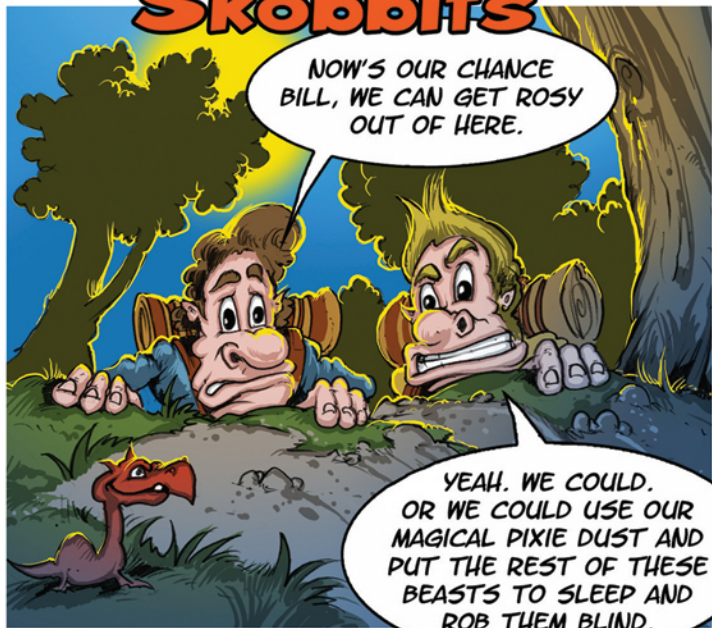
BY MIKE STEWART

**TROLLISH  
GREATNESS  
INSIDE!**



# Revenge of the Skobbits

by Stephen Chenault Art by Jason Walton



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## CONTENTS

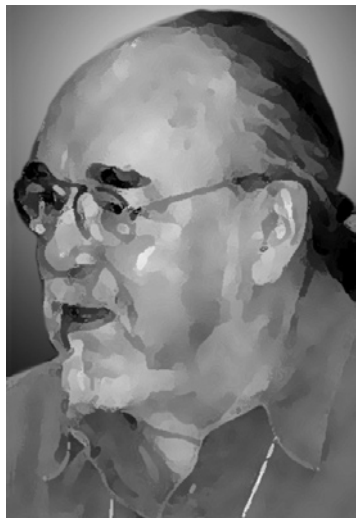
- 2 HOW IT ALL HAPPENED: Ghostly Happenings  
• by Gary Gygax
- 3 ALEA IACTA EST: 4th Edition  
• by Stephen Chenault
- 7 HAMMER & ANVIL: The Campaign Setting:  
Environs: Part I • by Casey Canfield
- 13 AN INTRODUCTION TO CARD MODELING  
• by Tom Tullis
- 16 THE AIHRDIAN CHRONICLES: Of Trees  
and the Trolls • by Stephen Chenault
- 20 THE ANGRY GAMER:  
• by Some Angry Troll Dude
- 21 MOAT GATE—A SAMPLER  
• by Don Mac Vittie
- 24 THE DWEOMERCRAEFTER'S DEN  
• by Jeffrey P. Talanian with Gary Gygax • edited by Gary Gygax
- 27 MUSINGS FROM THE DEN  
• by Stephen Chenault
- 28 SLIPPERY SLOPE: An Adventure for Levels 1-2  
• by Joe Damiani
- 31 AULD WYRMISH • by Mike Stewart

Issue 8 retraction – the Keeper's Notes article was written by Casey Canfield, and not Davis Chenault as originally printed. We apologize for the error.

# 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...*

## *Ghostly Happenings...Part II*



### 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".

Those following this series will have a pretty fair idea of the house on 925 Dodge Street. Just to make sure, I'll give a brief verbal description of the ground floor layout south to north: full-front screened in porch, entry hall with staircase up, sliding door ahead to dining room, sliding door east to living room; north from dining room to kitchen with water closet, pantry and utility area with side door and back door also leading to basement; north of long living room, sewing room (former maid's room). The place was big, had six bedrooms above, and made plenty of noise as frame houses are wont to...

November in Wisconsin is dreary at best. I was 11, home from school with nothing to do. No friends were around, and the weather was cold and damp, so I decided to stay inside and read. My mother was away in Illinois visiting relatives, but she had told me she would be home by six or so. It was a Monday, so father was not coming home from Chicago on the train as usual. My sister had married and moved out before we moved to Lake Geneva, and my brother had joined the Air Force two years before. Grandfather and grandmother left for Florida or California just before Halloween each year, returning in mid-April. I was quite alone.

It was already near twilight by the time I found a book I wanted to read, a volume of Poe's works, *Tales of Terror*, a book from the collection that I often read from. In the center of the living room, near the outside wall stood the armchair my grandfather favored, a floor lamp to the left hand for reading. I settled into that seat, switched on the light, decided that the "The Fall of the House of Usher" sounded like a story that should hold my interest. As soon as I began reading, the white tomcat Queball, that I had inherited when my brother left, joined me. A quick scratching behind the ears was all he expected when I was reading. We were both content.

About the time the strange sounds were issuing from the burial vault below the House of Usher, things changed radically. Queball dug his claws into my leg, that getting my

immediate attention. I looked away from the book to glare at the cat, saw that he was staring unwinkingly at the door to the sewing room. The only light in house was that of my reading lamp, and the few inches of space behind the partially opened door showed nothing but darkness. As I looked into that gloom the door swung slowly inwards a full foot and a half. At that the cat arose, back arched, tail up, fur standing out. My own crew-cut hair was also horripilated, because after the door swung open thus, the oak floorboards creaked exactly as they did when someone heavy walked upon them. That seeming invisible entity proceeded slowly from the doorway the six or eight steps necessary to stand right beside the armchair I was sitting in fear-frozen terror as Queball hissed and spat savagely.

After what seemed minutes but was surely no more than a few heartbeats, the cat relaxed, lay down again in my lap. When that happened I leaped up, unceremoniously dumping him on the floor in my haste to get away from the spot. I turned on the other lights in the living room, then the dining room and kitchen, when to the hall, flipped the light switch there, ran upstairs to my room and armed. With machete and hunting knife in my belt and a hunting arrow knocked to my bowstring, I proceeded back to the living room. There I sat with eyes fixed on the sewing room door until my mother came in about a half of an hour later. Although she assured me that there was nothing to worry about, it took me a long time to mentally deal with the very real scare I had had. I knew there certainly was something "unusual" in the house. Although I never had another paranormal experience there, two of my friends, Bill Fleming and Rom Keogh did. Neither would stay overnight and sleep in the upper bunk, Something unseen with a huge hand pressed them down into the mattress. Nothing happened to me when I slept in that bed...

So the uncanny was introduced to me in inescapable manner. The same is so in regards to physical danger. I'll touch on a few of those incidents in the next essay in this series, so please join me then.

# ALEA IACTA EST



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

## 4th Edition: The Beginning of the End of the Beginning

I must confess that when I heard about the release of 2nd Edition Dungeons & Dragons I never really intellectually conceived that there would be future editions. And as the years tumbled and passed by, any thought of future renditions of the game slipped even from my subconscious thought. Of course I never switched from AD&D, nor became involved in any kind of marketing concepts which would make me understand the need manufacturers have for creating new product. So when 3rd Edition arrived, I was genuinely surprised.

The sad part is actually how surprised I was as we were in the midst of founding Troll Lord Games (that would be Mac Golden, Davis Chenault and myself) when they were getting ready for the release of 3rd edition. I remember Mac was talking about it, some of the things he had read on newsgroups and other internet sources (I didn't use the internet much in those long ago days), what the game was going to be like, the new skills and feats and so on. We were discussing this trying to figure out which route to take our own company; whether we should try to get the new d20 license they were talking about, make our own game, or make a similar game, etc. This would have been late in 1999 and early 2000. Davis and Mac discussed the new game, its mechanics, how it worked, compared notes on what they would do with the property or on what and how they conceptualized a fantasy RPG. Notes were written down, compared and gone over and they would argue about this or that. I remember it well too, because I sat there in Vinos Pizza Joint trying to understand what they were going on about; but I couldn't hear them as there was this constant buzzing sound at the table, like a constant droning of car engines or something. Davis and Mac never seemed to notice it. I could only get it out of my head by going to a happy place--you know, thinking about things like how great the wild west would be, pressing wild flowers, chopping down trees, eating my lunch etc. Once in a while, they asked me a question and for a brief moment the droning would stop so that I could answer. I'm pretty sure I answered everything

with "we have to keep it cheap", or if it was about rules with "I let them do max damage on a critical hit and add 1d4" as that's the only rule I ever actually developed *and* remembered.

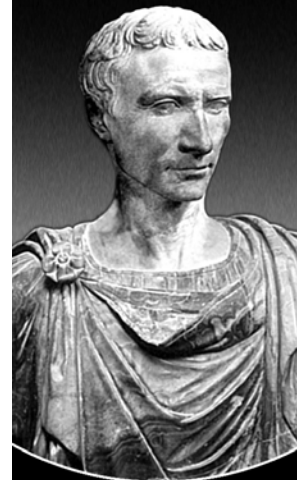
So, six months later at Gen Con after they had made our own RPG *Sword and Sorcery* and we had written three modules and a setting (this is what I did while they worked on the rules) I was genuinely surprised to see Dungeons and Dragons 3rd Edition Books. I probably asked Mac what they were and he probably said "That's what I've been telling you about for the past six months" (his voice would have been rather calm as Mac is generally rather calm), and I would have thought hmmm interesting, and thought nothing more about it until I noticed the ascending armor classes which both baffled and scared me . . . huh? a negative number is no longer greater than a positive one? Madness!

Of course, the release of 3rd Edition was earth shattering. Under the firm management of Peter Adkinson, WoTC had the brilliant idea to make their core book \$19.95, the *Players Handbook* that is, and it sold like hot cakes, into the hundreds of thousands. The release of 3rd edition generated a massive groundswell of growth in our market bringing old players back, new players in and young players over from card games. It helped to cement a trend that had been settling into American popular culture for decades, one started back in the 1980s. Dungeons and Dragons was part of the fabric of our modern culture, like hot dogs, GI Joe, Barbie dolls and coca cola. With this third edition the game hit its second giant plateau, becoming truly generational. It began to enter streams of media, the news as well as entertainment. So much so that today it is common throughout advertisement and TV shows. It seems that rarely does a week go by that D&D isn't mentioned somewhere in this great Nation of ours, other than of course, the gamer's table.

It was good for our market too. 3rd Edition brought the OGL. This gave birth to a host of new companies, and with the advent of the d20 license it opened up the playing field; at last

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**

allowing people who had for too long stood on the sidelines to step up and try their hands at writing, designing and publishing. Luckily for my pride, TLG predated d20 by about six months, so we can say we are not a child of d20. The market expanded rapidly; more companies, more retailers, distributors grew and the volume of sales skyrocketed. From the very small to the very large, we all benefited from it.

This growth was a very natural outcome of market expansion. But as often is the case, too rapid a market expansion transcends the vibrant customer base and eventually a ceiling is hit. When this happens is anyone's guess, but when it does it's fast and brutal. It happens all the time, much like the dot.com bust in the 90s and the mortgage bust of today. Industry expands and contracts... much like stars, galaxies, my gut and all other things in the universe. Savvy investors knew the growth couldn't last, so they stored away enough fat to last through the lean time coming, or turned their rewards from d20 into new ventures. Some decided to trudge on and weather the storm that smart folks knew was coming. When the bubble burst, it crashed hard and left the RPG industry in shambles.

Often in industry circles, we hear that the retailers were hit first. But this wasn't true. The end user was hit first. Somewhere in the midst of the swirl of official D&D products and hundreds of d20 logos, where there was no quality control and no overall guidance, the consumer stopped buying. Or rather they began to curtail their buying. Couple this with those who had purchased the game and left the game after a year or so and you were left with a vast array of product sitting on retail shelves, in distributor warehouses and on the tables of manufacturers. Chaos ensued as everyone tried to scramble and dump product before the bubble came crashing down, but the bubble had already come crashing down.

The retailers fell in droves, as too many had no reserves and when consumer dollars dried up they were left with too much stock, too much debt and no income. When their dollars dried up, they stopped buying. Distributors found their warehouses filled to capacity with products they couldn't sell to anyone. They weathered it at first as generally their resources are larger, but the consequences were long lasting and left a very bitter taste in the mouths of many distributors. The whiplash carried up the chain and hit the manufacturers. With no resources to fall back on, they fell like the retailers did or scrambled to change their tactics or simply hibernated. This of course all had a reverse effect on the chain as RPGs rapidly vanished from the focus of any buyer. "You have an RPG? Don't want it. I have d20 books I can't sell." Increasingly, manufacturers turned their energies elsewhere and the cry was simple: "d20 killed the RPG." Coupled with continued growth of computer games and the like, RPGs were seen as an old man's tool to the poor house. There was no end to the vitriolic hatred for d20 and D&D and what it did to the marketplace. It seemed that no one remembered the fat years.

Throughout the lean years since the bubble burst RPGs have continued to sell, companies like TLG and Goodman Games have grown and continue to grow. They have done this through selling RPGs. Though TLG steered its ship away from d20 – though honestly, I don't know if we were ever a d20 company seeing as how I wrote things that always had to be converted to d20 3.0 by the esteemed Mr. Casey Christofferson – Goodman Games carried their torch forward with the very same game and logo that collapsed when the bubble burst. So, considering the RPG a dead product does not in today's market hold much water.

But where does that leave the flagship, Dungeons & Dragons? The market has corrected itself, so what should they do with the brand? Support the old game or make a new?

From a manufacturing point, the answer is obvious. Maintaining 3.5 is not a viable option because that game has too many negative connotations associated with it. Forget that people still buy and play it. What's important is that those numbers are down. The market has evolved and so have the gamers who spend money. Video games offer a new challenge as do other games like C&C and True 20 (Green Ronin). These games chip away and fragment the core D&D market base as players wander off to different fields to pasture. The solution is simple, WoTC has to distance itself from 3.5 and evolve itself in order to gain new customers and hopefully bring back costumers from the far flung fragmented pastures.

But is it too soon for a new edition? 3.0 was released in 2000 and 3.5 just a few years after that. WoTC has to justify why they are creating a new version now, when a full 11 years stood between AD&D and 2nd Edition and 18 years between 2nd and 3rd? There are mountains of support material, in many respects untapped by consumers that will be lost if a new edition comes out. Isn't that going to adversely affect the retailers and distributors? And where does this leave third-party manufacturers?

Well, anyone can see there is no pattern in the release of previous editions. At best you can say that a decade at least passes between editions, but to do this you would have to ignore 3.5 which was arguably different than 3.0. But even if you assume that some pattern has been established by previous releases, as a manufacturer you can't really consider that in releasing new product. Sure, maybe they should wait another 11 years, releasing 4th Edition to the same fanfare that 3rd Edition was released and hope for the gigantic windfall. But they have to do something in the meantime and more importantly, far more importantly and everyone should take note . . . during that 18 year hiatus between 2nd and 3rd Edition TSR went bankrupt, its properties languished in extreme poverty and the company left in such dire straits that it was eventually absorbed by WoTC. Perhaps if TSR had looked to its major brand and revised it in the 1990s, re-releasing it as a New Edition, they would have had new life blown into their company and they

would have survived. But they didn't. They stuck with 2nd Edition and hosts of support products and auxiliary games.

WoTC has to make this determination for itself, and it is not incumbent upon WoTC to consider the effect it will have on other manufacturers, distributors or retailers. It has to consider its cash flow and whether or not the market can bear another edition so soon.

I think that it can and that it needs it a new edition of Dungeons & Dragons. Why?

