

# THE CRUSADER™

*The Journal of the Intrepid Adventurer*

NOTES FROM  
THE MANAGING  
EDITOR  
BY JAMES M. WARD

CHARACTER  
DEATH  
BY STEPHEN CHENAULT

GAME REVIEW:  
CONDOTTIERE  
BY JAMES M. WARD

TALES OF THE  
RINGS OF BRASS  
BY STEPHEN CHENAULT

STRANGER IN A  
STRANGE LAND  
BY CASEY CANFIELD

ROAD HOUSE  
ROGUES  
BY CASEY CHRISTOFFERSON

THE ANGRY  
GAMER  
BY A TROLL

MONSTERS  
OF AIHRDE  
BY STEPHEN CHENAULT

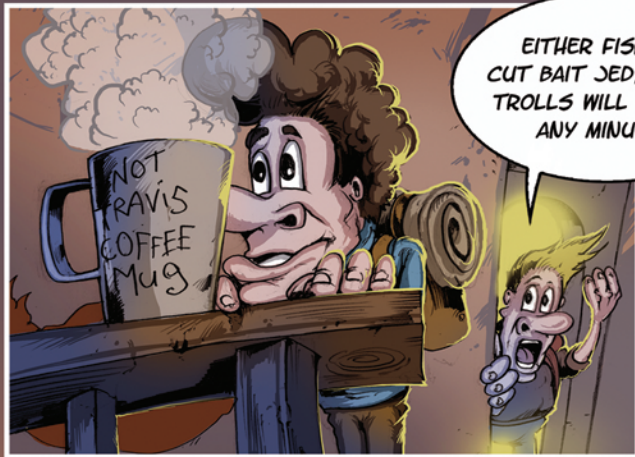


*LOTS O'  
TROLLS  
INSIDE!*

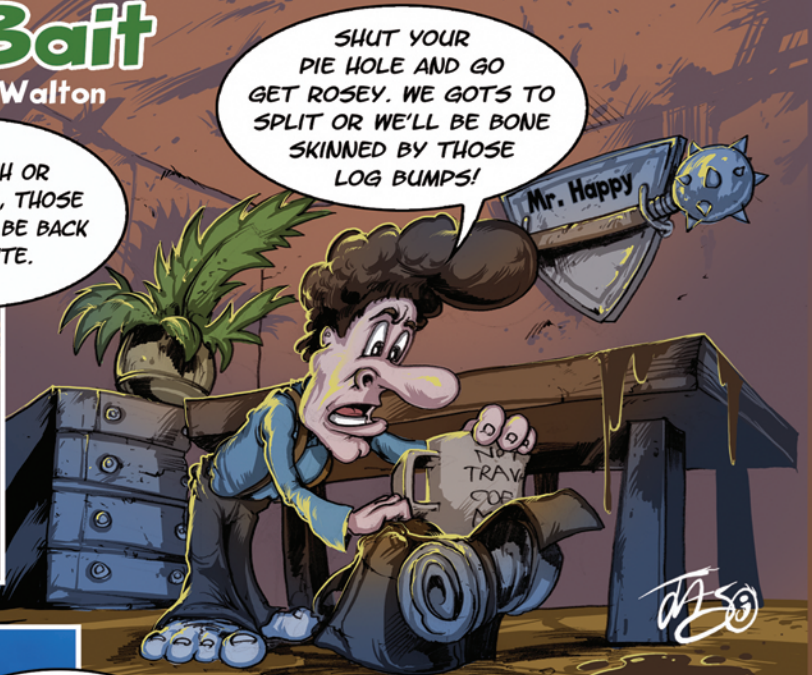
**NOW 36  
PAGES!!!**

# Fish or Cut Bait

by Stephen Chenault Art by Jason Walton



EITHER FISH OR CUT BAIT JED, THOSE TROLLS WILL BE BACK ANY MINUTE.



SHUT YOUR PIE HOLE AND GO GET ROSEY. WE GOTTS TO SPLIT OR WE'LL BE BONE SKINNED BY THOSE LOG BUMPS!

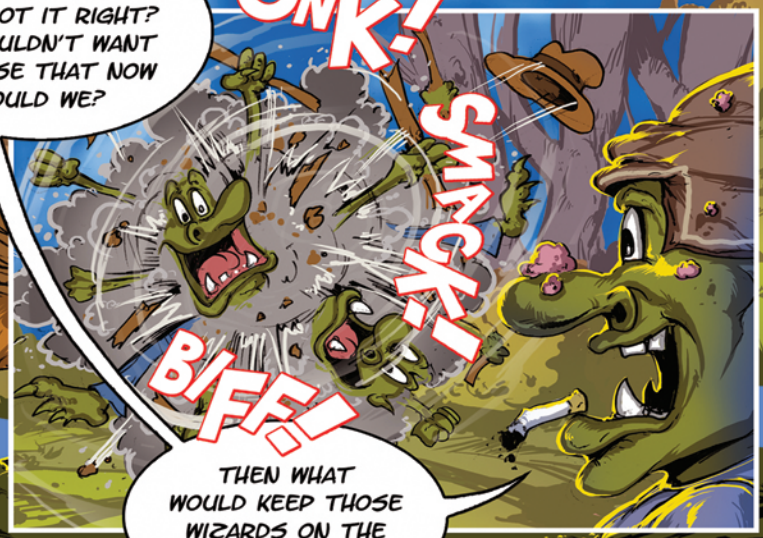


ISN'T THAT SAC UP AT THE HOUSE?



SURE HE IS. BUT HE HAD HIM A GOOD DOSE OF THE SIEGE ENGINE AND WAS SLEEPING AWAY, PRETTY AS YOU PLEASE.

THE SIEGE ENGINE HUH? HE'S GOT IT RIGHT? WE WOULDN'T WANT TO LOSE THAT NOW WOULD WE?



THEN WHAT WOULD KEEP THOSE WIZARDS ON THE COAST AT BAY?

END.

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# notes from the managing editor



## James M. Ward

was born in 1951. Living a pleasantly long time, he has been happily married 38 years thanks to the patience of his wife, Janean. He has three equally charming sons, Breck, James, and Theon. They in turn have given him five startlingly charming grandchildren: Keely, Miriam, Sophia, Preston, and Teagan. Working here and there, he's managed to write the first science fiction RPG, METAMORPHOSIS ALPHA, several best selling CCGs including SPELLFIRE and DRAGON BALL Z, and a few novels including HALCYON BLITHE MIDSHIPWIZARD and HALCYON BLITHE DRAGONFRIGATE WIZARD. He likes to fence, the 'sword' type, not the 'put up' type. He spends a great deal of time looking for work. He reads science fiction and fantasy novels and occasionally something else when the cover looks interesting. Recently, he designed and tricked a company into producing his DRAGON LAIRDS board game and he's very happy with the results. If possible, he'd like to end up as the Captain of the starship Enterprise, but that job keeps getting taken before he can get his resume into the proper time stream.

## So You Want to be a Game Designer: Breaking Into the Biz

**T**he glory road is filled with rocks." Robert Heinlein was an amazing science fiction writer who created **Glory Road**. It was about a reluctant hero and I highly suggest everyone read it. I don't want to say be careful about what you wish for, but this hobby gaming business, like other efforts I suppose, is a difficult one to become a success in at the best of times. Along our version of the hobby glory road there are a lot of nasty rocks.

Of all the questions I get asked by gamers and others, I get asked the most about the best way to break into the gaming business. I wish to go on record as advising all of you to not get into this business. The hours are long, the pay rates at every level are usually lower than in other business sectors, you get brutal criticisms by people who have never designed a game in their life, and most of your favorite projects will sell way below expectations.

Okay, I know that the above factual assessment of the Biz won't scare any of you off, so let's proceed into the secrets of getting hired in the game arena.

### Are You Gamer Material?

You have to ask yourself these questions and if the answer is no to any of them, consider another field of endeavor.

1. Do you own more than ten games, right now?
2. Have you ever looked at a game and said I could do better than this design?
3. Do you have your own inhouse versions of rules for games you play?
4. Do you play games at least once a month and think about game rules at other times?
5. Would you rather play a game than do a sports activity?
6. Do you read a lot?
7. Can you easily use a computer?
8. Have you tried role-playing games, collectible card games, and mass market board games?

9. Do you have more than one computer game?
10. Is the group of friends you have to play games with larger than three?

Okay, that was me trying to convince you once more that you shouldn't do this. If you said *NO* to any of those questions, you shouldn't even think of trying to get into this business.

**KEEP YOUR DAY JOB:** You need to have a regular job that pays the bills before you think about getting a game industry job. Trust me on this one.

**KNOW YOUR TARGETS OF JOB OPPORTUNITY:** You have to look at the entire business of hobby gaming. There are only a few large companies, that should tell you something right there. Wizards of the Coast, and the other large ones all have websites. You have to know what is on those sites and know what type of products these companies put out. It would be worth your time to get their catalogs, every year.

**KNOW THE INDUSTRY MAGAZINES:** Look at the magazines of the industry and there are fewer and fewer of those. Buy at least two issues of each and subscribe to all of them to learn what they write about. Get their writer's guidelines and submit material to each of them.

**DIVE INTO THE COLD, COLD WATER:** You need to write a finished product that you think would be something one of the companies you have selected to try and work for would take as a product. You should make it as finished as you can, including inserting artwork and mocking up a cover. Does this sound like too much work to you? If it does maybe you don't have enough heart to really get into this business.

**GO TO HOBBY GAME CONVENTIONS:** Origins, Dragon Con, and Gen Con are large conventions filled with designer want-to-bes. They have websites, check them out. These are shows where you can look at what the various companies are doing. Don't go looking for work there, go to meet and get to know the company people at these

shows. You are there to be friendly and praising of their efforts. It's a great place to get business cards and people's names.

**DON'T JUST KNOW ONE GAME/SYSTEM REALLY WELL:** When I worked at TSR I purposely got, read, and played all the competition's games from boardgames and role-playing games to collectible card games. If you are going to work at any level of the Hobby Gaming Business you have to know what is out there and the concepts in those games. I have two great game designer friends, Mike Gray and Rich Borg. Each of these men have huge game collections. Each of these men knows about all kinds of games. If you are only role-playing or only doing collectible card games you will hardly ever make it in this business.

**DO IT YOURSELF:** Let me just add one more thing. If you really want to get into this business, you should seriously consider doing a product from start to finish and actually produce 1,000 of them. Those of you who can get this done will totally realize if they have what it takes to do this work or you will realize you don't.

Lots of Luck,  
James M. Ward  
Managing Editor, CRUSADER



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March, 2009



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# Letters To The Editor

Featuring You, Our Gentle Reader...

Troll Lords,

First off.....WOW....what a great gaming system! It really brings back the magic of the good ole' game nights. I have been a pen and paper player for close to 30 years and have genuinely missed the magic of that Mr. Gygax created. 3.5 and 4th ED of D&D over complicate the game and take away almost all of the excitement. My son has been playing 3.5 and yesterday I ran the Rising Knight adventure and he is completely hooked on C&C. His exact words were, "Dad...I actually understood the rules!" Great job guys!

My question is when & how can I get a copy of the *Castle Keepers Guide*? My players (all previous 3.5 players) are looking for some skill and class options. Will these be covered in the CCG?

Thanks so much,  
Jack Berberette

Jack,

*Thanks for much for the good word! I'm glad your enjoying the game and bringing back some old school play. The comment about your son is particularly relevant as we were aiming to be understandable by even youngsters.*

*Do you mind if I send this letter to James M. Ward for inclusion in the letters section of our magazine Crusader?*

*And concerning the CKG, we are hard at work on it and it should be out in the next 3-4 months. There is indeed an expanded skill section. These are discussed on our boards by some of the fans as we released a preview in **Crusader 14** (out last month).*

*Have a good one and thanks again.*

Steve

## Location: Somewhere in Time

On CRUSADER #13:[I lost this issue for some time amongst my gaming stuff and just found it ~ heh, and started reading from the back page! ] Wow, very cool monsters (neutral fey critters actually) that have interesting characteristics and great abilities. These fellows will surely inhabit the caves surrounding Castle Frankfort. Use them freely to spice up your game. I've got to incorporate them into my current campaign!! Excellent, Steve!

Count Rhuveinus – Lejendary Keeper of Castle Frankfort

*Rhuveinus,*

*Thank you for the note. Steve and I are always looking for ways to make the magazine more interesting and useful to its readers. We have just started tying up the monsters of the magazine with the short story we include in that issue. This helps the reader see how the creature should be used. It provides them with an illustration that they can use when they take the magazine creature and place it in their own C&C campaigns. I believe our excellent artist can really present a strong image that invokes an emotion with each illustration. I think the illustration on page 15 of CRUSADER 15 and the Hlobane Orc are amazing illustrations. We have many more fun things planned for the magazine as it grows in size and content.*

*Thank you for the note,*

James M. Ward  
Managing Editor

## (On Writing for CRUSADER)

Cool, thanks.

One of my primary questions is what exactly C&C related are submissions allowed to cover? Is anything TLG allowed to be expanded on in an article?

Let's say I wanted to do an article on the Kellerwald?

What about areas that fall into other areas such as Yggsburgh and an article on orcish tribes of that region?

Without fear of confrontation or the consequence of outcome...

Sir Hengest the Oathbreaker, Warden of the Western Marches  
Castles & Crusades Society

*From the Managing Editor:*

*I'm trying to make writing for CRUSADER an easy process. We are working with 800 words a page. If you include a quarter page illustration that takes up 200 of those words. I need 2-3 page articles that don't continue on to the next issue or issues. At the moment I'm just looking for C&C themed articles, but in the next year that will change and other RPGs and other topics will be featured.*

*I am always ready to listen to an idea anyone might have for the magazine. Email me at [sirjmw@aol.com](mailto:sirjmw@aol.com) and head your mail CRUSADER. I have no fear saying the idea is great or terrible.*

*What types of articles have been successful with me and printed:*

- Short adventures for a specific level with a fine map
- NPC characters Castle Keepers can use
- Fun magic items
- Tips for players and tips for Castle Keepers

*What do you get for this effort? We give out free copies of the magazine. Someday when we are generating a profit and have a larger page count and number of subscribers that will change. For now we greatly appreciate our writers.*

*Respectfully,*

James M. Ward

James:

Are there any features of The Dragon (like Giants in the Earth) or other article segments (ie, maybe the Creature Feature) or something you would like to see added, Jim? If wanted, I could easily crank out something new monster-wise every month. And, in case you weren't aware (I wouldn't expect you to know this,) I am the guy who did the monsters for C&C originally, and that freak who submitted the Engineering Dungeons article which was for your first issue as main man at Crusader. I have your email if you would like me to send something.

*Serleran, Please get in contact with me at [sirjmw@aol.com](mailto:sirjmw@aol.com) and we can talk about articles. I'm always looking to add people to write for Crusader magazine. After all, now that we are 36 pages I need to think about the time when we are 48 pages long. Along the same lines although I don't want to copy DRAGON or DUNGEON I don't mind at all taking concepts from those magazines and making them CRUSADER'S. We are starting to run NPCs regularly in the magazine. We are running monsters every issue as well and they are connected to our fiction. I like the idea of running regular features and hope to find several more writers who are willing to send in something every month. The writing looks great on your resumes if nothing else.*

James M. Ward

Managing Editor, Crusader



# ALEA IACTA EST



*“The Die is Cast” – An Editorial by Stephen Chenault*

## The Cold, Cold Ground: Character Death

**I**n World War I some group of goodness knows who decided that when you personally shot down five armed aircraft you were given the title of Ace (I could probably look this up as I have several books on the World War I aircraft and air battles less than 36 inches from where I am presently sitting, but I'm much too lazy to turn around and reach for one of them). This title stuck and became a target for any airman to hit. The same principle does not apply to Castle & Crusades. There are no Castle Keeper Aces, no matter how many characters you might kill. In fact the point of the game is not to kill characters but rather the opposite. The goal is to create well balanced adventures and scenarios that are challenging, dangerous and fun. Many characters have fallen in my games over the years; some have been killed through doing crazy game stuff, some ridiculously, some heroically, some less than heroically and others through no fault, but for a host of bad rolls and poor luck. These deaths run the gamut from funny events that stunned us all to frustrating failures that ruined whole games. Before a character gets killed the CK and Player have to remember that there is more at stake than just a few random dice rolls; such a death may wreck the whole game, or worse the campaign.

