

THE CRUSADER™

The Journal of the Intrepid Adventurer

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THE MANAGING
EDITOR

BY JAMES M. WARD

CRITICAL TO
SUCCESS

BY STEPHEN CHENAULT

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LIBRIUM

BY CASEY CHRISTOFFERSON

THE ANGRY
GAMER

BY A TROLL

GAME REVIEW:
SPECTROMANCER

BY JAMES M. WARD

TALES OF
THE RINGS OF
BRASS

BY STEPHEN CHENAULT

OF GODS AND
MONSTERS

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MONSTERS
OF AIHRDE

BY STEPHEN CHENAULT

*LOTS O'
TROLLS
INSIDE!*

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CONTENTS

- 2 NOTES FROM THE MANAGING EDITOR:
April Fool's Issue
• by James M. Ward
- 3 ALEA IACTA EST: Critical to Success
• by Stephen Chenault
- 6 DRAGON GRUMBLES • by Tim Kask
- 8 TYMAN'S TAUNTING TOWER • by Christina Stiles
- 11 MOVALLO, THE APRIL FOOL
• by Casey Christofferson
- 13 CONVENTION BLOG: • by Stephen Chenault
- 15 THE BLACK LIBRIUM: • by Casey Christofferson
- 18 TROLL LORD FREEBIES • by The Trolls
- 20 THE ANGRY GAMER: • by Some Angry Troll Dude
- 21 GAME REVIEW: Spectromancer • by James M. Ward
- 23 OF GODS AND MONSTERS • by James M. Ward
- 32 THE AIHRDIAN CHRONICLES: The 14th
Narrative of the Lay of the Lothian Princes
• by Stephen Chenault
- 35 MONSTERS OF AIHRDE: Hlobane Orc
• by Stephen Chenault

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.

April Fool's Issue

Scotty on Star Trek has a great line in one of the shows. I think it was the Klingons that were trying to trick the Enterprise into following up on a fake distress call. It was the second time the Klingons had tried this trick. Our hero Scotty said, "Fool me once shame on you. Fool me twice shame on me." That little speech just struck in my mind as I write this and deal with the concept of April Fools.

I have to admit I don't like getting April Fooled. My family also has an ugly history with April Fools. I can remember once when my sons were very young. My wife was talking to her mother and just for fun said that both of the boys were getting Chicken Pox. She laughed at her mother's concern. The next day they broke out in nasty pox and their temperatures rose to alarming heights. On another occasion I joked with my parents that Janean was pregnant and laughed screaming, "April Fools!" Naturally, my third son was on his way at a time when we really couldn't afford the new baby.

There are three or four other instances like that, forcing my family and I to really avoid doing April Fools jokes on our family and friends. Now, that's not going to stop me from encouraging my CRUSADER authors to do April Fools jokes in the magazine. As I write this column in early March, I refuse to worry about the effects of the jokes until the end of April.

The publisher and I still want you all to subscribe to the magazine. The more subscribers we can get the better the magazine will become. Also, feel free to send comments on the magazine onto the Troll Lord web site. Steve and I look at the forum pages almost every day. We respond quickly to reasonable requests, just look at the center of the magazine if you don't believe me.

I thought I would take the time to ask for more fans to consider turning in articles for the magazine. I can always use more good pieces. We don't pay, but it is a good way to get published and that looks good on your resume. Here is what we are and aren't looking for:

CRUSADER ADS – We are looking for companies and hobby stores to start advertising in our magazine. Such ads help to pay for printing costs. Now that we come out on a regular basis and our readership is growing, the magazine can become a useful tool for advertisers. This May and June I'm going to do a letter campaign to push for ads. If you fans could push your favorite store to place an ad, that would be greatly appreciated.

CRUSADER – 800 words a page, a quarter-page illustration takes up 200-words, 2-3 page articles are best, but I will look at larger pieces. I don't want two or three piece articles, as I don't think it's fair to our current readership. Run your article through a grammar checker. Send them with a heading of 'CRUSADER Article' to me at sirjmw@aol.com.

CRUSADER ARTICLES – I do want articles that help the player or the Castle Keeper play C&C. Simple adventures for specific levels are good. Articles on attracting new players into your game and articles on keeping a campaign interesting are needed. If you make it interesting, I have no problem printing what is and isn't working in your C&C campaign game. I do not want the following: new creatures, fiction, game reviews, and book reviews.

CRUSADER PLANS FOR THE FUTURE – The magazine is 36-pages now. It's headed for 40 and then 48 pages as soon as I can manage it. I would really like the magazine to come out the first week in every month, but I haven't been able to make that happen as yet. I would like the magazine to be useful and entertaining at the same time. Issue fifteen was a large stride in that direction, but I want that excellence that everyone commented on and enjoyed to become the norm in the pages of the magazine.

That's no April Fool.

James M. Ward
Managing Editor
CRUSADER



ALEA IACTA EST



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

Critical To Success

We charged the bridge as soon as the gig was up. We probably did this a little too soon, the ruse might have lasted longer but Chris was thirsty for battle, and frankly I was too. Gerhard (my fighter) barreled forward with Conner (Mac's Bard) right next to me. Volchek the Dwarf (Mark) started shooting arrows at the men on the tower and Tanner (Chris) began running forward too... of course Tanner is a hunchback with no discernible skills, who has a mangled leg, a cinched back and one arm 112 inches shorter than the other. Gerhard tossed aside his shield in the charge forward and pulled his crowbill and tulwar, two favorite weapons of his. He sprang upon the Captain of the Bridge Guard with mayhem in his eyes.

We were attempting some new rules for the S&S game and Davis was running combat points and rehashing an old critical hit table. The combat points are meant to stack. I had two on my character and I could use them for damage, attack or defense. However, if I used them on attack it negated my Base to Hit. It was a bit much of the whirligig of math that can be game mechanics, especially for the fast free-flowing battles we ran at the table. Truthfully, we were meshing the two systems, which isn't fair to the mechanic as the experimental S&S combat points are not meant to be played with the Base to Hit for C&C.

Gerhard missed but fended off the Captain's blows, more guards spilled out into the night and a general battle erupted. Conner cut down two in short order while Tanner disengaged and fell back to gather burning pitch and light the bridge on fire. Volchek continued shooting. A fifth character, Fleur, found herself trapped on the far side of the river, unable to aid anyone as she had no weapons or armor, but she tried to occupy the men at arms over there. The general melee continued for several rounds, many misses and few hits later and we took the first part of the tower bridge by brute force. Several more men at arms were gathering on the far side of the bridge tower, these better armed than the sleep sodden fools we had killed or scattered. They had several pole arms. Conner had already slain

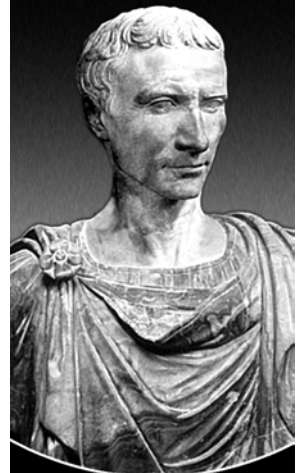
three or so and Volchek one or two. Gerhard was having a bad day but did manage to push the Captain into the tower.

My paper quickly became a mess of calculations as I tried to figure out what to do with Combat points without loosing BtH, and with two hand attacks that use my dex bonus. It was a mess over there and I kept forgetting to add things. I should have gone Steve Old School (this doesn't really mean that you play a 1970s style D&D game that originated in the Moldvay boxed set with the 4th page from the pink box basic set superimposed on the 11th page of the rule book, that's Librarian School. Old School is really just gaming, killing and getting killed and laughing the whole time). I should have tossed the two-handed attacks, gone one handed, and hacked at whoever I could get closest to but with a +4 to hit and damage...

Conner was creating a slaughter fest, dropping about five guardsmen at this point. After driving the Captain into the tower, Gerhard followed and attacked one of the guardsmen in the fore. Volchek continued with some suppressive fire at the top of the tower. Tanner hurled the pitch about, washing the bridge in mess. Conner leaped forward, bypassing one man-at-arms so that Gerhard could close with him. Hurling forward, the warrior slipped in the attack and lost initiative. The halberd swung true to form...

"Natural 20." Davis looked at the dice with glee, tired no doubt of days of taunting from me about how Gerhard was unstoppable. The previous week I had scored a natural 20 on a fleeing lycanthrope, shooting it in the brain pan and killing it instantly. He laughed as he bent the screen back to show me the dice roll. I gave my normal Homer response: "DOH!" We were both pretty confident I would survive. I had just made 2nd level and had rolled a 10 for hit points giving me 19. But under these rules we were testing Davis rolled another 20-sider. There is a sliding scale but a second natural 20 causes quadruple damage. That is precisely what I did last week to the werewolf. We were both stunned when the die came up 20. My already wounded character took 32 points of damage.

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

Moving forward toward the man-at-arms, you slide a little. The halberd cuts a wide arc, over Conner's head down into your forearm. The razor sharp blade cuts through flesh and bone, severing the arm just below the elbow, your tulwar arcing a crazy slash as both tumble through the air. But the halberd continues on, unabated, slicing into your neck and separating your head from your torso. With a thud...

The character died obviously. He was a good character and had cut a path through every game we'd played, hardly missing a swing. However, a critical hit is a critical hit. Of course, only Mac's character, Conner, reacted in rage, slaying guardsmen in vengeance, the rest of my worthless friends didn't miss a beat skipping along to the music of the valkeries... just wait until I'm back behind those screens!

I'm not a hundred percent certain what all of Davis' critical hit charges entail. It has several variables, but basically calls for anyone who rolls a natural 20 to roll a second time. The second roll determines the amount of extra damage that you take, starting with none on the low end of the scale, and ending at quadruple damage at high numbers. It's a fairly even chart I think, that is balanced. Balanced as a critical hit chart can be. Critical hits are always weighted against the players, assuming the opponents outnumber the characters. This almost always happens at low level where the 1HD monsters are generally humanoid and come in larger numbers because they are easy to kill and challenging without being too destructive to the players. They offer endless opportunities for different scenarios. That digression aside this is precisely where critical hits are the most deadly, that is, when they rain down the most often. In the above game the guardsmen outnumbered us, Mac and I in a hand-to-hand melee with 4 guardsmen when I lost my head. The odds are in their favor of rolling a critical hit, simply because they are swinging more times than we are. And the odds are, at that level, that we can't survive very much of a hit.

We intentionally left the critical hits out of the C&C game. They are unbalancing to say the least and too destructive. I had wanted my simple crit hit rules put in the book; if you roll a natural 20 you get maximum damage plus 1d4. Still deadly enough for the characters, but this simple rule is easy to use in a pinch without slowing the game down. Davis was pretty adamant about not including them; I think Mac was too, though I didn't fully understand his reasoning at the time. It seemed to me to take away the wild card chance of doing massive damage or even cutting down two foes at once was to detract from the game. The counter argument ran that once the rule is in stone, we can't easily get rid of it or change it, plus as was pointed out to me on numerous occasions there are plenty of critical hit rules all over the place.

That brings me to the next observation about critical hits. Often it seems as if the critical hit charts are a bit too complicated and involved with rolls on charts that lead to other rolls and determinations of damage inflicted and bodily harm exacted.

Any time you tackle a group of charts in the middle of a battle it's going to hammer the flow of your game, and the combat in particular, to a standstill.

In his very first combat Gerhard burst through an open door to attack a bandit, I hit the bandit on my first swing and rolled a natural 20 on the second. Davis didn't consult any charts... *kick-ing the debris out of the way you slash him through the bowels, he falls to his lap on the ground... "I swing the crowbill down on him."... The spike drives into his skull and buries it to the haft with a grinding crunching noise. "I kick him over; leaving the crowbill buried in his head I leap into the room."*

I've played in games where the opposite is true. *I swing my axe in a broad stroke trying to bury it in his chest ...NATURAL 20! (shouted gleefully from the player) All right, your axe strikes a mighty blow...check the chart and roll a percentile... dice hit the table... 46 percent. Okay, let me see, hmm, you hit him in the right forearm; roll again on chart 4.3a... dice hit the table again... 72 percent! Right, okay, lets see what it does, forty two percent. SEVENTY TWO! Oh Right, 72, sorry. So it looks like you cut off his arm.*

What was a really cool action sequence suddenly devolved as I was catapulted back into my 5th grade math class with Ms. Calloway where I was so bored that when she caught me reading

What was a really cool action sequence suddenly devolved as I was catapulted back into my 5th grade math class with Ms. Calloway...

in class she told me that I had to stay and learn or go out in the hall and read my Tarzan Book! Of course I went out in the hall with my desk and my Tarzan book and started reading... that story didn't end as well as I had hoped it would. The point

being that the critical hit chart reading slowed down the flow of the combat, put everyone in stasis, redirected the players own descriptive text of swinging at the chest, and generally made mince meat of whatever mood the GM had going.