Foremost, it shows that WoTC has at least some confidence in the RPG market. If not, why invest more time and money in it? The announcement of 4E sent a loud and clear signal to the entire channel, from customers to retailers to distributors, that the biggest gorilla on the block is set to invest large amounts of time and energy on RPGs. It immediately instilled confidence in everyone. This is especially true for retailers who have had to wade through a very complex field of companies and products in order to support a type of game that consumes significant portions of their shelf space. Because, dead or not, they've continued to buy RPGs; they've just become more selective, ordered less and restocked only occasionally. The absence of any large marketplace move to push the product lines on new customers has left them pandering to the same customers over and over again, which in turn has reduced everyone's sales potential.

Though retailers have cooled off since the original announcement, largely due to a lack of clear direction from WoTC, they will in the end benefit from it. Because if the game does well, it sends a good and clear message up and down the channel that RPGs are good investments, something that most of us have believed for a long time. So in this regard, from a marketplace standpoint, 4th Edition is a good thing.

WoTC is the only company well placed to expand the existing market. They have the brand, they have the money and they have the apparatus through Hasbro. They are attempting with 4th Edition to drive the brand deeper into the market through Gleemax and other web-based tools that have proved very successful for other manufacturers. With a little luck, this will expand the pool of new gamers and bring more money into the market. Why is this good? More customers means more money. This money will find its way into the hands of WoTC, but some will find its way into the hands of third-party publishers. This helps keep the market vibrant and filled with interesting products.

Another good thing about 4th Edition is that it makes a clean break with the 3.5 and 3.0. Forget the mechanics for now, but when considering the cluster that is the 3.5 market, the cacophony of products littering shelves from the hordes of manufacturers are going to be made obsolete overnight. Retailers will feel a nasty bite at first, but will be able to confidently discount the old and move it off the shelf.

This has another good side effect, because new customers won't have to be overwhelmed by the giant mass that is d20. Take a moment and imagine yourself twelve years old, you hear about this cool game that lets you play pretend for real, where you can develop your own characters and scenario. You go to check it out at your local store. Sure, the boss man behind the counter says, we can hook you up. "These three books are the main books but you can choose from these 629 other titles to really get it going." Any twelve year old is going to look at that mass and be overwhelmed. Now it will be much easier. The clutter and noise are going to be removed with deep discounts to long time costumers and the shelf filled with the new, sleeker version of D&D.

So for the market I think more advertising carries the potential for new customers, and may revitalize the whole market with an influx of cash. This is a good thing and let's face it, WoTC and its brand of D&D is the only RPG on the block big enough to do this.

But what kind of game is 4th Edition going to be? That's the question we consumers are asking ourselves. The internet is abuzz with many a mean spirited discussion about the game. It's caused a lot of stir. Will it be a game I play? Will it be a game that you play? Will we go buy it? I've read countless discussions and posts on the net, and by read I mean skimmed, and it seems that people are all over the place. Some are looking forward to it, some are not. But who can say until the game really comes out? Who knows? Maybe I'll like it and love to play it. Chances are I won't. I didn't switch off of AD&D until the advent of C&C. I haven't bought a new RPG since 1983. Any RPGs I have bought were written when Gary was still at the helm of TSR. I never liked what came after; even the Unearthed Arcana didn't sit well with me. You'll probably be about the same. You'll pick up the new D&D if you're really into all types of RPGs, you'll probably pick it up if you're a D&D fan. In both cases you'll play it some and other times you'll play other versions. But chances are you going to be playing the game you enjoy the most.

The end user is of course the key to the relative success of the product. But sadly, you and I are not the end users here. We play role playing games. We already buy the products. They have us already. Dr. Pepper doesn't make advertisements for me, I already drink Dr. Pepper; they make advertisements for people who don't drink Dr. Pepper. WoTC isn't making 4th Edition for you. They aren't making a better game for you to enjoy. They are making a game which they hope will capture a new generation of people like AD&D did and like 3rd Edition did.

And this is a good thing. Today's market for selling games is far larger than it has ever been in the past. Playing games spans whole generations of people, young and old. People have more free time and more money to spend on games. There is a vast market of people who play a vast array of games, it's growing and it's growing fast. New

mediums don't mean the death of old, hence games like Monopoly and Checkers continue to sell. WoTC is trying to tap this market, and this is what they should be doing.

And to do it the game itself has to change. It has to change with the times and as the market demands. Younger people play different games, live in a different world. They aren't stymied by older people's preconceptions about what should and should not be. They are willing to try things. They aren't rejecting what people played before, but rather they are driven by different circumstances and different experiences. This is what Gary realized with the first versions of Dungeons & Dragons. A game that was rejected by Avalon Hill had appeal to younger gamers. Where's the market? The old timers who liked their lead miniatures and chit based board games, or a younger generation who were looking for something faster and sleeker? With the old timers he had a ready-made market, but one with barriers; vast, sometimes insurmountable barriers. So he marketed it to you and me, because we were young then and though we played wargames, they just didn't compare to this crazy fast-paced game that gave open expression to our imaginations. Avalon Hill rejected D&D because it didn't conform to the past market conditions; ironically, but not surprisingly, TSR eventually bought Avalon Hill.

What WoTC is trying to do is appeal to present market conditions, not past ones. Its long term survival as a company depends on reaping a new crop of wide-eyed end users whom we can openly welcome to our wonderful little corner of the marketplace. And for this I applaud them.

Will the game be for me? I can't say, but this I know: long ago we subconsciously learned the real value of the role playing game, the value that gives it its true market presence even in the face of the massive onslaught of video games. It's that tangible intangible that has made D&D and all RPGs part of the popular culture, soon to be ingrained in our cultural psyche even as Monopoly is. Role playing games are malleable; they change with each end user. Very few gamers game the same way from table to table. We house rule and the game is built to allow us to do that. That is the true genius of role playing games, not some imagined apogee of mechanical wonder or seamless combination of imaginative role play and game design garnered by one edition or the other. Role playing games are unique and in that respect superior to most other games because, no matter what edition or game we decide to play, at its core I can do what the heck I want with it. Monopoly can change its face, take on different names like Autoopoly or what not, but the core game is the same; role playing games can evolve with the marketplace like no other game. And as the industry flagship, D&D should evolve, must evolve, and has to evolve.

4th Edition? I'm looking forward to it. I'm excited and anticipate at the very least a moderate growth in the market with an influx of new consumers and fans. Most, like with previous incarnations will leave after a few years,

but a new generation of people will find in this game a game they enjoy. They will stay and they will bring a fresh new crop of ideas and concepts to the gaming table, like only happens when a rush of new folks join us.

Now where does all this leave C&C? Just where we were before. We've co-existed with the 100 pound gorilla for some time now and we have no reason to believe things will change. TLG's endeavors have come to a critical milestone with the imminent release of the Castle Keeper's Guide, which is on track for release later this summer or early fall. The Crusade is growing and our player base expanding. I anticipate a short term dip in players, but a long term growth. Critical to the growth are this year's planned releases. After the CKG releases we'll redouble our efforts on the nearly complete Monsters & Treasure II and the C&C Basic Set as well as continue working on a multitude of products from the Haunted Highlands to graph paper. The year of 4e has already been a good year for C&C and I suspect will continue to be so . . . and this without out even mentioning our own 100 pound gorilla: Gary Gygax's Castle Zagyg Upper Works.

As a postscript I remember reading an old Dragon Magazine editorial by Gary Gygax. This was in early 80s. In it he talked about his long-term goal of never creating new Editions of D&D, but always improving the existing versions. I think, in retrospect this would have been the far wiser direction for TSR to take. Don't fragment your market he was saying, keep it intact and loyal, but allow your game room to grow, change and improve.





# HAMMER & ANVIL

THOUGHTS FROM A  
GAMER MASTER'S FORGE



BY  
CASEY CANFIELD

## The Campaign Setting: Environments, Part I

In the last issue, I began the process of detailing the overall culture of my campaign setting. I developed a theological system and described its impact on the populace. I also described how I integrated several diverse ideas for the campaign into a coherent package. Now that the flagstones are laid, it is time to take the next step: describing the place of adventure from the top down.

As I begin this process, it is important to remember my desire to keep the focus on a local level. Keeping the environment simple provides several advantages. First, it's easy to add things later, because there is less material existing that might conflict with new ideas. Second, simplicity removes the burden of remembering myriad details from the CK.

The most difficult part of describing the campaign area is starting the process. The truth is that there is no best practice. Start with something that interests you, and build from it, while keeping in mind the groundwork you've already completed.

For some, this could mean creating a map and populating it with towns, bodies of water, roads, forests, and other bits of terrain. From the map, the work of describing those locations in depth can be tackled. This has the advantage of providing a visual reference to aid in brainstorming and also in the description of each area.

Another approach is to work out some of the details before mapping. I prefer this method, because it allows me the freedom to create whatever I like, and then I can create the map later to suit my description. I'm not restricted by the dictates of a map I've already created; my map is restricted only by my imagination

as I build each place of interest. I'll be using this method, but you should use the method that best fosters your creativity.

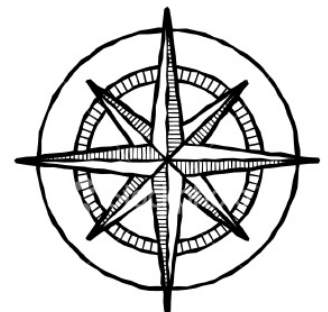
Many decisions are arbitrary when creating a campaign setting. While many things might be explained by cause and effect, the truth of the matter is that there is a large random influence on the development of any locale. I haven't explained everything rationally, nor should you when creating your own settings. As you read the following descriptions of key areas in the campaign setting, you might wonder about some of my decisions. If I don't stop to explain the reasoning for what I've done, then chalk it up to that random influence.

Now that's out of the way, so the fun begins. I find that the easiest step after defining a culture is to define where things live. I like to start with the most obvious places, which are significant towns, villages, or settlements. I want to place four towns in my campaign setting. Four is an ideal number because it allows me to provide locations with differing character without overwhelming the players or CK with information to remember. Four also makes sense, since I've already decided that the "base" of the campaign resides in an isolated valley. (See Hammer & Anvil in Crusader issue #7 for the synopsis.)

Not all of the settlements need to be the same size. Some will be larger villages that provide more services, while some may be simple hamlets that most people just pass through. I need to keep in mind that an isolated area cannot support many large towns, nor can it thrive without a town large enough to provide basic services. Because of this, I will designate one town as the hub – the most populous settlement in the region. The



*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.*



other nearby settlements will serve as auxiliary towns. These towns will provide the most basic services to those dwelling too far away from the main village, and will also provide more specialized services that the hub cannot or does not support.

One challenge faced when creating towns is the need to give each one a distinct character. Think of the towns or neighborhoods near your home. Perhaps the residents are mainly upper middle class, with medium to large single-family homes, two cars per household and landscaped yards. This area has a feel that is very different from an area speckled with a mixture of strip malls and apartment complexes. A mining town might not exist save for the mine providing jobs and support for the town. If the mine closes, the town would likely be abandoned. A commercial area relies on the trade of goods and services, but not the production of those goods. Some areas are mixtures of these features, providing them with longevity and resiliency. As CK, consider these possibilities as you plot out the adventuring area. Starting with the right frame of mind helps prevent “cookie cutter” areas with few distinguishing features.

List some ideas for making towns unique. These features could be as simple as the town known for a special type of craftwork, or as complicated as the town being located on a ley line nexus. Try to blend the mundane with the supernatural, but be careful not to overdo it. Not every town has a dark secret, a magical taint, or catacombs crawling beneath it. However, some towns may have all three!

My four townships are to be unique but complementary. They will have special traits, but they will also share a cultural foundation. With all of this in mind, I’m ready to describe the towns and decide upon their names. For naming, it is helpful to decide on a style that is consistent between the townships. After all, the settlers in this area came from a common background. The importance of naming cannot be overstated. The overall “feel” of the setting is influenced greatly by the naming style. Consider the differences in feel between a region with Germanic naming versus areas with Spanish, Arabic, or Indian naming styles. The imaginations of your players will be profoundly influenced by the names they hear during the game, and it will color their entire experience in the campaign setting.

I’ve decided to name the towns with an “English countryside” flavor, primarily to lend a quaint, rustic, and friendly feel to the “civilized” portion of the setting. This will contrast with the names of some wilder and more dangerous areas in the setting, including those of the cities; these names will have harsh sounds and dark overtones.

## Bristlebury

Bristlebury is quiet, it’s peaceful, and yet it has enough personalities residing there that life is always interesting. Bristlebury boasts a population of approximately 400 people, both within the village and living on farms outside of town. Bristlebury itself straddles the creek known as Drake’s Run, a stream that washes out of the headlands of the Dunlock Mounds, to the west. The creek is about

40 feet wide, and teems with trout, muskrat, and an occasional beaver that builds a lodge outside of town.

An excellent bakery is here, run by an expatriate from the city of Dunlock. Unlike many newcomers to Bristlebury, Rafe Hamm was accepted by all after only two weeks of baking delicious cakes, pies, and pastries.

Will Graymain runs the local foundry. A large but quiet man, he is an accomplished blacksmith and weaponsmith. He sheepishly admits that armor is not his specialty to those that inquire. For the right price, his mastery of sword making can be commissioned.

“The Spit and Spigot” is the local tavern and inn. Owned by Hamill Hale, a gruff, uncompromising codger, the Spigot prides itself on its roasted wild game and locally brewed beer. Hale is a conversationalist with those he trusts, but he has thrown “city folk” out of the inn for doing nothing more than mentioning their origin.

Renwistle’s Goods is a trading post of sorts, offering an exchange point for the various merchant wagons, farmers, and craftsmen looking to sell their wares locally. Renwistle’s exists mainly for exporting Bristlebury goods, though travelers find the post exceptionally helpful when their journeys pass through the town. Abner Renwistle is the proprietor and is respected throughout the area as a fair dealer and jovial spirit.

There is a small temple dedicated to the Siblings in Bristlebury. Three clerics work and live there, one from each order. Britte of Darshai, Larash of Incordis, and Yvette of Kheloria came from other areas of the province to settle in Bristlebury. They have earned the trust of the local populace. They minister to the needs of the village and the nearby hamlets. Underneath the temple is a massive crypt where all deceased persons are interred.

Numerous other establishments exist in Bristlebury. A grain mill is nestled into a rough area of the creek. A small marketplace allows farmers to hawk their wares to the townsfolk. An established butcher supports the town, as well as a local weaver that makes rugs, blankets, and cloaks for sale locally and elsewhere.

Bristlebury has a volunteer guard. Most citizens between the ages of 16 and 30 are members. Will Graymain is the nominal captain of the guard, and sounds a loud horn to muster the guard. It is not a well-trained or equipped force, but it is adequate against occasional raids from bands of kobolds or goblins.

Graymain serves on an informal council that handles governance of the small town. This council meets infrequently and only to discuss matters of grave importance to Bristlebury and its residents. Abner Renwistle and Larash of Incordis also serve on this council.

Bristlebury seems like a typical town in a fantasy milieu, and intentionally so. In isolation, a town does not grow to

the size of Bristlebury without providing the “staples” one comes to expect from a town in a fantasy setting. The unique character of Bristlebury comes from its inhabitants, but also from its role as the epicenter of religious activity in the valley. Nothing more is needed to make Bristlebury compelling than well developed NPCs that possess motivations suited to the underlying culture.

Bristlebury is meant to be the center of adventurer activity in the region. While the other towns may serve as temporary bases, Bristlebury will eventually call adventurers back to receive goods and services unavailable elsewhere.

## Wickling

Wickling is a week’s hike southwest of Bristlebury. Several well-cut wagon roads lead between the towns, though the areas between them are largely empty. The population of Wickling is about 50 people, but can double temporarily depending on the season.