I ran a game not too long ago in which over half the players didn't show up. This is not such a bad thing, occasionally its nice to have a low impact evening of C&C. The two players who could make it, Todd and Mark, were raring to go. Todd particularly enjoys these small games as it reminds him of how he got started in RPGs so long ago. In those days it was only Todd, a guy named Rodney and myself. As always, your first games are the most memorable. So Todd was really into it. Mark too was into it, as he likes less confusion at the table; the less people, the less confusion. We kept playing the same campaign we had been playing for the better part of a year, if not more than a year...time all seems to run together for me...and they ran their normal characters. Both had made several levels, Todd 5<sup>th</sup> and Mark 4<sup>th</sup>.

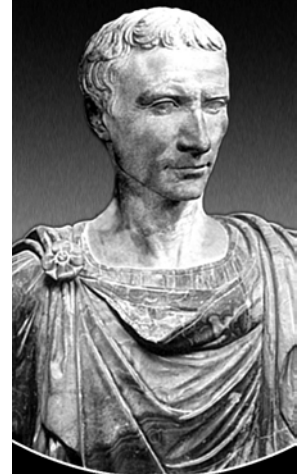
I set the adventure up with a simple bandit chase. In the previous game, we had a raiding party strike the camp and kill a low level NPC. Todd, playing a ranger named Stark could easily track them. So leaving the party behind the two of them set off into the wilderness that is the Darkenfold after these creatures. The evening's play went quite well. The tracking was fun, then the quick swift bandit battle followed by a random encounter that drove the two characters off the main track and onto a small ridge. This was a bit

contrived on my part as I wanted them to discover Baerentum, a long lost city in the Goose Neck—an unexplored section of the Southern Darkenfold. They played into my hands quite nicely and found themselves upon a cliff face overlooking a huge box valley. It was open only on the southern end, thickly forested, and surrounded by cliffs roughly a hundred feet tall. Huge vines grew upon the cliff faces, hanging from the forest above. These vines were tangled, interwoven and hung all the way to the floor. They seemed to afford an easy trip to the bottom.

After some discussion Mark convinced Todd to go down and they announced their intention to climb down the vines to the valley floor and explore the lost city. Without much thinking or consideration of the rules I said, “Okay the trip down looks doable, but is going to take some effort. Just roll a d20, if you roll a 1 you fall.” As soon as I said it I knew it was a mistake. Todd notoriously rolls 1s, in such circumstances. I can't count the number of times the rope has broken; he's fallen, tripped into the trap or what have you. He actually rolled a one, 4 times in a row as I vainly tried to save his character on the edge of cliff (in this instance I finally let him die, he was so mad he wouldn't have played the character had I 'saved' him with some contrived CK shenanigan). But there it was. I had said it. A game that had been going on for over a year, with good characters, lots of successful adventures and invested time, all hung on the balance of a dice. Mark rolled and got in the high teens. Todd rolled and rolled a 1. Of course he did. His explosion of anger resonated around the house and Mark and I resigned our selves to the inevitable. I have no idea how he rolls so many bad rolls. I quickly had him make a dexterity check and he failed that at which point Mark mentioned that he didn't think rangers could actually fall if they had something to climb on.

We looked it up and sure enough, the ranger can't fall in such circumstances because his wilderness skills have made him capable of climbing up and down climbable surfaces, and the vines were such a climbable surface: “When climbing typical natural slopes and inclines, such as steep but rocky hillsides, a ranger need not make an attribute check to scale the surface” [*PH*, page 13, *Scale*] (somehow I can't help but think Davis and Mac included that falling rule for Todd and Todd alone). Though this was not really an attribute check but a fumble check I ruled that the surface was definitely climbable and covered by the ruling, so he technically could not fall. So I had him fall a few dozen feet, catch himself, wrench

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

his arm out of its socket and take some damage. He was very unsatisfied with the ruling, even though it saved his character's life, because it seemed to somehow cheat the dice, which seemingly overrules all rules. He had rolled a 1 and I had ruled against it. It irritated him both ways.

Looking analytically at this event there were only two possible outcomes. In the first, Stark falls to his death. In the second, Stark lives. However, it's never that simple.

Looking at the first outcome, had the ruling gone otherwise and Stark plummeted through the vines, unable to slow his fall, he would have stuck the ground with extreme force. The cumulative damage is massive for a hundred foot fall and Stark, at 4<sup>th</sup> level, with no particular magical protection against falling would have perished. From a meta-game stand point, stepping far, far back and looking at the death, this is kind of cool. Adventurers take extreme risks all the time, climbing walls, leaping chasms, riding beasts not meant to be ridden, and so forth. There is a certain amount of realism that comes with such a fall.

"What happened to Stark," Ki asks when Karagi returns to the camp alone.

"He fell from a cliff and died," comes the answer.

There is a finality too this, a senselessness to the death that in role-playing context makes the game more fascinating because even the mundane is deadly. It also adds a whole level of play to the game because there was no heroic fall for this titanic ranger who has fought countless battles and won. The realism resonates with the players for a long time to come.

Of course that in and of itself is the problem with such a death. It was so out of character, out of game context that it leaves nothing but a residual feeling of 'crap, that sucks.' It makes players loath to risk their characters in these tasks which in turn throw up innumerable obstacles to the Castle Keeper as the adventurers continually avoid things that might be risky for no gain. This can affect the game throughout. They don't go over the swinging rope bridge, but rather take the two extra days to go around the whole chasm. They don't try to swim the river, they look for a bridge. As realistic as these reactions would be—if I were looking at a raging river and needed to get across I would look for some way to safely do so—they are not heroic. Conan does not hesitate to leap up the cliff face. Tarzan swings from tree to tree, a hundred feet above the ground. John Carter leaps between the flying ships that are thousands of feet above the surface of Mars. Sure, in reality these are risky events, but this is not a game of reality. It's a fantasy role playing game where people gather to unleash the hero in them, to conquer the unconquerable, to kill the unkillable monster and seize the day. Meshing too much realism with the game can derail a game as quickly as it can make it more interesting.

The greater problem with Stark's death comes in the whole game context. They were adventuring hundreds of miles from the nearest settlement. It might be realistic to allow the character to die from a fall, but now the Castle Keeper has to realistically replace the character with a character the player wants to play. Try having a wandering dwarf fighter in the middle of the darkest, dankest forest in the world and keep that mystique of realism about the game. Not to mention the annoyance that the player goes through after losing a character and the whole new process of bringing them into the game, fitting in with the present campaign arc and so forth.

Allowing the character to die, even though the dice called for it, may turn out to be far more detrimental to the game than the Castle Keeper at first thought. It really isn't that fun.

The opposite approach, if Stark lives, has far fewer pitfalls to it, if any. Though the realistic factor of death by mishap is removed from the game, which does impact the game, the overall game is not interrupted. The adventure continues, the players continue with what they are doing and there is no massive disruption. The fun is not suddenly removed from the game by one bad roll which as we all know everyone suffers from at some point or the other (everyday life is filled with enough pitfalls and bad rolls to not make those in the game so catastrophic).

Of course there is another side to this coin, one from the player's point of view. In facing the cliff with the vines, both players could have taken extra precautions to make certain that they didn't fall. Often players abuse the situations they are put into in order to get through them as

**“We have to go this way because the adventure calls for it” can be as damaging to a game as the random senseless death of a beloved character.**

quickly as possible, this is often done in an insanely unrealistic manner. Facing a hundred foot cliff, even with vines, I think even the most experience mountain climber would take some precautions such as studying the best way down, chalking fingers, tying guide ropes, etc. To come to a cliff and assume that because you are there you can climb down it, or to listen to that subtle CK speak which indicates you

are supposed to climb down it, does not necessarily mean you have to charge into it without thought or planning.

The attitude that “we have to go this way because the adventure calls for it” can be as damaging to a game as the random senseless death of a beloved character. Players send their characters into countless situations where they just shouldn't be and any amount of reflection would reveal that. I remember playing a first level wizard in Davis' game once, the original *Vakhund* adventures actually. I'm always impatient when I play and usually charge in first. When we were cornered by boar-riding goblins and the party seemed to hesitate as to what to do, I leapt over the small brush we had built as a wall and attacked the leading goblin. Well, it really didn't take the goblins on their massive boars long to rip me asunder. This was the height of idiocy and I deserved to get the character killed. But the action itself had greater ramifications than one idiot with a pile of sticks. Suddenly the party found itself bereft of a magic user. Davis had to figure out how to get me a new character in the middle of the goblin kingdom. I had to roll up a new character and decide what I wanted to play and so on.

Though it may seem like a good idea to do the crazy heroic deed and get yourself killed it actually makes it more difficult, read less fun, for the CK because they are the ones who have to pick it all up and figure out how to restart the player. Though it may seem on the joking surface that Castle Keepers love to kill characters, especially stupid characters that do insane things, it's really not. The CK knows that as soon as that final rule has passed and the character is dead that the evening's fun was just halved, and the evening's reworking just doubled.

That was a good character too!

So what to do? When should the CK kill a character and when should a player risk a character. In the case of Stark it would have been far better for me to simply say the following “Roll a d20, a roll of 1 means you have some difficulty.” This simple sentence preserves the right to allow him to fall but to control the fall. This is what the



good Castle Keeper does. Realism is preserved, danger remains but the CK has not lost control of the situation. If Todd says something like “Stark puts his double handed axe in his teeth, grabs a vine, cuts the end and swings to the bottom” the CK can quickly kill him. If on the other hand Todd says: “I go ahead and climb down,” it’s easy enough to have him fall, catch himself, and pull his arm out of his socket. He’s been damaged because he didn’t take precautions; say, he loses use of his second hand and can’t use the aforementioned battle-axe. In the case of Fodius, it would have been far better for me to bide my time a few minutes, use caution in my actions and not wreck the game and my character.

Two of the most important things to remember for all those at the table are how to make things challenging and how to not challenge everything. Challenging does not mean succeed or instant death. Challenging is just that, its something that challenges the imaginative role play of the players and the abilities of the characters. It also doesn’t mean that it is something that has to be overcome. Just because an obstacle is put in front of you doesn’t mean you instantly have to attack it or overcome it.

Dangerous does not necessarily mean deadly.

Does this mean you should never kill a character? Of course not, the fear of death should be in the game, both as an arbiter of risk and as a reaction to crazy stunts. But the death of a character is far more than a notch on a gun or a flag on the side of your CK screens. The death of a character impacts the role playing game you are playing and before a CK needlessly kills a character or before a player needlessly kills himself both should think about what is coming after the fall. Often the whole campaign and even the tone of the game have to be reset.

I remember this great line from the *Lion in Winter*, where Henry II has his three sons Richard, Geoffrey and John imprisoned in the wine cellar. Eleanor brings them each a dagger. John and Geoffrey do not want to pick up the daggers, but Richard snatches his up in an instant, and immediately goes into a plan on how to slay Henry. When his brothers object that such an action serves no purpose Richard replies, “When the fall is all you have, the fall matters.”

That’s a great line and one that serves the role playing community well. If a character is to die, or does die, there should be some meaning to it. It should either serve the game you are playing or at least leave the player with a feeling of extreme sacrifice. It is the CK’s job to make the job of adventuring as dangerous as possible and as life threatening as possible. So that when the characters emerge from the adventure they are drained, exhausted and exhilarated. It is the player’s job to survive as best they can through whatever is thrown at them, to make the game challenging for the Castle Keeper, putting their scenarios to the ultimate test. If both sides pay heed to this, then any game will have more meaning and a lot more fun. The added benefit is that when a character enters that cold, cold ground, the death will be memorable and part of that fun, not destructive and leave a bad taste in everyone’s mouth.

Thanks for playing,

*Steve Chenault*



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# Tim Kask

*was born near the leading edge of the Baby Boom, and is getting older every day. The product of the union of a Swedish-Finnish father and a mostly Irish mother, he is a typical American; a mongrel. He grew up in Illinois hating Ohio State; he now lives in Ohio by way of Illinois, Washington (the state) and Wisconsin, and still loathes the Buckeyes. He survived eight years of Catholic school and is convinced that he and George Carlin were class clowns once joined at the hip. He got to tour beautiful SE Asia courtesy of Uncle Sam and wanted to live in Hong Kong for a long time, but not anymore since the Commies took it back. He married (a girl he met in 9<sup>th</sup> grade) nearly 40 years ago, has a couple of kids, four grandkids and two cats in the yard. His great regret is that he will probably die before he realizes his lifetime of striving for the perfect job; being a pirate.*



I've been playing wargames since I was in the 6th grade; the game was Avalon Hill's D-Day, which had just come out. I am a member of the leading edge of the "Baby Boom" generation, the generation that embraced wargames and simulation games and paved the way for the RPG phenomenon.

I joined the Navy within months of High School; I thought by joining the Navy I would thwart my local draft board's plans to send me to Viet Nam. That didn't work out anywhere near how I hoped, but that's another story. I had one buddy with which I played a lot of 1914 for a while before being sent to WestPac and Yankee Station.

I played a little more in Jr. College with a couple of guys, mostly SPI games, and then left for S. Ill. University in Carbondale, Ill in 1973. It was at SIU that I first found a gaming club. It was there that I first discovered the joys of miniatures. We played Seven Years War scenarios and Dark Age/Medieval games; those were the figures that various members had. (It was also at SIU that I first encountered Tom Wham, another club member and one of the guys that actually owned miniatures; our lives remain entwined to this day.)

One of the miniatures rules sets that we played a lot was CHAINMAIL. As was customary then, the back page listed an address to which you could send questions regarding the rules accompanied by the ubiquitous SASE, and they would usually give you an answer/interpretation and mail it back in that SASE. (For those of you not old enough to remember, that was a Self Addressed Stamped Envelope.)

After accumulating far too many questions to ever hope to have answered in one letter, I took it upon myself to take the bold step of actually calling someone to ask my questions. The game was published in Lake Geneva; through the operator, I found the number of this fellow named Gary Gygax, and determined to call him on a Saturday when the rates were low for Long Distance. So I did just that one Saturday, and as we all know, the rest is history...

*Author's Note: Our Esteemed Editor, Sir James, has informed me that I have to explain further. Oh well, if I must...*

Actually, Gary was incredibly forbearing and gracious with this goofball stranger calling him out of the blue.

Sometimes, if you are lucky or live long enough, you meet someone that you instantly feel a kinship with. When Gary and I first started talking, we both felt that bond of shared interests.

I couldn't begin to tell you what any of my questions were, although I am certain that they had to do with CHAINMAIL. As he has often been quoted, Gary believed that what he thought about a gaming situation was not all that special; he would always ask you how you had handled it, and would occasionally ask you your justification for a given answer. So it was with our friendship; our talks soon turned to history—which we both absorbed liked sponges, favorite fantasy authors where we each recommended a couple of favorites to each other and found we liked a lot of the same authors, and lots of games and game rules. We talked about what we liked and didn't like about a given game or rules set, what we would do to improve it, etc. This went on for some months.

In the summer of '74 he invited me to come up to GenCon; we finally met face to face and spent some very pleasant time just talking. Prior to my making the trip, he had told me a little about the very avant-garde game he had published where everything "took place in your head" and invited me to try it out when I was there. I did. Twice. I was intrigued and fascinated and bought the boxed set and a set of dice to take back to college.

For the next year we continued to talk a couple of times a month; my group's adventuring was the main topic. He wanted to know everything we did and how. He wanted to know how the players did this and that and he began to feed me variants and ideas and such and would always ask how things went. In a way, my group and I were then what you would call beta-testers nowadays.

Also during that year we discussed his plans and how I might fit into them. I went back to GenCon in '75, and it was agreed that I would come to work for him and his new company in the Fall, and I did.



TALES OF THE  
**RINGS**  
 of  
**ORASS**

THE AIHRDIAN  
 CHRONICLES  
 BEING THE 14<sup>TH</sup> NARRATIVE  
 OF THE  
 LAY OF THE LOTHIAN PRINCES

*The Elven Warlord, Meltowg-Aet-Ohd, Prince of Lothian, travels west with his Vale Knights and a company of mercenaries on a journey to find the fabled Castle of Spires. The Castle of Spires, ruled by Melius the Wise, is rumored to hold gates to other worlds, wherein the Elven hosts of old have taken refuge. The Prince is possessed of a grim determination to open those gates. His journey has led him west across the Blighted Screed, through the northern reaches of the Kellerwald and into the Red Hills which have recently been conquered by the Hlobane Orcs, fierce servants of the horned god who rules in Aufstrag. In total Meltowg leads 119 men and they are hardened, bitter from years of loss and suffering accumulated in the Shadow of the Long Centuries.*

**M**eltowg remained mounted, leaning across the huge armored horse's saddle horn. He looked impassively on the orc that rushed down the length of the ridge at him, two long chains capped with iron spiked balls in hand. He took the whole scene in, the human nailed to the tree, the dark valley with its laager of orc wagons. The second orc, apparently a keeper who had held the chains of the larger one that even now rushed him. Sedgwick, his cousin, topping the ridge with the rest of the company.