Some critical hit charts are just over the top. Arduin and Gimour comes to mind. That crazy game had some of the coolest charts I've ever seen and we used the heck out of that critical hit chart in there. Those charts were beyond brutal. Characters died fast and hard on that chart, with little forgiveness for low or high rolls! It was a mess and probably accounts for the many many character deaths I had back when it was just Davis and I playing D&D. In those days, referencing the Tarzan book above, I named all my characters after the great apes in Tarzan's ape tribe. Those were simpler times.

Where does that leave us with critical hits? On the one hand you have the excitement that only a massive blow can bring. There is little like it. Probably the best example I've ever seen with how a critical hit can make one of those legendary moments happened way back in '86 or thereabouts. I was running a game of about seven guys, all the usual suspects and some more, to include a fellow named Gary Griffen. The battle was easy, blocked in a canyon the 3rd level characters are attacked by some 60 orcs. The battle was a grueling affair of to and fro, chopping and hacking, bad rolls and good. Helmets crushed, shields shattered, swords dropped or broken, wounds everywhere and the bodies of

orcs mounting up quickly. With every 5–7 orcs that hit the earth a character went down and by the end of it Gary stood alone on a pile of his fallen friends and orcs. He kept on hitting, swinging crazy good and orc after orc went down. Eventually he was hit so many times that he couldn't last long, but from nowhere he rolled that magical critical hit. He maxed out his damage, rolling a 4 on the d4 and I allowed how his axe carved through three orcs at once, winning the day. It was a moment we all remember because everyone was jumping up and down at the table, hoping that the next guy would live to save his fallen character and as it narrowed down to crazy Gary (really, this guy was nuts, we loved him though) everyone was shouting and high-fiving with each thunderous blow.

The other side to that coin is balance. I had a 5th level character in Davis' game once, can't even remember his name. I sure do remember that brain crushing blow I took fighting some ogre and Davis saying: instant, irrevocable death. I never mind getting killed in the game, I rather strive after it actually, but that was a bit numbing. Over a year's worth of games wrapped up in one brutal moment. Of course, that's life on the front line.

So what have we learned from my rambling observations, other than I need a better outline from which to write these columns? We certainly don't want to lose the chance of the sudden turn of the tide with a well-deserved and highly sought after natural 20. It's got to mean something for the moral of the game. The solution is as simple as C&C, use critical hits judiciously and sparingly. They are unbalancing only in as much as the CK lets them be. A good trick I've used many a time when I roll a crit, and I know its going to separate a character from his head, is to obliterate a piece of equipment or magic item instead. It's a simple fix to a complicated call. However, if Davis pulls such shenanigans against me I'd lose respect for him as a CK. I have a long list of dead characters in his game and I'm not finished by a long shot!



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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 9th 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.



The question that I have been asked frequently in the past couple of years since I “resurfaced” goes something like: “What was it like to: a) take over *Strategic Review*?; b) go to work for TSR?; c) start *The Dragon*?; d) be at TSR in those years of unprecedented growth?; e) “all of the above?” (I have taken the liberty to simplify and somewhat codify the most frequent questions, and am paraphrasing for clarity.)

I have previously related how I got to know Gary and all of that, and one of my ramblings ended with the simple statement that I went to work for him. (I’m not sure in which order our Esteemed Editor has printed these; I am writing this before I have seen the latest issue that has my first opus.) I purposely understated that bit.

As I wrote in my short bio in the first *SR* I did, my wonderful wife of 38.5 years, Cheryl, tolerated my gaming mania with grace and forbearance. When the possibility to make a living at it arose, we talked it over and she supported my decision to give it a try. She is an RN, and we knew she could find employment anywhere we moved. So, we packed up our two Siamese cats, all of our earthly belongings and our two-year-old daughter, loaded everything into a U-Haul truck, fastened our VW to the back and installed our cats in it and trekked off to the frozen north from the southern tip of Ill. (I just hate the two-letter abbreviations that the post office uses; I will use the old abbreviations whenever possible.)

We found a house to buy before we moved, and had signed a land contract to get immediate possession; VA loans would come later.

I was excited as could be, and had no idea whatsoever as to what to expect when I got to Wisconsin. We were buying our first house in

Delavan, a lovely little town about 12 miles west of LG. Cheryl had been hired at once by the County hospital in nearby Elkhorn (home now of our Esteemed Editor); we were both filled with eager anticipation and trepidation in nearly equal amounts.

Even though Gary had been completely honest and forthright about our initial physical setup, I’d be lying if I didn’t admit that it was a bit of a letdown, that first morning, to be knocking on the door of a seemingly ordinary house in a seemingly ordinary neighborhood. “Ordinary” took a leave of absence once the door opened.

We later joked about that time, referring to it as our “dark age,” mainly because a good deal of our early endeavors took place in Gary’s basement, which was not the best-lighted environment I have ever worked in. Although I will say that in many ways, it was the most “enlightened” place I worked in.

A lot of what we did in those very early days involved re-selling other peoples’ products, mainly MINIFIGS miniatures. All orders were packed for shipping down there; we collated brown-box sets down there; complex collation was done on Gary’s dining room table. When we had a meeting (Gary, Brian, and I) it would be in his study/office. We did our work “at home”; for Gary that meant upstairs, for Brian at his place and for me at home in a spare bedroom or on the kitchen table. This was an exciting time; we were all true believers in the potential of *D&D*, even though the world at large didn’t know yet what was in store. Gary & Brian had sold out a print run that some thought was foolhardy. I had seen the viral nature of the game’s appeal firsthand in my own college gaming club. (The club still flourishes at Southern Ill. Univ.-Carbondale.

It still uses the same name I concocted for it. I don't know if they still RPG.) We, along with a few others frequently seen around the place, were true believers, fanatics to the core. We just *KNEW* that we were headed for big things at some point; the speed at which we reached that point was NOT predicted, but that's another story.

Gary had made it pretty clear that I would be *his* editor, as well as edit upcoming game products and take over the reins of *Strategic Review*. At this point in time, my writing had been limited to research papers in college and a couple of short nothings for the junior college newspaper that I became Business Manager for and had put on stable financial footing for the first time ever. Aside from that, my "writing" experience was slim; some long letters to Gary that I guess convinced him that I could write made up the bulk of it. Was I a little nervous? No, I was a lot nervous. I had gone over a few sections of the Holy Triptych (1st three books) and Greyhawk with Gary as examples of confusion and less-than-clear writing and explanation, and he had concurred, and rather than tell me to mind my own business, made the first suggestion that I might be the editor he was looking for. We all know how that turned out. I determined to bluff my way through until I got the hang of it. I guess I'm lucky; it turned out to be pretty easy, overall.

My "philosophy of editing" was that stuff should be easy to read, particularly when presenting new material. I know it sounds pretty simple today, but back then, it was pretty radical. Miniatures rules were written for people already familiar with miniatures. Board game rules were a different beast altogether. The two primary publishers had very different approaches. Avalon Hill published "games"; SPI published "simulations." What this basically amounted to was this: AH's products were "fun" and relatively loosely based on the history of the war or battle that they represented; SPI's products were much more detailed and "serious" and involved in the nuts and bolts. Loosely put, AH made games about wars and battles, SPI made games about battles, occasionally campaigns and often about just parts of battles or campaigns. Their styles of rules writing reflected, to some degree, this dichotomy. AH wrote pretty clear rules about the mechanics of gameplay; SPI wrote about the minutiae, as well as the overall mechanics. SPI's rules were incredibly dense and complex in a lot of their early games.

We were faced with writing guidelines (we hated calling them rules back then) for a totally new market: some experienced boardgamers, some experienced miniatures players (the level of experience varied widely within both), and a whole new market of neophytes. To further constrain us, we had to allow for the fact that a great share of the would-be new market was likely to be considerably younger than the average gamer of that time, and therefore not as an accomplished reader as the rest of the potential market.

Writing has come just about as easily to me as talking (I'm Oirish). My personal style of writing can best be classified as "conversational" (what used to be known as "story-telling"). I have always told my students that if they can hold up their end of a conversation, or give a good oral explanation of something, they can write. If they can master the nuances of punctuation and spelling,

they can really write. Writing well comes with practice. Virtually every professor I had in college or grad school commented on how easy my papers were to read, even if they didn't always agree with my assertions or opinions. I have always had an eye for typos—a "natural born" proofreader. (How the nuns inculcated that skill into me is another tale, best told some other time.)

I have told the tale of my first official assignment, *Blackmoor*, on my thread on Dragonsfoot. (<http://www.dragonsfoot.org/forums/viewtopic.php?f=11&t=23223&start=0>)

Without going into mind-numbing details, and not wishing to pick at any old scabs, suffice it to say that it was my baptism under fire. As a teaching/training aid, it was both ridiculous and sublime. It was my first encounter with the problem of continuity; subsequent rules and/or supplements are supposed to build on or add to the existing rules. They are not supposed to contradict or otherwise conflict with existing rules. This is one very delicate process, necessitating careful forethought before plunging ahead. I have a feeling that one of the primary reasons a number of RPGs never did supplements, or at most one "expansion," is this issue of continuity. Some companies, rather than address these issues in a forthright manner, simply take the coward's way out and scrap the old game and come up with a new "edition". It also seems a great way to make a slug of money by exploiting the devotees of the previous "edition." It seems some sorcerers on the seashore certainly felt that way.

The *Blackmoor* project formed my basic principles in editing for other TSR projects as well as *SR* and later *TD* and *LW*. I looked at the "germ" of the articles, the basic premise, or assertion. If the author had a good idea, I ran with it. Lots of times, the article published bore only a superficial resemblance to what had been submitted; I had not *edited* it, I had *rewritten* it. (Although I had ostensibly been the Bus. Mgr. in college, I re-wrote a lot of stuff before publication.)

So it went in those early days when I did not have the luxury of picking and choosing between well-written submissions. For the most part, a core group of writers, most of whom were TSR-affiliated, wrote the stuff I published in *SR* when I took over. It is interesting to note that the first time I did a re-write on one of their pieces and published it, the author told me in passing that he never knew he wrote that well. I took that as high praise; it was still "his" article and I had just polished it and made it better (and a lot easier to understand). The early *TD* days were no different at first, but that's another story.

Next installment, I'll relate how lucky I was in finding articles, writers and artists, and how much dross you had to pick through to find the good stuff. Also, I'll relate my experiences with the then bane of my existence, APA-'zines.

If there is some specific topic you readers would like to see addressed, or specific questions for which you'd like an answer, contact the mag. I'm always glad to talk (ask any of my friends), and like I said earlier, writing is just talking on paper, and offers you less chance of making a fool of yourself.



Tyman's Taunting Tower

By Christina Stiles

A silly side adventure for characters level 5-7.

Setting: Any hilly wilderness area.

*Summary: A magical, teleporting gingerbread tower occupied by taunting creatures and besieged by ogres blocks the characters passage, interrupting their progress on another time-sensitive mission. They must find some way around it to meet their real goal. This encounter should provide humor and irritation to any game. Obviously, access to **teleportation**, **passwall**, and other such spells defeat the fun of this encounter, so characters should not have access to them—or they just don't work near the tower.*

Background

Three days ago, an unusual brown tower magically appeared in front of an ogre family's cave, blocking entrance to their home. Upon encountering it, Zrog, his mate Herva, and their children, Vlok and Greka, attacked the tower with large rocks, but their futile efforts gained them retaliatory attacks from the tower's battlement, where two blue-skinned humanoids (taunters) harassed them with rotten fruit, buckets of dung, and dead animal carcasses. When young Vlok struck one of the humanoids with a rock, the being shot a crossbow bolt into the boy's chest. Thereafter, Vlok keeled over in laughter. Perplexed by her son's reaction to being struck and enraged by the humanoid's assault, Herva charged the tower with her club. When she neared the structure, a large brown creature emerged from the tower's wall (a gingerbread golem) and slammed her senseless. When Zrog went to her aid, an identical creature popped out to stop his charge. The mighty Zrog smashed at it with his club, but the weapon merely bounced off the creature; the thing then slammed into Zrog, pushing him away from the tower. After three more such attempts with the same results, Zrog realized he was overpowered. Instead of attacking, he rushed in and grabbed Herva, and beat a hasty retreat into the nearby woods. The tower creatures did not pursue; instead, they re-merged with the tower wall.