Wickling specializes in horse breeding. The rolling, open landscape and rich pasture facilitate the husbandry of hardy and powerful horses of all types. Almost all of the horses in use in the area are bred on farms near Wickling, and the trading or auction of horses takes place frequently in the village center. As a small town, Wickling has basic services, but those services are geared toward the support of horse farming. Instead of a single blacksmith, there are several, but there is no formal trading post or store in the town. Instead, Wickling relies on the craftsmen of Bristlebury to provide most finished goods in exchange for horses and other livestock.

Visitors not native to the valley will come to Wickling to purchase horses for delivery to distant buyers, and will bring rare goods of their own in exchange. As such, it is possible to trade with the occasional individual in Wickling, but larger commercial enterprises do not exist.

Due to the volume of travel to Wickling, accommodations are also provided, though not to the degree Bristlebury offers them. The accommodations are also more rustic, and carry few luxuries.

Wickling is also known for the residency of Rebictus, a sage and scholar from the large city of Dunhammer. The sage tired of the city and fled into solitude in Wickling decades ago. The locals leave him alone, and only those determined to tap his knowledge seek him out.

Wickling has two characteristics that make it unique: a specialty trade and the less mundane residence of a worldly scholar. These two features make the town of interest not only to adventurers, but to those that could be their rivals.

It is easy to see how Wickling and Bristlebury complement each other. They each provide a service or services that are unavailable in the other location, and they are compatible within the underlying culture. These

features definitely add to the feeling that these are real towns, and not just fabrications. This is an important part of adding depth and verisimilitude to the campaign.

## Acton Dinsbury

The third town, Acton Dinsbury, is located about 10 days march from Bristlebury, to the southeast. Located on a small lake, and named after the original settler of the area, it is the smallest of the valley towns. Its hills are dotted with terraced vineyards and fields of grain, providing ample fodder for the production of wine and spirits. Local forests provide lumber for a local wainwright of great skill. A tavern was opened in the town by an itinerant bard, and it is said the music there is without peer. Finally, the picturesque lake and apple trees in the town itself are an idyllic setting, widely regarded as the most serene place in the valley.

Acton Dinsbury has a reputation for producing children with striking beauty. Eligible youths from around the valley often come to Acton Dinsbury first to seek companionship and marriage, which can bring a hefty share of drama to the small town.

Acton Dinsbury further compliments the roster of towns in the valley. It has many qualities that make it unique, and they explain why it grew as a settlement of its own. An interesting place to visit, it holds no lasting commercial attraction, ensuring that it retains its quaint status.

Acton Dinsbury has the advantage of providing many potential adventuring hooks for the smallest amount of effort. Visitors will likely find no shortage of trouble to get into, and an imaginative Castle Keeper will be sure to exploit this.

## Cobb’s Wells

Cobb’s Wells is no longer inhabited. It is located about two weeks to the northwest, and was roughly the size of Bristlebury during its prime. It was known for a series of hot springs that allowed warm bathing throughout the year. About 14 years prior, Cobb’s Wells was stricken by a plague of some kind. Many residents moved to Bristlebury or other locales before they were affected, and at least half of the village died. After the disease cut its swath through the area, it struggled to maintain an existence. About 5 years ago, Cobb’s Wells was abandoned entirely.

The Order of Kheloria sealed the town, and members of the Order of Incordis occasionally travel there to check on the burial sites of the dead. Otherwise, the town is avoided. A local rumor is that the hot springs were somehow the source of the plague.

Cobb’s Wells is one giant plot hook. Apart from the mysterious plague, there is the lure of potential items and wealth left in the town when it was abandoned. It

is the type of location that simultaneously worries and attracts adventurers. A Castle Keeper can always count on the curiosity of the players, especially when a nasty carrot like Cobb's Wells is dangled in front of them.

With the basic outlines of these towns complete, I have a pretty robust adventuring platform. More work is required to further detail these areas, but I now have a very deep baseline that will allow me to build very compelling scenarios.

At this time, I will move outward a bit to describe the general environment of the valley. This will help to further highlight the characteristics of each town, as well as provide plot hooks in more unsettled areas.

## The Surroundings

Following Drake's Run west out of Bristlebury leads into the rugged badlands known as the Dunlock Mounds. The rough territory of the Mounds separates the City of Dunlock on its verdant plain from the remote valley where Bristlebury lays. The mounds are infested with tribes of humanoids and the occasional band of itinerant criminals. At several times throughout history, civilized people have tried to settle within the Mounds, only to discover that the inhospitable terrain and the territorial humanoids were too large an obstacle to overcome. Traces of old settlements can be found in the Mounds, if one knows where to look.

The Bracken Wood is a thick, old-growth forest that extends from the Mounds into the area between Bristlebury, Wickling, and Acton Dinsbury. The roads connecting the towns traverse the forest, except for a small distance on the road between Bristlebury and Wickling. Wagons and horses find travel through the heart of the wood difficult at best. Legends place the ancestral home of the lost gnome race somewhere in the Bracken Wood. The occasional gnome sighting makes its way through the grapevine, but no one is sure how seriously to take the stories.

South of Bracken Wood lurks Wet Fork Mire. The road between Wickling and Acton Dinsbury travels directly through this sodden marshland. The dry patches are marked with huge oak trees covered with moss. The single road through the mire has been elevated over the years, but still washes out occasionally after fierce rains or snow melts. With luck, a traveler can stay dry on the road, except for the crossing at the Wet Fork Ford.

To the west of the Dunlock Mounds, the town of Wolf's Crag perches on the highlands overlooking the plains of Dunlock. This palisaded town is about two weeks from Bristlebury by horse, and subsists by trapping and selling furs in Dunlock. Most of the town hunts or traps, while others tan hides or fashion furs into clothing. Wolf's Crag is attacked frequently by tribes of humanoids, and has developed a very active defense.

One week past Wolf's Crag is the city of Dunlock. While not as large as other cities, its relative size and distance from Bristlebury makes the very concept of Dunlock seem alien to most living in the valley. Dunlock has a reputation as a cesspool of corruption, and an example of all that is foul about city life. That designation may be colored by the opinions of those that have never been there.

To the northeast, about twelve weeks distant over hills and plains, rests the city of Dunhammer. On the shores of the Harbinger River, Dunhammer acts as a regional capital. It is growing rapidly, and is considered a cosmopolitan center of change. Despite its "cultured" exterior, Dunhammer and its surroundings have a reputation as one of the most dangerous areas in the region, primarily due to criminal influences.

The surroundings breathe further life into the towns I've described. First, they reinforce the notion that these towns are islands in a rough wilderness. The nearest city is weeks away, and the nearest town outside the valley is a difficult two week journey through the dangerous Dunlock Mounds. Second, the surroundings help to explain the attitudes of the people living in the valley. Only by observing the isolation of the valley can one truly appreciate the point of view of the residents. Finally, the outside world adds mystery to the setting, and produces an organic sense of insecurity and wonder for those characters that venture outside the valley.

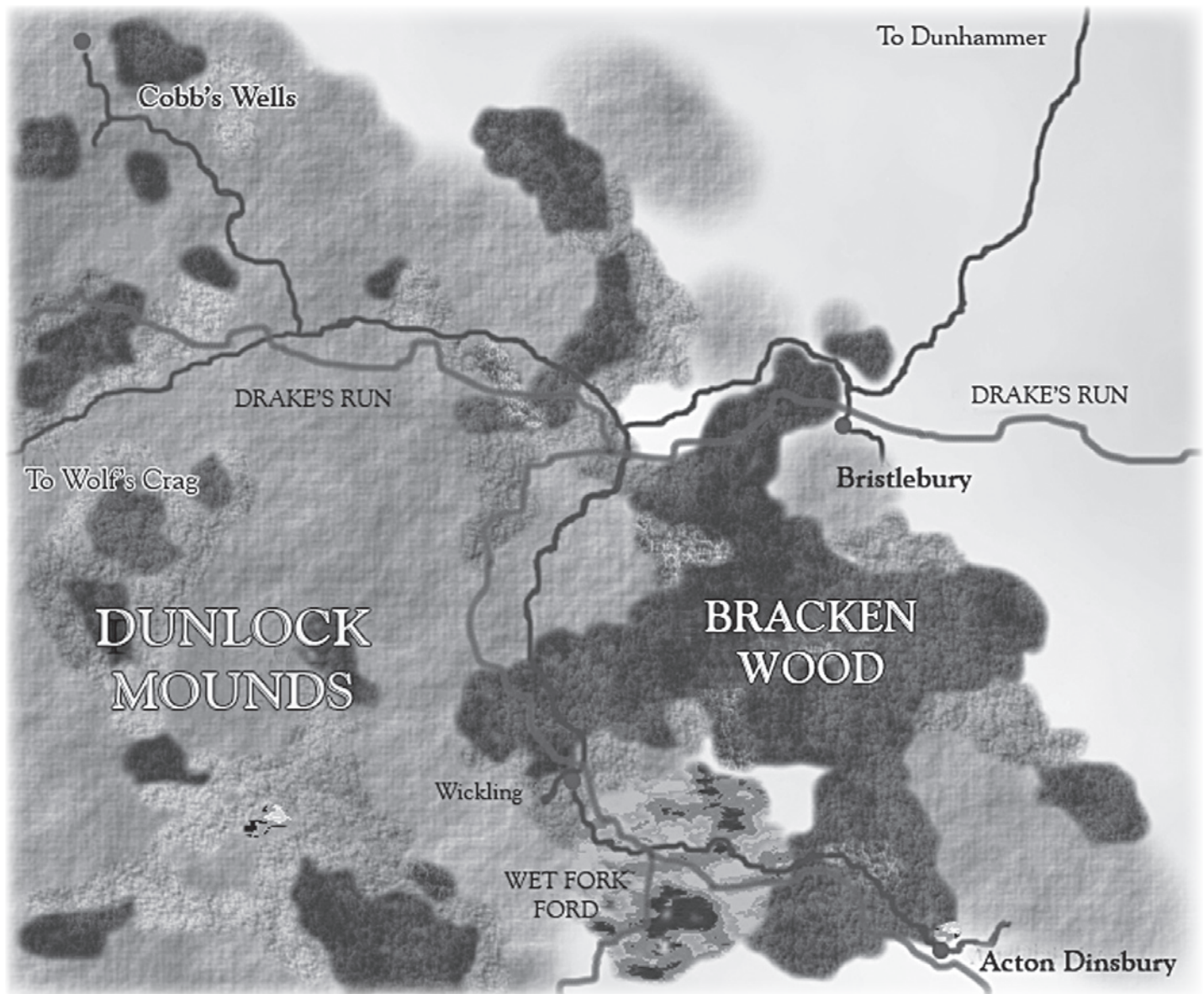
Now that I've developed the basic areas of the setting, the time has come to draft a map to help me visualize it. As I draw it, I need to be mindful of the geographic features that I've described, as well as the relative distance between towns, and the relative locations of those towns. The map does not need to be detailed, for the details will come later as adventures run and the area uncovers itself. It just needs to provide a decent frame of reference that allows the Castle Keeper to imagine what lies between the marked portions of the map.

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# Bristlebury and Surroundings



I now have a map and a brief description of the areas upon it. These descriptions will help me to provide further details of the denizens and attributes of each area, and will also help me to create more adventure hooks and plot devices. I've already seeded my brief descriptions with adventure possibilities. These came to me as I was writing, and I included them. As you describe your areas, feel free to do the same. It is never too early to gather good adventure ideas, and hints of them make for outstanding bits of character that make a location seem "real."

The next step in the process is to delve into the anatomies of Bristlebury, Wickling, and Acton Dinsbury, as they are the likeliest places for adventurers to travel when the campaign begins. The towns need to be mapped

and keyed, and the major NPCs and locations within the town detailed. This will happen in the next issue.

Following that, the same treatment will be applied to nearby wilderness areas like the Dunlock Mounds. While the wilderness is too vast to detail completely, we can focus on a few key areas.

When complete, we will have a useable campaign setting, and we could begin the process of creating adventures to occur within it. However, I'll discuss the process of adapting the rules to further accentuate the unique nature of the setting. When that is complete, I'll begin the work of detailing adventures that are tailored to the culture, geography, and house rules of the campaign.

Until next issue, happy designing!

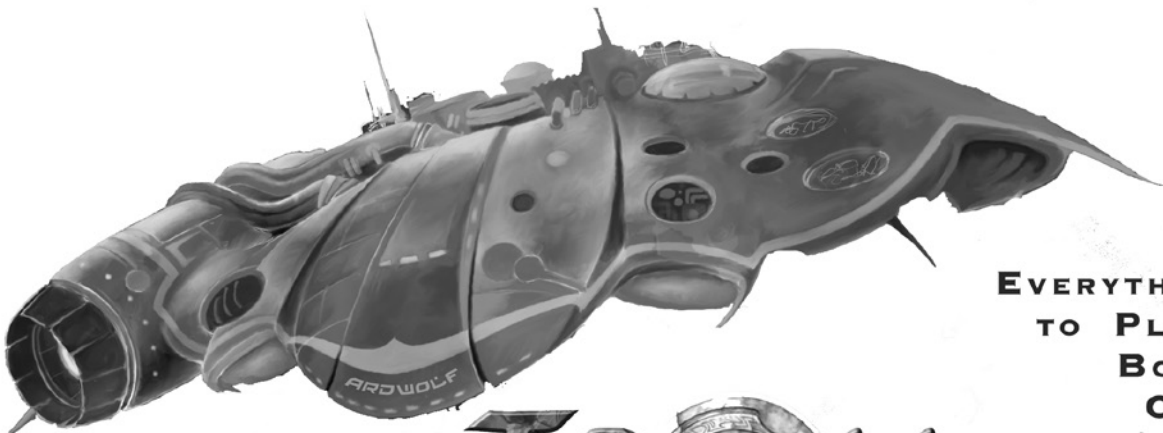


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A SIEGE ENGINE GAME

# AN INTRODUCTION TO CARD MODELING

BY TOM TULLIS

Nothing brings a great RPG to life better than using props. While most gamers already make use of metal or pre-painted plastic miniatures, many avoid using other terrain such as resin cast pieces due to the excessive cost involved. I am always surprised at conventions we attend like Gen Con and Origins at the number of players who have never heard of cardstock miniature terrain. Unlike other alternatives, cardstock miniature terrain is cheap, quick to assemble, easy to convert and very light to transport. The number of available sets is staggering, with everything from complete dungeon sets, caverns, wilderness sets, castles, villages and even cardstock creatures for your game. Fat Dragon Games offers a wide range of genres, everything from fantasy and pulp to modern buildings and sci-fi sets, and all of our models are designed for the novice card modeler. We're including a 'dungeon sampler' in this issue of The Crusader that features common items for your dungeon. Most of these are designed using a simple 'box' construction technique intended for the first time card modeler (I recommend doing a few of the tables or bookcase first before attempting to do the coffin.) Before you can construct your model, you will need some basic supplies:

**GLUE:** While white school glue (Elmers) will work on these models, this type of glue contains too much water to make really nice looking models (it warps the paper). We recommend using a white craft glue (also known as 'tacky glue') which is essentially white school glue but with less water (available at Wal Mart, etc.). If this is not available you can also use a good quality glue stick or even better a liquid paper glue pen.

**CARD STOCK:** You will need a supply of white letter size card stock. This is available at any office supply or discount store in the school/office supply section.

**TOOTH PICKS:** These come in handy to apply glue to small areas.

**PAPER TOWELS:** Wet paper towels or hand wipes: Very useful to clean your fingers off whenever you get glue on them. This will keep you from getting excess glue on your models.

**COLORED MARKERS:** A black, gray and brown marker is useful to touch up white edges on your finished model.

**ACRYLIC PAINTS:** Common acrylic paints can also be used to touch up edges on your finished model.

## ASSEMBLY INSTRUCTIONS:

Before cutting each piece from the page, we recommend you first score all of your fold lines (dashed lines) by lightly dragging the knife across them. Do not apply pressure and just let the weight of the knife break the surface of the paper without cutting completely through it.