The orc closing on him was raving mad, shouting as he rushed. His steps were sure and his skill with the lengths of chain obvious. Tall, burly and covered in strange geometric tattoos, the orc closed. With a strange whistling noise the chains whipped through the air and the two huge spiked iron balls came toward the war steed's head. With a deft move the Prince signaled the horse to lower, kneeling upon its forward knees. In the same flash Meltowg leapt over the horse's head and freed his huge black blade Noxmorus from its scabbard. The blade flashed a darkened sheen, spilling its own rage onto the field. Ethereal hands deflected the iron balls, knocking them to the side as the Prince closed the gap, never slowing his attack.

But the orc would not have it so easy. Seeing this, he yanked hard on the chains and like whips they snapped back, tearing up earth and plants upon the ridge, leaving all in ruin as they hurled through the air with such force that Meltowg swore at their thundering noise. The orc spun on its heel, snapping one chain at the Prince who was forced to leap back and to the side even as he reeled one chain in to whirl about his own head close and at a guard position.

Meltowg slowed his attack, forcing his rage down. Pivoting he side stepped another swing, trying to cut the chain length with his

sword. A ringing pain in his chest knocked him to the ground. The orc's second ball had struck him, seemingly hurled straight on.

"Damn your eyes!"

The orc leapt on, screaming wildly and swinging the chained balls to and fro in a whirling tangle of iron and spiked death. The hill itself exploded in a rage of earth and debris. The smaller orc, this one's keeper, shouted its glee and Sedgwick called his men to a halt to see what type of enemy his master fought. The Prince for his part was thrown back and forced down the hill, defending himself against the chains and whirling balls. Once-twice- a third time the spiked iron smashed into his armor.

Battered and bruised, he fell back and his rage took him. He hurled the blade aside and waited for the next impact which caught him in the shoulder, knocking his helm from his head. But this time, his free hands grabbed the chain and with a back-breaking wrench, tore the orc from the ground and brought him smashing to the earth.

The beast scrambled to his feet even as the Prince took the chain in both his hands and with one huge effort tore the chain asunder, breaking links and separating the spiked iron from the chain. The orc howled in rage and leapt upon Meltowg, leaving his second ball and chain behind. It took up the Prince in a great bear hug, crushing him in its furious grip.

Lungs flushed of air, the Prince gasped for breath. Pulled off the ground with his hands pinned to his sides, he struggled to break free. His armor now proved as much a hindrance as a protection as the orc used it to hold the elven lord. They stood there for a long moment, straining against each other. Muscles popped and the blood rushed to the Prince's ears. In a moment he reared back his head, flashing his teeth; he bit the orc in the cheek beneath the eye. A

sickening ripping sound and the muscle clad bone of the orc's face came to the light of the moon and for a moment as it roared in pain it released its grip and the Prince broke his right arm free.

In a flash the axe strapped to his back was freed and arcing down behind the orc to sever its foot and leg at the calf. In a howl of pain the orc stumbled, dropping the elf and fell backwards. With little thought of the deed, the elf separated the creature's head from its torso. Ruin and death arced from the creature's neck and his incessant howling ended.

In rage the smaller orc, the Urkjanu Let (see page 35 for stats), charged up the hill, screaming in pain and fear at his charge's death. Meltowg hurled his axe as he shouted to his men, "Prepare for BATTLE!" The orc flipped up and over, his chest open and his life gushing out across the darkened earth.

Leaping upon his steed Meltowg spurred the creature to where his sword lay upon the ground. Scooping it up he was joined by the wall of armored men and horses that were his troop. They reined in,

forming a ragged line that slowly stomped its way into a V-shaped formation, the Prince at the fore. One of his men fetched his axe and returned it to him. Shields swung around, spears, axes and swords were uncovered.

Before them the ridge gave way in a gentle slope until it came to the valley floor. It was here the orcs laagered their wagons. The wagons were drawn up in a tight circle forming a wall. This wall they topped with planks and towers of wood. Several hundred of the creatures were gathered there, warriors, sows and pups. Even as the Prince formed his company into line, a horn sounded and the orcs answered it with a clamoring of arms and weapons. They saw the threat gathering on the hill and made ready at the walls of their mobile fortress. The Captains shouted commands as crossbow men climbed into the wagons, pike baring warriors gathered at the hinges where the wagons met. They corralled the oxen into the center of the wagons where the sows and pups were herded for their safe keeping. The whole camp rang with a cacophony of organized chaos.



Meltowg looked down upon the wall of wagons. His steed pawed the ground in anticipation of the battle to come. He looked for an easy entry point and could not find one. These orcs were disciplined and seemingly anxious for the fight. The men flanked him, some nervously, but most grim faced and determined. "Sedgwick. I think we need a hole in that wall, have you any sorceries?"

"Aye my lord, I think so." Sedgwick moved his horse forward of the line. Lifting his helm from his head he shook the sweat from his brow. Hanging the helm on his saddle horn he stuffed his gauntlets into it. Looking over his fingers he flexed them, stretching them. They were scored black, denoting long years of sorcerous endeavor. He looked up to the darkened heavens, raising his hands and calling out in eldritch tongues. He spoke slivers of that most ancient of languages, the language of creation. The words tumbled from the ether, piling about him in a heavy dissonance. At last the spell ended and about him swirled a withering madness of energy. He plunged his hand into it and drew forth a crackling, burning ball of flame. This he hurled at the wagons, following it with a second, third and fourth. Even as the last of this meteor swarm left his grasp the first struck the wagon laager with a massive concussion. It tore through the wagon, splintering wood and hurling orcs to the side. The second and third struck the laager in rapid succession blowing the wagon to pieces and scattering it all about the valley floor. When at last the fourth burning ball struck the larger it skidded through the wide gap and plunged into the oxen clustered at the center of the corral and exploded in a shower of blistering sparks.

Chaos erupted. Screaming oxen, already nervous at the noise and flame, broke their tethers, fled in every direction, trampling orcs beneath their cloven hooves. The orc sows and pups leapt from their holes, trying in vain to avoid the maddened beasts spilling out across the compound colliding with formations of orcs. A lantern was dropped or knocked over and flame licked up the side of a canvas tent adding to the tumult. All was chaos within the narrow confines of the wagon wall, for even the Hlobane could not organize themselves in such tight quarters. At this Meltowg ordered the horn to sound and the Vale Knights and mercenaries roared a charge, spurred their horses on to plunge down the hill into the valley. In answer to a signal from their Captain they drew up into a column of four, the narrow front aimed at the hole torn in the wagon wall.

Some few orcs scrambled to meet them but the shock of the charge barreled them over and they were ground under hoof. Meltowg's men fanned out as they entered the compound until they were a great wedge of iron clad horses and iron bound men and elves. They hurled their spears and drew forth blades and axes and carved a path of ruin through the orc host. Some few of the Hlobane managed a defense, shaking off the chaos of the spell, calling up their troops into squads and driving back into the enemy in their midst. Though brave it was hopeless, for the wrath of the Prince was beyond anything they had seen before and he drove them to ground, slaying all those before him be it sow or pup.

The battle raged for a while as the last of the Hlobane gathered in a knot and fought off their attackers. They surged back and forth, trying to break free from the maddened horsemen but in the end man, a human, Brian of Spars leapt from his steed into their midst and broke their formation. The orcs fought to the death, never asking for quarter, nor giving any. By night's fall they all lay upon the ground, dead or dying. Though no Vale Knights fell, 3 of the mercenaries were slain and a score more wounded.

Meltowg sat in the middle of the ruin. Taking his helm off he looked about him. "Good work lads! Tis a good day to deliver the dark tower a message. These are the best of his new best. Look at them, wasted and ruined. Heaps of soon to be forgotten memories." He looked around more. "Burn it all. Kill everything. Spare nothing. We'll leave a message for the Lords in Aufstrag."

Sedgwick came from the far side of the wagons, his long sword coated in the ruin of the orcs. "How now, Lord? It's been a hard fight. But I think we should go see to yon man hanging on the tree."

The Prince looked up at the ridge, seeing the crumbled form of the large orc and the tree upon the hilltop. "Aye, let us hear what his story is and see to his needs if it be worthy of us."

They rode from the compound, leaving the men to the task of burying their dead and burning the encampment. A few moments later found them riding up to the foot of the tree. There, bound to the tree with nails through his flesh was a man, a human. His body showed signs of great suffering and abuse. The two of them looked at him, trying to decide if he was alive or dead.

Through blood matted hair that partially covered his one remaining eye a croaking voice came down from the tree. "You have saved my life."

"Not by design." The Prince looked upon the man with no compassion, no hint of emotion passed his countenance.

"Be that as it may. You have saved my life and for that I owe you. My people always pay their debts. It is unfitting that one should pass to the Stone Fields in debt." The man lifted his head slightly, but there was no energy left in him.

"And what pray tell can a man nailed to a tree give us for the gift of life?" Meltowg spoke even as Sedgwick guided his horse up next to the tree.

"My name is Rhul-eye of the House of Vian. For long centuries my family ruled these hills, serving the Emperors of Aenoch. We are turned vagabonds now these many years and turned out for our misdeeds toward the horned one. He is an unforgiving foe."

"Indeed he is Master Rhul-eye." Meltowg took a greater interest in the poor figure. "Speak on."

"But we are not without power. My people live in yonder mountains, hidden in caves and the like. But they have magics in their possession, magics that can be used against the horned one and his servants. My people would pay a heavy price for my return."

The Prince pondered for a long moment. "We shall see Master Rhul. We shall see. Sedgwick, bring us up the tongs and let's pull these nails from his arms and feet."



# Condottiere

**Players:** 2-6      **Ages:** 12+

**Play Time:** 30-45 Minutes

**ISBN:** 978-1-58994-337-7

**Stock Number:** SL01

**Game Design:** Dominique Ehrhard

**Company:** Fantasy Flight Games

[www.fantasyflightgames.com](http://www.fantasyflightgames.com)

**BOTTOM LINE:** Buy it, love it, play it



I came to like this game in its first version because the cards were way cool. They were longer and thinner than normal cards and I really liked that feature. However, my game playing friends didn't like how long the game took to play. I could play the game two or three times in a gaming session, but soon they didn't want to play it. I would then bring Condottiere to conventions and have complete strangers learn to play with me.

Now the third version has come along and it doesn't have the wonderful long cards any more, but the designer has completely solved the time problem of the game. Well done, I say.

In the game, you are a band of Condottiere. (mercenary leaders of "free companies" employed by the Italian city-states from the late Middle Ages until the mid-sixteenth century.) Your objective is to take over portions of Italy. To do this you have a hand of cards and each card is wonderfully illustrated and has unique powers that help you or hinder your opponents. I really enjoy the historical theme of the Condottiere and I need to design my own game on this concept, maybe write a book or two as well. There is an exciting feel to mercenary bands roaming Italy conquering cities sometimes, sometimes just sitting outside the walls, and bluffing their way to gaining gold from the city.

## The Cards

- Mercenary cards just have numbers on them. You win a province by having the largest number of mercenaries in the battle.
- Winter cards force Mercenary cards to equal "1" no matter what their numbers really are.
- Spring cards get rid of the effect of Winter cards.
- Bishop cards remove the highest number Mercenary card.
- Courtesan cards allow a player to decide what province is fought next.
- Drummer cards double the strength of the Mercenary numbers.
- Heroine cards equal a strength of 10, but are not Mercenary cards and not effected by cards that effect Mercenary cards.
- Scarecrow cards allow the player to pick up one of their Mercenary cards.
- Surrender cards stop a battle.

The reason I list all of these cards is to show you the many possibilities in the game.

## Play of the Game

A game is played over many rounds. During each round, one or more battles are fought. When all but one player has played all their cards in that round, that round ends with a result and a new hand of ten cards is dealt and starts the next round.

During each battle, players take turns placing out cards on the table forming their battle line for a region. Once all players have placed all the cards they intend to play for that battle the fight is concluded, and the player with the highest total strength in the fight conquers the contested region. A new region is chosen, and another battle is fought.

## Winning the Game

In a game with 4-6 players, the game ends when a player controls 5 total regions or 3 adjacent regions. In a game with 2 or 3 players, the victory condition is 6 total regions or 4 adjacent regions.

## Optional Rules

There are a good number of optional rules that add to the fun of the game, but do make the game lots longer.



# The Crusader's Assault

by Stephen Chenault



*“Lifting the ground on high, he made a true mountain of slag amidst tumbled buildings and set his high citadel atop. The fortress he fashioned in the shape of a tree thousands of feet high, a grim mockery of Wenafar and the Great Tree in the west. He surrounded this with mighty buttresses and fell towers. And this abode he named anew, calling it Festung Aufstrag, the Citadel of Command. The ruins of Al-Liosh sprawled underneath Aufstrag and into the countryside around”. ~ Codex of Erde, Book 3, Chapter 3, Section 7, Page 71.*



**I**n many ways Aufstrag is the center of the world of Aihrde (or Erde for the Old Guard). As the mythology goes it is from those fell towers that originates all the world as we know it, the world as presented first in the Codex and later in the Folio (and soon enough the Codex again). It is in Aufstrag that the horned god ruled, with all the changes to the landscape that made the highly dynamic and versatile setting to develop. So when Castles & Crusades began to take form Davis proposed a series of adventures that would lead characters to the heart of the world of Aihrde. Of course these adventures had to start at low level and slowly work their way up to the very high, close to epic, level play that would be required in the ruins of the horned one's tower. We toyed with several approaches. We thought about beginning the adventures in The Trenches, that network of cavernous ruins and tunnels that is the old city of Al Liosh and now little more than the dungeons of Aufstrag. But those offered no chance of resupplying or normal NPC interaction. We looked at all the Kingdoms around but eventually settled on the one to the south, Outreme, New Aenoch. It is here that the Empress had sent out a call to the west for Crusaders to come and clean her lands of the remaining filth of the horned one's rule. These were lands filled with all manner of adventurers from every walk of life, every profession and every race. It was indeed a melting pot of player opportunity. Desiring a good mix of powerful monsters, wilderness and a proximity to Aufstrag Davis chose an as yet unnamed river and a squiggle line on the map that represented and ridge line that ran north-west to south-east. Very little had been developed on this are as it had been preserved for the now long dead Legendary Erde society. So here Davis decided to start the series of adventures that was to lead, after 12 published modules to the very gates of Aufstrag. These adventures were, and still are, to be followed up by a huge, monstrous dungeon: the tower of the tree itself, Aufstrag. In the intervening years since the release of the first module it is easy to forget that in its original conception the A series was a huge, interlinked, though independently played adventures whose ultimate goal was the conquest of Aufstrag. But after many ups and downs the series is at last coming back to life and being revisited by Davis and myself. So Jim and I thought it fitting to take a moment and revisit what we have so far and reveal what is coming in the near future.

## **TLG 8020 A1 Assault on Blacktooth Ridge**

**ISBN: 1-931275-62-9,  
\$8.95**

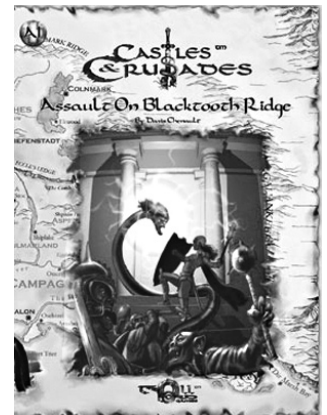
### **Author Davis Chenault Adventure Module for Levels 1-2**

In A1 the adventurers find themselves upon the far northern reaches of New Aenochia in a region that was once inhabited by creatures of fey, elves, will-o-the-wisps, dryads, pixies and so on. These creatures had been largely destroyed by the incoming evil overlords. Now of course the evil has been largely driven out so what remains are the residual magics of the old fey, the evil of the orcs, ungerm and that ilk and the incoming humans form the south. It makes for a nice mix.