Befuddled Ogres

After two futile days of this, Zrog and his abused, rancid-smelling family members have retreated to the tree line about 40 yards from the tower to lick their wounds. They occasionally throw rocks, but to little avail. The tireless tower creatures continue their taunting, and Zrog paces, smashes things, and growls the whole while.

Ogre Family

Ogres (wounded) × 4 (Their vital stats are HD 4, HP 30, 28, 26, 25, AC 16. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a club for 1d12 points of damage or by hurling rocks for 2d6 points of damage)

Zrog: Zrog is fuming at his inability to beat the tower creatures to a pulp. He is so consumed with defeating the tower and its creatures that he does not care about any approaching characters (he only attacks if he is attacked). In fact, he is curious to see how the characters will fare against the odd structure and its guardians. Zrog may attack the characters if they are badly wounded after defeating the tower, but only if he thinks he has a chance to win.

Herva: After having been beaten back and humiliated time and time again, Herva has been trying to convince her mate to abandon the cave. She believes they can find another just as suitable. In fact, she knows of such a cave inhabited by goblins that she's sure the family can overrun. And right now, she'd love to find something she can dominate and torture—something to ease the pain of this encounter.

Vlok: The young male ogre is stubborn, very much like his father, and he hasn't lost hope that they will yet defeat the tower and slay the tormenting creatures within. When the characters arrive, he is resting and plotting anew. If anything funny befalls the characters in this encounter, he is the first to start belly laughing and joins the taunters in their verbal assault.

Greka: Young Greka is enjoying the free animal meat the humanoids are tossing at her. Occasionally, she rushes the tower (outside of the golems' range) and dares them to throw dead animals at her. When they toss the carcasses at her, she gathers them up and returns to the tree line to feast. She finds the whole situation funny, but she won't say as much to her proud father.

Hey, That Tower is Rot on the Map!

It should be afternoon when the characters encounter the tower and the disgruntled ogre family. Zrog's angry cries and the taunters' silly taunts alert the party to trouble ahead before they spot the tower (tall trees block their view of it). If the characters have a map of the area, they note that this tower is definitely not on it!

Successfully sneaking up on the scene (Move Silently, CL 1) allows the characters to see the previously described scene. The scent of the smelly ogres drifts to them on the wind, too, so describe the smell. The taunters are yelling things like: "Come here you big, smelly creature. I want to taunt you some more. You cowardly maggot of an ogre. You slimy goblin excrement. You are not worthy of my spit." (Note: French accents work best for the taunting—think Monty Python's *The Holy Grail* for flavor). Follow such taunts with catapulted animal carcasses and have some fun with the description!

Tyman's Taunting Tower (New magic item)

Tyman, a wizard famous for his weird sense of humor and love of irritating others, created this teleporting tower. Now, the tower teleports throughout the world, wreaking havoc in the most opportune of places.

The square tower stands 35 feet above the ground and its sides are 15 feet wide. The tower is made from a grainy, brown stone-like substance (magically hardened gingerbread) and has a crenellated battlement (providing cover) and a visible catapult. The tower has no visible windows or doors. Curvy patterns appear on the structure's lower end, rising up to a height of 10 feet from the ground (the gingerbread golems' outlines; there are two such outlines on each side).

Two types of creatures protect the tower (and aggravate those in their range): the taunters, the blue-skinned humanoids on the battlement, and the gingerbread golems in the tower walls (a wisdom check (CL 10) is needed to notice that the pattern on the wall is actually an outline of the golems). The taunters attack with their crossbow and catapult. The gingerbread golems pop out when things come within 20 feet of their wall. If characters play it smart, they may not have to deal with any more than four of these creatures.

The tower's walls (sans gingerbread golems) have 100 hp. When damaged, the tower can repair up to 20 hp per wall per day. Although not visible, the tower has a door hidden behind one of the golems (Wisdom check, CL 8 to notice when the gingerbread golem is away from its post). When the tower appears, the GM should randomly decide which of the tower's eight golems hides the unlocked door.

Breaching the door causes the tower to automatically teleport away within 2d6 rounds. Unfortunately, any PCs within the structure at that time teleport along with it. At its new destination, the tower begins to repair itself and the creatures, if killed, regenerate back to life, too.

The taunters can teleport the tower, as well, by speaking the following tongue-twister: "Tyman totally teases travels to twiddle time today." They generally only move the tower when they become bored or when others best them with their own humorous antics.

Taunters × 2 (These chaotic neutral monstrous humanoids' vital stats are HD5, HP 33, 32, AC 15 (19 with ½ cover), move 30 feet. Their primary attributes are mental. They carry short swords, light crossbows, 20 bolts (and have access to magical ones), and wear chain mail. The taunters can use their taunt ability to disrupt a character's next attack. They always resurrect).

Gingerbread Golems × 1–8 (These neutral constructs' vital statistics are HD6, HP 45 each, AC 22, move 30 feet. Their primary attributes are physical. They have magic immunity and can make ranged vomit attacks that can encase opponents in hardened gingerbread).

Main Floor

If the characters breach the tower's main level, they find a 15-foot by 15-foot room with only a round dais in its center, upon which rests a note and a plate of gingerbread cookies and a number of tumblers of milk for all the characters. The note reads: Congratulations for besting my gingerbread golems, my worthy foes. Feast upon your reward. If the characters eat the cookies,

they receive the benefits of a *cure serious wounds* spell but may wind up with gas for 1d4 hours (constitution save, CL 5). If they drink the milk, they gain the temporary benefit of a +2 bonus to one attribute (roll 1d6 to decide if strength, intelligence, etc) for 1d4 days, but may suffer from hiccoughs 1d4 days, as well (constitution save, CL 5).

Top Floor

The characters can't get to the top floor from the main floor, as there is no entrance from below. Instead, a trap door on the roof allows entrance into this floor, the taunter's living quarters. The room is the same size as the one below, and contains two beds and two chests filled with jester clothing, two large sacks of peanuts (the taunters' favored food), and two skins of water. The taunters have no treasure.

Removing the Tower

Some possible ways the characters can remove the tower include:

- Breaching the secret door causes the tower to teleport away within 2d6 rounds. Of course, the characters might be in it!
- Kill the taunters, and the tower teleports away in 2d6 hours.
- Best the taunters at their own game. (The GM must decide if the PCs' antics warrant such an action. If the GM can't stop laughing at the PCs' actions, then this is a sure sign that the taunters will be willing to leave.) If this happens, the characters do not get the cookies-and-milk reward, but they may gain Tyman's favor (yes, the wizard still lives) when the taunters return to tell him their humorous tale.
- Kill all the gingerbread golems protecting the tower's bottom level and squeeze their way past the tower into the cave.

New Creatures

Gingerbread Golem

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 2–8

SIZE: Large

HD: 6 (d10)

MOVE: 30 ft.

AC: 22

ATTACKS: Slam (3d10)

SPECIAL: Encase, Magic Immunity, Resurrect

SAVES: P

INT: None

ALIGNMENT: Neutral

TYPE: Construct

TREASURE: None

XP: 540 + 6

The gingerbread golems are unique to the tower, and they are controlled by its presence. The tower has charged them to attack anything that comes within twenty feet of them, including small animals, but excluding the taunters.

The process to build a gingerbread golem is expensive (12,000 gp, at least) and complex. It involves the use of *wish*, *polymorph object*, *geas*.

Encase: Twice per day, gingerbread golems can vomit liquid gingerbread on opponents. The liquid can encase creatures of medium size or smaller, and it hardens within the round it engulfs its victim. The golem must successfully hit the target with its regurgitation attack. If a struck victim fails a dexterity save (CL 7), then he is stuck within the mixture, which then hardens around him. Breaking out of the gingerbread requires a strength check (CL 7). If a character fails to break out of the encasement, then he may suffocate, as per the following.

A character who has no air to breathe can hold his breath for 2 rounds per point of Constitution. After this period of time, the character must make a constitution check (CL 2) in order to continue holding his breath. The save must be repeated each round, with the CL increasing by +1 for each previous success.

When the character fails one of these constitution checks, he begins to suffocate. In the first round, he falls unconscious (0 hp). In the following round, he drops to -1 hit points and is dying. In the third round, he suffocates.

Immunity to Magic: Gingerbread golems ignore all spells and spell effects except as follows: *disintegrate* affects the golem as a *slow* spell, and inflicts 1d12 points of damage (physical save negates).

Resurrect: Dead gingerbread golems always return to the tower's walls and rise again.

Taunter

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 2-4

SIZE: Medium

HD: 5

MOVE: 30 ft.

AC: 15

ATTACKS: By Weapon

SPECIAL: Resurrect, Taunt, Tongues, Darkvision 60 ft.

SAVES: M

INT: High

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Neutral

TYPE: Monstrous Humanoid

TREASURE: None

XP: 240 + 5



Taunters appear as blue-skinned, scrawny humanoids. They wear colorful, court jester clothing, complete with pointy-toed shoes and jester hats. As their name implies, they exist to taunt others. If given a well-delivered dose of their own medicine, they may be bested. In which case, they bow to their foes and teleport the tower away. The Castle Keeper must decide if the characters succeed at this. If the CK is laughing his butt off, that's a good sign they are winning. Otherwise, the taunters will fight to their last breath, as death isn't final for them. They always rise again, and their death causes the tower to teleport away in 2d6 hours, taking the golems with it.

While on the battlement, the taunters have access to a small catapult, which they use to fire items from Tyman's chest of endless irritating items.. The chest also creates magical bolts, which the taunters use to fire upon their opponents.

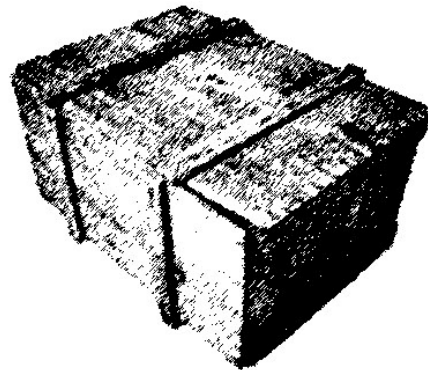
Resurrect: The taunters always rise to taunt another day (rising within 1d4 days), even if their bodies are destroyed. The tower just keeps bringing them back.

Taunt: Those within hearing range of a taunting taunter must make a save (CL 0) to attempt to attack anything or cast a spell. Failing causes the victim to lose his attack for the round out of anger. The golems are immune to this effect.

Tongues: Taunters can speak and understand any language.

Rew Magic Item

Tyman's Chest of Endless Irritating Items



This stone chest is two foot by three foot, and it weighs 165 lbs. It is a part of the tower and cannot be removed. When opened, speaking one of several different command words allows the user to pull forth various items from within, as follows (saves are CL 5):

Command	Items
Morphers	2 bolts of polymorph other
Corn-fusers	2 bolts of confusion Save or wander aimlessly for 1d4 rounds.
Laughs	2 bolts of hideous laughter Save or fall to the ground in laughter for 1d4 rounds. Laughing individuals suffer a -6 penalty to AC and a -6 modifier to attacks.
Dead'uns	2 dead animal caracasses (usually cats, fish, squirrels, rats, etc.) Be Creative! This is the taunters' favorite.
Dung-ditties	2 buckets of cow dung. Another taunter favorite.



MOVALLO, THE APRIL FOOL

BY CASEY CHRISTOFFERSON

It is written by the ancient sages that the most untrustworthy and venomous in his spites and jibes is Movallo. Movallo is called by a variety of names such as the Misfortune's Fool, The Trixter of Hell, the Clown of Chaos, and Ribald of the Nether. It is Movallo who is both feared and beloved of his fiend-amongst their courts in Hell. To him is to revel in the absurdity of reality, and the inconsequence of mortal life in the face of a universe destined for the ultimate entropy. Where the Seven Princes of Hell plot their plots and make their schemes, working their deals with the gods, it is Movallo who provides a mortal-like face to the bestial, unhinged destructive fury of the Four.