Once you test fold the model and are sure it is scored properly, proceed to glue the tabs. Work slowly gluing a few tabs at a time. Working with several models at a time allows you to set one model aside and dry while you switch to another.

Once the model is finished, you may wish to 'edge' the white folded edges with a colored marker or acrylic paint and a small brush.



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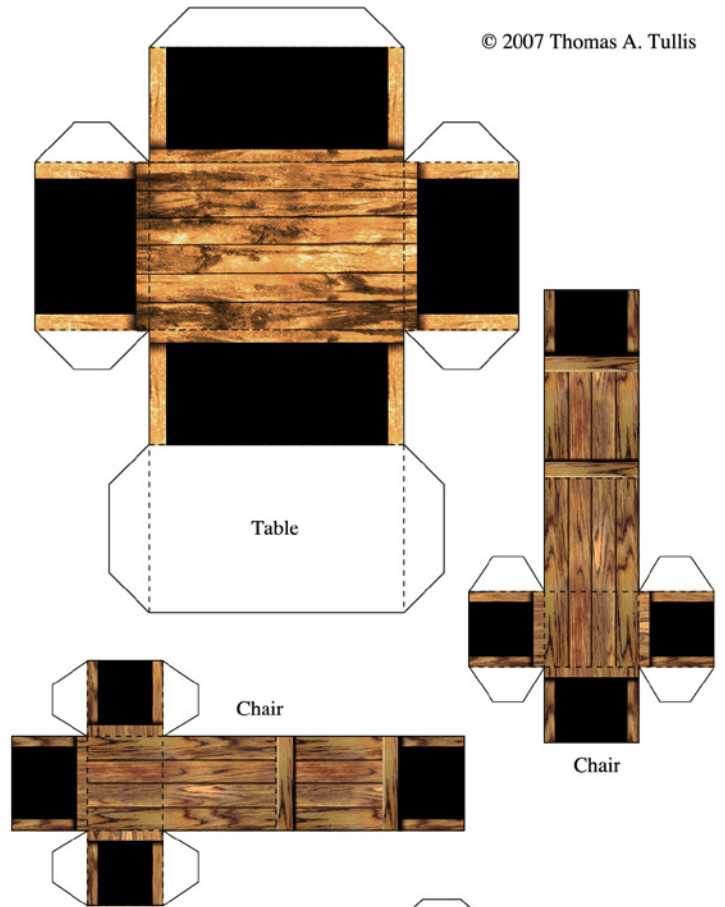
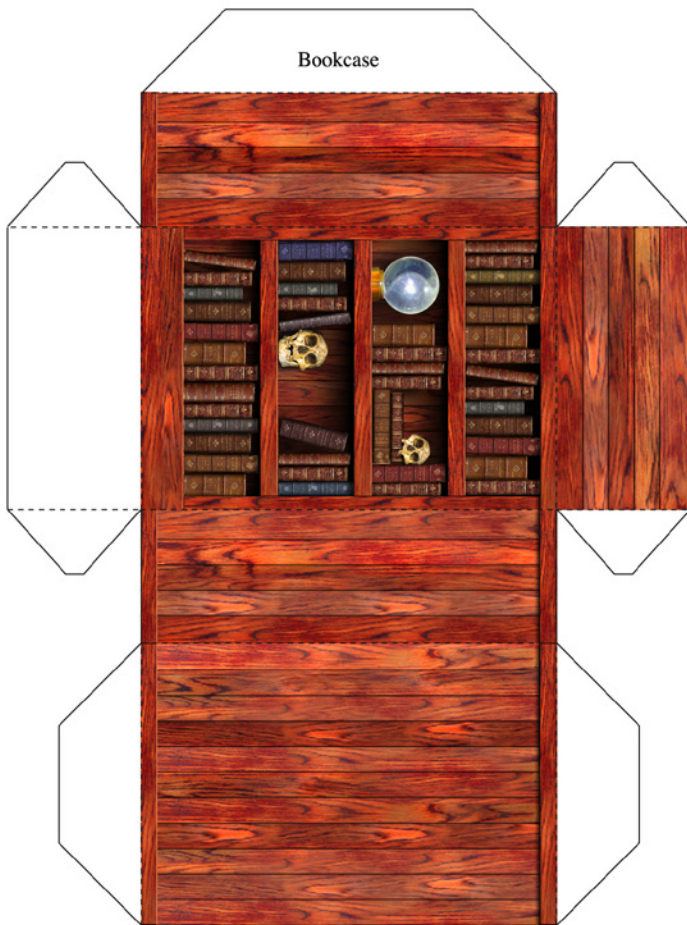
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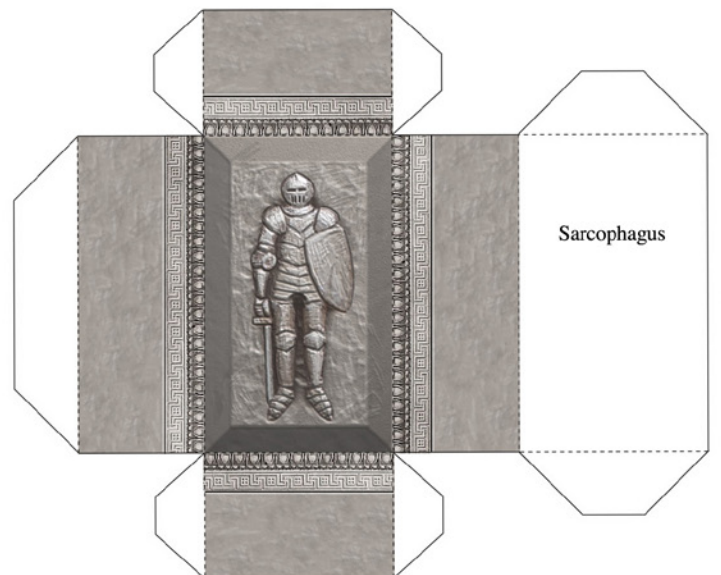
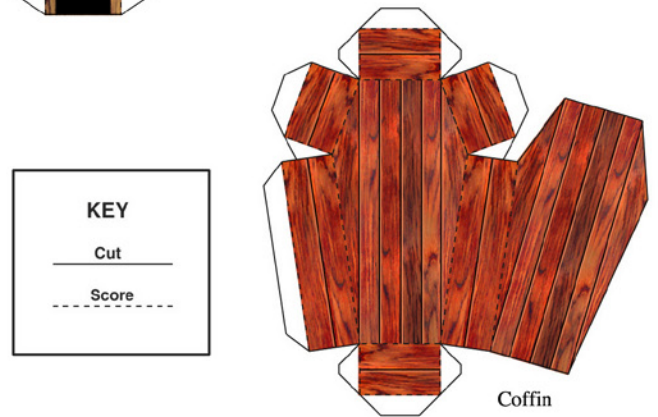
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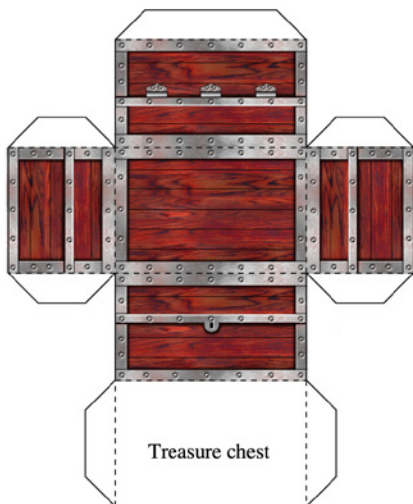
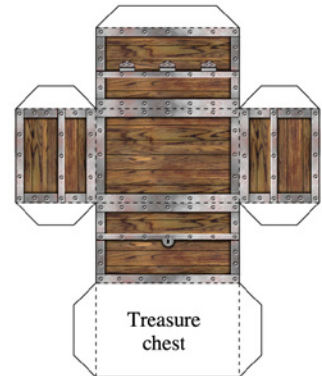
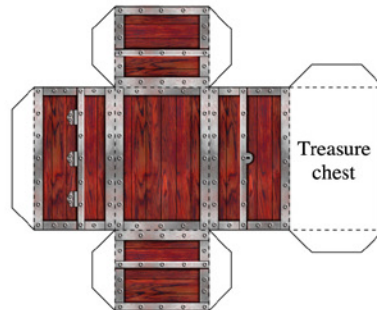
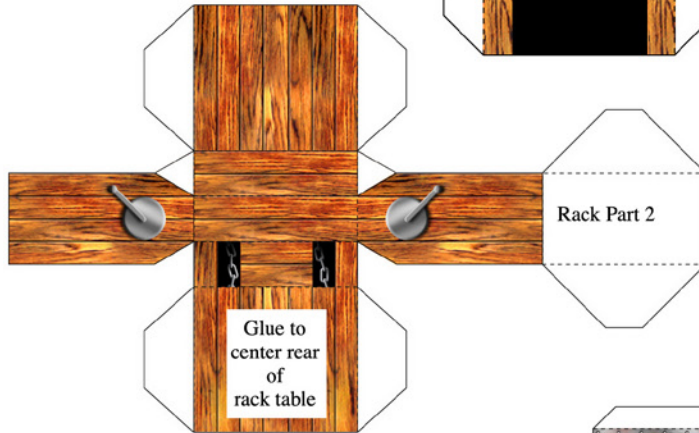
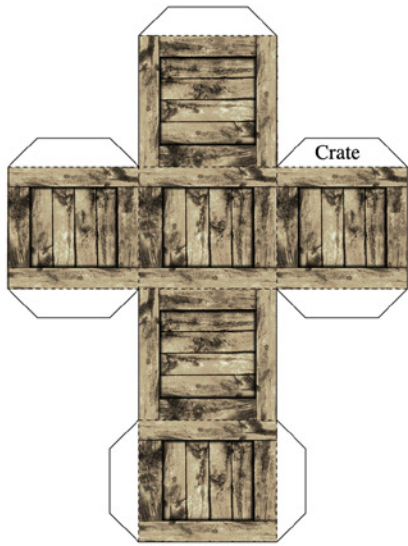
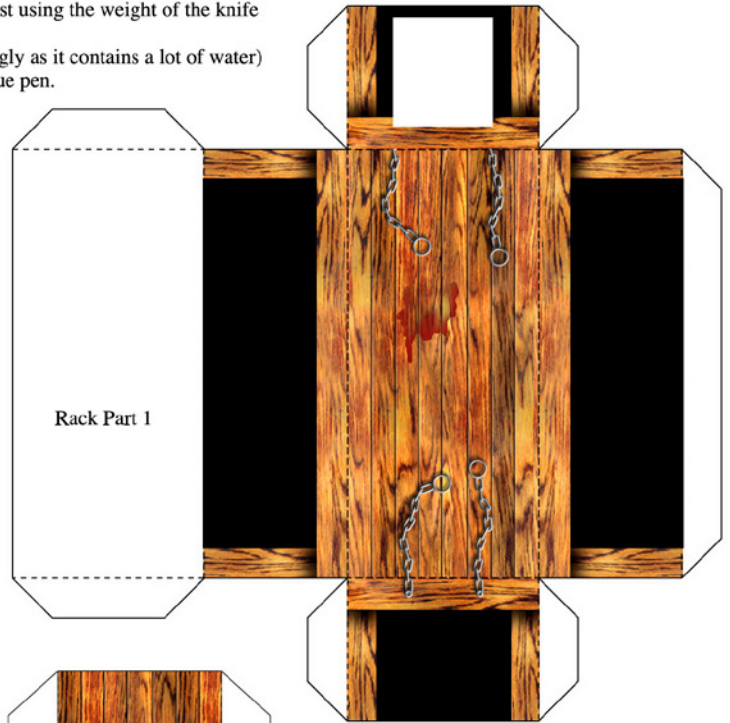
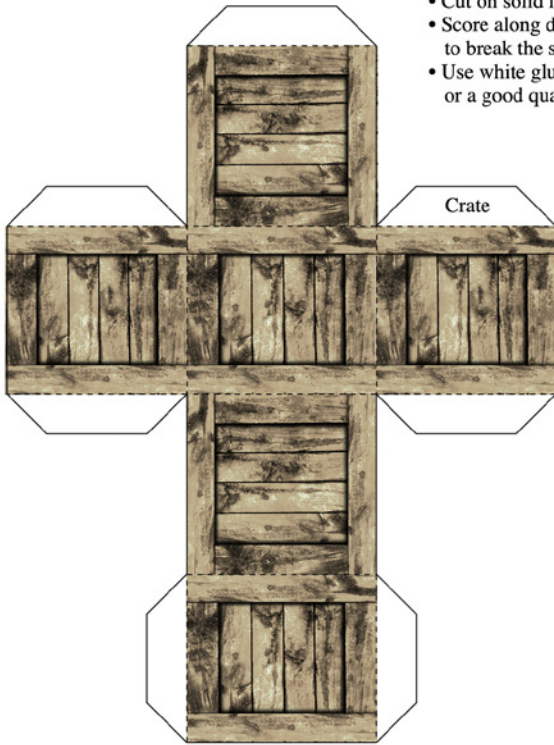
Check out [www.fatdragongames.com](http://www.fatdragongames.com) for more fantasy card models!





Instructions:

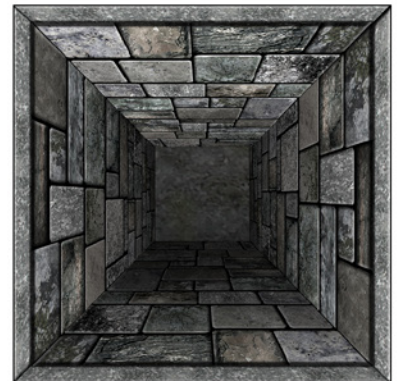
- Cut on solid lines with a hobby knife.
- Score along dotted lines just using the weight of the knife to break the surface.
- Use white glue (use sparingly as it contains a lot of water) or a good quality paper glue pen.