The Blacktooth Ridge actually represents the furthest reaches of the Empire of New Aenoch. When first she came to her throne of New Aenoch the Empress Pryzmira controlled only a narrow strip of the coastline. To her north lay the sprawling remains of the horned one's dark empire. She sent cries to all the kingdoms of the west, calling for a Crusade to come and rid her kingdom of the ilk that lived there. She promised land and title to any who could hold it and would pay her tithe. This had led to all manner of peoples migrating to New Aenoch in the promise of a better life, adventure, spoils, glory and gold.

It is the perfect place to begin a new adventure.

Assault on Blacktooth Ridge is that adventure. The characters find themselves in the northern town of Botkinburg upon the Hruesen River, beyond the river the country rises into a series of ridges, the Blacktooth. These ridges are the home to goblins, trolls, ogres and other nasties. On the surface the adventure is cut and dry. But as the game unfolds the CK is introduced to a thicker plot and left to their





owe devices as to whether to use or not. For the Baron of Botkinburg is having trouble with his neighbor the Lord Dietmold of Ludensheim. The plot thickens and without revealing too much the characters can be drawn into a series of adventures with the Dietmold's allies or simply avoid it all and wander through the encounter areas of the Ridge.

These encounter areas are what gives the adventure its teeth. Here there is Fromkin's Pass, filled with strange winged monsters, Kruggle the Ogre's Lair, Neegle the Witch and so much more. A1 actually has a troll under a bridge encounter.

*"Among the bramble and shrub of the Hruesen River is an old stone wharf once used as a staging post for troops of the Horned One. The wharf has collapsed and worn away with time and very little of it is recognizable or even visible at this point. Beneath the wharf is a small series of rooms built by a gnarly river troll.*

*The area around the wharf is dense with undergrowth and bramble making the wharf itself difficult to see unless one is traveling along the river's bank or along the ridge line above it. An observant character might notice that the banks of the river have no tracks on them. This is very unusual since wild game often come to the river for refreshment. But, since the troll has a tendency to eat everything it can, the animals tend to stay away.*

*Though the troll usually eats his prey in the tunnels beneath the wharf, he occasionally sits upon a high rock nearby and devours whatever he has caught, tossing the remains into the river. The river is shallow near this rock and even a brief glance into it reveals a pile of bones and shreds of armor along with a few weapons in the sandy river bottom. Most of these remains are of animals, though a*

*few human, dwarf and other remains can be located." A1 Assault on Blacktooth Ridge, page 16*

The adventure module *A1 Assault on the Blacktooth Ridge* became an instant hit upon its release in 2005. It had a number of things going for it, not the least of which was the distinctive honor of being the only published adventure module for the newly born Castles & Crusades RPG. But in crafting it Davis took a distinctive approach to the adventure. Instead of creating a sharp, definable adventure where the characters are presented with a problem, a target, and an end game, he created a setting of mini-adventures with several lively personalities in it. This served to kill several orcs with the same stone. Not only does A1 introduce new players to the then new game, but they are given an adventure in which they could exercise the very virtues that C&C purported to possess. The CK could, with relative ease, mold A1 to their own ends. This open ended approach proved very popular, so much so that Assault on Blacktooth Ridge is the single best selling adventure module for Castles & Crusades. Unless I am wrong, and I am never wrong (well, maybe once in awhile), it will soon surpass our best selling d20 adventure modules, which one could argue had a slightly larger audience.

A1 suffered from the editor's pen. As Davis was crafting this adventure I was actually negotiating printer deals. I worked closely with a printer and got a wonderful price for 24 page saddle stitched books. I had to sign a deal for 10 books and we did so, but I had to stick to the 24 pages. Davis, when he turned over his original manuscript was sadly not at all surprised to see me cut over half of it out as it was too long. These smaller encounters were quickly scattered into some online pdfs as well as integrated into A2 and A3. About 10 of them remain undeveloped on some hard drive somewhere.

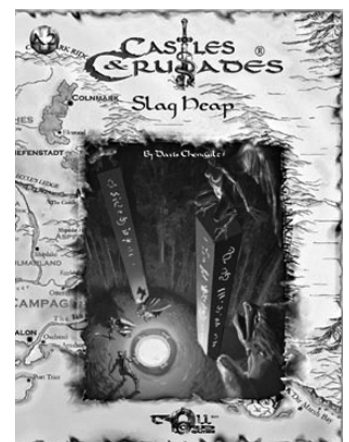
This deal created innumerable problems with manuscripts from Gary Gygax, Davis and Casey Christofferson, all three of whom tend to craft their adventures in a looser fashion. The minimum seemed too severe and caused endless arguments. Once Peter Bradley entered the mix the arguments became even more convoluted as he kept shrinking font sizes, kerning paragraphs and the like promising the writers he could 'make it fit'. Not until I explained to them that I could not read our published material did they let off.

## TLG 8021 A2 Slag Heap

ISBN: 1-931275-78-5,  
\$8.95

### Author Davis Chenault Adventure Module for Levels 2-3

The adventure *A2 Slag Heap* takes a slightly different track than does A1. Its far more focused, drawing the characters into the border war between the two minor lords the characters are encouraged to enter the Barren Wood, a forest hill country just south of the Blacktooth Ridge and the Hruesen River. Though designed to fit loosely with A1, Slag Heap is a perfect stand alone adventure. Here the characters are tasked with cleaning out an old mining camp that has become occupied by all manner of bad guys. The leaders of whom may or may not be aligned with Lord Dietmold from Ludensheim.





Slag Heap gets to the action far quicker than Assault does. After a few pages of background the characters are on the Riggers Trail, heading south. A host of new and interesting NPCs are introduced on the road from Farl Turkl to Darin Goblneck the gnomish prospector. Davis' ability to make the mundane interesting really shines when he's bringing NPCs to life. He has a natural aversion to any of his creatures or NPCs being killed and I think that he loves to flesh them out with names, personalities and backgrounds in the subconscious hope that the players will not molest them, or slay them. Of course with me at the table it's a vain hope as my characters generally attack anyone and everyone I deem is evil. Of course this in turn leads to many dead characters (see my editorial at the beginning of this publication).

The Riggers Trail ends at Gipsheim, a small town inhabited by only riff raff, many of whom are the occupants of the Slag Heap. From here the characters are spring boarded to the actual mine which is in fact an abandoned quarry with many small caves and a sprawling half ruined village in it. The adventures here are sharp and deadly but lots of fun as the party must figure out how to weed through the whole thing.

Slag Heap introduces the next evolution in the series which is, one must remember, designed to lead the players to Aufstrag. The master of the Slag has ties to someone called the Witch Queen, who lives in an old temple some distance from the Barren Wood. This is of course the Wicked Cauldron.

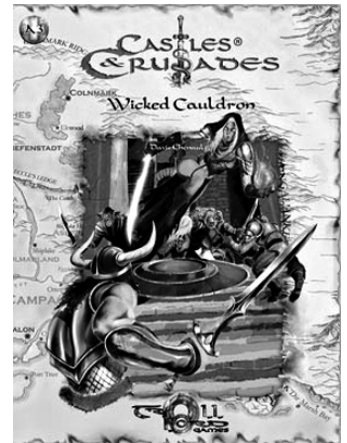
## TLG 8022 A3 Wicked Cauldron

ISBN: 1-931275-79-3,  
\$8.95

### Author Davis Chenault Adventure Module for Levels 3-4

Wicked Cauldron is a straight up dungeon crawl. Here the characters are brought to the doors of the temple complex by a series of encounters contrived by the CK in Ludensheim. Presumably the characters have interacted with some of the Lord Dietbold's men and been introduced to the politics of the region. Even if they are not enough information and background is given to give the characters reason to explore the environs and find out what is going on in the Cauldron.

*As one begins to approach the ziggurat, its seven tiers, each resting ponderously upon the other, slowly consume the horizon so massive is this structure. Its sheer faces are all plastered with reliefs of garish faces and figures while its edges and corner's have many a gargoyle and chimeras peering down. At the very peak of the ziggurat is a great bestial relief of the Horned One, that dreaded and demonic creature who once ruled the world.*



*This ziggurat, the Cauldron, is the abode of the Witch Queen. Here reside remnants of the Horned One's armies and priests. Few in number, they are huddled together for safety, practicing their dark witcheries and dread rituals in an effort to bring the Horned One back to this world. The Cauldron has remained untouched through the ages but has fallen into disrepair since the fall of the Horned One. Yet, despite this, through the machinations of the Witch Queen, her superiors and servants continue unabated, if somewhat less effective.*  
**A3 Wicked Cauldron, page 4.**

A3 is really a cross-over adventure. It sets the stage for the greater struggle to come but does not yet leave behind the petty border wars between the towns of Botkinburg and Ludenshiem, and introduce the players to a larger war that is going on. Here, for the first time hints are dropped that the forces in Aufstrag are moving again. They are gathering their forces to invade the south and throw off the ever growing power of New Aenoch. The Witch Queen and her ziggurat shaped temple are the vanguard of a much larger movement.

This is a difficult adventure, filled with hard encounters, many with priests. A cleric's involvement is very useful here. The original version of this adventure placed the maps on the inside front covers. We moved them to the interior in later printings for ease of use. In the days when we did detachable covers such things were very helpful, now they do not seem to be. But Wicked Cauldron ends abruptly, giving little introduction to *A4 Usurpers of the Fell Axe*. It assumes that the characters must return from the wilderness, going to the closest town they can find, which is of course Ludensheim.

**TLG 8023 A4 Usurpers of the Fell Axe**

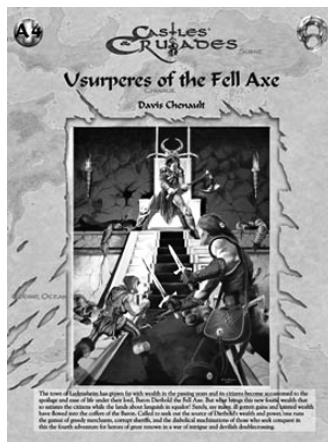
**ISBN: 1-931275-84-X,  
\$8.95**

**Author Davis Chenault**

**Adventure Module for Levels 3–5**

Very few things in any of Davis' creations happen for little or no reason. Reason in fact governs most things. Even chaos seemingly has purpose. In the early days of the mythological creation of Aihrde I was stunned by the depth of mythology that spilled out of Davis' head about the world of Inzae. I often wondered what he thought about on those innumerable trips into the Rocky Mountains, where he would camp by himself for weeks on end. Apparently he created his own mythology. Ask him almost any question and if he can shake off whatever haze the modern world has cast upon him he'll rattle off some answer quick as any priest from any temple. The same counts for the Lord Dietbold's evil workings in the first three A modules.

When the characters return to Ludensheim they are cast into a morass of filth that only a border town ruled by the ruthless and governed by the cunning can devise. The characters are confronted with a people on the brink, languishing in poverty, ruled by a master who is dripping in wealth. Rogues, clerics and wizards abound in this border town as the party of adventurers is set to unravel the reasons of Ludensheim's aggressive actions toward all its neighbors and why they seem to possess alliances that no reasoned human ever should. It



all lies in the Axe of course and it is the character's job to settle it and free the town.

A4 is largely a city adventure and Davis rivals even his best NPCs as presented in *By Shadow of Night*, a previous publication of his, in the townsfolk of the Ludensheim. This adventure should be a welcome respite from the difficult overland treks that the other adventures forced the party on, making it ideal for rogues and bards.

Originally, Davis envisioned this adventure as being much larger than the one he delivered. His notes were voluminous and his plans for the number of side adventures and hooks absolutely huge. This however is when life interrupted Davis and the series became largely abandoned. He had finished the bulk of the adventure but had only just begun to flesh out the areas of interest in and around Ludensheim when his oldest girl entered the hospital. Several years this went on and Davis set aside all things TLG, including this, to work through various issues. It was the right decision then and one we do not regret here.

I tend to believe things happen for a reason, and it seems in recent months as Davis returns in an every growing role at TLG that his latest bunch of releases are back to the track of the older ones. Less events in his life led him to quickly pen A5 *The Shattered Horn* and relaunch the A series of adventures.

**TLG 8024 A5 The Shattered Horn**

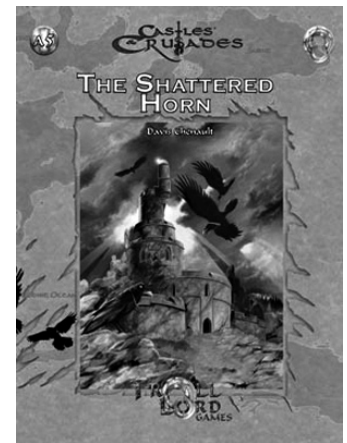
**ISBN: 9-781931275859,  
\$8.95**

**Author Davis Chenault**

**Adventure Module for Levels 5–8**

*The Shattered Horn* is one of the Davis' most creative adventures. It finds the druid Deuranimus the Crow in command of a post, Festung Akt, dedicated to the lawful evil forces of the fallen horned god. The druid is perhaps not the best man for the post as his task is to capture and torture creatures opposed the evil from the north. It is a job that does not sit well with his personality. In fact his actions drive him insane so that he acts as much against his masters as for them, creating a magical gems possessed of a most peculiar nature (I'll not spoil it too much here).

*"Deuranimus had served as a minor assistant to a troop in the Blighted Screed for a number of years and his assignment to Festung Akt surprised him as much as his immediate superiors. Perhaps it was a sign of the decline of Unklar; a portent really, for such a person as Deuranimus would never have been offered a position like this in times past or perhaps a more spiritually influential Unklar would have kept Deuranimus' one small personality defect in tow. Deuranimus, it must be known, had a conscience and was capable of feeling guilt. For many long years, he buried these emotions and acted faithfully to the cause which bound him. Once in charge of Festung Akt however, the sheer volume of his heinous deeds got the better of him. Remorse, guilt and an effort at repentance guided his actions over time."* **A5 The Shattered Horn, page 3.**



The action is centered around the multi-level fortress, really a tower called the Festung Akt. It is left to the CK to determine what vehicle propels the characters to leave Ludensheim and venture to the tower, though several suggestions are given. Here the series leaves behind the border wars of Ludensheim and Botkinberg and enters the high stakes game of regional war between the tower of Aufstrag and the Kingdom to the south. Since the evil has presumably been destroyed in Ludensheim and some semblance of peace restored to the border regions of the Blacktooth Ridge, the characters are bidden to enter to travel north to this strange tower of the mad druid where they have heard the master of the Witch Queen, one Balonakalon has made a powerful base if not a home for himself.

The adventure plunges the party in a rapid search and destroy or search and rescue at Festung Akt as the region is occupied by a monstrous troop of ungerm soldiers. Filled with magical traps, monsters and plenty of room for spell use, *A5 The Shattered Horn* is a perfect mid level adventure.