Movallo the Trixter serves as jester, confidant, accomplice, and instigator of the Four and Seven, possessing a space equal to but at times subservient to their power. It is possible that he is actually the most powerful of them all and simply plays the others against one another for his own purposes and diabolical perversions. What is known is that he is at home amongst the courts of the Four Harbingers of Destruction and Seven Princes of Hell who rule those spaces of Hell and the Nether that the gods themselves dare not claim.

Movallo is always depicted as a crimson-lipped clown dressed in jester's motley. He enjoys travels to the mortal realms where he convinces the mighty to fail, tricks the good to misdeeds. Most despicably, he plies upon the greed and sorrow of the weak, often with artificially tasty sandwiches and small but amazingly cheap toys.

Like other of the Archfiends, Movallo himself cannot grant clerical spells directly, but rather grants them via proxy by means of sacrificial rites performed through acts of mayhem and sacrifices of blood and sin. To achieve this, Movallo frequently allies himself with Ataxus, God of Chaos and Jokashka, Queen of the Dark Fey, offering his nefarious services to their terrestrial ambitions for a price.

Conversely, Movallo is seldom welcome in the realms of Khazarn, as his free spirit goes against the notion of absolute slavery, preferring instead the deviant trappings of the unconscious slave who feels not his chains. Gathaak is brutish but useful, and Soagoth's chaos is too alien even for Movallo's mad whimsy to comprehend. It goes without saying that the Lords of Light and good have much to fear from the perversions and disarray that Movallo's influence breeds in the world.

MOVALLO THE TRIXTER, PRINCE OF JESTERS OF THE NETHER REALMS

INFERNAL SYMBOLS: Deck of Cards, Clown Marionette

UNHOLY PROVINCE: Evil, Chance, Madness, Anarchy

CEREMONY: Followers put on clown face and commit anarchic acts of wanton murder and mayhem with little rhyme or reason behind their activities.

TABOO: Worshippers of Movallo may follow no law set by mortals, nor follow any desire save their own lusts.

GRANTED ABILITIES: After level three, and once for every three levels after, a true believer in Movallo may make one reroll of any roll they wish. This may be an Attack roll, a Siege Check, or Saving Throw.

MANIFESTATION

Like the Gods, Arch Fiends are occasionally capable of manifesting themselves into the mortal realms from their domains in the Abyssal Nether, or the Rings of Hell. On the mortal realms, Fiends are in fact more powerful than the Avatars of Deities due to the relative closeness of Hell and the Abyssal Nether to material reality. It as the sages have always said, Hell could be at your very doorstep or right around the corner, and Heaven isn't too far away.

On the material planes, a typical Fiendish manifestation could be as weak as the common goblin, or as powerful as the mightiest dragon depending on Fiendish rank and infernal power. Alternately, deity avatars are typically



represented as exemplars of a race or class with artifact quality equipment. This fact is almost always reversed in the higher and lower planes of existence where a deity alone is as powerful as any three fiendish princes, with perhaps the exception being Malhater himself.

MOVALLO'S MANIFESTATION

SIZE: Special

HD: 26; 208 HP average.

MOVE: 40 ft.

AC: 28

ATTACKS: (2) Slams 7d6+Special

SPECIAL: Fiendish Powers and Vulnerabilities, Spell-Like Abilities

SAVES: M, P

INT: Genius

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Evil

TYPE: Arch Fiend

TREASURE: Special

XP: Special

Movallo always appears as thin ashen faced clown dressed in putrid motley. If appearing to a clan of dwarves he appears as a dwarf. If appearing to a band of goblins he appears as a clown faced goblin. Like other fiends, he may range in size from as small as a kobold to as large as a titan depending on his guise and whim. Regardless of size, his actual mass remains the same, and he deals a set amount of damage when using physical attacks.

Combat: Movallo prefers to use spell like abilities and treachery but is not opposed to the use of overt violence to further his ends and shock his prey. In melee Movallo hammers his foes with his jester's stick, called Mirth. Foes struck with the stick are affected as if by a *confusion* spell cast by a 20th level illusionist unless a successful (CL 26) Charisma save is made.

Spell Like Abilities: Movallo Casts clerical spells as a 15th level cleric. He may choose 4 cleric spells each of levels 1st–5th and 2 spells each of levels 6th–8th. He also casts Illusionist spells as a 20th level Illusionist and may choose 4 spells each of levels 1st–5th and 3 spells each of levels 6th–9th.

In addition, he may use any of the following powers as 26th level casters.

Plane Shift 1/day: Abyssal Nether, Rings of Hell, Mortal Realms only. *Teleport Without Error* (Current Plane Only) at will. *Telekinesis* (2000 lbs). *Protection from Good*, *True Seeing*, *Confusion*, *Suggestion*, at will.

FIENDISH POWERS

As a fiend, Movallo's manifestation is immune to fire (magical and natural). Fiends also take half damage from cold, electricity, and acid. Chaotic evil fiends take 2d6 points of damage with a direct hit from holy water or 1d6 points of damage per round when directly touched by a lawful good holy symbol. As other

planar beings, they cannot cross into a magic circle of protection from evil unless its creator breaks the circle.

Summon Greater Monster (Fiend) 1/day: Most fiends have the ability to summon other fiends to their aid based on their hit dice. A summoned fiend may not however summon another fiend to its aid! For that, the fiend must have a direct conduit to the world in which they are attempting to summon, such as a permanent *gate* spell. Movallo summons other fiends as a 26th level caster. He has a 1% chance of summoning one of the Four and Seven to his bidding, though even Movallo would be loath to call on such powerful aid.

TREASURE

MIRTH

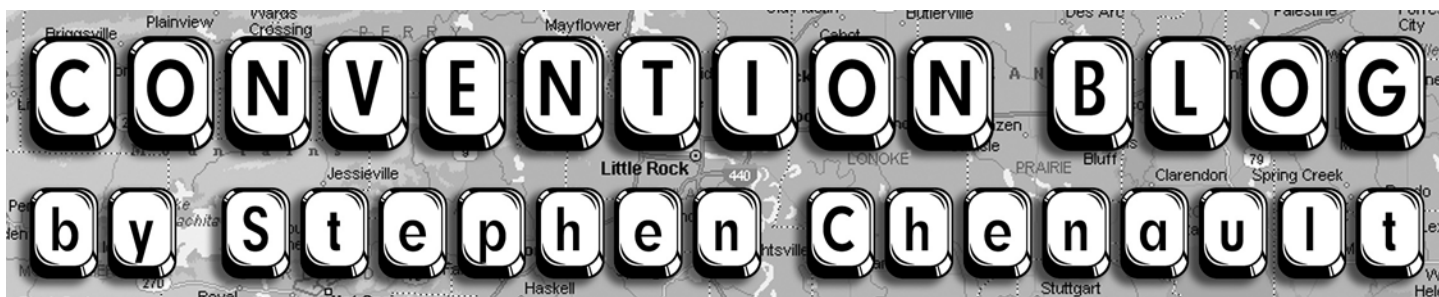
Mirth is the artifact weapon of Movallo. In the hands of anyone other than Movallo, the weapon appears as a clown faced cast iron mace weighing 10 lbs. The item is +4 weapon in the hands of a mortal and deals 2d6+4 points of damage on a successful hit. Foes struck with this weapon are forced to make a Wisdom save vs. confusion with a challenge level equal to the level of the bearer. Victims who fail are confused as if by the spell for a duration of 1 round per HD or level of the attacker.

The item refuses to leave the grasp of any good being and forces a Charisma save (Challenge Level 10) upon contact. Those who fail are fully infatuated with the weapon and refuse to let it from their sight. They immediately assume that truth is lies, that right is wrong, and that good is evil which must be smote. Needless to say, Movallo enjoys casting Mirth into the mortal realms to see what chaos it causes. Movallo may summon Mirth to his side at any time, no matter where or what plane it is located on, unless some complex protections and divine interventions separate him from his beloved Jester's Stick. In Movallo's hands, the stick deals 7d6 points of damage, though its confusion effect remains.

DECK OF MANY THINGS

Movallo is typically in possessions of one of these cursed decks. Movallo enjoys finding weary travelers and tempting them with the treasures of the deck. Movallo's deck has double the number of ill-fated draws than would be found in a typical deck.





Dundracon 33, 2009

Adventures on the West Coast

Dundracon is held out on the West Coast of these great United States. It's in San Ramone I believe, near or in the bay area of San Francisco. I've been to this show a number of times in the past, though I had missed last year. It's always been a good show for us, not stellar, but good and solid. Finding C&C material on the west coast is not as easy as it is in the Great Plains and on east. I enjoy the show as it's a good time to visit with Aldo Ghiozzi of Impressions Advertising and Marketing and Joe Goodman of Goodman Games both of whom attend the show.

Flying into San Francisco/Oakland is strange. At this time of year it seems to be a GIANT golf course. The hills and valleys are covered in this lush, picture perfect green grass. Cows are wandering about in vales and the like. A few burbs here and there and then suddenly water, turning into marshland and with a jolt and dip you land at Oakland. It seems so peaceful and serene, like Australia or some such. But that quickly changes.

When you disembark the plane you are swallowed by a huge crowd of people all jammed into the airport and moving with the speed and purpose that only people in large cities can achieve (its much slower in the more rural states). The box of people I'm wandering through is quite the shock to my tired old system.

Its a great place though, California, and though the state is going through a couple of bumps right now, the people are always friendly if not overly so and the crazy place is beautiful. Mike "Cotton Mouth" Ekart, once of Citizen Games fame, met me in baggage claim and we shouldered my air port carted racks and headed off to his car. We had a delightful car ride in which Mike and I caught up after several years of not seeing each other. He's a great guy and I remember him fondly from the crazy days of d20 when he ran one of the premier second tier companies.

Once at the show I hooked up with Joe and Aldo and immediately set up the booth. It's always an easy affair on these far away trips as I have limited space, limited racks, and limited product. This was our first official show without any of Gary Gygax's material, or any d20 material. It was all Castles & Crusades.

I won't bore you with countless babble about sales data. The con was fair to middling sales wise. I did what I expected us to do, being short of two of our major lines. I was looking at a drop in about 40% and that almost exactly where I was from previous years. One customer accounted for a great deal of those sales as he bought everything in the line. It remains a hard pitch, pulling folks off their D&D habit!

It was good to hook up with Chris Rutowsky of Bash fame (we are looking at doing a boxed set of this super hero game soon) and always with Luke Gygax who came up for a day of gaming. He ran us through the Tomb of Horrors, AD&D style. Wouldn't you know it we ran it until 1:30 am or thereabouts and collapsed in exhaustion unable to finish it. Next time!

I also did two podcasts here one with Ogre Cave. This is a staple now at Dundra Con in which Joe and I do a semi-silly cast with some product information in it. However, the second one was much more engaging; 2d6 Feet in a Random direction by Brian Isokoff. It was a great little discussion that ran for about 45 minutes and we touched on all manner of things, great and small, concerning TLG.

The highlight of the show however came on Monday (Dundracon runs through George Washington Day... I refuse to call it President's Day, Lincoln did some great things, but Washington is Our Founding Father).

I was sitting at the booth, hum drumming the morning away when a fella came up and asked if I had anything to do with the company and C&C in particular. I said, "A little. I run the company and helped design/write the game." He said, "Great! I wanted to talk to someone about it." I'm going to paraphrase, but he went on to tell me that he had bought the books yesterday from a dark haired guy (I thought, "Luke! Good job Luke!"). Then he continued with how he read it over and was very disappointed, it looked like a 3.5 knock off. ("Dirn it Luke! Curse you for selling this guy the books!"). He tossed it in his bag. I was waiting for the other shoe to drop and listen to the fellow have at the game for awhile longer.

I was surprised.

He goes on to relate how at 1 a.m. the previous night he and his buds had nothing to play. The con was a loss because the several games he signed up for hadn't panned out. So they pulled these C&C books out and decided to give them a whirl. Then he hesitated, looking at me as if for some type of reaction. I wasn't sure where he was going with this, but was preparing myself for the worst.