Treasure tile

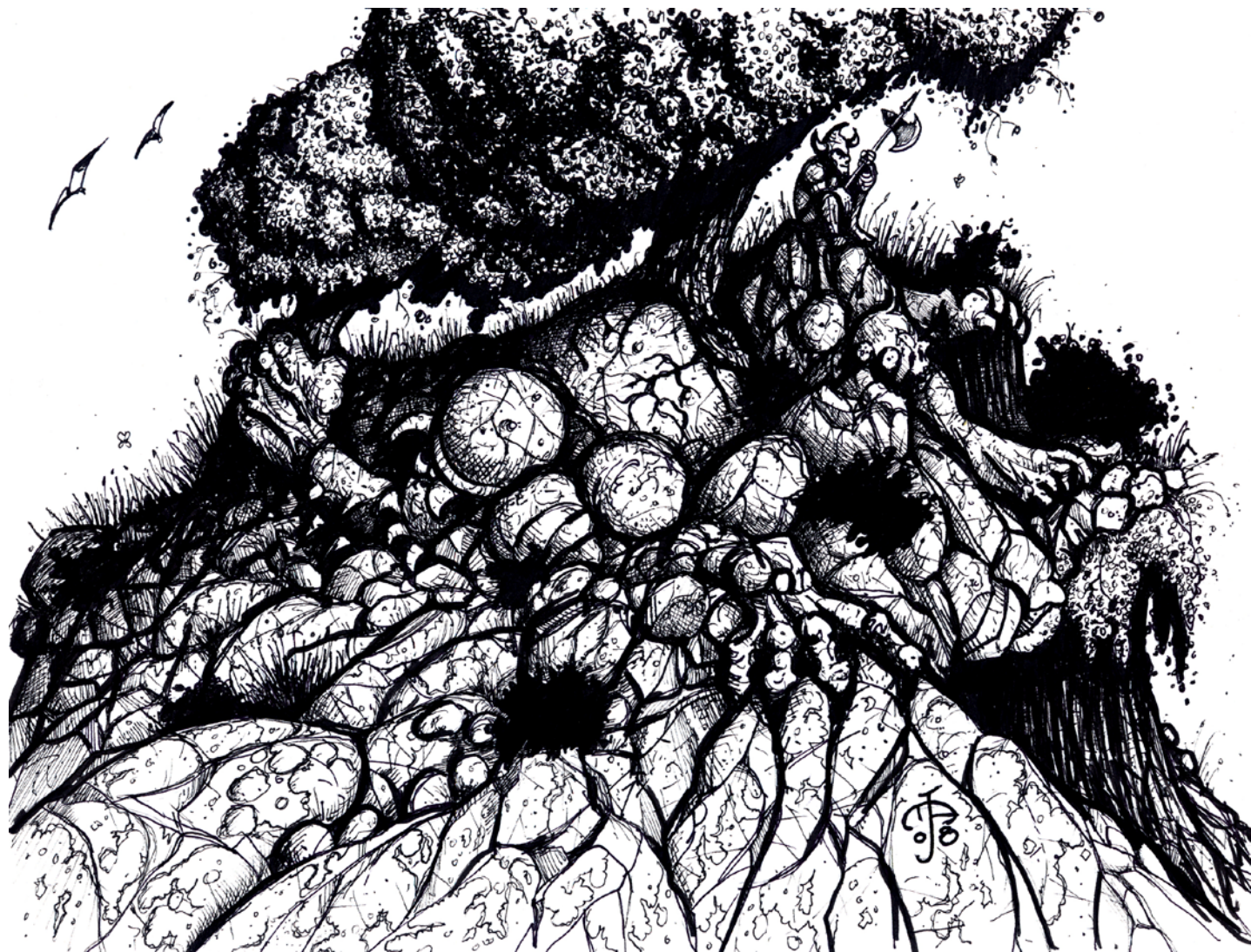


Pit trap tile



# THE AIHRDIAN CHRONICLES: OF TREES AND THE TROLLS

BY STEPHEN CHENAULT



**T**he 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. In his travels he learned of the Castle of Spires and its guardian Melius the Wise and he learned that it held the gates to other worlds, where his kin had fled to and now dwelt. So he turned himself to finding this gate and returning to his people to force them to war. To this end, he traveled to the Gausumland, the Gray Pools, that swamp land that girded the towers of Aufstrag and where lived The Fair Lady of Gilgum, to learn what she could teach him about the whereabouts of the Castle of Spires. He learned it stood in the deeps of the Twilight Wood, guarded by dark skinned elves. He left the lady and returned to his gathering army upon the Avishean Ridge, that is the Blacktooth in the Vulgate, where stood the Ineng Tree.

“She called me the Dire Prince, Sedgwick,” Meltowg said to his lieutenant. “I do not think I like that name.”

“Well My Lord, be that as it may, we have gathered two score of the Vale Knights, to include yourself and me. Some four score mercenaries, adventurers, half breeds and rangers have joined our banner as well. It seems the Blacktooth Ridge is home to many displaced by the horned god. But the season is late and winter is coming . . . as if the Winter’s Shroud that hangs over Aihrde is not winter enough.” Sedgwick looked up at the dark overhanging clouds.

The snow whipped around them, picked up by a northeasterly wind. It battered the forest of small, twisted oaks, bending their branches to and fro. The last leaves of the dying autumn were being torn from their moorings to careen crazily into the air before they found a new home on the ground where the snows were beginning to gather.

The two elves stood together beneath one huge tree whose girth made it a lord over the smaller trees about it. With outstretched arms the Ineng Tree dominated the hillock. This ancient thing was as much a part of the landscape as the stone, for it had stood upon the ridge centuries even before the Winter Dark. It was huge, 15 odd feet in diameter, but not so tall, only 40 feet or so. Perhaps once its branches stretched further, but now it stood largely dead to the world, a short squat thing reminiscent of the days of old with only a few branches here and there.

“She said something else, old friend.” Still looking at the tree, Meltowg reached out and touched it. “She said, ‘You have come into contact with the secret of sentient creatures,’ and I’m not sure what she meant by this.”

“If it were any but a witch I would say the answer was simple and you are wiser for your adventures and the many creatures you have met over the years. . . .” Sedgwick looked to his armor, set aside in an orderly array. Uncomfortable with his master’s talk he began to put it on, slowly and methodically. As if on cue the soldiery began to follow suit, without word.

“But she is a witch and there must be greater meaning.” He squatted, looking closer at the tree, his great sword Noxmurus dragging the ground. It groaned in its scabbard. He noted a vertical split in the tree, barely discernable, as if the tree had some old wound that closed in folds of bark. At the foot of the tree, where the split entered the ground, water bubbled up. It was this water that Sedgwick and many others of the elves had learned was possessed of healing qualities. There were flowers too, small violet flowers that grew here, mostly only in the late spring, and early summer when the grip of the horned one slackened a little. Then they pushed up through the snow and spread their petals, soaking in the weak sunlight. These were supposed to heal as well, or so the legends said.

Meltowg could not speak from experience for his wounds were never healed but by time and only recently by the Fair Lady of Gilgum. It was his curse he thought, though his great endurance balanced it out. But he reached down and took the water in his hands. Lifting it to his lips he took a long drought. The cool water flowed down his throat, spreading coolness though him he had not felt in years. But there were memories here, latent, buried in the water’s fabric and these memories eked into his wandering mind even as the water flooded his body. The memories were distant, remembrances of a world of long, long ago.

In the beginning there was warmth and happiness, the air was cool and the world wide and open to exploration. But later there was lust for more, avarice, indifferent or altogether evil deeds. And the warmth was lost in these as if these deeds were wounds that bled out and scabbed over until the memories were little more than knotted hate field scabs of a misspent life and there was no cure but death. Meltowg-Aet-Ohd, Prince of Lothian, knew that he stood at the feet of a Troll, one long returned to earth. This creature did not die, it did not fall by the sword, it was one that became so weighted down by its life’s deeds that it could no longer move and its feet rooted to the ground and its weather beaten body became encased in hard, rigid skin. And in the water’s at its feet were revealed to Meltowg the story of the Trolls of Aihrde, from whence they came and what fate awaited them. And the Troll’s name was Ineng.

Meltowg saw a score of great trees, huge and towering, their roots spread into the earth like veins; the world was sunny and green, the skies overhead an infinite pale blue, dotted with distant clouds. The plains beyond the trees were covered in deep grasses and strange plants and everything was warm. The trees swayed in the breeze, bending first this way and then that. They became aware of the warm, clean air through their leaves, the warm sun energized them and their leaves spread to take in more, sating them on the life giving light. Beneath them their roots spread out like toes, pushing through the cool earth, thirsty for nutrients, absorbing water from the soil. And they marveled for they could not see their lives behind them but knew that the world was alive around them. So the trees became sentient creatures and they called themselves Sentients, for the All Father made them alone aware of the world around them.

Ineng stood amidst that grove. An oak of unbelievable size he towered over his companions and marveled at what he could see. The grove grew upon the slopes of a massive mountain chain that tumbled up into the sky in layer after layer of rocky ridges. On the other side he could see a vast sprawling plain of deep green grass. The grass went as far as he could see and the earth there called to him, promising deeper soil and water unspoiled. Beyond the plains were

slim slivers of shimmering light, scores of them, which he after ward learned were lakes of life giving water.

Meltowg knew in his own mind's eye that these were the Channel Lakes of the distant east for he had been to them once. Though then, they were frozen over and the grass-filled plains were covered in the thick snows of the Winter's Dark.

Ineng drifted from his grove, wandering down the slopes, his rooted feet cutting up the earth and finding new passage, but a voice beckoned him back. He stopped and cast his awareness toward the voice, for it was deep and made him thirsty for something he could not grasp. He heard the voice of the All Father and it promised him knowledge, so Ineng stood and listened. He stood apart from the grove and absorbed all that the All Father had to say. The Twin Sisters, that is the sun and the moon, came and went countless times, the seasons rolled past, Ineng's leaves fell and returned time and time again while the All Father spoke and all those in the grove learned what he had to say. They learned the language of creation, which is the language of making things and they learned of the world, the Void and all things besides. But at last he finished speaking and settled into the cool shade of the grove and enjoyed the company of the sentients for a long while.

Ineng watched the All Father sleep for a long while, but growing curious, he wandered from the grove and down the slope so that eventually he found himself upon the plain, far from his grove. They called to him, the other sentients, noticing his absence at last, but he did not answer them for in his mind's eye stood only the image of the water of those lakes and he was thirsty. So he uprooted himself and began a slow ponderous movement across the world to the Channel Lakes. There he sated himself with the cool waters for many years. He stood there alone and grew to think of the land as his own and he watched over it. He turned the water in its course and he drew so much from the soil that it withered and the grasses around him died. The water receded before him so that he had to follow it and when he did so he killed more of the land and behind him stretched a black path of death.

In time other sentients came to him and he swayed and moaned so that they knew he did not desire their company. Thinking no ill will they wandered on, for the world was wide. But unbeknownst to him the sentients were growing in number, as the years passed new breeds of the tree folk sprouted and some took root and others wandered on. Eventually more sentients came to the lakes and he could not dissuade them, until at last they came close and he sought to turn the soil barren beneath them. He sucked the nutrients out and made it like sand, keeping his neighbors

from any food. Some of the trees died for his greed and many of them fled.

But some did remain, angered at his claim to the lake country. They entered the waters and drank deep there and dried the land around him and stretching their shadows beyond their own form they blocked the sun and Ineng's light. But Ineng refused to leave, suffering their attack. He grew tired and shabby and his bark peeled away and he began to die. At last, overwhelmed with the need for sustenance he fled the lakes and moved into the western lands that were barren and hot.

He wandered for long years and his roots became shallow and his limbs shorter and his leaves withered and only grew in small bunches. There on the Plains of Achrothos he lived steeped in the rage of his own hate. He set about remaking himself then, using the language to shape his roots into legs so that he could move faster and his limbs into arms. He mimicked the shape of the All Father, though that one was faceless so Ineng in these early days had no eyes or mouth. So came to be one of the first of the Trolls and though he was not yet evil he was becoming so, driven by his greed and hunger. But also by his envy and hate, for in the barren plains of Achrothos he was always hungry and thirsty and he could find no purchase. He was constantly weak, always blaming others for his plight, never thinking that it was his greed that set him on his course.

So Ineng gathered himself one day and strode across the plains and returned to the Channel Lakes. There he saw a great forest of trees spread along the banks of the waters that were once his. A dark rage took him. With little thought he picked up a boulder and hurling it, struck a tree in its bowl. And the great timber groaned, cracked and fell to earth. The other sentients marveled at this for they had never seen one of them slain in such a way. They turned on Ineng, reaching out with their roots through the ground, sucking the moisture from the earth and balling out the light. Ineng stood against them for many long years but he could not overcome them and he began to wither again for their shadows were deep, fashioned so by their knowledge of the language of creation.

So Ineng fled again into the wilderness. The forest on the Channel Lakes groaned in triumph. But some few of them broke free of the grove, curious and hungry, filled with greed like Ineng and they followed him into the wilderness. At first he feared these sentients and fled, leaving them behind but eventually he realized they too were filled with a lust for the world much as was he. So they gathered together for awhile, but eventually Ineng left them, longing to have his own country. But they learned from him and they too shaped themselves as Ineng was shaped and wandered through the world

In these days, when the Trolls were still few, the All Father peopled the world with hosts of animals. Creatures large and small, thoughts of his that as often escaped from his dreamings as from his waking mind and the world was soon occupied by more than sentients and gods. The sentients enjoyed these new creatures for the most part, but the trolls did not and they cursed them and slew them when they could. In time the All Father brought to the world the dragons and then later the dwarves and the world began to change beyond the scope of the trolls and they slew all manner of creatures to keep their lands their own. In these days they banded together on occasion to better keep creatures from molesting them. Trolls fed off their anger and hate and greater signs of evil grew in them.

“My Lord.” Sedgwick pulled Meltowg up gently by the arm. “My Lord, the men are getting ready to march. In which direction should I tell them.”

Meltowg looked at Sedgwick for some time. “Tell the men to move east to the Hruesen River. There they are to make camp and wait for me.”

“Where shall you be, My Lord?”

“I shall be here. There is more to this tree than meets the eye my friend; and something tells me the story of its life shall aid us when we come to the Twilight Wood, which is our final destination.”

Sedgwick’s eyes did not reveal the gloom he felt. “The Twilight Wood? I have been there my Lord. A foul and evil place of shadows and darkness is that wood. Why there?”

“For it is there that the Castle of Spires lies and this tree shall give me the power to open its gates. Now go. Tonight, warn the men of where we are going. Tell them, those who do not have the courage or stamina to make the journey to the Castle, that they have my leave to go and to find some other endeavor where their lives may be wasted without purpose.”

“My Lord.” Sedgwick turned and shouted for the elves and men to mount their horses. Meltowg watched his friend, an elf lord of no mean abilities gather the men only for a moment. He turned then and gathered more water from the feet of the Ineng tree and drank its memories....



## Castellan's Guide to Arms & Armor



June, 2008

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# the ANGRY GAmER

by Some Angry Troll Dude

## NOMENCLATURE

I love sitting at the table and listening to the opening salvos of the game. We get some music playing, sprawl out around our places at the table...drinks, snacks, dice, books, paper, miniatures...the battle map commands the center of the stage, the screens go up. After a brief stint of politics (we have an almost equal share of conservatives and liberals at the table), some name calling...that has no relation to the politics, but usually is Steve & Todd calling each other various and sundry foul names (Steve's are always more graphic and Todd's more expressive), Davis uttering the most disgusting if undirected obscenities known to man and Mac spewing soda out his nose...and other sundries we get down to gaming.

The CK kick starts the night with some cool descriptions. *"After last week's ferocious battle with the mercenary band from the Green Wizard, you find yourselves regrouping in the snow covered courtyard; the sky is a brilliant blue, and clear. The forest trees that surround the compound are naked of leaves; their thin silhouettes seem to fence you in. Ki took a horrible wound to the chest that obviously nicked his lung for each time he took a breath a little blood bubbled up on his lips. He seems on death's door...Alright, lets get a quick round of descriptions."*

Every one chimes in with his own measure and many details are rattled off in great detail. Mark's descriptions last about 15 seconds, Chris's last about 15 minutes. Go figure. Anyway all this is wonderful, good gaming all around until someone... and there is always someone...mentions their character's name. "Xifiopucus is wearing a green..." What the bloody sin kind of name is that? Who on the earth, in the heavens or below would give birth to a bouncing baby boy or girl and think to themselves that they want to name their son Xifiopupuask. No one, and I mean, absolutely no one would do this. Even someone whose culture had a word like that in it would not do this. German words can be ridiculously long, but the names they give their children are things like Karl and Bjorn not Geschwendigkeitsbegrenzung!!!

I hate stupid names. Worse, I hate long stupid names. If you're going to have it stupid keep it short, something like *Ee!* I hate long, stupid names you can't pronounce. I hate long, stupid names that only the creator can pronounce and only then after he or she looks at the character sheet.

"What's your name dude?" "Er, my name is..." flipping the character sheet "Cracatoah." So you're a volcano? Cew!! That sets the mood.

I get that they are trying to be exotic. We all want our characters to be exotic; to have that fantasy feeling and origins in a mystical universe. But I'm here to tell you that no mother anywhere is going to name her child Baldebius-lupcus. It's just not happening, anywhere, anytime.

Of course the opposite is true when it comes to names. I remember Todd had a character once. I think it was a paladin. Steve started the game off with the wilderness setting and the characters meeting some NPC or other. This was AD&D and in the old days. When asked for description Todd rattled one off and then Steve asked his name. Todd realized he had no name and as much to aggravate Steve as to have a name he says "Joe. Ah, Joe Paladin." Steve looked at him for a minute and then without warning struck him with a blue bolt of lightning and killed Joe Paladin. It was cool!