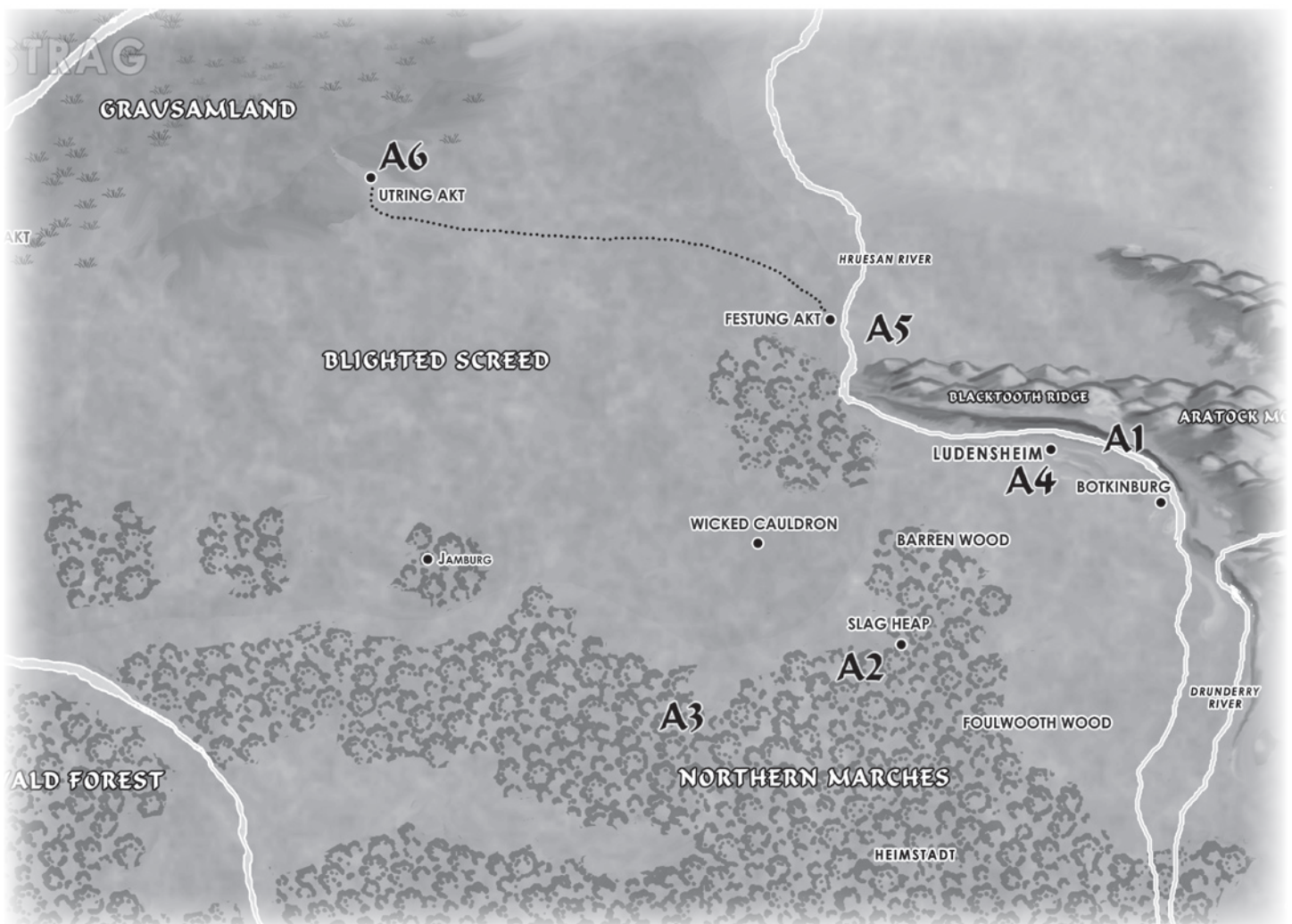
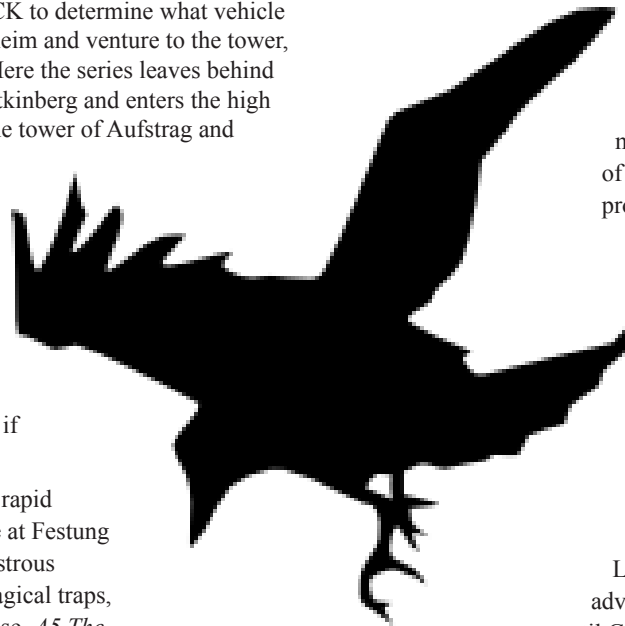
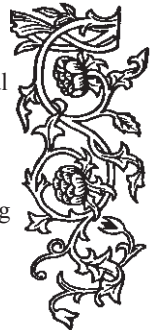
A note should be made about the cover for A5. Though Peter Bradley did the cover art and a bundle of the interior art of the series,

A5 represents one of his best pieces he's ever done. It has a nice measure of tone and mystery about it.

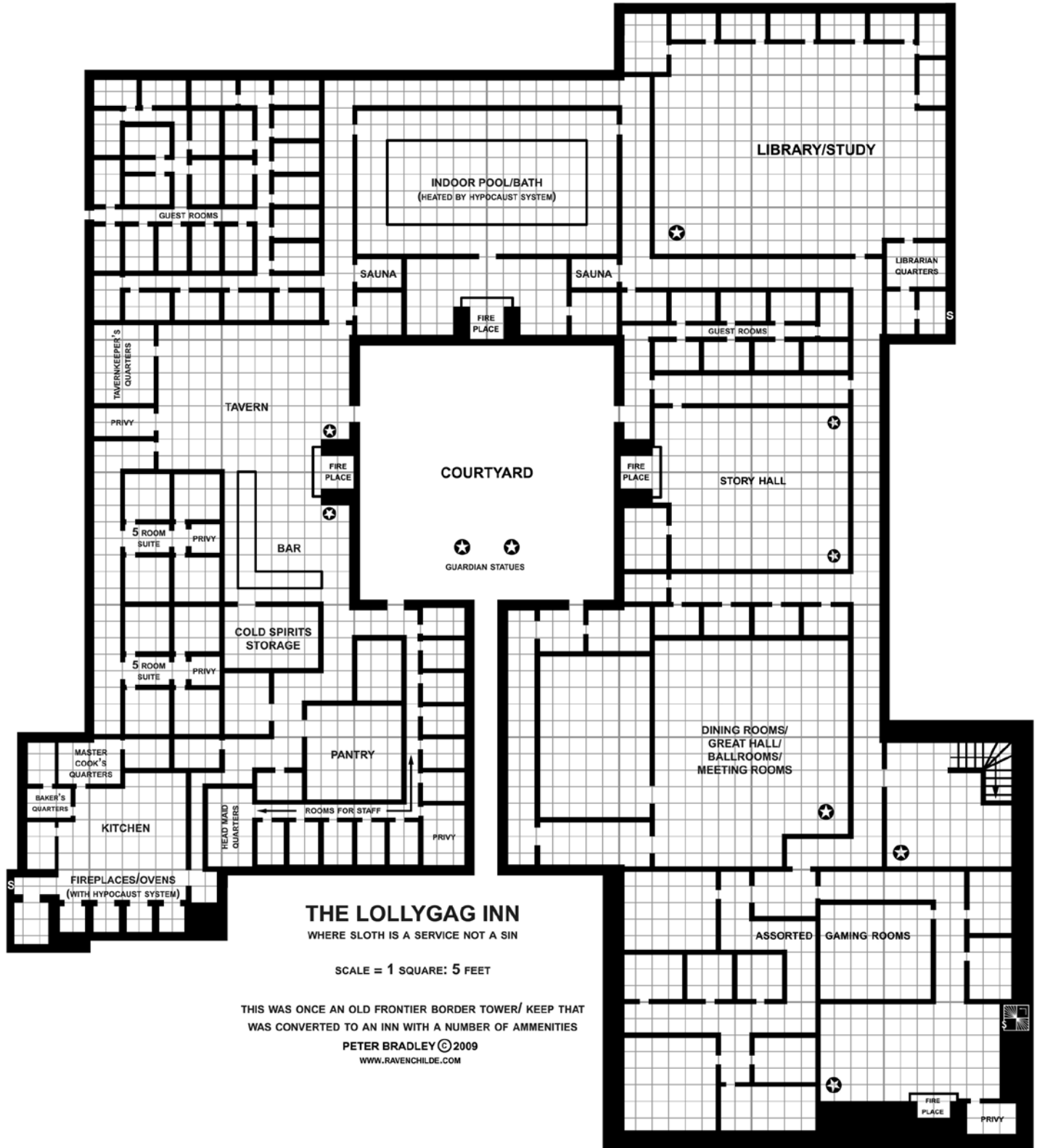
The coloring is perfect and captures the eye, drawing one into Peter's own vision of the border tower. It might very well be my favorite Peter "20 dollar" Bradley piece of art. I've used it on cards, posters and other promotional material because it does exactly what Peter intended it to.

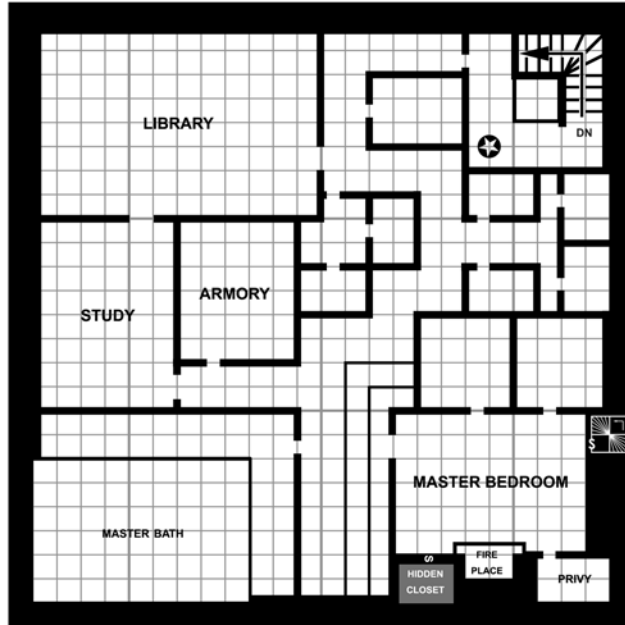
Take note if you will that the cover of this very issue is the cover of the soon to be released *A6 Of Banishment and Blight*. This adventure continues the gradual move to the north, bringing the party of lackluster adventurers one step closer to the monumental task that is *A13 Aufstrag*.

Look for a new A series adventure monthly from now until Gencon. We are also looking to rehabilitating some of the excised passages into pdfs or ancillary adventure modules. It is a Troll Lord World after all.

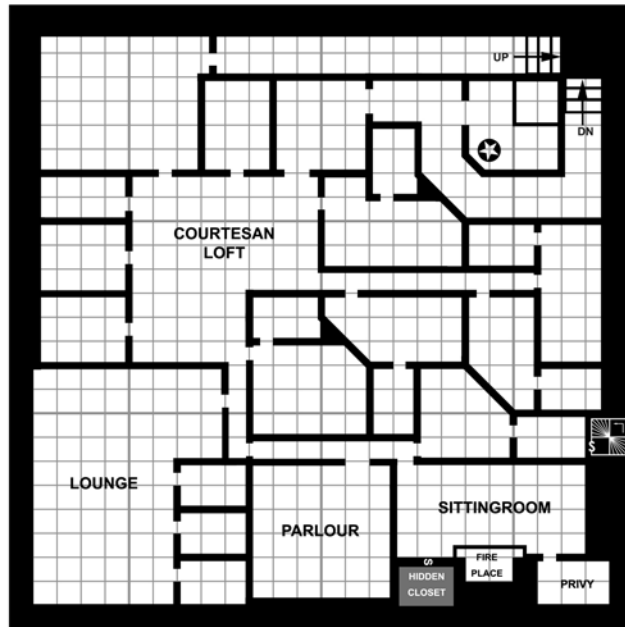


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# CONVENTION BLOG

by Richard McBain



**Richard McBain** was born in Dallas Texas, in the year of our Lord 1973. He currently lives in North Little Rock with his more than understanding wife Stacy, and two beautiful daughters Leah and Zoe. A self-professed geek of all trades, Richard enjoys just about every geek endeavor out there. His first real introduction to gaming came in the form of the 3<sup>rd</sup> printing of the *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons Players Handbook*. Richard has been gaming in one form or another since the mid 80's and hasn't stopped since. Beyond gaming, Richard can be found enjoying a well-crafted beer, while watching his Stars and pontificating about the true nature of the universe. Richard's dream job would be as a deckhand aboard an Alaskan snow crab boat.

**G**en Con 2007, Steve and I were discussing the current state of Troll Lord conventions, and I found it a bit odd that a company based in Little Rock had all of their conventions in Wisconsin. After much conversation, he agreed to bring Troll Con back to Little Rock for 2008.

I knew I had a tough road ahead, seeing as how there are no gaming events in the area, much less the state. So promoting the convention, and getting bodies through the door would be a difficult task. Plus the Troll Con name had no recognition to gamers; so I had to make sure that this Troll Con would be one that people would remember in a positive light.

So with TC moving back to Little Rock, the first thing to do was to secure a location that would meet our needs. Finding a venue would prove to be a difficult task. July is one the busiest months of the year in terms of events. And finding a place that would be available for three consecutive days made it more difficult.

In the end, the Holiday Inn Express in West Little Rock was available, had the space we needed, and the cost was in our price range. After the date and location were locked in, I went into promotion mode. I wanted to get the word out that Troll Con was happening, and that we wanted you to be there.

There are many ways to promote events these days. Obviously, promotion through the website being the easiest. I also wanted to get the word out throughout the region, and through channels that would help expose TLG and Troll Con to people who maybe had never heard of us before. So I hit the road, visiting game stores near and far.

Con flyers were printed and I embarked on getting the word out. Now granted, I had no real way to track any return that the flyers might have gotten us in terms of actual bodies through the door. I firmly believe that simply having them out there is positive for the company and the convention itself. Plus building relationships with retail stores is key in helping spread Troll Lord on a local level.

So jump ahead to June 2008 and after some good response from emails and forum postings, it looked like Troll Con was going have a fairly decent attendance. We figured that the Convention hall was going to handle about 40 or more attendees give or take. Steve was going to be happy if we simply broke even on costs. I, on the other hand, was aiming a little higher.

Friday morning on the day of the Con comes, and I'm up bright and early to head to the Convention

hall to begin setting up the table. Jason Alexander was nice enough to join me to assist in getting the hall ready. After a few hours, we had the floor setup and the TLG area ready to go. Around 10:00 am Steve, Todd, and Mark arrived with all the Troll Lord stuff and we finished getting everything set up for a 1:00 pm opening.

After an abbreviated lunch, we open the doors to a huge flood of gamers waiting to get in to Troll Con. No wait...that's Gen Con. Yeah so we open the doors, and it's fairly slow going. Jason runs a C&C one shot that has about eight players, and is very well received by everyone. Later that evening, Steve runs a C&C game with about 12 players in it (the more the better is his motto), and runs for well over four hours.

Saturday opens with quite a flurry of activity and players are showing up at a good pace. Larry and the Warhammer 40K miniature guys show up to run a few demo games. Jeremy is there to run a variety of board games, and of course there is plenty of C&C to be had. At full swing on Saturday we had over 40 gamers in the Convention hall, all having a great time. It was great to look around on Saturday and see everyone gaming and having a blast. The feeling that I had actually pulled it off was a very satisfying one, and I knew it would make Steve happy as well.

Sunday was a bit slower with a lot of gamers leaving early to get back home (we had an attendee come from as far away as Chicago). Steve ran a few more C&C games, and I spent most of the day getting my butt kicked at Puerto Rico. At 4:00, we shut down, and started the fun process of packing up. It had been a very successful return to Little Rock for Troll Con.

Looking back, Troll Con would not have been the great event that it was without a lot of help. Thanks go out to Mike and Elizabeth Stewart, Peter Bradley, Jeremy Hinton, Jason Alexander, Larry Focshe, the guys from Rose Song Publishing, Jay at Imagine Hobbies, Casey Christofferson, all the Trolls; Mark, Todd, Davis, Steve, and even Mac for making a rare appearance. And of course, everyone who came out to game with us. Thank you for coming out and supporting Troll Lord Games.

Look for Troll Con in 2009, July 11–13th, at the West Little Rock Holiday Inn Express. We hope to see you there.