His face suddenly lightened up, "This game is Awesome! We started playing on the table, using the table cloth for our character sheets, no screens, no nothing but some dice, hotel pencils, and the PH and MT." He said it was fast and fun and let him and the players really stretch their RP muscles. He was very excited and jumped into the spirit of the game immediately. We talked about

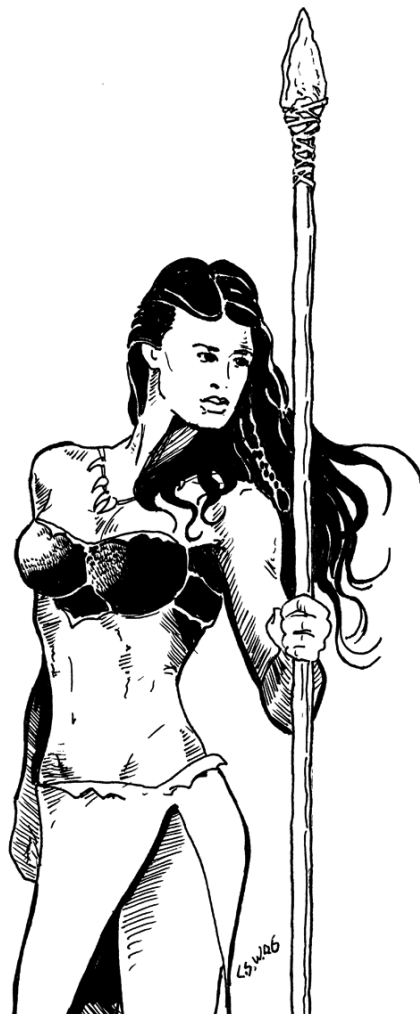
the game, its concept, and all manner of stuff for some time and he left rather happy after buying a few Haunted Highland modules, and A1 and A2.

It was a great encounter and jazzed me up to no end. On top of a slow weekend this was the perfect ending. He showed me the table where the paper table cloth was, with the characters scribbled out on it. I asked if he minded if I took it and he didn't care so I did. I have it here and am going to get some photos up shortly!

It was a great encounter. The dude's name was Curt something or the other, I didn't catch the last name. I tip my hat to him! Thanks for playing the game Bare Knuckle Style.

2009 CONVENTION APPEARANCES:

- 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/>
- July 10–12, **Troll Con VII**, Little Rock, AR
<http://www.trollord.com/cons/trollcon.html>
- August 13–16, **Gen Con**, Indianapolis, IN
<http://gencon.com/2009/indy/default.aspx>



**Be a part of Gaming History
Join us this July, in Little Rock, Arkansas**

*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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**TROLL CON VII
JULY 10-12, 2009**



BLACK LIBRIUM OF NARTARUS—A TOUCH OF EVIL

BY CASEY CHRISTOFFERSON

The Black Librium of Nartarus is all about evil. In its roots, it of course has the stark brutal world of the Haunted Highlands and its malevolent deities. This is not to say it is specific to that setting or its adventures. On the contrary, as a writer and a gamer I feel quite strongly that every campaign setting NEEDS a little black book of evil in it to grow. More importantly, it needs a touch of evil to grow up as a game!

Ok, Ok, so others strongly and rightly argue that you need to grow the youth of gaming and through the youth you will grow the fan base. Agreed 100%! Here's a lollypop! You figured out what everyone already knows. Young gamers are absolutely the future of the gaming industry!

Still, with so much vanilla fantasy offered up to the global world-wide media's mass market machine of internet and downloadable adventure to the consumer, one has to be careful how they spend their gaming dollars. All too often, Swords & Sorcery adventure has become a mass of dumbed-down McRPG. Hopefully the Black Librium offers something different and maybe better than all those other alternatives.

The fact is you still need to keep the "old guard" engaged and interested, not only in recruiting new gamers but also in sticking with RPGs in the first place. This is a bit more of a challenge in the face of the variety of electronic alternatives that all ages have to choose from.

Castles & Crusades needed the Black Librium of Nartarus, so we created it! Those familiar with the Haunted Highlands know that it is set in a dark world, though one with some tongue-in-cheek aspects to it that let the clever in on the joke. In a dark world, one needs sorcery and black magic as much as they need a bit of grim humor to go along with it. Furthermore, a true Swords & Sorcery campaign needs villains that are vile and worthy of being put down by heroes. Of course, the final judgment of whether or not the Black Librium succeeds as a reference for dark adventure and twisted fantasy is up to you the reader to decide.

By and large the Librium is a spell book; however, it also includes some information on altering characters to better fit the mold of an evil necromancer. There are bits of alternative magic used to inspire Castle Keepers in their own campaigns. There are some monsters both new and old and some of that were originally penned by my good friend Scott Greene of Tome of Horrors™ fame. Still others were crafted by my own hand.

Other pieces of information found their way into the Black Librium of Nartarus through the power of the original OGL used as Mr. Ryan Dancey intended, so that an RPG by the people and for the people would not perish a death of silly marketing schemes and new school vs. old school propaganda.

The following is a brief excerpt from the Black Librium of Nartarus.

NECROMANCER ABILITIES

Blessed of Nartarus	500 xp	Reaction Penalty -2
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Those who take this blessing of Nartarus gain a +1 to saves for every 4 levels vs. the special attacks and abilities of the Undead creatures. This power reflects the constant contact with undead that is the stock of a Necromancer's trade.

SPELLS

SHAMBERE'S STALKER—LEVEL 4 NECROMANCER—OR CLERIC OF SHAMBERE

CT 1 action	Range 150 ft.	D 1 round/level
SV n/a	SR No	Comp (V, S, M)

With this spell, the caster creates a shadowy stalker to aid him in combat. The stalker performs a back attack on any opponent chosen by the caster within range as a rogue with a level equal to the caster. The stalker will continue to slink about the battlefield attacking as the caster commands. The caster must concentrate on the stalker to change targets, but can do other actions if the stalker continues to attack the same target. The stalker is armed with a shadowy dagger, and a successful attack deals 1d4+ sneak attack damage to the target. The material component for this spell is a mask of pure black silk worth at least 25 gp that is torn in the casting.

SWARM OF SKULLS—LEVEL 1 NECROMANCER

CT 1	Range Self	D 1rd. +1 rd./lvl.
SV None	SR No	Comp V, S, M

The caster summons into being 1d4 grinning animated skulls per 3/levels which whirl around the caster moving as he moves. The orbiting skulls grant a +2 armor class bonus to the caster and may be directed to attack any foe within 10 ft. of the caster. Anyone entering melee combat with the caster is attacked by the skulls. The skulls have an armor class of 15, and 4 hp per skull. They deal 1d4 points of damage on a successful attack +1 point of damage per skull in the swarm. The skulls share the attack bonus of the caster. The skulls share the same dexterity save as the caster.

The material spell component for this spell is a tooth from a humanoid skull. The tooth of a murderer adds +1 to damage dealt by the skulls in the swarm.

SALTS OF SORROW—LEVEL 2 NECROMANCER

CT 1 action	Range 30 ft.	AOE 30 ft Radius	D 1 rd./lvl.
SV Constitution Negates	SR Yes	Comp (V,S,M)	

Favored by necromancers as well as fell priests of all wicked deities, this spell causes a fog of salt gasses to erupt from the ground around targets. The yellowish gas inflicts 1d4 damage plus 1 point of damage per level of the caster to any wounded and bleeding targets within the gas cloud. The gas may be countered or dissipated with a gust of wind or similar spell. The material spell component for this spell is a pinch of salt pressed into a cut or scab.

ARTIFACTS AND RELICS

BLACK LIBRIUM OF NARTARUS

This legendary tome of ineffable evil is believed lost to the ages. Tradition claims this libris was penned by the Nartarus himself before he ascended to demi-god status, and may even have been what empowered his ascension. In an ancient battle it is said that the god Vanium himself seized the book and scattered its pages to the four corners of the world to prevent its secrets from being available to any single person again. Pages of this Librium are rare and valuable treasures, valued by those who desire the hidden secrets of the ages.

The tome itself was horrid to behold. Its covers were made from the ebon skin of a horned devil, and the head of an undead imp was affixed to the cover. This imp constantly whispered secrets most vile and truths most terrible. Any within 60 feet of the tome, who can hear the whispers must make a Wisdom save (CL 12) or be driven insane.

The pages of the tome were etched upon the hides of good dragon wyrmlings, and the ink used to pen the Librium distilled from their blood. The shimmering of the gold and silver pages were blinding to those unprepared to its brilliance, but the hides have been corrupted by the fell secrets penned within.

Any character of good alignment who touches the book, or any of its pages, suffers 6d6 points of cold (make a save vs. Constitution CL 12 for ½ damage). A good cleric or paladin who reads any of the contents of the book jeopardizes his faith and good standing with his own deity. Such a character must make a Charisma save (CL 12). Failure means the cleric or paladin has been corrupted by the book's foul taint, and the cleric immediately loses enough experience points to be dropped to the halfway point of the previous level. In addition, they can no longer access the gifts of their deity (spells, ability to turn undead and/or paladin abilities) until they have received atonement. Of course Nartarus will accept them into his service immediately, restoring their lost level and abilities. They must naturally become neutral evil in alignment if they do so.

Neutral characters, who touch the book or any of its pages, suffer 3d6 points of cold damage (save vs. Constitution at CL 12 for ½ damage). Neutral clerics suffer the same risk of corruption as good clerics, but the CL on the Charisma save is only 8 for them.

Rumors indicate that this tome held the secrets of powerful blood magics, and that the foul rituals within would enable one to achieve powers undreamt of by most mortals. Most have been lost to the ages, but some pages have appeared in the unlikeliest of places. Several pages are said to have been collected by a vile magician who dwells within the depths of Ungkalar.

Each page of the Librium contains the formula for 1 blood magic spell (described above). Some of these formulas have been copied elsewhere over time, but the Black Librium is the source of many of these magics. Any attempting to learn a blood magic spell directly from the Black Librium gain a +4 bonus on their attempt to learn the spell. These are the originals, not possibly erroneous and altered versions that have been copied through the ages. Castle Keepers are encouraged to create more blood magic spells if he or she desires more pages of the Black Librium in

their campaign. The tome originally contained 80 pages, which have been scattered throughout the world. It is unlikely that the entire tome will ever be collected in a single place again, but that has not stopped those ambitious enough from trying. If the tome were ever collected in its entirety, an evil cleric reading the entire contents would gain enough XP to gain a level and put them half way to the next level. In addition, any holding the entire tome can utter the name of an individual the holder wishes to target 1x/day. The holder of the tome must be able to see the person so named, but scrying or other magic can allow the holder to see his target. The tome attempts to draw the blood from the one so named to empower a blood magic spell. The named victim must make a Constitution save (CL 12) or the book rips the blood from their body and absorb it into its pages. This takes 1 round. The following round, the holder of the tome may cast any blood magic spell as a single standard action.

MONSTERS

MUMMY

Greatly preserved through rite and ritual, set as a guardian, or prepared for an eternity of rule from beyond, the Mummy is a deadly foe. Like the lich and vampire, the mummy may be more uniquely powerful than those presented in the Monsters and



Treasure. In the Haunted Highlands, such mummies as are presented in Monsters and Treasure serve as the baseline for the weakest of their ilk.


As with the vampire and lich, a mummy created from a more powerful being retains the special attacks and magical abilities that it had in life. The mummy adds to this already deadly repertoire of undead powers with a Hit Dice-based increase to saves vs. fear and rotting touch. As with the Vampire and Lich, the Mummy gains powers over time as it molders in its wrappings for ages unending. Centuries of slowed decay and dominion over empires of the undead grant the mummy greater armor class, Hit Dice, and greater resistance to fire-based attacks. Additional hit dice are added to the pre-existing total but do not increase any of the special abilities possessed by the mummy in life (such as spell-caster levels). Experience points awarded for defeating these powerful creatures should be adjusted accordingly.