The same name problem goes for monsters. What the heck are game designers thinking? Why do they think the more syllables in a word the cooler the word. Well they're wrong. I can't count the number of times we've listened to some cool description of a monster only to have the illusion shattered by a stupidly named beast. Imagine hearing, the wacapacup attacks. The what? For all you self-described game designers look to our own world for inspiration: lion, tiger, bear, shark. These are simple, simple words. They don't have 14 syllables in them. Only the platypus does and that's a stupid name. I guarantee you that if that animal could understand its "name" it would stand up on forelegs and beat humans to death with its tail for such a stupid name; Platypus indeed.

Furthermore, it drives me nuts when names are cool and are ruined by some bonehead. Mac has forever ruined the word Kraken. We can never have a kraken arrive at the table because every time we do he starts dancing around like a fool with his pepsi in hand singing, "the Kraken of Kraken More, the Kraken of Kraken More!" and I don't even know what the hell he's talking about any more.

# Moat Gate - A Sampler

Designer: Don MacVittie

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**G**ervan, warrior of the village of Hillside, walked across the bridge toward the strange gate at the edge of the City of Yggsburgh. The huge gatehouse – its twin towers looming above the gate, the frilly guards, the mix of people so diverse that it was hard to tell friend from foe, and it set him on edge. He had traveled here to find a cure for the village master, who was taken ill with a dog bite. He was entrusted with this task because he was the fastest runner, but now, seeing people in all sorts of finery mixed with the slovenly dregs of society, he was not certain a fast runner was the best choice.

“Welcome to Yggsburgh, City of Rivers, traveler,” said the guard in a friendly voice. “The fee to enter the city is five coppers.”

Gervan dug in his pouch, glad that the elders had given him plenty of coin, just over an entire gold piece worth. He handed the guard five copper. “Is there a doctor in town?” he asked.

The guard tried hard not to smile at his innocent question. “Several. There is a midwife just inside the gate, the priestesses at the Temple of the Three Norns are not unfamiliar with healing, and there is a doctor just down Moat street – and that is just what is close to the gate. I recommend the surgeon for most things, but if it’s a love potion you’re after, the apothecary, or the witch.”

“Thank you, the doctor will do just fine,” Gervan said simply.

“You are welcome, now move along please,” the guard replied.

Gervan walked past the guard into the gate area. Vendors held out tantalizing bits of meat on sticks, a man was juggling daggers, two women were offering tour guide services while two others – scantily dressed – were offering something, Gervan wasn’t certain what. All were shouting to have their services heard over the general din of people, horses, and oxen crowding the courtyard.

A shabbily dressed one-eyed man walked toward him. “Money for a wounded veteran, Sir?” he asked, holding out a hand. Gervan hesitated, the elders had told him not to give money to beggars, but was a veteran a beggar?

Another man walked up next to Gervan and tossed an arm around his shoulder. “Pay no never mind to old beggar Thom, tomorrow that patch will be gone and he’ll be missing a hand. He’s always here, hoping to find some rube to take coin from. You’re not a rube though are you, just new here?” at Gervan’s nod he continued “What you need is a guide. I can be your guide for a few coppers.”

It was all happening too fast for Gervan, he nodded reflexively and reached into his pouch, pulling out a silver and a copper. He handed the silver to the man. “You have change?” he asked.

“Of course my boy, of course,” the man said while taking the coin, “but we’ll need to spend some of this to get you a meal and even a room if you need one, I’ll just hang on to it until we’re done for the day. Now, what did you want to see in Yggsburgh, my friend?”

“A doctor. The guard recommended one on Moat Street,” Gervan replied.

“Of course, Doc Brewer. We can go to the Doc, this way. Oh, and I’m Berrick, your guide for the day. I know more about this city and its people than anyone other than Ernst Grumbold, and you’ve hired me for a pittance.” He turned Gervan to the north and headed out of the square, up Moat Avenue. Gervan didn’t notice his quick smile to the man with one eye, nor the one-eyed man’s return wave.

“So, how much coin do you have in that pouch?” Berrick asked as they walked up Moat street.

Gervan’s hand went subconsciously to his pouch. “A little – enough to pay the doctor and get a meal.”

“A meal? Well my boy! Good thing you have Berrick to guide you, I know just the place for us to eat! What about women? Do you have some spare coin for some sport, eh?”

“Today was fun, Berrick – I’ve never seen so much food, so many stores, or so many people in one place before, but I really must return to my village, the master is very sick, and I’ve been trusted to get the potion.” Gervan said tiredly as they walked through the rapidly darkening streets. At least he had the potion, though he had spent nearly all of the money the elders had given him.

Berrick slapped him on the back. “Oh my boy, this day has been nothing! The sun is setting! Just you wait, my boy! This is a very different city at night!”

## Don MacVittie

is a published author in both Computer Science and Fantasy literature.

Though he has been running RPGs since 1982

and writing all of his own adventures since 1997, the Yggsburgh

Town Modules project is his first foray into adventure writing,

accepting the opportunity to work with the renowned Mr. Gygax

to make The Town of Yggsburgh even better than the great city

defined in the core Yggsburgh Guide. Don authored three of the 24

modules defining the town and its immediate environs. His lovely wife

Lori has another three to her credit. Don is grateful for the opportunity to have worked

with the cooperative and talented group of designers that Mr.

Gygax recruited for the project.

Daily there is a flow of traffic into and out of The Moatgate, that gate that connects The Outs with Yggsburgh proper. Through this gate flow workers, businessmen, ladies, and city leaders, all going about their daily tasks. With them come foreigners, thieves, uncounted underclass, spies, and adventurers.

The areas around The Moatgate reflect this varied traffic. Near the gate are businesses that cater to foreigners and denizens of The Outs, while cheap housing abounds to hold the workers that keep the city and The Outs productive. The Fane and Convent of The Three Norns lies in the Southeast corner of the city, and the neighborhood around it is upper class patrons of the convent or people with vested interest in the businesses around the Moatgate.

Here your brave adventurers will find people willing to purchase old documents or provide research for a fee. They will meet the underclass and find outfitting for basic adventuring. They can dine with a retired Knight of the Citadel or take their repast in a bawdy bar. Whatever type of adventure your characters wish to undertake, whatever type of citizen they hope to encounter, they will find it here.

This district is detailed enough to give you, the Castle Keeper a solid background without tying his hands. The remainder can be fleshed out as needed or used as is. There are plots, rumors, thieves and heroes in this district. They await your command and your final personal touch to make them a part of your Yggsburgh.

At the edge of the city of Yggsburgh, sitting at the confluence of the Menhir Hills Road from the north and the River High Road from the east is the busiest gate in the city. Here come all forms of traders, travelers, minstrels, and fugitives, seeking entrance to the great free city. Access is controlled at the gate by the city guard, but the volume of traffic makes it impossible to keep out all of the unsavory elements that venture from the roads and The Outs, a slum outside the gate.

In the immediate area of the Moatgate, there are temples, wealthy landowners and businessmen, common taverns, and even some slums. Everything an up-and-coming adventuring party could want or need is here – intrigue, business, crime, punishment, even politics are carried on within the Moatgate district.

Whether hoping for adventure in the city or looking for a place to use as a base of operations while adventuring in the Eastmark, the Moatgate district will serve their purposes. While the Moatgate district is best utilized with the other modules detailing the workings of the Free City of Yggsburgh and Castle Zagyg: Yggsburgh, it is possible to use in your campaign however works best for your group.

At the Temple of the Three Norns, adventurers can seek succor or find adventure, the priestesses having both a healing touch and dire problems. The Pale Spirits Inn serves some of the strongest drink in Yggsburgh for a reasonable price, while Hunters' Outfitting offers equipment needed for journeys on the dangerous roads of the Eastmark.

From the moment your adventurers enter the Moatgate they will be assailed by the sights, scents, and sounds of a large city – from purchasing rodents on a stick in the gatehouse area to the row of Inns and shops lining the streets from the gatehouse to the nearest town square, this is a place vibrant with life, fun, and danger.

Ernst Grumbold at Ye Porkers' Stern will regale the characters with tales of Yggsburgh and the environs while serving them good food and ale at reasonable prices. And should the unspeakable occur to a character, his or her associates can stop by at Memorial Burials to hire the best in mourners and funerary arrangements – albeit at inflated rates. For those just passing through, Yggsburgh Souvenirs offers those special trinkets that adventurers will want to send home, while Henry Meade's Billiard Hall will give the party thieves a chance to make that extra bit of money required to shop at Hope's Chest, or even just enough coin to rest at Fox's Flophouse.

The Moatgate district includes information about all areas in the Southeast corner of Yggsburgh, from South Palisades Avenue on the south, to Neargate Lane in the north, from Moat Avenue on the east to Lower Market on the west. There are apartments for rent, a bank to store wealth collected adventuring, the town historian, a temple, places to buy items for adventure and places to sell items collected on adventure. There are even lower end clothiers, a barber, and a wig maker, should the party decide to dress the part of townfolk.

Add to that random encounter tables of notables from the city plus residents of the district – separate tables for day and night - plus a large list of rumors that the Castle Keeper can dole out to offer the players opportunity for adventure, and the Moatgate district is a powerful addition to your Castle Zagyg collection. Finally, there is a new magic item and an expansion of the Yggsburgh skill system that defines its use for Sages, expanding not just your adventure material and the city, but the Castles and Crusades system itself.

There are bully-boys, a witch, activities of the Thieve's Guild (the actual Thieve's Guild is detailed in Castle Zagyg: Yggsburgh and more detail in another of the Yggsburgh Town modules, but they are active in most every district of the city). There's even a mercenary



organization that the characters can join to find adventure and legally earn funds.

With over two hundred areas detailed in the Moatgate District and two of them mapped separately, the Castle Keeper will have plenty to mull over for incorporation into his campaign. Areas like tenements are lightly defined, leaving the CK room to expand upon them as needed in the course of adventuring, while items that adventurers will need from day one – like the Fane and Convent, stores, and the like – are detailed enough to allow the Castle Keeper to run the module without investing a lot of hours.

While there is much to do in the Moatgate district, the Yggsburgh Town modules have subtle references to each other, making the whole of Yggsburgh more than the sum of its parts. Gathering other modules in the series will allow you to track the activities of certain individuals and organizations across the town, deepen the intrigue, and offer even more goods and services to the adventurers. And of course, each module has built in adventures and adventure hooks to keep your characters adventuring for a very long time.

*Ernst Grumbolt sat back with the mug of his heavy Stout that the group of young hopefuls had given him, and finished up his tale. "... and that's the way it was, the poor prelate didn't know what to do!"*

*They all laughed. These were nice young kids, in the city for some fun and adventure, still a little innocent, but earnest and hoping to make a name for themselves. Ernst didn't mind regaling them with tales – they were buying a lot of ale, and he liked to talk.*

*A young man – not more than 13 – came running into the common room of Ye Porkers' Stern. "Something's gone wrong at the Teacher mansion! A statue of a man crashed through three floors!"*

*Ernst looked up and then waved a hand. "You could go look into that if you like my rowdy friends. I'll keep your table, and it certainly sounds like adventure. Just be careful, statues don't just appear on the third floor of a house. Run along now," he said.*

*The four youngsters hopped up from the table to go gawk. The one with the golden oak crest of Forseti on his tunic dropped some coins on the table with a serious nod. Ernst nodded back, outwardly just as serious, inwardly smiling. He watched them leave.*

*He shrugged. No doubt a statue had fallen through three floors of that house, Ernst had wondered when the Chief Curator's research would land him in trouble. The man was too curious about arcane objects by half. Ernst snorted and set*

*about clearing the table, looking about for another crowd to regale with tales of the past. There was that one Chief Curator who tried to have himself placed into the museum as part of the people in history display... Too bad that he was crushed by a falling block, that was an intriguing and eccentric man indeed. This one wasn't nearly as bad.*

*After about half an hour, the group returned to Ye Porkers' Stern, and Ernst brought them another round. "Well, was it interesting?" he asked.*

*They all began talking at once. Finally, one voice quieted the others. "We don't know. It's a statue all right, a full sized replica of a man. But the Beadles chased us away before we found out how something that heavy even got up onto the third floor. Saw the statue though, it was missing an arm. They said he looked like the butler, and one of the maids was killed in the accident..."*

*Ernst smiled. Another great day in Yggsburgh. The next group to come in would have another tale. "You should sneak past the Beadles and find out what happened. Isn't that why you came to town?" he asked.*

*Energized by his simple suggestion, they all started talking at once again. Ernst wandered off whistling a tune.*

WALKING AMIDST  
GIANTS  
LAKE GENEVA  
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THE COVE IN  
LAKE GENEVA

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**Jeffrey Talanian** hails from the woods of New Hampshire. A gamer since 1981, he is presently working as Gary Gygax's co-author of the *Castle Zagyg™ Campaign Module Series*, including the recently published *Castle Zagyg: The East Mark Gazetteer folio*, by Troll Lord Games. He is also the author of four of the *Yggsburgh Town Expansion Series* modules, including the recently published *Yggsburgh: The Town Halls District*. When not developing adventuring material with Gary, Jeff is changing diapers, bussing his 3 children about, reading old books, watching movies and TV with his lovely wife, Erica, or gaming with his stellar group of companions, *The Knights of Next Tuesday*.

by Jeffrey Talanian with E Gary Gygax  
edited by E Gary Gygax

Autumn, 1972. It's been a few months since the Democratic National Committee headquarters at the Watergate hotel complex was broken into, a story that will continue to take life over the next two years and beyond. Bobby Fischer defeats Boris Spassky to become the first American chess champion. The Munich Massacre shocks and saddens the world. The Price is Right debuts on CBS, with host Bob Barker. The production of the first recombinant DNA molecule is reported. Henry Kissinger suggests that "peace is at hand" after visiting South Vietnam. Atari launches the first generation of video games with the release of Pong. And the Apollo 17, the last manned mission to The Moon, lands.

What did not make world headline or entertainment news that autumn of '72 was a hand-drawn dungeon map on a sheet of graph paper. The map was drawn to test the initial prototype of the Dungeons & Dragons game (published January, 1974), which was based on the Chainmail "Man-to-Man" rules and the "Fantasy Supplement" to it in which the players selected various figures for tabletop combat — Heroes, Superheroes, Wizards, normal soldiers of various sorts, humanoids, and monsters. Play in the new fantasy game involved creating a character that was a fighter, magician, or cleric and then having them engage the exploration of a subterranean dungeon in which lurked monsters, and where there were traps for the unwary. The man who created the rules for play and penciled this dungeon map was E.

Gary Gygax, co-author and driving force behind the Dungeons & Dragons game.

"...The work began with a single dungeon level in the late autumn of 1972, with the first exploration party being composed of characters created by my eldest son, Ernie, and my eldest daughter Elise. The very next day they adventured again accompanied by Rob Kuntz, eventually my co-game master, and his brother Terry, as well as my friend Don Kaye. As play was so intense I went to work immediately that night to create a second level, and to those two I added a new deeper level every few days..." —Gary Gygax, from the Author's Preface of *Castle Zagyg, Vol. II: The Upper Works*.

For over three and a half decades, hundreds, perhaps thousands of player characters have explored the mysterious depths of Gary Gygax's most fabled dungeon. In those early days the dungeon adventure was called Greyhawk, the name he gave to his castle ruins, which was later expanded by Mr. Gygax to include an entire campaign setting that to this day remains a favorite of fantasy role-players. Over the years, at his home game in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin and at gaming conventions around the world, Gary has run various incarnations of the castle. He also explored its limitless depths as a player whenever his co-DM Rob Kuntz took the reins.

But Gary never got around to actually publishing his seminal dungeon adventure. That is, until now. In 2008, a brassy independent RPG publisher called Troll Lord Games will release the first

component of Gary Gygax's legendary mega-dungeon. The adventure has a new name and is indeed a new incarnation that draws from, respects, utilizes, and expands upon the previous incarnations. This grand adventure is called the **Castle Zagyg™** campaign module series.