As always, if you have any comments or suggestions, drop me a line at [Richard@trolllord.com](mailto:Richard@trolllord.com)

- February 13–16, **DundraCon**, San Ramon, CA. <http://www.dundracon.com/>

- March 7–8, **Gary Con**, Lake Geneva, WI  
<http://www.freeyabb.com/phpbb/viewtopic.php?t=6811&mforum=trollordgames>
- March 20–22, **Egyptian Campaign**, Carbondale, IL  
<http://www.egyptiancampaign.com/>
- April 14–17, **GAMA Trade Show**, Las Vegas, NV  
<http://www.gama.org/gts>
- June 5–7, **Sooner Con**, Oklahoma City, OK  
<http://www.soonercon.info/dnn/>
- June 19–21, **Lake Geneva Gaming Convention**, Lake Geneva, WI  
<http://www.trolllord.com/cons/lggc.html>
- July 10–12, **Troll Con VII**, Little Rock, AR  
<http://www.trolllord.com/cons/trollcon.html>
- August 13–16, **Gen Con**, Indianapolis, IN  
<http://gencon.com/2009/indy/default.aspx>



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*And a July Day shall ne'er go by,  
From this day to the ending of the world,  
But we in it shall be remembered-  
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;  
For he to-day that sheds his blood with me  
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,  
This day shall gentle his condition;  
And gentlemen in all the country now-a-bed  
Shall think themselves accurs'd they were not here,  
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks  
That fought with us upon the fields of this most Trollish Con.*



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# HAMMER & ANVIL

THOUGHTS FROM A  
GAMER MASTER'S FORGE

BY  
CASEY CANFIELD

## Stranger in a Strange Land

*"I attempted to rise, but was not able to stir: for as I happened to lie on my back, I found my arms and legs were strongly fastened on each side to the ground; and my hair, which was long and thick, tied down I the same manner. I likewise felt several slender ligatures across my body, from my armpits to my thighs. I could only look upwards, the sun began to grow hot, and the light of-fended mine eyes. I heard a confused noise about me, but in the posture I lay, could see nothing except the sky."*

- Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*

**I**n Castles & Crusades, not all character classes are created equal. Each is designed to represent a particular archetype prevalent in fantasy fiction and gaming. By choosing a class for a character, a player can create a stalwart man-at-arms, a crafty burglar, or a wizened magician.

The rules for each class are designed to suit the archetype in question. For example, the fighter class enjoys the best all-around combat proficiency of the available selections. As a result, it can appear to the casual observer that some classes are dramatically mismatched. This is not really the case. The intent was to foster a cooperative style of game play that utilized the talents of all characters across many situations. Not every character is an excellent combatant, but excellent combatants also have a need for stealthy rogues and silver-tongued diplomats, from time to time.

The truth of the matter is that while all classes serve as representatives of an archetype, not all classes are equally useful in every situation. Some classes, like the fighter, wizard, cleric, or rogue, find themselves more useful than other classes in a wider variety of situations. Others may find themselves less adaptable. Rangers and druids, for example, are classes that may find difficulty in city environments due to their specialized wilderness skills. Specialized archetypes have more pointed strengths and weaknesses.

It can be a challenge to maintain a consistent level of entertainment in your games when a party consists of diverse archetypes. How can a CK keep a barbarian's player entertained when in a

city where rogues thrive? Of course, part of the responsibility lies with the player that made the decision to play a character of that class. Player involvement is not entirely the CK's responsibility. However, there are steps a CK can take to help maintain an entertaining game in situations where certain character classes don't feel as effective.

In this installment, I will present several examples of situations where a character may be diminished in capability, and offer ideas of how players and CKs alike can work to solve the problem.

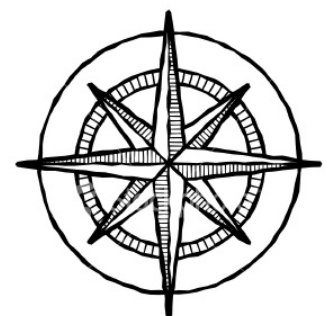
### **A fighter grows bored during lengthy negotiations, research, or in stealth scenarios.**

Such is the way of the person of action. The obvious solution is to mix these situations with the need for action. During heavy role-playing, create a circumstance where those talking need protection from a known threat, such as a hostile group of assassins. Adding dramatic tension and the threat of violence puts the fighter back into his element.

Of course, this approach doesn't work every time. Having someone or something attack every time PCs and NPCs sit down for a chat would strain credulity. In other cases, try to think of specific ways that a fighter character can use his or her expertise to contribute to the scenario. For example, an investigation into a murder may require examination of a body. A fighter, with an appropriate Intelligence or Wisdom check, may be able to determine what type of weapon caused the wounds on the murder victim, and how many times



*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.*



the victim was struck. The SIEGE Engine lends itself to just these sorts of uses, and it enables players to feel involved and to feel that their characters are truly experts in their profession.

### **A wizard runs out of spells for the day, or has memorized spells that seldom have utility.**

A wizard with no useful spells can feel useless in combat situations, but this is not the case. A wizard requires protection or isolation from melee combat, but this allows the wizard the advantage of observation. A character engrossed in melee does not have the capacity to observe the entire battlefield, but a wizard sequestered on the sidelines does, and can provide insight and instruction to his or her companions.

Consider allowing the wizard to use his or her Intelligence or Wisdom from time to time, both to observe the enemy, and potentially anticipate their actions. While this sort of boon could be abused by players seeking every advantage, judicious use of this technique in certain circumstances can help wizard players feel like full contributors to the success of their party.

A CK can also construct scenarios to allow a wizard to use some of those rarely-used spells. If a wizard's player takes the time to plan for contingencies, his or her foresight should be rewarded from time to time.

### **A wizard or illusionist loses his or her spell book.**

A missing spell book, while a monstrous challenge for a wizard, is a situation of epic adventure. A quest to retrieve a lost spell book, or to replace a book that was destroyed, can be a great deal of fun if handled properly. When a wizard retrieves or rebuilds the book the sense of accomplishment is enormous.

The CKs responsibility in this situation is to provide opportunity for the quick retrieval or replacement of the book. The destruction of a spell book in the middle of a lengthy wilderness jaunt, without hope of replacement in the reasonable future, spells doom for the enjoyment of the player and probably for the adventuring party's chances of success.

To help supplement the capabilities of the wizard (and thus the party) during the time spent without the spell book, consider making some magical accessories available for discovery or purchase. A wand, some potions, and a few scrolls should help the wizard avoid feeling useless until the book can be recovered or reconstructed.

All classes have trappings that are necessary for the work of their profession. If a rogue loses thieves' tools, a cleric loses a holy symbol, or a bard loses his or her voice or instrument, they are in a similar bind. In all of these cases, the CK must be flexible enough to allow the problem to be solved in a reasonable manner. No CK should allow the participation and enjoyment of the player to be damaged in a prolonged fashion.

### **A rogue or assassin is affiliated with a notorious guild.**

Rogues that are affiliated with a notorious thieves' guild, or are infamous in their own right, may find themselves in uncomfortable circumstances from time to time. Known bastions of law and order may heavily restrict or outright forbid the presence of the rogue in their jurisdiction. To overcome this, allow rogues the opportunity to disguise their identity or nature, either through the purchase of physical disguises, or through the hire of a clever wizard or illusionist. Further, keep the suspense alive by making the disguises imperfect, or by strictly enforcing their duration. Your intent as CK may not be to catch the rogue in the act of violating such a restriction, but your intent should be



to keep the process as thrilling and seemingly dangerous as possible. The risk of discovery adds this sort of spice to the game.

Consider letting the notoriety work to the character's benefit, as well. Just as a reputation can bring negative reactions, it can also evoke admiration or be intimidating to certain individuals. It's important to let this situation work both ways. Judicious use of Charisma checks can effectively model these circumstances when the time comes to roll the dice.

### **A cleric or paladin ventures into an area controlled by a rival theocracy.**

A cleric or paladin in this circumstance may need to take steps to conceal his or her presence. Certain clerics and most paladins will probably find this difficult, at best. A CK should remember to let the players mess up once or twice without large recriminations. A suggestion that things could be far worse the next time, such as a minor penalty or narrow escape, will guide the players in the right direction. The CK should also remind less experienced players that characters with strict moral codes need not be foolish in a manner that endangers themselves or their companions.

As a case study, a certain evil town in a classic adventure module comes to mind. Players and CKs with experience in this elemental adventure will know the town of which I write. I have run games with that module on multiple occasions, and in every case, the paladin in the group had the discretion to keep a low profile in that town.

Another situation may involve a culture that frowns upon the religious as a whole. Clerics and paladins of all types may be ostracized or even hunted. Characters in these situations will want to avoid public displays of their faith, including spell casting, turning undead, or even utterance of oaths to a deity. Again, certain characters may find this unreasonable or impossible over long periods of time. The CK should use these circumstances in the campaign with caution, and limit their duration.

## **A cleric has transgressed against his or her deity and requires atonement.**

A cleric requiring atonement of some kind for transgressions against his or her deity may have fewer options to contribute to the party's welfare. Some or all spell ability may have been stripped away, depending on the CK's discretion. The cleric's combat effectiveness is less than that of a fighter.

In these cases, the cleric's player is likely to drive for a reconciliation of some type to restore the cleric's abilities. The CK should take reasonable steps to allow the player this opportunity. It does not have to be an easy process, but it should be available to undertake in some form within a reasonable amount of time. A quest spanning one or two game sessions, to be undertaken with the aid of the cleric's companions, is adequate to demonstrate the contrition of the cleric. In a pinch, allowing the cleric to visit a higher-ranking member of the same faith to receive an atonement spell requires less effort. Atonement should not be treated as a way to transgress and "get away with it." It is a tool to allow a campaign to both have verisimilitude and yet still move forward.

## **A druid, ranger, or barbarian ventures into a dungeon or urban area.**

Playing a character of wilderness origins is a challenge when the party ventures into an underground complex or spends some time in a large town or city. They may find many of their spells and abilities to be less effective or even useless, which tends to weaken the capabilities of the party as a whole.

As a CK, there are many options available for improving the experience of these character classes while in these types of settings. Consider developing scenarios that have some sort of botanical or biological element involved. Rangers are particularly adept at dealing with poisons, and druids with identification of plants and animals. Barbarians may, at the CK's discretion, be sensitive to the line between that which is natural and unnatural. If a ranger, barbarian, or druid can use these skills to provide useful information about a magically altered beast that stalks the alleyways of a city, I think any adventuring party would find themselves glad to have them along.

Rangers can track in any environment. Tracking a foe across cobblestone streets can be difficult, but tracking a monster through a muddy, unused sewer tunnel is definitely possible. Druids can leverage the natural world that can be found in such environments. Using the grass that grows between cobbles to spawn an entangle spell is perfectly admirable and acceptable. Barbarians can use their simple way of life to provide insight into the foibles of the more "enlightened" urban culture. The CK can use the SIEGE Engine to handle all of these cases.

## **A paladin has committed an offense against their god and fallen from grace.**

This is a more difficult case to handle than that of a cleric who has transgressed. Paladins are special creatures that act as mortal paragons. Paladins, by definition, are the best representation of law and good in the earthly realms. An action that contravenes that responsibility and honor is not something that can be lightly undone.

A paladin seeking a return to grace has but one choice: absolutely unconditional repentance. The paladin must have complete remorse for the actions that were taken and must sincerely work to undo the damage to the best of his or her abilities. A quest may be the best opportunity for the paladin to accomplish this, but it may simply be a matter of spending a significant amount of time, effort, and treasure to undo the wrong while asking the deity for forgiveness. Note that a paladin would

seek only forgiveness. He or she would never seek the return of his or her abilities if truly remorseful, and no CK should ever hint that they can be restored once lost. The abilities should only be restored if, in the CK's point of view, the paladin satisfied the will of the god and restoration of the abilities is restored as an extraordinary gift of forgiveness.

Depending on the offense, even contrition and deeds of honor might not be enough to earn back the privileges and responsibilities of paladinhood. Certain acts may cause an irrevocable taint on the reputation and honor of the character and the deity. Consider a paladin who publicly maims and kills an unarmed man who kidnapped and murdered his sister when he was young. His actions may be understandable, but the horror of the act tarnishes his honor and the reputation of his deity as a lawful and just god.

In such cases, the deity may eventually offer forgiveness for the act, but the character is too damaged spiritually to serve as an effective mortal representative of the god.

## **A party containing a paladin or knight chooses to take part in subterfuge.**

Paladins and knights do not operate well with rogues, but many adventures require the talents of rogues to successfully navigate them. The paladin or knight that cannot come to terms with this need for cooperation places a CK in a difficult situation. It is difficult to maintain the cooperative, party-oriented nature of the game when reasonable role-playing puts characters at odds.

It has always been my position that paladins and knights require very skilled players. There is a great deal of nuance involved in playing characters that have very little nuance themselves. A player must allow role-playing to take a back seat to the enjoyment of the group from time to time, even if that involves pretending not to notice the unsavory behavior of another party member. As a player of a paladin or knight, I always tried to avoid noticing the small things, and I always took a pragmatic approach. While my characters may find the association distasteful, the skills of the rogue are needed to accomplish the mission of bringing justice and right to the land.



Similarly, accomplishing a noble goal may require stealth or subterfuge. A paladin or knight has two choices: help, or do nothing. Sometimes, doing nothing is the greater wrong. Clever parties will plan their activities to allow a knight or paladin to help without the knowledge of precisely what they are doing. For example, a rogue may ask a paladin or knight to travel to a temple to speak with the clerics about obtaining healing. In the meantime, the rogue has coordinated a stealthy break-in to the temple's sanctuary, while the clerics are distracted, to obtain evidence about temple corruption. This is excellent roleplaying, and the CK should be flexible and encourage these arrangements.

**A ranger is for**  **ley with a racial enemy.**

Rangers have expertise in combat versus specific creatures that is cultivated through years of experience, conflict, and ordeal. As such, it can be difficult for rangers to negotiate with opponents of these types. A ranger that has spent fifteen years defending the frontier against rampaging hobgoblins may find it difficult to avoid killing them on sight. What if these hobgoblins hold a secret that may help contain a greater evil?

Never stake the outcome of an adventure on the assumption that a character or party in this circumstance will choose to negotiate. A wise ranger may see the benefit of restraint, but another may not, particularly if the character was once a victim of these creatures.

In these cases, a CK should have the knowledge the party seeks carried in a written form by the enemy creatures. That way, the choice of negotiation or combat does not dictate the potential for success.

As a reminder, a favored enemy is not always studied in the realm of combat. A ranger schooled in the ways of the enemy may know things about the enemy's culture and behavior that would allow him or her to negotiate more effectively. The approach of the player and the personality of the character guide how these scenarios play out. The CK should be alert and account for these possibilities.

A rust monster, green slime, or other destructive monster obliterates the weapons and armor of a fighter, paladin, ranger, knight, or cleric in the middle of a dangerous dungeon expedition.

Nothing brings a dungeon crawl to a screeching halt like the destruction of armor and weapons. Most parties will immediately try to exit the dungeon to obtain new equipment. What if the route to the exit is guarded or blocked and the characters need to find another way out?

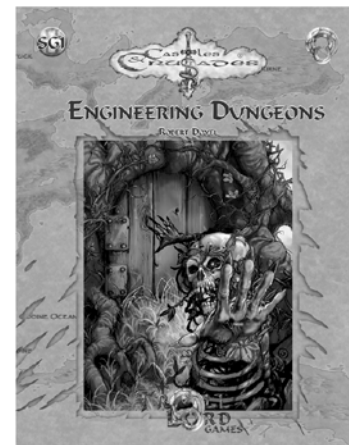
First, allow there to be another way out. There is rarely one path into or out of a dungeon, mainly due to the needs of the creatures living in it. Second, if using a creature that can destroy equipment, allow the characters the opportunity to obtain equipment they can use in the interim. Even if the armor or weapons obtained are not of the same quality, they are certainly better than going without. Finally, consider building flexibility into the dungeon so that encounter sizes and strengths can be adjusted according to the party's relative strength at any time.

Make no mistake, encountering a rust monster should be harrowing, and if the monster gets the better of the party, the characters should have to deal with the consequences. On the other hand, allowing one monster to be the pivot on which the success of the entire adventure rests can be terribly frustrating for players who lose their characters because of it.

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# THE ILLUSIONIST

BY MARK SANDY

**I** don't think there are too many gamers who would argue with me if I said that the illusionist is one of the least used, and least understood, classes ever invented. Even in the troll dens, the illusionist is rarely seen, more often as an NPC than a player character. In fact, I think I can count on one finger the number of people I know that have a knack for playing an illusionist, and that would be our artist Peter Bradley.

Illusionists can be tough to play. For one thing, no one can really seem to agree on the purpose of an illusionist. Is he just a weaker form of wizard, is he a specialist, is he using an entirely unique form of magic, is he using some kind of hypnosis? Are illusionists more common than wizards are, or less common? There isn't any one right answer to any of these questions, because every game is different. Logically, it does not seem that the two could be entirely different, since there is some crossover in spells, nor that they are just two types of the same kind of magic, since there isn't more crossover. Personally, I favor the notion that all the different forms of magic (wizardry, illusionism, alchemy, fortune telling) all began at the same source. As the disparate practitioners of this early, crude magic went their separate ways, the different types of magic developed independently of each other. Rivalries grew, particularly between the two dominant types of magic, illusionism and wizardry, so that they now get along about as well as clowns and mimes.