GREATER MUMMY

Age	Category	Type	HD	AC	Damage	Special
400-800	Old	Monarch Of Death	+2	+2	+2	Fire Resistance
801-1200	Very Old	Prelate of Tombs	+2	+2	+4	Fire Resistance
1201-2000	Ancient	Vizier of Necropolis	+4	+2	+6	Fire Resistance
2001+	Primordial	Mummy King	+4	+3	+10	Fire Resistance

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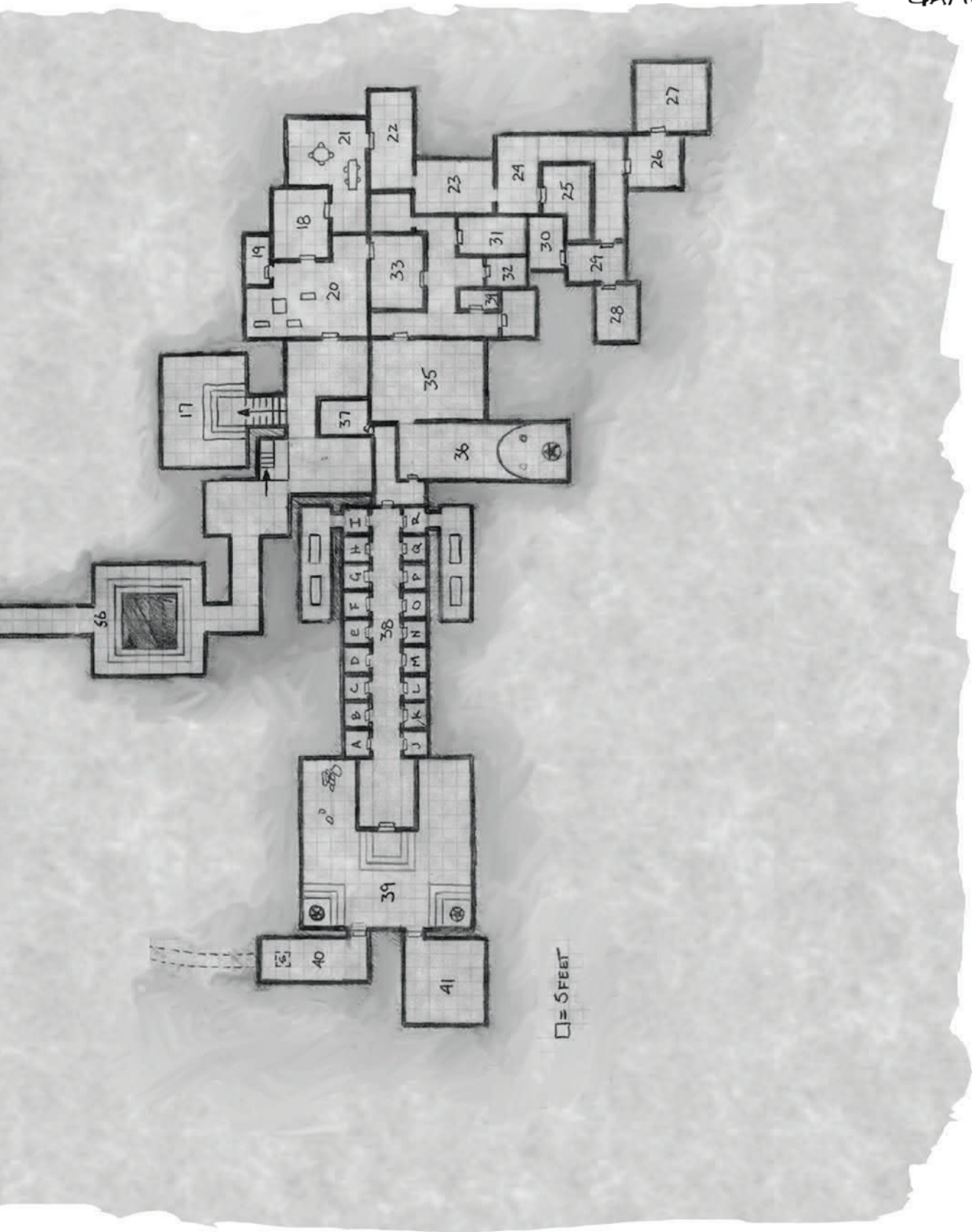
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The Angry Gamer

by Some Angry Troll Dude

CAVEAT MONSTRUM

“Not again!”
Dialing the cave of the trolls, the managing editor gets the littlest troll.

“Get over to my house right now! It’s an emergency of the worst kind!”

Slam! The phone goes down on its cradle.

Moments later, there is a soft knock on the editor’s door. Three trolls are standing there with their eyes downcast.

“Come in gentle trolls; please use the boot scraper for your talons.”

The trolls scraped dragon dung, ogre flesh, and assorted scales from their talons and walked in.

The editor was sitting at his computer chair. He didn’t even look up from his screen. “I didn’t get issue 16 when everyone else did. Please step through that glowing portal and be welcomed to my world.”

The trolls didn’t even hesitate. Whatever was beyond that portal was not near as bad as being yelled at by the managing editor. In fact, the last little troll was smiling at missing out on the fire and brimstone.

They came into a metal cave and naturally, the gleaming portal vanished. Written on the wall was the legend, **STARSHIP WARDEN LOADING DOCK.**

“What in the world is a starship warrrdon?” the large troll asked.

“What’s a dock?” the little one asked.

The stun rifle-toting Wolfoid pack ripped into the three trolls, stunned them to the deck of the ship, and started eating the more fleshy parts.

Hours later, the trolls slowly regenerated from the heads and talons that were left.

“What hit us?”

“Let’s get out of this cave.”

They moved down the corridor in the darkness still shuddering from the feel of the wolfoid fangs. They came to a large portal that opened in front of them. They saw a huge valley with high rocky hills on the sides. It looked like home to them. They raced for the large boulders.

The three rock aliens rose up sixty feet tall and smashed each of the trolls into jelly on their boulder fists. They raised the crushed mixture to their maws and licked a taste of the new creatures. The

smashed troll flesh was bitter. They each shook off the green goo and went to find better tasting prey.

Hours later, the trolls slowly regenerated from the smashed flesh.

“What hit us?”

“The rocks weren’t the answer boys. Let’s head down into the valley.”

They moved as fast as they could. The posted signs warning of eighteen-intensity radiation were ignored.

“I’ve never seen red grass before. The blades are kind of sharp though.”

“My skin feels tingly, how about you guys?”

“Yeah, now that you mention it, mine does too.” The troll was itching his skin and big hunks of flesh were falling off with each scratch.

“There’s a building over that way. Let’s check it out.”

Coming to the door of the android vat complex, it opened and a new faceless creature was just inside. The android leveled his black death-ray at the three and opened up.

From far away in space and time, the managing editor watched his three trolls. “Maybe I’m being a bit too tough on them. No, no I’m not... they did forget to send me issue 16. I’m just going to have to write that *Angry Gamer* article again.”

For the second time the lovely sprites of the Tinkerbelle forest moved up on the bad old honey bear stealing honey from the friendly bees.

“We’ll teach that bad old bear a good lesson this time,” said Tink.



Spectromancer Online Game

Players: 1 or 2

Play Time: 10 Minutes +

Game Design: Alexey Stankevich

Lead Programmer: Ivan Polyacor

Company: Three Donkeys LLC

Entry Cost: \$20.00



Spectromancer is an online game that's fun to play, even if it is a bit frustrating. There are two ways to play. One can start the game and play through two different campaigns in a solo fashion. This is good as it allows you to get used to the style of combat, and allows you to learn the many power cards of the game. The second way is to get online and play against other people. I've now lost contests with players from all over the world. It's surprising to me how many people from Egypt and Brazil play the game.

In the solo campaign, you assume a role as one of six characters and you then try to conquer the continent. The artwork is good as you meet computer-controlled characters with their own powers and you use your abilities against them. There are five game slots: fire, water, air, earth, and whatever one of six styles your character is able to use. These slots grow by one power point every turn. The creatures and spells available in these slots have a certain cost. Naturally, the better attacking creatures cost more. Your computer opponent throws creatures and spells at you while you do the same to him. During the course of the campaign, you experience many obstacles in the form of special creatures, magical lands, and abilities the computer-controlled characters have that you do not. The campaigns are fun and a good preparation for what comes later.

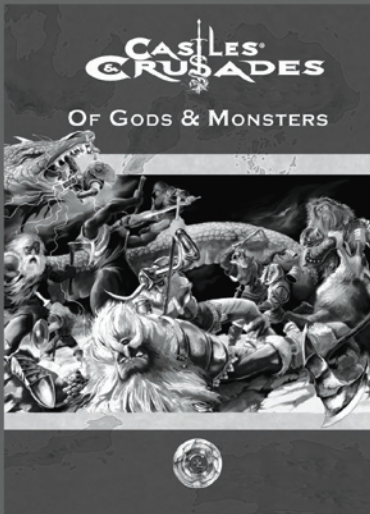
There are six different types of characters. The cleric uses holy power. The mechanic uses the science of gears and machines. The necromancer uses the theme of death. The chaosmaster uses chaos to win. The Dominator has several different control spells and creatures. The illusionist uses different types of illusions to win.

Each character has sixty life points. The object of the game is to be the first to take away the opponents life force. Point totals are made based on the number of creatures you kill, the number you summon, and the damage you do to your opponent. In the online tournament, you are ranged by how many points you have versus your wins and losses. I've played the game several hundred times and have a rank of four. My buddy Mike Gray has played it 50 times and has the same rank.

As you play the game, everyone picks up on favorite cards. For fire I like the Orc Chieftain because it adds two attack points to the creatures on the left and right of it. The water element has the Astral Guard, which prevents the opponent from gaining its +1 point in the five categories. The air element has a really broken card in the Phoenix. If you manage to get 10 points in the fire element, it becomes impossible to destroy the Phoenix and that's really nasty in the longer games. The earth element has the Master Healer who gives everyone of your creatures and you +3 points every turn. In the Holy element there is the Holy Guard giving +2 in defenses to the creatures on its left and right. The necromancer has the Drain Souls, which kills all creatures on the board (except for the stupid Phoenix). The mechanics has the Dwarven Rifleman, which shoots every new creature for four points. It's really fun to have three of those creatures on your side at the same time as they almost kill the summoned creatures of your opponent. Domination has the Ancient Horror, which prevents some creatures from making attacks. Chaos has the Insanian Berserker, which damages your opponent while attacking his creatures. Illusion has my favorite card, the Wall of Reflection. This card does as much damage to the opponent as it takes. It's a wonderful card against beginning players who do not know its power. Often they will throw twenty or thirty points of fire at my character and are then see their character killed as the Wall throws it right back at them.

The second format is the most fun as you are playing against other online players. My good friend Mike Gray and I play all the time. Right now, I'm a bit ahead of him in wins, which is where I like it.





OF GODS & MONSTERS

BY JAMES M. WARD

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OF GODS AND MONSTERS

BY JAMES M. WARD

It is my extreme pleasure to present a small portion of the *OF GODS AND MONSTERS* book coming out just a few weeks after this issue of *CRUSADER*. I had done product like this in the past and this time I really wanted the book to be highly useful for players and Castle Keepers. I think the various sections of spells, magic items, and the avatars generate a whole new batch of role-playing opportunities that weren't available before. The highly useful spells can only be used by player character worshipers, encouraging the players to pick one of these deities. Player characters can have the artifacts of the gods; but only if they agree to a god-given quest to earn those way cool objects. The avatar will be the most fun as they find player characters and take them on deadly adventures they would have never managed before. These tough characters could also be used as powerful enemies with agendas that don't agree with what the players want. I hope you enjoy what you see and thanks Steve for asking me to do this product.



HALFLING PANTHEON

CREATION MYTH

The same, miles-long dragon that created the elves and gnomes also created the halflings. Their legend says that one day the sun beat strongly down on the body of the dragon and it greatly enjoyed the heat and turned its body repeatedly so that the sun's rays struck all sides evenly. The scales from its back rubbed against some very hard mountain granite and pairs of male and female halflings popped out of the scales and ran into the hills to become mated pairs to make many halfling babies.

While these creatures are soft looking and seem to be fun loving, there is a hard edge to them allowing them to survive in dangerous lands. The larger creatures tend to ignore halflings, while the smaller enchanted beasts make peace with halflings or are driven out of halfling lands. Few records in the libraries of the elves, dwarves, humans, or gnomes deal with what the halflings are capable of doing. Few scholars have bothered to read the records the halflings keep for themselves. If any of these races did take the time to study the way of the halflings, they would become alarmed at the real power of these creatures and what they have killed when demons, devils, and dragons tried to invade their lands.

Halflings seem to get along with everyone and especially humans. Halfling communities that live beside human villages and towns aren't doing so for the protection humans give them. They live near the community to make sure the humans don't try to enslave halfling kind. Halflings train their young in the art of hiding not because they are cowards, but to better attack an enemy without being seen.