Welcome to the first installment of *The Dweomercrafter's Den*. This new feature of The Crusader magazine will focus on Gary Gygax's Castle Zagyg. From setting material, to Castle Keeper advice, to historical footnotes, to anecdotal tales of the old Lake Geneva campaigns, this regular feature will serve to enhance your Castle Zagyg campaign. And so we will begin by introducing the Castle Zagyg™ campaign module series setting and adventure.

## THE CASTLE ZAGYG™ CAMPAIGN MODULE SERIES SETTING

In 2005 Troll Lord Games released the first product of Gary Gygax's Castle Zagyg campaign module series line. This was **Castle Zagyg, Volume I: Yggsburgh**. The 250+ pages of this hardback are packed with setting material, adventure hooks, encounter areas, and thousands of NPCs. It is comprised of the Free Town of Yggsburgh (pronounced "EGG's-berg") and its environs, which are slightly less than 1,700 square miles (or an area of some 50 by 34 miles). The town's environs are known as "The East Mark."

The society of Yggsburgh is Western European in tone, its culture rather English, its political structure feudal (vassals owing fealty to lords, including service and taxes from the fief granted). The cultural level is similar to the High Middle Ages, and early Renaissance in the more developed states. The technological level is also equivalent to this period, with the exception of chemical explosives (of which there are none), and the addition of magical innovations that only such a fantasy milieu can provide. The geography, history, politics, and culture of Yggsburgh are fully detailed in the Yggsburgh hardback, with plenty of opportunity for expansion by the Game Master.

**The East Mark Gazetteer**, a folio released in 2007 by Troll Lord Games, includes much of the environs information originally presented in the Yggsburgh hardback, but it also includes added material, such *The Whole Urth & The Celestial Heavens, Weather & Climate, Trees of the East Mark, Population Examination, Ancient and Current Languages, Deities of the East Mark*, and more. It also includes several new maps and a Castle Zagyg adventure module called **Mouths of Madness** (more on this below).

Still, the Yggsburgh setting is small enough to be fitted into any campaign world, be it published or "homebrew." Likewise, it can be used as the core for building a complete campaign around it. In the pages of this regular feature, we will at times discuss this setting and

its development, for what is a mega-dungeon adventure without its surrounding wilderness and communities?

Even now, Yggsburgh is being expanded. Mr. Gygax has divided the Free Town into 19 town districts and five suburban districts. These 24 modules have been developed from the main book by a group of freelance authors under Gary's watchful eye and direction, each one distinct yet a component of the greater whole that is Yggsburgh. Two have thus far been released: **Yggsburgh: The Town Halls District** and **Yggsburgh: Moat Gate District**. Two more are presently on the horizon: **Storehouse District** and **The East Corner**. Mr. Gygax continues to push the bounds of creativity, providing gamers with a toolbox of setting information to enrich his legendary castle and dungeon adventure.

## MANSE OF THE MAD ARCHMAGE

On the heels of the Yggsburgh hardback, Troll Lord Games released **Castle Zagyg: Dark Chateau**, a 40-page adventure module for character levels 1–3, penned by Robert J. Kuntz, Gary's old partner from the early days of Castle Zagyg's conception. This fantastic module features Zagyg's old manse, the place he lived before he effected the construction of his fabled castle. Dark Chateau is filled with mystery, intrigue, and danger. It not only provides many hours of exciting game play, but also affords castle seekers a glimpse into the eccentric whimsy of that most mad of Archmagi. As an aside, in my own Castle Zagyg campaign, two player characters met their fate in that manse — both by the same player, no less!

## THE CURSED FOG BEGINS TO LIFT

In 2007, GenCon, the largest role-playing game convention in the world, celebrated its 40th annual gathering. As the creator of the original GenCon event, Gary Gygax was rightfully the Premier Guest of Honor. His time and attention were in heavy demand, and there were several releases associated with him. Not the least among these was **Castle Zagyg: The East Mark Gazetteer**. We've already discussed the setting material and maps contained in that folio edition. It also contains a 48-page adventure module called **Mouths of Madness**, which I have had the pleasure of co-authoring with Mr. Gygax.

**Castle Zagyg: Mouths of Madness (MoM)** features the first glimpse of the Castle Zagyg adventure. This adventure is but one component of the Castle Zagyg: Upper Works boxed set to be published by Troll Lord Games. The East Mark Gazetteer version of the MoM adventure, however, is modified to stand on its own for immediate game play. It features the wilderness surrounding the castle, where bandits, monsters, and green-furred, ape-humanoid brachiate. It also features several cave lairs that pierce the bluff on which the castle ruins stand.

Long was Castle Zagyg enveloped by a cursed fog referred to as "Zagyg's Curse of Fog & Frogs" by Yggsburgh sages and scholars alike. Reputed to swallow men whole, polymorph them into frogs, and transport them elsewhere, the weird mist struck fear in the hearts of even the most stalwart of seekers. But now, in nearly imperceptible degrees, the fog lifts revealing the bluff on which Castle Zagyg was constructed. The bluff is pocked with caves filled with challenges in abundance for the intrepid adventurer. Whether these caves provide ingress to the many and sundry dungeons of the Mad Archmage is a mystery only the brave can solve...

### THE CURSED FOG NO MORE

In the forthcoming boxed set, **Castle Zagyg, Volume II: The Upper Works**, the eldritch mists that consume Zagyg's Castle will recoil further. Revealed thus are the *Ruins of the Castle Precincts*, including the walls, towers, gatehouses and outbuildings that once thrived at the foot of the castle fortress. Here, challenge and mystery abound. Also revealed are the *Castle Fortress & The East Wall Towers*, comprised of the magnificent fortress in which Zagyg once dwelled and the two massive towers that flank it. Seekers who have long sought to explore the castle will at long last discern its present state. Beneath the castle and its ruined precincts lies the first of those fabled dungeons. Its inhabitants, its horrors, its tricks, traps and zany mysteries can only be learned through adventure.

### THE FUTURE OF THE CASTLE ZAGYG™ CAMPAIGN MODULE SERIES

This project has suffered many delays over the years, not the least of which I myself shoulder as Gary's main assistant in its present development. Indeed, when I was a young man I remember reading about Gary's legendary castle in the pages of *Dragon* and even then looking forward to its future publication. So what stage is Castle Zagyg at now, and what is its future?

Presently (February '08), the final manuscripts of the first boxed set near completion. Based on examples furnished by Mr. Gygax, as well as text direction, many of the floor plans and maps have been completed, and illustrations are well underway. The whole of the project will go through editing and layout, and if all goes smoothly, we are hoping for a late spring release.

After the Upper Works is completed, the second boxed set will begin, and already several maps for that set have been drafted. Peter Bradley has been an indispensable part of the team, doing all the cartography, cover art, several interior illustrations, and laying out each module. I am a bit reluctant to say exactly how many boxed sets Castle Zagyg will be comprised of upon its completion. It really all

depends on how much material we'd like to stuff into each box. In order to avoid long spells between each set, we've decided to release smaller sets, more frequently. As such we are looking at five, possibly six sets, with separate and independent adjunct modules (in the vein of *Dungeonland*, *Land Beyond the Magic Mirror*, and *Isle of the Ape*), most of which are drawn from Gary's original campaign. Also, the aforementioned Yggsburgh Town Expansion modules will be spaced in-between these releases. Through the next two years fans will see a steady stream of Castle Zagyg products released — boxed sets, adjunct modules, setting modules, and a regular feature here in *The Crusader* magazine.

### CASTLES & CRUSADES

Some may wonder why Gary Gygax has chosen to use the Castles & Crusades system as the engine for running Castle Zagyg. Why not use *Dungeons & Dragons* as currently published by Wizards of the Coast? Why not use his own thriving skill-based RPG, the *Lejendary Adventure*™ system?

The answer is simple. Gary believes that the Castles & Crusades role-playing game is closest in spirit to his own version of *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*, and thus best facilitates the sort of class-based level advancement that a dungeon-based campaign adventure requires. Although much of Gary's creative energy these past ten years has been poured into his outstanding LA game, he did not feel that this RPG was appropriate for the massive level-based adventure, either.

That being said, although the C&C system suits Castle Zagyg well, enterprising game masters of any such fantasy role-playing game should have little difficulty in adapting the Castle Zagyg adventure to their preferred system, including those steadfast enthusiasts who continue to run the rules system for which this adventure was originally designed. Indeed, even Gary is devising a level-based alternative of his LA game specifically for use by those *Lejend Masters* who desire to adapt Castle Zagyg. So, while the Castles & Crusades RPG is a perfect fit for this sprawling adventure, one should not allow rules or rules systems hinder its playability.

### 1972: FROM THEN TO NOW

What started as a simple dungeon map penciled on a sheet of graph paper back in Autumn of 1972 is at long last being realized as a comprehensive, multi-release adventure, and it stems from the creative mind of the most significant individual in the history of the RPG genre, E. Gary Gygax. The zany whimsy of that most Mad of Archmagi is at hand! He parts the fog and opens the gates to his castle and dungeons, so come seekers one and all, and find out for yourselves what all the fuss is about ...

# MUSINGS FROM THE DEN

BY STEPHEN CHENAULT

As February 2008 fades from the scene, and we here at TLG struggle with outfitting the Castle Keeper's Guide, getting Crusader on track, and I personally prepare to make a final run on Shades of Mist, it seems a good time to have a look at what ground we've covered and what directions this Trollish Crusade is going to take. I'll try to dispense with the military metaphor as my musings wind on.

We kicked the year off with the Winter's Dark II. This is a show we throw in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin every year. It's the winter version of our Lake Geneva Gaming Convention. Winter's Dark is in its infancy and as a smaller show we don't put as much energy and time into it. I went up by myself and with much help from the Gygax's put the show on. But the show was surprisingly busy and a far greater success than we anticipated. Turnout was good. This included such notables as Gary Gygax, Jim Ward, Tom Wham, Ernie Gygax, Frank Mentzer and our very good friend Joe Goodman from Goodman Games. There was lots of gaming and everyone seems to have had a good time. You can check out my convention blog in this issue to read all about it.

Troll Lords, the company, had a strong start this year. Releasing a number of titles for C&C and LA and by the time you are reading this the first of the Gord reprints will be making the rounds. For Castles & Crusades we've seen Robert Doyel's **Engineering Dungeons** hit the streets with some success as well as well Davis Chenault's **Chimera's Roost**, a very good high level adventure. We've already released Gygax's **East Mark Folio** and the companion books **Town Halls**, **Moat Gate**, and **East Corner**. For Legendary Adventure we've seen **The Rock** and **The Hermit** hit the hobby store shelves, this latter the final and full LA version.

Much of this has been house cleaning, moving products out the door that have been delayed or that are small and manageable and this is to really clear our decks for action for the larger projects that will dominate the center and latter half of the 2008 year.

We have at long last begun earnest work on the **Castle Keepers Guide**. This long awaited third book in the Castles and Crusades library has been often delayed and side-tracked. It now commands the attention of both Davis and myself and progress is now being made. The restructuring of the company has freed up a great deal of my time, which is allowing me to assist Davis and his crew. To this we must tip hats to the TLG newcomers Jim Ward, Mark Sandy, and Elizabeth Stewart who have all allowed me and Davis more time to bring the system on par with its targeted goals. This in turn will allow me to begin work (after the CKG) on my long mused over **Adventurer's Backpack**, a companion to the **Players Handbook**.

Also we have begun the extensive re-working of the Legendary Adventure RPG. We have slated Lake Geneva Gaming Convention as the official debut of the **Legendary Rules for All Players**, the first of the three core books for the LA game system. We hope to follow this with the remaining books as the year unfolds, releasing the whole system in short order.

And these coincide with **Legendary Pantheons**, the latest in the Gygaxian Fantasy World series. This book has for too long sat neglected upon my desk. It is largely complete, awaiting only art for the various chapters. This is a fabulous book on deities written and compiled by Gary Gygax himself. It has hosts of pantheons with official and generic names for ease of play. We are hard at work, in the guise of two of my favorite writers, Mike Stewart and Casey Canfield, in bringing online **Essential Places** as well.

Of course, all this goes hand in hand with a bunch of adventures, monster books, and source material for both the C&C and LA systems, some d20, and a few odds and ends such as **The Weyland Smith Catalog**, also by Gary Gygax and Casey Christofferson's spell and magic items books. The most excited, for me, line launch this year is the **Castellan's Guide** books written by Mike Stewart, the first of which is **Arms and Armor** and should be out this summer. Of course work continues on **Monsters and Treasure II** and **Monsters and Treasures of Aihrde** for the C&C system.

But if you really want to sit down and learn all things troll join us at one of the three conventions we run, or at any other show we'll be in attendance at. Lake Geneva Gaming Convention is going to be a blast and probably the last year it will be 'small' if its growth of last year continues. With 150 attendees last year, a growth of three times from previous years, we are expecting a good sized turnout. Check out websites for all the info. And for folks in the mid south we'll be putting on Troll Con VI in Little Rock, AR in July. This will be a great chance to meet all the trolls, have some fun and do a lot of gaming...you might actually meet the elusive Mac Golden, co-author of the PH and the one who always says, "I don't know why Davis put that in there!"

And late breaking news: we'll probably be heading for a 4th printing on the PH.

2008 is going to be a good year. I hope you all continue to support us and the games we love to make and make it an even bigger year.

Thanks for Playing,

*Steve Chenault*

# Slippery Slope by Joe Damiani

## “Alignment DOES Matter”

Joe Damiani has been an avid player of RPGs starting in the early 80's largely with 1st Edition AD&D. After University he entered the corporate world and worked away at some nebulous personal goals that were largely in part to prove his worth to his father. After 15 years of the rat race to some modest success, Joe found himself asking “Now What?” After soul searching, introspection and good old fashioned Freudian psychoanalysis, Joe took stock and realized that he wasn't happy.

A chance meeting with Gary Gygax at a Toronto convention introduced him to a world of opportunity...he realized that he had been denying his inner dweeb. Being introduced to C&C, the folks at Troll Lords and some of the old guard from TSR provided the opportunity to write, create and design...which he thought was way cool! While necessity keeps him in the corporate grind, when Joe isn't spending time with his family and wonderful new baby, he enjoys delving into world of imagination.

### HAPPENED UPON A HAMLET

Often with running a group of characters, you can tend to overlook all but the most overt good or evil acts. But there are subtle nuances...it can be a slippery slope. This adventure is designed for a 1st-2nd level party of 3-5 characters. As CK, your job is to track how the players react, both with the scenario and each other which will determine how you ultimately reward or penalize. The CK should take note during game of any excellent roleplaying, assigning points for being on alignment and within character. A chart and suggested actions based on roleplay against alignment is provided in the conclusion section of the module.

### TRAVELING DOWN THE ROAD

*The fresh air and smell of sweet pine are making this journey between towns a pleasant break from the hard life of an adventurer. The group figures that a few more days will have them arrive at their destination.*

#### 1) The Message

As the party follows the trail around a tree-lined corner, they notice a piece of parchment nailed to one of the trees. Inspection reveals the following message:

*“You are entering the lands of the Hamlet of Osni presided over by Nobleman Vanian through appointment by Duke Grond. Come in peace and respect the rule of the land or turn back and seek alternate routes Thievery and banditry will not be tolerated”*

The party knows of Duke Grond, who is respected as a stern yet fair man governing these parts. There is nothing in the area besides the note.

#### 2) Three Way Intersection

The T-shaped intersection continues in the direction of the party's travel with a sign reading “Osni” pointing towards the river.