On the surface, the illusionist does appear weaker than the wizard does, because the wizard's strength is so often measured by the damage he can cause. The wizard doesn't always have to be about blowing stuff up, but let's face it, when push comes to shove, out come the lightning bolts and fireballs. If that's the kind of game you're playing, where the damage is all that counts, then more power to you. If you are playing in a world that actually makes sense, however, then it stands to reason that for every yahoo out there throwing destructive magic around, there must be somebody whose job it is to prevent or punish such transgressions where public safety is concerned. When you get down to it, a fireball and a pipe bomb aren't that much different, and perceptions of innocent folk toward the user wouldn't be either. It would even make sense that some spells would be regulated or possibly illegal to possess.

The illusionist takes a more subtle approach to magic. Since he doesn't really possess any truly destructive capability, the illusionist must be a little cleverer with his spells. A non-destructive approach to encounters can be a refreshing change, and can promote some excellent role-playing. Oddly enough, some people take as much offense, or more, to being tricked than to being attacked.

The other big thing that seems to trip up the illusionist is the concept of Belief. The perception is that if the target of the spell does not or cannot believe in the illusion, then it has no power. This can be further frustrated by the attempt by the players to voluntarily "disbelieve," something I have never been personally fond of. I can understand allowing a save when the illusion is first encountered, and maybe a second if special circumstances warrant. Of course, not every spell the illusionist casts is a quote-unquote illusion. These spells would have real, even tangible effect regardless of belief. Since the illusionist as the caster of the spell would know it is an illusion and therefore would not believe in it, does his continual flame disappear as soon as he casts it? Of course not. What would be the point?

What can create confusion is the manner in which illusion is interpreted. Simply put, illusions don't all work the same way. Listed below are four different interpretations of illusions of a visual nature. These are not meant to be the only possible interpretations, nor do I address all types of illusions.

**Photonic.** Illusion composed solely of light; it has no substance and cannot be affected by physical means, unless it is something which specifically affects light (such as a *Darkness* spell). Any creature which can see would perceive the image, and intelligent creatures should be able to quickly determine its nature. Photonic objects cannot be picked up or moved, (unless it is anchored to a real object) burned or broken, because there is literally nothing there but an image. In that same respect, the photonic illusion can cause no direct harm (indirect harm, such as using an illusion to conceal a real trap is still possible). Barriers of this type could be passed through as if they were not there. At middle to high levels, the caster may be able to support the visual illusion by adding sound or smell or even tactile characteristics to the illusion. Photonic illusions are not dispelled by Disbelief. *Continual Flame* and *Darkness* would be Photonic illusions.

**Plasmic.** These illusions are actually physical in nature, composed of ectoplasm-like substance which takes the shape of the object to be simulated, and which is then colored by photonic means to appear real. These objects would be delicate in nature, having no more than one hit point per caster level, and could be destroyed relatively easily. Because these types of illusions are "real" in the sense that they have physical substance, they can cause physical harm. In that same sense, a caster of middle level could actually create simple, useful objects, such as a weapon or a tent or a rope that would function as if they were real. At higher levels, the illusionist may even be able to create objects which simulate more esoteric characteristics, such as lantern oil which burns or food and water which can provide real sustenance. Illusions of this

type cannot be used to simulate voids, such as pits or passageways through solid objects. Plasmic illusions are not dispelled by Disbelief. *Minor Creation* and *Fog Cloud* would be Plasmic illusions.

**Hypnotic.** These illusions only exist in the mind of those affected by the magic. Virtually anything may be simulated this way, if both the caster and the target of the spell have the mental capacity to conceive in the illusion. Mindless creatures cannot be affected by this kind of illusion. The power of the hypnotic illusion is in the belief that it is real. As long as this belief lasts, those who perceive the illusion will act and react as though it truly exists. Barriers cannot be passed, objects could be picked up, traps or monsters could cause damage. However, these things only exist in the mind of the believer. Any damage taken will be perceived to be physical, but it is all in the mind. A character that eats illusory food could starve while he thinks his belly is full. A character who believes he has taken enough damage to be killed may actually die of shock, but will have no real wounds. As soon as the illusion is no longer believed, the character will realize the damage wasn't real and will regain any hit points lost to the illusion. Characters that have defeated the belief in the illusion may be able to convince those who still believe that it is fake.

**Mental.** The mental illusion works similar to the hypnotic with regard to the fact that it exists only in the mind of the believer. What makes it different are the effects of the spell. Hypnotic illusions can only damage the psyche; mental illusions can cause real, physical damage. The belief of the target of the illusion is so strong that his own mind will cause the damage. His own belief can actually break

his own bones or split open his own flesh. Any damage caused in this way will remain, even after the character no longer believes in the illusion which caused the damage. Such physical effects of mental illusions should not be limited to causing damage. After all, if the character's own mind actually caused wounds to the body because of an illusory attack, then it stands to reason (as well as maintaining a sense of consistency, balance and fair play) that the character's own mind can heal those same wounds if he were the recipient of an illusory healing potion. Anything the mind can do, it can undo. Other types of effects should be treated in the same way: if the character believes there is a bridge over the bottomless pit, then his own mind will carry him safely across that bridge, if he believes that he has grown wings out of his back then his own mind will give him the power of flight. If he believes that he carries a magic item, then that item will have all of the magical effects of the real thing. *Color Spray* would be a mental illusion.

Part of the difficulty of playing an illusionist is agreeing between Player and CK on just how illusions work. I expect many of us as players have found ourselves in the middle of a tight spot with what we thought was a good resolution, only to find the CK looking at it entirely differently, just as I'm sure many a CK has had his game interrupted in the middle of the fight in order to discuss how the illusion works. As stated, they don't all have to work the same way. It is simply a matter of determining which ways work at which times. As always, we Trolls encourage you, our loyal and valued gamers, to feel free to alter or reinterpret any rules as it fits in your own campaign.

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# Roadhouse Rogues



By

Casey Christofferson

*Roadhouse Rogues features the creative work of Casey Christofferson, and is set in his Haunted Highlands setting.*

**T**he Flybite Fens are a mythic and little explored region southwest of the embattled city of Dro Mandras, and several days journey south of the famed Dirty Bowbe's Roadhouse. Once a province of the ancient and evil Slithar kingdom, the fens are all that was not drowned by Lake Veyona. Here a group of adventurers and their retainers has found themselves on the wrong end of the hag Izhadashae in a desperate fight for their lives.

Included in this month's installment are a new monster, new spell, new magic item, and Izhadashae's statistics for use in your *Castles & Crusades* adventure campaign.

## Izhadashae's Revenge

Izhadashae wrinkled her long hooked nose in amusement as she let the paper-thin razor do its work on the wriggling mass beneath her. Reaching across the table, she tightened the straps and sighed delightedly at the wails of anguish that reverberated from the walls of her benighted cottage. Merrill crowed incessantly, showing his pleasure at the coppery stench filling the air, a scent mixed with the sooty smell of her fire and the putrid stew, which boiled in her hag's cook-pot. Izhadashae tossed the corbie a pink bit of flesh off the edge of her razor and began her grisly vivisection.

*"To the Mistress of the Night  
As my fire simmers bright  
Hear the call of a daughter true*

*Born of womb in blackest hue  
Heart as dark as midnight blue  
Jokashka I do call on you*

*Izhadashae offers up this treat  
Gives this gift of supple meat  
Carved for you right from the bone  
Give dark blessing to my wicked home!*

*Grant to me that which I seek  
Tis a witches vengeance I do beg  
Against they who wronged us*

Brushing a white wisp of hair from her eyes with a bony, gore-covered finger, Izhadashae set herself to work removing the entrails and carefully examining their color for any polyps or oddities. Like any skilled butcher, she soon had her subject divided into three precise pyramids of once living matter. The first was of bones, the second of entrails and organs and the third of quivering pink meat. The screams had not lasted nearly long enough to satisfy her darker desires this night. No matter, tonight's sacrifice would make her curse calling

all that more powerful. Dipping a cup into the cistern below her worktable, she took a deep draught of the salty, coppery fluid that had been the unfortunate's life and turned to the fires sputtering beneath her charred cauldron.

In the shrill throat of her kind, she called forth the darkness she cast the last drippings of crimson from the cup against the side of the cauldron and called forth to the queen of dark fey.

*"To the Mistress of the Night  
As my fire simmers bright  
Hear the call of a daughter true*

*Born of womb in blackest hue  
Heart as dark as midnight blue  
Jokashka I do call on you*

*Izhadashae offers up this treat  
And gives this gift of supple meat  
Carved for you right from the bone  
Give dark blessing to my wicked home!*

*Grant to me that which I seek  
A curse a hundred fathoms deep  
Tis a witches vengeance I do beg  
Against they who wronged us  
Let they here well!*

*Izhadashae seeks aid from Hell!*

The cauldron bubbled, boiled, troubled, and surged forth in the form of a dark, womanly figure.

"My child, you call your mistress from her musings. Speak to me of your troubles. Who has wronged thee? Wherefore is thy covey?" the apparition asked, its voice seeming to lilt, bubble, and gurgle all at once.

"Murdered my queen!" Izhadashae hissed. "Slain most unfairly by those who stole into the fens uninvited."

"Such Insolence!" roared the figure from the cauldron. "Who would dare murder my children? Know you the name of these fools? Have you an item of theirs which may set our fiends upon them?"

"I do my queen, for this one was their pack bearer," cooed Izhadashae, indicating the three piles upon her cutting table. "And this belonged to one of them," Izhadashae held a curiously forged silver dagger up to the apparition, who took it and examined it closely, boiling ichor and ooze running in rivulets over the dagger, dripping and hissing onto the side of the cast iron pot.

“I know the ones you seek.” said the queen at length. “They are wily, for certain, yet a remedy for their black deeds do we have here. Bury the bones of their comrade in thy yard and irrigate your planting with the wretch’s own blood. Feed what rises from the crop with the flesh you have pared my daughter and they that rise shall go forth and gain thy revenge!”

The thing within the pot gurgled one last time and collapsed with a sickening squelch back into the pot as the flames suddenly died upon the cauldron.

“And so Merrill, it shall be done as the queen instructed and revenge shall be ours at last!”

The hag waived her hand at a pickaxe and shovel next to the door. Both leapt to life and clanked out to the yard to begin their digging. Izhadashae threw her head back in a wild cackle as she stroked the corbie’s comb.



The mud sucked at Ghori’s boots as she waived the clouds of flies from her face and pushed forward. Ahead of her Mikal and his remaining servant, Anurak probed the muck with poles seeking safer footing. Two weeks ago, they had set out from Dro Mandras with and four canoes made with skill by Umeshti tribesmen who used them to traverse the marshes north of Long Loc. Now all that remained of the party were Ghori, Mikal, and Anurak. The canoes were long gone and the edge of the fen was still farther than they could make by nightfall...when the creatures returned to finish them all.

Ghori swallowed hard, trying to squeeze down the fear in the pit of her stomach and pulled her blue woolen jacket tightly about her. She checked her crossbow and moved forward in the footsteps of Anurak and Mikal. She quietly cursed the wizard who had hired them and his thrice-damned corpse, torn asunder the night before by those wicked, dark things. Now the wizard was dead, and his treasure was no doubt locked in a cursed chest that none of the current survivors would be able to find, let alone open.

Three days prior, they had encountered the covey of hags in the marsh by accident, and that’s where everything started to go wrong. The wizard’s plan had been sound at first. Paddle into the interior of the Fens, portaging the canoes when necessary until they came upon the spot his map mentioned. Allegedly, they would find an ancient Slithar tomb. Within the snake priest’s tomb, a rod sought by Vasyav master in Dro Mandras would be recovered and returned. Pursuit of the Serpent Rod had proven fruitless. They found the location marked on the map but learned only that it was overgrown and had long since been plundered by other treasure seekers than themselves.

On their return trip the band accidentally came upon a hallow showing the mark of a hags covey which got the wizard Vasyav’s mind to whirling on a new plan. Vasyav explained that he would conceal the band with his sorcery and they would wait with nets weighted with lead and threaded with wire spun from cold wrought iron. He told how his master would be displeased with the loss of the rod, but that he could be convinced to reward the band with gold for the hag’s teeth, which could be used to empower the casting of a variety of charms and spells.

When the unsuspecting hags arrived at their covey hallow, the band sprang into action. Their nets were effective, but the band was not prepared for the strength of these bony fiends. Over seven feet tall, the hags had the strength of ogres. The first shirked her net and dove upon a pair of rope handlers, slicing the throat of the first with her bony talons and snatching poor little Dellin of Gilby into her leathery arms before fleeing into the night. Ghori hurled a silver edged dagger at the fleeing hag but it was too late and the fiend escaped with a howl into the night.

Mikal, Tovallos, and Anton busied themselves stabbing the remaining two hags trapped under the nets with long knives charmed by Vasyav the wizard. Ghori and the others watched the perimeter, unable to watch the Vasyav’s gruesome work of plucking the teeth from the putrid faces of the murdered hags.

The band immediately set forth to leave the area, but the darkness and a sudden fog had them lost before sunrise on the murky second day. Vasyav scowled and turned the map around and around repeatedly, and attempted charms and counter charms to find their way again but evidently to no avail, so that as night fell they were no closer to the edge of the fen than they had been when they began. That night, none slept as the marsh echoed with poor Dellin’s screams.

Before sunrise, the creatures attacked. Ghori could not make out their exact shape, as they seemed to be made mostly of shadowstuff. Their eyes glowed a bright violet just before they attacked, and they seemed to be made of nothing so much as sharp claws and drooling teeth. In size, they were no larger than a young child was but their ferocity matched most of them. Tovallos the Chaos priest and his acolytes went down screaming as they tried to stuff their guts back into their split bellies.

The remainder of the band fought off the fiends as best they could till sunrise when they vanished into thin air. Two more of their members had disappeared, along with one of the canoes.

Anton and his kinsman Kreigher were found the next night with their guts spread through the limbs of a cypress grove. Ghori still felt a sickness swell in her stomach when she thought about their horribly contorted and gnawed upon bodies. It was their eyes that held the worst of the horror, and Ghori was certain that she would be afforded a glimpse of those faces every time she closed her eyes for the rest of her life.

Anurak, Mikal, Vasyav and Ghori moved away from the gruesome discovery and busied themselves building a large bonfire. They expended every ounce of lantern oil they had remaining and used the dugouts for fuel, finding little burnable matter in the expanse of the fens. Their fire worked for a time, as they could sense the creatures around the perimeter of their camp, but none strove closer than the edge of their light until the flames began to flicker out. Vasyav began a spell of light, but even as he cast it, the shadowy beasts were upon him. Mikal, Anurak, and Ghori stole forth from the place as Vasyav’s final screams filled their ears.

Anurak and Mikal had paused and looked back at Ghori.



“What is it Mikal?” she asked.

Mikal pointed to the edge of the swamp, and then pointed to the sun’s position in the sky. An hour, no more and the sun would set and the creatures would return.

Ghori nodded and they all doubled their efforts to escape through the swarms of flies and rotted rushes. Overhead a crow circled them, ever out of crossbow range, cawing as if to lead their pursuers against them. The purple tinges of night began to streak across the sky and the three knew that it was the last sunset that any of them would ever see again. Already she could hear the flutter of the things at her heels as they splashed through the muck, their claws destined for her soul.

## New Spell

**Call of Ra’t’h Sidhe**, Level 6 Spellcaster

CT 1 Round    Range Special    D 1 night/2 levels  
SV n/a        SR No            Comp (V,S,M: See Text)

Users of this spell must have been wronged by their opponent and call upon the unholy powers of the Dark Queen Shambere in order for the spell to work. If conditions of sacrifice and rage are met, the spell summons 4 +1 Ra’t’h Sidhe per caster level to do the bidding of the summoner. If proper sacrifice is made the Ra’t’h Sidhe are under the mental command of the spellcaster for 1 night per level of the caster or until the Ra’t’h Sidhe are destroyed or their goal completed. Ra’t’h Sidhe are only effective at night, but plan, attack and ambush their victims incessantly during the course of their summoning.

The required sacrifice is 1 Hit Dice of flesh from a sentient victim for every 4 Hit Dice of Ra’t’h Sidhe summoned. If proper sacrifice is not provided the Ra’t’h Sidhe still appear, however they turn upon the caster and attempt to devour them for the slight.