Unknown to most of the world, the halfling race is expanding faster than any other race on the world. In several hundred years, there will be a crowding in some countries and the true nature of halflings will be revealed.

MIRIAM HAIRFOOT: Deity of Barriers and Trees

GOD SYMBOLS: Stone Fences, Oak Trees, Sling Staff, Emeralds

DEITY PROVINCE: Nature, Barriers of all Kinds, Ranged Attacks

CEREMONY: Worshipers plant oak trees on every solstice.

TABOO: Worshipers can't burn trees or brush.

GRANTED ABILITIES: Worshipers are +1 with a sling staff and have a cumulative +2 to hide in the woods.

Peaceful forest glades surrounded by oak trees are the common religious gathering points for worshipers of Miriam. Thick and thorny hedges stop most intruders and animals from coming into the area.

Clerics of the order are unusually well protected in plate armor, which is unusual for a halfling, but typical for a worshiper whose deity loves a good barrier of any type. The common worshiper



spends a great deal of time and effort in making the doorways to their homes unusually strong.

ARTIFACT: MIRIAM'S SLING STAFF

Miriam often lends her weapon out to low-level halfling adventurers walking about on their first or second quest. These characters have given a sacrifice of emeralds before they set foot on their adventure quest. The weapon always strikes at any target the wielder can see. It does 2d6 +4 in ranged damage and doubles that against orcs or goblins. The staff's magic prevents ranged spells from touching the wielder. When used as a melee weapon, the staff does 3d4 +4 and never misses.

ARTIFACT: MIRIAM'S ROBE OF BLENDING

Miriam favors female worshipers with this robe if they promise to give every emerald they ever find to Miriam's altars. The robe adds a +5 in any hiding attempt. It stops all ranged weapon attacks from striking the wearer. It also magically makes sure the wearer never trips a trap.

MIRIAM'S AVATAR

Miriam doesn't appear a lot to her worshipers, but has been known to help raise a new town and a new glade. When she does appear, for the next two years, there are bountiful crops and the weather is fair in the lands around where she manifested herself.

Avatar of Miriam Hairfoot: (neutral good), 20th level bard, HP 110, AC 18, MV 80 ft., primary attributes: wisdom 26, dexterity 25, constitution 24. She uses her sling staff and robe when she walks the prime material plane. She has all the powers of a 20th level druid including spells: 0th-9, 1st-8, 2nd-8, 3rd-8, 4th-7, 5th-7, 6th-6, 7th-6, 8th-5, 9th-5.



BLACK HAIRFOOT:

Deity of the Night

GOD SYMBOLS:

Moon, Stars, Darkness, Opals

DEITY PROVINCE:

Rogues, Assassins, Dagger work

CEREMONY: All worshipers must learn to make their own dagger.

TABOO: Worshipers may not do serious work during the day.

GRANTED ABILITIES:

All worshipers have the backstab rogue ability and are +1 to strike and

do damage with a dagger.

Half buried in a hillside and half out, all of Black Hairfoot's temples are taverns open only at night and located only in the largest of halfling cities. They are also designed to accommodate human guests as well as halflings. Services are held at every full moon and donations of opals are especially prized.

ARTIFACT:: BLACK'S OBSIDIAN DAGGER

This unbreakable blade allows the wielder to see in the darkness as if it was daylight. It raises the level of the wielder by 2 and they never fail in climbing anything. The weapon does 3d4 +5 in damage. It's given to any worshiper who gives the temple a large sacrifice of opals. They gain use of the weapon from full moon to full moon.

ARTIFACT: BLACK'S NIGHT CLOAK

This cloak is only given to dual class clerics and rogues who are going about the business of making a new temple for Black Hairfoot. It acts as a displacer cloak, a cloak of invisibility, and a cloak of flying.

BLACK'S AVATAR

The deity loves going into the lands of orcs, goblins, and ogres and taking their precious possessions, especially from their temples. He joins every questing party that raids the humanoid lands.

Avatar of Black Hairfoot: (neutral evil) 20th level rogue, HP 80, AC 22, MV 80 ft., primary attributes: dexterity 26, wisdom 20, intelligence 19. He wears mithril +5 ring mail and uses his dagger for four strikes a round in combat. He has all the powers of a 20th level rogue and has a set of +5 mithril lock picks he leaves behind with his armor after a quest.

TEAGAN GOLDENBERRY: Deity of Flowers and the Shield

GOD SYMBOLS: Rose, Shield, Grapes, Amethyst

DEITY PROVINCE: Berries of all types, Defense

CEREMONY: All worshipers must learn how to make wine and sacrifice a bottle on the solstice.

TABOO: Berries must never be allowed to go to waste.

GRANTED ABILITIES: All worshipers are +1 in their armor class.



Teagan's people all live in tree houses at the edges of large forests. Her temple is placed in the largest of trees and her worshipers work the soil around the tree so that it grows taller and taller every year. Her worshipers are said to make the best wine in the world and all the hills around a Goldenberry village are covered in grapevines. Goldenberry druids work with plants of all types to make strong defenses around their towns.

ARTIFACT: TEAGAN'S SHIELD

The shield is only given to a halfling who has proven their courage in the face of great odds and lived to tell the tale. It gives the wielder a 20 AC and prevents ranged spells from touching the wielder. The loan is from solstice to solstice.

ARTIFACT: TEAGAN'S BOAR SPEAR

The spear often appears in the hands of a hunter who has given a sacrifice in amethysts to the deity. It stays with them until they kill an enchanted beast with it. The mithril +5 spear does 2d12 +5 versus most creatures and double that versus giants and dragons.

TEAGAN'S AVATAR

The deity loves large halfling parties and often appears as an uninvited guest.

Avatar of Teagan Goldenberry: (lawful good), 20th level ranger, HP 140, AC 20, MV 80 ft, Primary Attributes: strength 25, intelligence 24, dexterity 23. Teagan rarely wears armor and generally first appears in party clothes. She has all the abilities of



a 20th level ranger. She often rides a winter wolf into battles with goblins or ogres.

EBONE GOLDENBERRY: Deity of Justice

GOD SYMBOLS: Law Scroll, Apples, Rubies

DEITY PROVINCE: Justice, Fruit

CEREMONY: Worshipers can't rise above 5th level until they have served as a lawyer or a judge.

TABOO: Worshipers can't tell lies in court.

GRANTED ABILITIES: All worshipers have a +1 in intelligence and constitution.

Ebone's temples have thick stone and act as halls of justice in any halfling town. During the day, town officials and clerical judges carry out the municipal business of the town. At night, it's a communal temple where families come to hear sermons and have large dinners.

Clerics of Ebone are expected to spend some time as judges and lawyers for the cities where they live. When the apple trees are in bloom, worshipers are expected to search for intelligent beings doing acts of chaos and make them stop.

ARTIFACT: EBONE'S SWORD OF JUSTICE

The short sword's purpose is to slay chaos wherever it is found. The weapon does 40 points of damage when it strikes a creature of chaos. It does 3d6 +5 in other strikes. Any creature of chaos coming within fifty yards of the sword is lit with faerie fire. The weapon is often given to a first or second level worshiping fighter for thirty days so that they can learn to notice the chaos all around them.

ARTIFACT: EBONE'S MITHRIL CHAINMAIL

The +5 chainmail is also magicked so that control or hold spells have no effect on the wearer. Ebone often lends out the armor to poor worshipers who are staking every penny they have on one last quest.

EBONE'S AVATAR

Ebone rarely appears to his worshipers, but has come when villages and towns are being threatened by enemy forces of orcs, goblins, or other humanoid armies.

Avatar of Ebone Goldenberry: (lawful evil), 20th level fighter, HP 140, AC 25, MV 80 ft., primary attributes: strength 25, dexterity 25, charisma 24. He uses his sword of justice in melee,



striking four times a round and he has all the other powers of a 20th level fighter.

KEELY CHOICEROOT: Deity of Gardening and Hiding

GOD SYMBOLS: Carrot, Grape, Strawberry Bush, Carnelian

DEITY PROVINCE: Gardens, Vines, Clothing

CEREMONY: When worshipers come of age, they are given a cloak and a garden hoe.

TABOO: Worshipers can never hide from the work they need to get done.

GRANTED ABILITIES: Worshipers are easily able to make +2 cloaks of protection.

This deity's temples are places for families to gather and have fun. More play than sermons are encouraged in her holy structures. Clerics are to help worshipers with their gardening, hide, and seek is a game played every day with the young and old of the temple. When Carnelian gems appear for sacrifice, half of them are used to pay for feasting and high feast days are a regular event.

ARTIFACT: QUARTERSTAFF OF KEELY CHOICEROOT

The weapon has a lawful good alignment. It has a will of 17. The staff can cure light wounds 3/day. It strikes for 1d12 +3 and does double damage versus orcs and goblins. The staff is often lent to worshipers who are about to enter the lands of other humanoid races. The weapon has a purpose to defend halflings.

ARTIFACT: CLOAK OF KEELY CHOICEROOT

The cloak is lent to newly-made warriors of the first and second level who are out to protect their village. The artifact combines the powers of a displacer cloak, invisibility ring, and +5 protection ring.

KEELY'S AVATAR

Keely appears near new villages of her worshipers. She looks to remove the more deadly creatures that might lair near her people. In typical ranger fashion, she is hardly ever seen, but her actions do a great deal to protect her people.

Avatar of Keely Choiceroot: (lawful good), 20th level ranger, HP 140, AC 19, MV 80 ft, Primary Attributes: strength 26, wisdom 25, dexterity 22. She has an adamantite +4 short bow and uses adamantite +4 arrows for ranged combat. Keely has all the abilities of a 20th level ranger. Several times when she has appeared to help fight orc or goblin armies, she has ridden a young golden dragon into battle.

SHADOW CHOICEROOT:

Deity of Courage

GOD SYMBOLS: Short Sword, Shield, Chain Mail Shirt, Almandite

DEITY PROVINCE: Battle, Courage, Hunting

CEREMONY: The worshiper's first kill must be made into a belt pouch and cloak if there is enough of the fur.

TABOO: Worshipers will never run from a battle, but they can hide on the edges.

GRANTED ABILITIES: Fear and charm spells have no influence on worshipers of this deity.



Battle practice fields are the temples for this deity. His clerics help train all worshipers in the art of war and being brave. Shields with almandite gems at their centers are the holy symbols of the order.

Normal worshipers are not allowed to advance in levels until they have faced powerful foes and defeated them or driven them from the battlefield. Normally, halflings are fond of humans, but the worshipers of Shadow all try to keep their distance from humankind.

ARTIFACT: ADAMANTINE WAR HAMMER OF SHADOW CHOICEROOT

The weapon is given once to any worshiper who sacrifices a number of almandite jewels to Shadow's altar. The weapon has a will of 18, with empathy to help its wielder. It can cast faerie fire 3/day and darkness 3/day. The weapon does 2d10 +4.

ARTIFACT: MITHRIL CHAIN SHIRT OF SHADOW CHOICEROOT

The shirt provides +5 protection and doesn't allow ranged attacks to hit its wearer.

SHADOW'S AVATAR

His avatar always appears when evil humans come into his worshiper's area to do mischief.

Avatar of Shadow Choiceroot: (neutral evil), 20th level barbarian, HP 170, AC 21, MV 80 ft, Primary Attribute: constitution 26, strength 25, dexterity 25. He has all of the abilities of a 20th level barbarian. He often rides a giant shadow mastiff into battle. He strikes four times a round with his hammer.

SOPHIE TALLFELLOW: Deity of languages, Magic, & Travel

GOD SYMBOLS: Tome, Red Flag, Yellow Diamond

DEITY PROVINCE: Languages, Magic, Travel

CEREMONY: When a worshiper comes of age, they must make a long trip to some far-away human settlement.

TABOO: Worshipers must always have a backpack filled with useful things near at hand.

GRANTED ABILITIES: Worshipers have a +2 to their constitution.

Sophie's temples are all stone towers set in the middle of any village or town of her worshipers. Her holy people are wizards instead of clerics and there is always a 10th level caster or two in her temples helping teach the apprentices. Languages are a big deal to the deity and many languages of the various cultures around the village are taught to the



worshippers giving the merchants of the sect a big advantage in trading with other cultures.