#### 3) Osni Proper (Use the detailed map next page)

The main square is nothing more than a cluster of a few buildings...a hamlet indeed! As the party heads closer, they can head the hammering of anvil and wisps of smoke from what is obviously a smithy. The remaining buildings can be identified as the party gets closer. The populace is scant, the party passing a few townies who will nod greetings and go about their business. Folks that the characters meet seem subdued and keep to themselves. It will be difficult to earn the residents' trust.

### Osni Inhabitants

Farmers (1-4): (These are 0 level good humans whose vital stats are HP 4, AC 10. Their saves are physical. Attack with shovel or pitchfork for 1d2. XP: nil)

Trappers (1-2) (These are 0 level good humans whose vital stats are HP 6, AC 10. Their saves are physical. Attack with club for 1d6. XP: nil)

#### A: Trading Post

This wooden structure is well kept with a simple sign reading “The Trading Post”. Inside is a polite yet quiet man named Arthur (use Farmer stats) who will buy and sell goods appropriate to the area at C&C Players Handbook Prices.

#### B: Grotto's Cottage

This is a small one room cottage with a small garden out back and a set of stocks to the road facing side. There are two people talking near a female figure in the stocks.

*As the party nears the little cottage, they witness a lively discussion between a middle aged man at arms and a well dressed Elven nobleman. At the approach of the party, the man at arms gives a hurt nod to the well dressed gentleman and heads to a set of stocks next to a small cottage.*

*The nobleman gives the party a superior look and heads towards them. “I am Vanian, administrator of these regions. You are welcome in peace as long as you obey the rule of law. Watchman Grotto can see to any questions that you might have. If you are after work, I am offering 5 gp per head for the capture of bandits that are staying on the Duke's lands to the north.” And with that, he walks off towards the bridge.*

*In the stocks is a young woman wearing the simple tunic of a farmer. The man at arms approaches the young woman and says a few quiet words after which she begins to weep. The man at arms looks at her sadly and gives her some water from a nearby rain barrel. Watchmen Grotto will speak up if approached “Goodday sa'ars, I am Grotto Donny, watch for this area.”*

Grotto will answer any questions but be vague if asked about the bandits. Like most residents, he is aware of the Forester's circumstances and is entirely sympathetic.

If asked for details, he will mention that this area is under the granted stewardship of Nobleman Vanian. That he is a goodly man who applies the law in black and white terms.

If asked about the girl in stocks, he shakes his head in sadness. He describes the plight of Tamarea. The poor girl lost her parents to illness and was caught stealing food from the trading post. She was sentenced to be locked up until she paid the fine of 10gp or there she would remain for a fortnight. Grotto keeps her as comfortable as he can, but that is all he can do for the poor girl.

#### C: The Smithy

It is well kept with a simple sign reading “The Smithy”. At work making horseshoes is Grant Lindon, a middle aged man with grey hair (use farmer statistics). He is again polite yet reserved selling farming and tools appropriate to the area at C&C Players Handbook Prices.

#### D: Tavern and Inn

An all wood structure run by Ingrid Black. Four rooms with a large open bar area with fireplace and hearth and two common rooms for let (both vacant, 3 sp per person, per night). Ingrid sleeps in the forth room.

#### E: Home of Nobleman Vanian

The complex is comprised of three buildings surrounded by farmland which include the main house, barn and servant cottage.

This is the summer home of Vanian, an Elvish nobleman tied to the court of Duke Grond. He is a stickler for the law seeing everything in black and white and governs the area accordingly.

Vanian: (He is a 3rd level, Lawful Good, Elvish Warcaster (see the Crusader Issue 5) whose vital stats are HP 12 AC 14. His primary attributes are Intelligence and Strength. His significant attributes are Intelligent 16, Strength 16 and Dexterity 14. He wears a +1 Ring of Protection and a +1 Cloak of Protection and carries a Longsword +1. His spells per day are 0th × 4, 1st × 4 and 2nd × 2. XP:66)

This area is a very small part of Duke Grond’s realm. For that reason, it was convenient to grant Vanian the ability to adjudicate local matters. If Grond understood how strict Vanian was ruling on his behalf, he would be displeased and revoke this power (thus angering Vanian who would hold a grudge against the party).

#### 4) “Bandit” Caves

The residents are friendly but reserved about assisting the party figuring out where the bandit incursions are coming from.

With some time investigating, rangers or other characters with tracking skills will be able to find a trail leading to the north. After winding through the forest, they will come across a cave that shows obvious signs of habitation.

*You break through the tree line to see a small clearing in the hilly area with tracks leading up to a cave entrance. There is a rope slung up between two saplings with some clothing hanging to dry. There is also a fire pit that is smoldering with a beat up pot containing some bubbling thin soup. A rain barrel sits to the left of the cave mouth.*

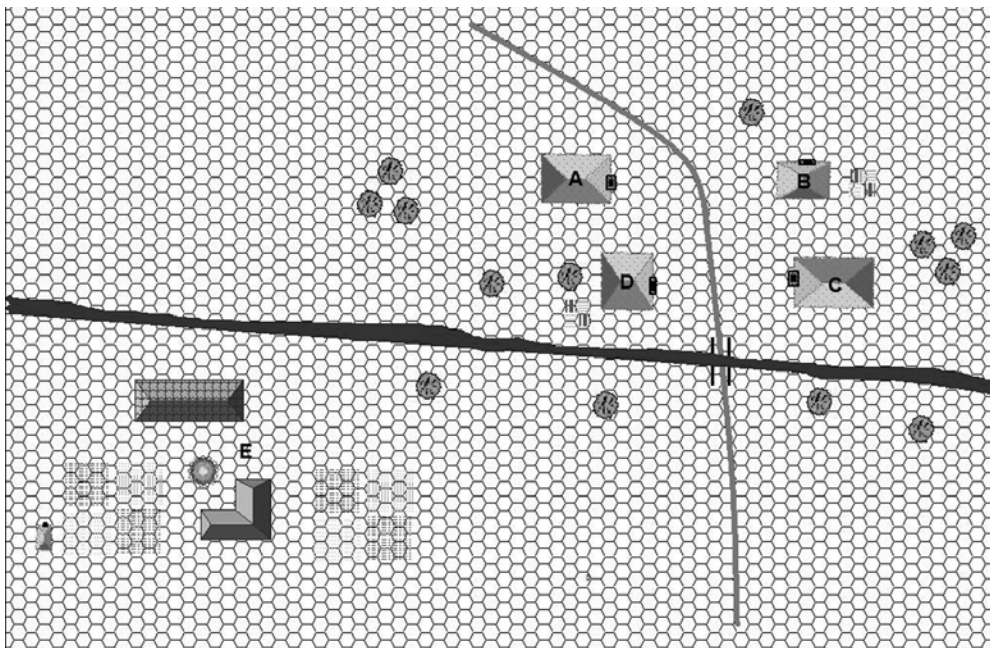
#### “Bandits”:

Hester Forester: (He is a 1st level, Neutral Good, Human Ranger whose vital stats are HP 10 AC 12. His primary attributes are Strength and Dexterity. His significant attributes are Strength 16 and Dexterity 16. He wears studded leather armor and carries a Longsword XP:15)

Claude Forester: (He is a 0 level Neutral Good, Human Farmer whose vital stats are HP 5 AC 10. He carries a spear and short bow with 20 arrows XP:10)

Sara Forester: (She is a 0 level Neutral Good, Human Druid Farmer whose vital stats are HP 2 AC 10. She carries no weapons. She is an innate druid who will ultimately realize this

## Osni Proper



## SLIPPERY SLOPE

profession and has started to display the effects of Animal Affinity as a special ability. XP:12)

**Brown Bear:** (Neutral, HD 3d8, HP 17, AC 13, MV 40 ft. Attacks 2 x Claw d6, Bite d8, Hug for automatic Bite damage. Its saves are physical. XP:91)

The “bandits” or Forester family who are making residence in the cave are aware of the character’s approach having been forewarned by some of Sara’s forest creature friends. They are barricading themselves in one of the caverns and have made the brown bear aware that strangers are coming.

When the characters start to investigate the cave, the brown bear will give a loud warning roar. Hester will shout out that the party should leave them alone and go about their own business. If the party presses in, the bear will attack.

After the combat starts, should the bear be struck Sara will run to the scene of the combat and throw herself between the characters and the bear. She will shield the bear from attack and stop him from attacking the party.

*“Don’t hurt bear! He is our friend!”*

If the party presses on, or injures Sara in any way the bear will go berserk and fight at +2 to attack and damage at full strength until he reaches -10 hit points.

At this point, hopefully the characters will realize that all is not as it seems and the fighting will end. Hester will begin his story and throw their future on the good will of the party.

*Hester sits on a log by the fire and begins with a heavy sigh. “I tried,” he said, “very hard but times have been difficult and now I have my children living in a cave like animals. You see, it started with the poor crops that this whole area has suffered from the last few years. Everyone is just making by...but when Becca died and Claude here fell sick, everything just fell apart.*

*I asked Vanian for more time but he demanded full payment on the debt I had taken on the farm.”*

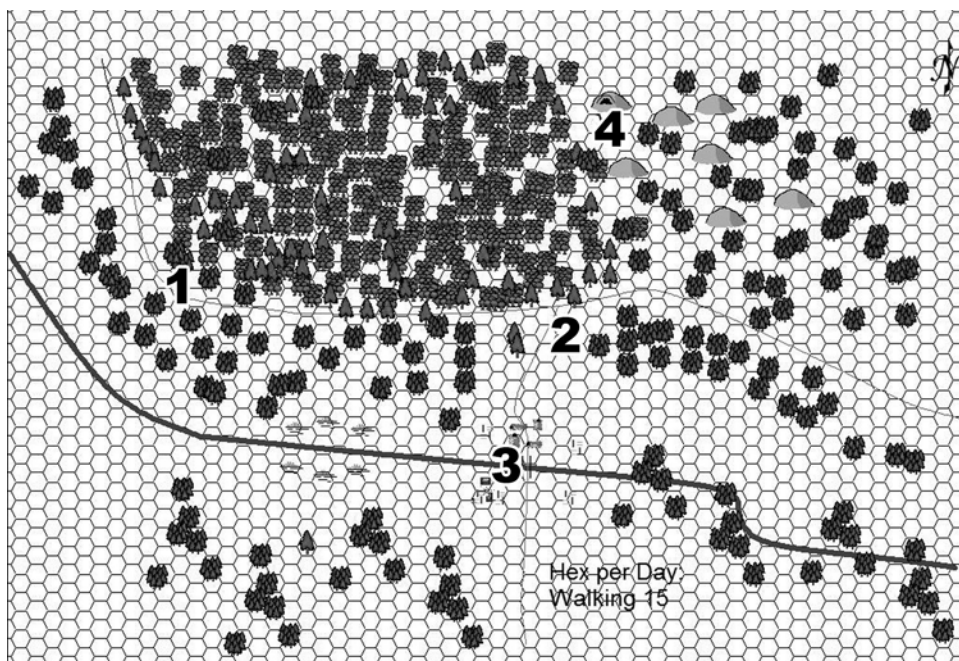
Other details that Hester will reveal are that Vanian, though uncharitable, had every right to call the loan. That the children lived on the charity of others for a while but since the region is going through difficult times, it only lasted so long. He himself is a proud man and lived off the land until his children eventually came to join him. Due to Sara’s natural affinity with animals, a friendly living arrangement was made with the bear in the caves. Hester heads to his old farm under the cover of night to glean whatever crops he can find to assist his family. The amount of debt that he owed Vanian was 250 gp and currently his lands are up for sale.

### CONCLUSION

Event	Lawful	Chaotic	Evil
Assist Tamarea to escape		X	
Assist Tamarea by paying the fine	X		
Arrests the “bandits”	X		
Lets the “bandits” go		X	
Negotiating a debt settlement with Vanian	X		
Send word to the Duke on how Vanian is governing	X		
Overthrowing Vanian		X	
Each NPC killed			X

The CK can use this chart to allocate XP awards or penalties. A recommendation would be +250 XP for appropriate with -150 for inappropriate behaviors. You may also want to consider alignment shifts for extreme behaviors.

## Osni Environs





# Auld Wyrnish

Wisdom from an Old Master by Mike Stewart

## ERRATA ON THE FLY:

### Additions for the "Creating High Level Characters on the Spur of the Moment" Article

As with anything created by human/demihuman hands, gremlins occasionally sneak in and screw things up. This happened with Issue #8's **Auld Wyrnish** article. The below should clarify things and improve the overall efficacy of the system to one and all.

#### ADDITIONAL DESCRIPTIONS

The below should be right after the **General Adventuring Table**:

**Danger!**= This reflects an adventuring period of peril, either by choice of the Character or imposed on them by circumstance. If the roll indicates *Danger!* and the Specific Adventuring Activity rolls come up as either *Bounty*, *Guard* or *War*; then the PC gains an extra +1 to the Advancement roll for that subsequent Epic Period.

**Wandering**= This denotes a Player Character's adventuring period spent traveling near and far, for new sights and experiences. If the roll indicates *Wandering* and the Specific Adventuring Activity roll results in either *Mystery*, *Urban* or *Wilderness*; then the PC gains an extra +1 to see if Loot is acquired during the subsequent Epic Period.

**Special**= A result of "Special" means that the Player Character obtains some truly spectacular event during their Adventuring period. Instead of moving to the Specific Adventuring Tables, the die is rolled on the **Special Adventure Table** and the results applied to the PC. Then the **General Adventuring Table** is rolled on again. Note that unlike other results, this only ages the Character as if only **one** Epic Period resulted, not the usual 4 that comprise the Adventuring Period.

- For the **Loot Table**, all numbers are in gold pieces, or whatever coinage is used as the standard mode of exchange in your campaign.
- Characters gain the ability to roll on either the Loot Table or the Magic Item Table as a

result of spending accumulated Renown Points for the various Epic periods.

#### PATTERN OF ROLLS:

The below is a outline format of the method of die rolls and the resulting tables for the system.

I. Roll on the General Adventuring Table.

a. Determine results as modifiers to subsequent rolls on the Specific Adventuring Table.

1. If "Special" results, go directly to the Special Table and apply results; then return to I.

II. Roll on the Specific Adventuring Table, keeping track of the number of Advancement success rolls, Loot Rolls, Renown rolls and Survival rolls. For the last, consult CK if death or injury will result.

a. Return to II. above until the 4 Epic Periods are rolled, then return to I. for the roll of another General Adventuring Period.

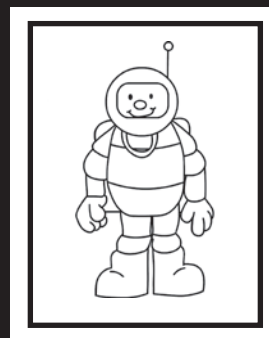
b. Keep careful track of the years the Character ages based on their race. The Castle Keeper may apply penalties due to aging as appropriate.

III. Once the Character has achieved the desired level (and/or age) then the Loot rolls are generated on the Loot Table, Magic Items determined on the Magic Table, and Renown points spent on either Loot or Magic Item rolls as desired.

IV. Begin Play with Higher level character.



*In 1978, Mike Stewart became interested in roleplaying games and has never looked back. He is currently a post graduate student at the University of North Texas. When he grows up, he wants to be a spaceman.*



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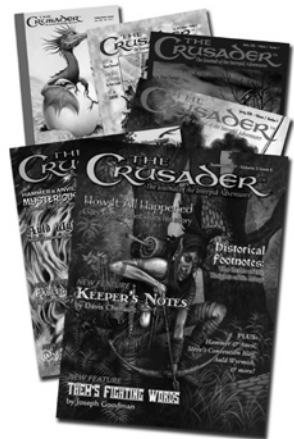
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# TOM'S PAGE

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Above me and to my left are some drawings from some games that are in the works. And I have no excuse for what follows. You may ask what this has to do with gaming (as well you might). To that I say, it came from a gamer's refrigerator (mine... see photo to your right.)

BTW this was Sal's farewell performance.



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