**Special:** Hags add the Call of Ra’t’h Sidhe to their covey powers. They frequently grant a Hag Eye to the Ra’t’h Sidhe so that they may better direct the Ra’t’h Sidhe assaults. When summoned by the whole covey the number is multiplied by 3.



## New Monster

### Ra’t’h Sidhe

NO. ENCOUNTERED: Summoned Number (Avg 5-12+)

SIZE: Small

HD: 2d6

MOVE: 30 ft.

AC 18

ATTACKS: 2 Claws (1d6) and Bite (1d4)

SPECIAL: Fear, Shadowstuff, Darkvision 60 ft., Gang Attack, Summoned Other Planar

SAVES: P, M

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Evil

TYPE: Other Planar

TREASURE: 0

XP: 39+2

These wicked creatures are born of blood sacrifice and emotional outrage. They are summoned by servants of the dark queen with the sole purpose of punishing those who have trespassed against them. They are terrifying to behold and are known to set forth clever ambushes to trap their prey.

Ra’t’h Sidhe appear at first glance to be thin, emaciated children roughly three feet tall with oversized bat-like ears. They have large eyes shining like glowing violet gemstones in torchlight. Their mouths are wide and filled with razor sharp fangs. They have extremely long fingers, which end in hooked claws. Their lower extremities are folded almost completely into shadow, giving them a wispy and surreal appearance.

Ra’t’h Sidhe are typically summoned in a gang or pack. The gang does not dissipate until the last victim is punished, or until the last of their gang is destroyed.

**Combat:** Ra’t’h Sidhe attack en-masse seeking to take their prey down one at a time until none remain, thus allowing them to return back to the Court of the Dark Queen unpunished. When attacking as a gang, each Ra’t’h Sidhe may only take one attack, however they gain a +1 to hit for each other Ra’t’h Sidhe attacking the same target. Thus if four Ra’t’h Sidhe attack the same character they attack at a +6 to hit including +2 for Hit Dice and +1 for each additional Ra’t’h Sidhe. They deal 1d6+1 claw damage for a successful strike when attacking in this manner.

**Fear:** Opponents facing a pack of Ra’t’h Sidhe for the first time must make a successful save vs. Fear (CL 4) or attempt to flee in terror from the coming onslaught. Those who flee or separate from the group are often considered prime targets by the Ra’t’h Sidhe. Those who suffer from the fear may defend themselves if cornered by do so at -2 to AC, Siege Checks, and Attack Rolls for the duration of the encounter.

**Shadowstuff:** Ra’t’h Sidhe are formed from shadow, but are also partially formed from the stuff of their home plane. As such, foes attempting to attack them have a 50% chance of missing unless they bear weapons made from silver or cold iron, which hit the creatures normally. Cold Iron weapons deal double damage to a Ra’t’h Sidhe but become corroded on each successful strike, so that a cold iron weapon which scores a roll of natural 1 on any attack after a battle with Ra’t’h Sidhe is destroyed, unless it is also magically enchanted. Magical cold

iron weapons allow the user to make a standard Dexterity save with a +1 for every plus of the item to avoid breaking.

Ra'th Sidhe hide as rogues of 2<sup>nd</sup> level and gain a +4 to their hide rolls due to their shadow stuff, small stature, and dexterity.

As beings of shadow, they are powerless (and invisible) in daylight and extremely bright magical light.

Summoned Other Planar: Ra'th Sidhe must be summoned to cross into the natural world. As such, they are susceptible to all the rules, which apply to a summoned creature. For instance, characters under the effect of a protection from evil or similar spell are immune to the effects of the Ra'th Sidhe to the point that the Ra'th Sidhe are invisible to them. If the protected individual attempts to attack a Ra'th Sidhe however, this immunity vanishes and the Ra'th Sidhe becomes visible to the attacker.

## New Component

### Hag's Teeth

Hag's teeth are the actual teeth jerked from the stubbly jaw of any of the various hag races. The average hag only has 1d6 teeth in its filthy mouth. These teeth are valued by wizards, illusionists, and clerics of many faiths due to the strength that they add to the casting of common and rare spells, or their use in the creation of potions or magic items using these spells. Hag's teeth affect the following spells. Caster level for the following spells is increased by one level per tooth used:

- Animate dead
- Bestow curse
- Control weather
- Dream
- Forcecage
- Mind blank
- Mirage arcane
- Polymorph (any)
- Veil
- Vision

Annis Teeth sell for 100 gp/Tooth

In addition, Annis Teeth increase the caster level of the following spells:

- Change self
- Fog cloud

Green Hag Teeth sell for 250 gp/Tooth

Green Hag teeth also increase the caster level of the following spells:

- Audible glamour
- Dancing Lights
- Invisibility
- Pass without trace
- Change self
- Speak with monsters
- Water breathing

Night Hag Teeth sell for 500 gp/Tooth

Night Hag Teeth increase the caster level of the following spells:

- Magic missile (increased to 1d8 damage per missile)
- Ray of enfeeblement
- Etherealness
- Know Alignment
- Polymorph Self
- Sleep
- Gate

## Izhadashae

Izhadashae is a Green Hag who dwells within the Flybite Fens to the southwest of Dro Mandras. Sister of Rellatina of the Witch Moors, like all of her kind she is a devotee of the Jokashka Queen of Night.

Izhadashae recently relocated to the Flybite Fens to research the ancient magic of the Slithar folk who once dwelt in the swamp in ages before Lake Veyona Drank swallowed their kingdom. Allegedly, ancient outposts and perhaps a lost city of their civilization lay sunken beneath the Fens, though little proof save an occasional overgrown ruin is proven.

Izhadashae recently lost her covey to a band of adventurers whose mutilated corpses now serve as zombies guarding the marshland around her hovel. Izhadashae's only living company is her crow familiar Merrill. Izhadashae is always on the lookout for new magic items, spells, and spellbooks. She has acquired quite the collection of spell books from various apprentices who wander through the Fly Bite looking for Slithar relics.

**Izhadashae the Green Hag** (This chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 9d8, HP 50(55) and AC 22. Her primary attributes are physical and mental. She attacks with two claws for 1d4+4 damage or her enchanted razor for 1d6+6 points of damage. Her special attacks are spell like abilities, weakness, mimicry, and camouflage. In addition to her hag powers, she casts spells from both the druid and wizard spell list as a 5<sup>th</sup> level caster, increasing her XP value to 2000+9. She carries a wand of lightning with 10 charges, her +2 razor "Gut Slitter," 2 scrolls of *animate dead*, 2 potions of *cure light wounds*. Her typically memorized spells are as follows. Oth—Detect Poison, Know Direction, Detect Magic, Open/Close. 1<sup>st</sup>—Alarm, Entangle, Magic Missile, Shield, Sleep. 2<sup>nd</sup>—Cure Light Wounds, Heat Metal, Mirror Image. 3<sup>rd</sup>—Call Lightning, Fireball.)

**Merrill the Fiendish Crow** (This Chaotic Evil creature's vital stats are HD 2d4, HP 5 and AC 15. Merrill has the same saves as Izhadashae.)



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# The Angry Gamer

by Some Angry Troll Dude



## THE GAME YOU HATE TO LOVE

**O**h my sweet lord, the arguments are still going on! The game has been out for years now and we are still having the same argument. The ranger should have been a dexterity based class and not a strength based class. His abilities are all wisdom and dexterity based, but his required prime is strength. All you have to do is mention the ranger prime at the game table, the breakfast table, or any table and it gets Todd and Mark fired up. Heck, you could mention it at King Arthur's table even while Morgana Le Fe was cursing the King and his trollop of a wife and that greatest of rogues Sir Lancelot and mention ranger and Todd and Mark would come unglued. (*The thoughts of this Troll on whither the lovely Queen Guinevere is a trollop or not, are not the thoughts of the current Managing Editor.*)

It boils down to two basic arguments.

One put forward by Mac and Steve, is that the ranger is a warrior-based class, more akin to Aragorn in the appendixes than Aragorn in the books. There he's a hero of renown, whose skills in the wild are secondary to his skills as a warrior born leader. When he does use his wilderness skills its more like the Army Special Forces who infiltrate the battle field, hunts the enemy out and destroys them! Add to this, that Steve hated the half-elven ranger in AD&D as the perfect example of a munchkin class...he gets all the benefits of being an elf, with no real limitations...unless you use that silly max level chart which no one ever did except for that one guy in Racine Wisconsin...er, munchkin class that everyone played because it was a steal!

The other side of the argument, the wrong side of course, wants the ranger to be some kind of sneaky forest dude, more like Gump from the movie Legend. He's a bit light in the shoes, can walk on snow or such, but really spends his time sneaking around, avoiding battle and calling out to the trusty fighter to save him...er, I mean to do his battles for him, wait, not do his battles for him, but keep him safe, cozy and warm. Something like a country squire, and I exaggerate of course. They envision the ranger to be something of a field operative, a master of the wilderness who uses his skills to gather information, launch hit and run raids and so on. Of course they say that the prime being strength negates most of their abilities, which require dexterity or wisdom.

They have a point there. But the counter argument is that the human can get those with this other two attribute slots and elf and half elf have most of those abilities already. Only the half orc ranger is cut really short by these rules. But who the heck would ever believe a half orc ranger would range anything. He would have to have a name like Stark.\*

However, it's not the tired old arguments that get thrown around by the four stooges, it's the fact that everyone still gets all worked up over it. For heaven's sake the game has been out for years now, thousands of people are playing it and doing just fine!

Last time it was mentioned was about two weeks ago, something came up on the prime check for wisdom and Todd rolled and failed.

Steve asked, "It's not a prime?" He didn't do this to get Todd's goat, he did this because he's genuinely an idiot. He can't remember anything. We go to the movies every Sunday night and nine out of ten times he can't remember what we were watching on the drive home. It has to be exceptionally funny like Dodge Ball or exceptionally violent like Taken to even leave an impression, and even then, it's only fleeting moments and images. So this rule that is four years old and Todd's character that he's been playing for over a year hasn't quite resonated in his tiny monkey brain! (On a side note, he has an amazing memory for people's orders. He almost never forgets them and can find them in all the confusion, remember people's names and usually what they ordered.)

Moreover, of course, it's not a prime because Todd is a demi-human and only gets two, one has to be strength, the other he chose to be dexterity. "No. It's not. Don't you know the ranger is punked out?"

It's like what I imagine a flash flood to be like. Suddenly Todd's face drops and his whole frame settles into a brace, as if he's taking on some large load of bricks. Steve rears back with his mocking laughter, as if to say, "off with your heads." Mark leans far back, scratches that indomitable belly of his, and snorts his derisive laugh. Mac's eyes flash and he leans ever so slightly forward, bracing for the argument to come. And they are off! (As an aside, Chris couldn't give a crap at all and usually just fades out, thinking about the cool waters or warm summer breezes!)

However, this discussion always results in genuine anger. These four idiots go round and round for several hours. They eat meals during the argument, drink sodas, make popcorn, and keep on arguing. They yell a lot, well, mostly Steve and Todd yell a lot and really loudly. Someone will wander back to the bathroom and you can hear them shouting some reply. Of course it ends in little reasoned comments. Mac and Mark eventually grow bored but Todd and Steve never do. They always square off and somehow, eventually just start making fun of each other, their heritages, and physical traits and so on. Then of course there's no stopping them. It's like watching two old water buffaloes bash horns, or better yet, two old Trolls. They are too stupid to know that they aren't convincing anyone of anything, but rather just bludgeoning each other, slowly sinking down into a gelatinous morass of idiotic banter, and bone-headedness.

Though it is fun to watch.

P.S. Of course arguing with Steve is like arguing with a brick wall. I saw some fellow really go at him about including the walrus in the Players Handbook equipment list. How he could have found something more useful to put in that space. Steve looked at him and said without blinking, nor cracking a smile or in anyway indicating that he wasn't completely right, "There is nothing more useful than a walrus!"

*\*Stark is Todd's half orc ranger in Steve's current Darkenfold campaign.*

# MONSTERS OF AIHRDE

BY STEPHEN CHENAULT

*The world of Aihilde spins upon an earth-like axis of ancient civilizations where good and evil have struggled for countless years. It is a world bearing the markings of its past; where ancient evils slumber, stained with the power of eldritch wizardry; where gods dwell in bejeweled halls of wonderment, worshiped by men and women of all creeds; where dragons live in great dens of heaped treasure; where the new stands upon the ruins of the old in beds of ancient glory. Here, kingdoms have risen and fallen, ground to dust by war, famine, plague or time. Aihilde is a world reborn, and in the After Winter Dark heroes tread in iron, shod boots and wizards lean on crooked staffs to plunder the buried wealth and power of the ages. Here, the eternal struggle goes on, age after age, for Aihilde is a world of adventure, of undaunted heroes, untainted by the decadent philosophies of those meek who suffer in the shadows of lesser men. For here, the stone columns of history are wiped clean, awaiting the bold to carve their mark and gain entry to the halls of immortality.*



## **HLOBANE ORC: UKJANU LET, KEEPER OF THE BONE CRUSHER**

**NO. APPEARING:** 1

**SIZE:** Medium

**HD:**4(d8)

**MOVE:** 30 ft

**AC:** 16

**ATTACKS:** By Weapon

**SPECIAL:** Twilight Vision, Light Sensitivity

**SAVES:** P

**INT:** Average

**ALIGNMENT:** Lawful Evil

**TYPE:** Humanoid

**TREASURE:** 2

**XP:** 90 +3 (I, II)

The UkJanu Let, the Keeper of the Bone Crusher, is a unique orc amongst orcs. Their appointed task is singularly unique amongst the orc kindreds for they are set to watch the Neurog Let, the Bone Crushers. The UkJanu shave their bodies to make themselves seem more palatable to their maddened charges. They wear tattoos of a religious bent as men wear clothes. But much of this they hide as they love to adorn themselves in iron. A fitted breastplate, leg and arm greaves leave only their forearms and thighs exposed. They always wear a heavy helm, often shaped to mimic a crow's bill. They carry any assortment of weapons, but prefer cleaving weapons such as the glaive, pole axe or bearded axe.

It is a sought after position to be appointed an UkJanu Let for once tasked as a Keeper, the orc is relieved of all other tasks. Only those possessed of keen intelligence, guile and strength are chosen. Once chosen they are given a charge, usually one fresh from the Den Mother's hold and they are set the task of bonding with the Neurog Let. Only the UkJanu are allowed to speak with their charge. Through a series of elaborate rituals they bind the Neurog Let to them and a true empathy develops. The two are inseparable ever after.

A great iron ball binds the Neurog Let; this ball is opened upon a command word given by the UkJanu. Once spoken the ball opens, releasing the chains that hold the Bone Crusher.

If a Bone Crusher is killed the UkJanu are often driven mad with rage and grief and attack whatever killed their charge.

**Combat:** The UkJanu possess no particular battle skills that stand them above and beyond their fellow tribesmen. They do not engage in combat so long as their charge is alive. They rush to its aid only if they see it being killed; otherwise, they remain near the iron ball ready to call back their charge whenever they can. If pressed they attack with the lust that any of their breed possess.

### **The UkJanu In Aihilde**

UkJanu is a rank more than a breed. Orcs vie for the post for a variety of reasons, but the honor-hungry Hlobane, of which the UkJanu come, are usually after the power that the post commands. The UkJanu are given a wide berth by all in the Hlobane Tribe but for the Tribal Council. They are given a great share of any treasure, well fed and given plenty to sate their thirst upon. Keeping the UkJanu well supplied and happy is an honor for more common Hlobane and for this reason they are often found in the best of circumstances.

They are found wherever Bone Crusher orcs are found and certainly with the Hlobane tribes in and around the Red Hills.

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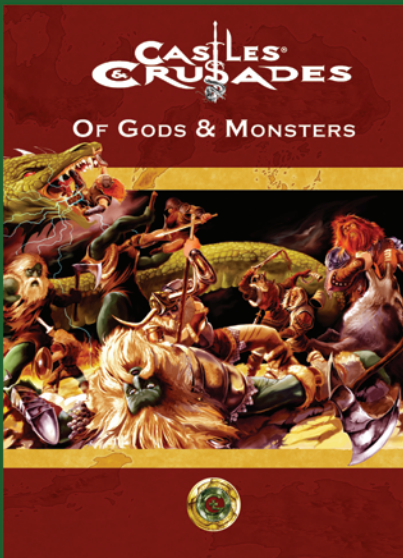
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