ARTIFACT: 7-LEAGUE BOOTS OF SOPHIE TALLFELLOW

The boots are legendary among Sophie worshippers. They allow the wearer to go seven miles with each step. They allow for levitation and can cast haste 4/day. They also give +3 protection as the ring. When worshipping halflings turn 20, they gain use of an exact copy of the boots for twenty days. Sometimes the birthday halfling sells their use of the boots to other adventurers.

ARTIFACT: SOPHIE TALLFELLOW'S CLOAK OF MANY THINGS

Those who wish to use the cloak for twenty days must bring a new spell scroll to the temple to acquire that honor. The cloak is a portable hole, cannot be destroyed, provides an armor class of 19 to the wearer, and blocks all physical missiles hurled at the wearer.

SOPHIE'S AVATAR

Sophie has long battled orcs and goblins as they continue to attack the homes and villages of her worshippers. She especially likes going into orc lairs and battles in them to the last orc.

Avatar of Sophie: (lawful good), 20th level wizard, HP 75, AC 22, MV uses artifact boots, primary attribute: intelligence 26, dexterity 24, charisma 22. She has all the powers of a 20th level wizard. Spells: 0th-9, 1st-9, 2nd-9, 3rd-8, 4th-8, 5th-7, 6th-6, 7th-6, 8th-5, 9th-5. She uses two mithril +5 daggers in combat (1d6



+5/1d6 +5) and she can strike with both daggers in a round without penalties.

PRESTON TALLFELLOW: Deity of the Sword

GOD SYMBOLS: Sword, Peridot

DEITY PROVINCE: War, Sword use

CEREMONY: When a worshiper comes of age, they must quest for the perfect sword.

TABOO: Worshippers can never sell swords they acquire.

GRANTED ABILITIES: Worshippers are +2 in sword use.

This deity has the fewest of worshippers and they are generally males. His temples are all fencing studios dedicated to the use of the sword and no other weapon. Using a blade is worship to Preston and all of his people are skilled swordhalflings. There are some humans who worship as well, because they want to learn all there is about the sword.

The sect is unusually well organized and all of their weapons are expertly made and come to them at normal sword prices. Weapon smiths from surrounding countries are paid well to provide swords for new worshippers.

ARTIFACT: SINGING SWORD OF PRESTON TALLFELLOW

This mithril, +5 sword has a will of 23 and a lawful good alignment. It uses speech and telepathy for its wielder. Its lesser powers are faerie fire 3/day, detect magic at will, deflect missiles 3/day, and locate object 3/day. Its greater powers are: lesser globe of invulnerability 1/day, quench fires 3/day, teleport 2/day, and locate creature 3/day. The sword begins singing in combat and all allies hearing the music are blessed and gain a +2 to strike. The weapon does 2d10 +5 and +10 more when striking orcs as its purpose is to slay orcs and orc avatars. The weapon often appears in the hand of one of Preston's followers when they are facing great odds in a battle with orcs or goblins.

ARTIFACT: DRAGON SWORD OF PRESTON TALLFELLOW

The scimitar is a lawful good aligned weapon with a will of 20. Its purpose is to slay dragons. Its speech is halfling and it warns its wielder so that he is never surprised. The weapon does 2d10 +5 and doubles that when damaging dragons of all types. Its lesser powers are: locate object 3/day, suggestion 3/day, and detect magic at will. Its single greater power is light as bright as daylight 3/day. The weapon is gifted to whoever is fighting alongside Preston when his avatar dies. All of the other equipment of the avatar vanishes when the avatar turns to dust.

PRESTON'S AVATAR

Preston's avatar only appears in battles against other avatars or dragons.

Avatar of Preston Tallfellow: (lawful good), 20th level knight, HP 140, AC 20, MV 90 ft., primary attributes: charisma 26, strength 25, dexterity 22. He has all the abilities of a 20th level knight. He fights with two swords and can strike twice a turn with both of them with no penalties. He always rides a double-sized mountain lion into battle. If he dies in the fight, the lion vanishes from the battlefield.



THE TRIPLETS, BRECKON, JAMESON, THEON: Deities of Production

GOD SYMBOLS: Smith Hammer, Carpenter's Saw, Hunter's Crossbow, Gold Star Sapphire

DEITY PROVINCE: Building anything, Making defensive structures, Hunting enchanted beasts

CEREMONY: All worshipers build a house, strengthen a fort, and hunt for a magical beast before they can go above 5th level.

TABOO: Tools are never sold by worshipers.

GRANTED ABILITIES: Worshipers are +1 on defense, +1 with ranged weapons, and +1 in dexterity.

The temples of the Triplets are an odd combination of blacksmith shop, carpenter shop, and tannery. Halflings flock to the temples to learn trades, buy goods, and sacrifice their time and gold to the betterment of the village or town where the temple rests. All of the Triplet clerics must have skills in smithing, building, and hunting before they can rise above the third level.

ARTIFACT: HAMMER OF BRECKON

The weapon is unbreakable and balanced for throwing and its magic allows it to be tossed up to a hundred yards away before it flies back to its wielder. It's a +4 adamantine weapon doing 2d12 +5 and doubles that versus orcs and trolls. Breckon allows his hammer to come into the hands of worshipers building walls around their villages or other types of fortifications. When that

hammer is used to work stone or metal, it does it three times faster than normal smithing hammers.

ARTIFACT: BATTLEAXE OF JAMESON

The weapon is a +4 adamantine vorpal weapon doing 3d8 +4 in damage. Jameson often lends his axe out to foresters who can chop down any large tree with a single blow.

ARTIFACT: CROSSBOW OF THEON

The magical weapon can hit anything the wielder sees. It never misses and as regular heavy bolts come into the weapon, they are magically transformed into +4 adamantine bolts doing 2d10 +4 points of damage. Theon often lends his bow to hunters who have to hunt dragons newly-come into their hunting grounds.

AVATARS OF THE TRIPLETS

The avatars appear in ones and twos depending on the difficulty of the task or enemy that needs to be taken care of. Only twice in the history of the order has all three triplets appeared, and then an avatar dragon needed killing, as it led an army of trolls into the hills of the halflings. The avatars have different likes and dislikes, but all appear as the same type of fighter.

Avatars of the Triplets: (lawful good), 20th level fighters. HP 200, AC 22, MV 80 ft, Primary Attributes: strength 26, intelligence 25, charisma 24. When working among their worshipers, they appear in normal halfling clothes. When about to enter battle, they appear in highly magical ring mail with great helms and mithril shields.

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Any halfling spell caster with the proper level can use halfling spells.

Hide, Level 0, all spell casters

CT 1	R 10 ft.	D 2 tns./lvl
SV n/a	SR yes (h)	Comp V

In the racial trait of a halfling to hide, this spell removes the penalties for movement. The spell also gives a +2 to the dexterity check of hiding. The spell only works for halflings.

Bumper Crop, Level 1, all spell casters

CT 2	R one plowed field	D planting season
SV n/a	SR n/a	Comp V, M

Using the seeds planted in a field, this spell causes double the normal yield of the field.

Guard Spirit, Level 2, all spell casters

CT 1	R 50 ft.	D 2 rds./lvl
SV n/a	SR n/a	Comp V

When the spell is cast, it is fixed to an area. Any new beings entering the area cause the spirit to bark out a warning. Also, a bright light shines in the eyes of all new beings coming in the area for the duration of the spell, or until the caster orders the light put out.

The spirit catches and safely deflects all ranged weapon attacks directed into the radius of the spell.

Luck, Level 3, all spell casters

CT 3	R touch	D 3 rds./lvl
SV n/a	SR n/a	Comp V, M

Using a thousand gold pieces in diamonds, the spell grants a +2 for striking foes, for making attribute checks, and for resisting illusions.

Halfling Fog, Level 4, all spell casters

CT 1	R 150 yards/lvl	D 1 tn./lvl
SV n/a	SR n/a	Comp V, M

The spell uses ground beryl gems (2,000 gp.). The dust is tossed into the air and a thick fog fills the air all around the caster. The caster and all other halflings can see as if it was daytime, even in the dark. If the caster or other halflings attack while the spell is up, the fog vanishes.

Lots of Help, Level 5, all spell casters

CT 1	R Special	D Special
SV n/a	SR n/a	Comp V, M

The spell uses a small silver horn. The horn is blown and any natural beast, bird, or insect that doesn't make its mental check comes to see what is happening to the caster. Each creature may or may not help in the conflict. Insects buzz into the faces of the foes of the caster. The larger creatures like bears, wolves, and mountain lions seriously consider attacking the foes of the caster. Birds fly into the face of the foe.

If the caster survives the battle, they are expected to work the land in and around the area of the spell. This working is to provide more food for all the creatures that came to help. If the caster does not do this work within thirty days, the spell never works for them again.

Cave Bear Spirit, Level 6, all spell casters

CT 1	R 50 ft.	D 1 rd./lvl
SV none	SR no	Comp V, M

Using a bit of cave bear fur that turns to dust with the action of the spell, a ghostly cave bear appears and attacks whatever the caster directs them to attack. The enchanted spirit can only be hit by magical weapons. The spirit never attacks halflings no matter what the caster directs.

Where's the Treasure, Level 7, all spell casters

CT 1 tn.	R 100 yds/lvl	D 1 rd./lvl
SV none	SR no	Comp V, M

A 500 gold piece gem is turned to dust with the casting of this spell. If there is a mass of treasure in the caster's search area, the size of the treasure and a golden path towards it forms for the caster to see. Multiple treasures over 500 gold pieces can be seen with this spell.

Much Needed Weapon, Level 8, all spell casters

CT 1	R 5 feet	D 1 rd./lvl
SV none	SR no	Comp V

This spell creates a magical weapon perfect for facing a single foe the caster watches. The caster is then able to strike twice a round with the weapon. The weapon is magical, does 2d6 in damage, and strikes as if the caster was a fighter with a level equal to the caster's current level. No other person can use the weapon and it's never a ranged weapon. If there is remaining duration to the spell, the caster can use the weapon on other foes.

Halfling Dragon, Level 9, all spell casters

CT 1	R touch	D 1 tn./lvl
SV no	SR yes (h)	Comp V, M

The spell uses a dragon scale from a lawful dragon. The scale turns to dust with the casting of this spell. The caster or one who wishes to be changed is transformed into a fifty-year-old version of the dragon whose scale has been used. The dragon has all the memories and skills of the changed character plus the powers and abilities of the new dragon form. If the dragon dies, it transforms back into the still-alive character, who now has one hit point. If the dragon lives, and transforms back into the character, that character would heal half of his lost hit points.



HALFLING DRAGON

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1 or a mated pair
SIZE: Medium
HD: 8 (d10)
MOVE: 50 ft., 40 ft. (fly), 30 ft. (swim)
AC: 18
ATTACKS: 2 claws (1d6/1d6), Bite (2d6)
SPECIAL: Tail Sting, Darkvision 60 ft., Scent, Spell-like Ability
SAVES: P
INT: Low
ALIGNMENT: Neutral
TYPE: Magical Beast
TREASURE: 7
XP: 825 +8

Halfling dragons enjoy living around halfling villages and make their lairs in the higher hillsides and mountains within a few miles of halfling settlements. The dragon is about the size of a large pony. Its scaly flesh always matches its surrounds and can instantly go from shadowed forest to the blue of the sky. It has small wings that look like they wouldn't be able to lift it into the air, but the dragon can fly for a thousand miles without resting.

Combat: The creature swoops down and rakes foes with its claws. For the more dangerous foes, the dragon stings with its tail. The poison of the sting forces a constitution save and the victim takes ten points of poison damage with a save to half that.

Illusion: The dragon has a special illusion ability that allows it to appear as a halfling. In this disguise, it often travels with young halflings on their first quests. The dragons know halflings can discover interesting things and much treasure. The dragon has no trouble helping and taking the greater share of gems and magic items for its part.

Hiding: The dragon has observed halflings long enough to have perfectly copied the halfling ability to hide in any type of environment.

Treasure Use: Although the intelligence of the creature is not great, it is capable of wearing and using magic items that it finds. Such dragons often wear a magical ring on one of its talons. They are capable of using bags to hold potions and spell scrolls they find in their travels.

HALFLING CANINE

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-6
SIZE: Large
HD: 6 (d8)
MOVE: 50 ft.
AC: 16
ATTACKS: Bite (1d12), Trip
SPECIAL: Darkvision 60 ft., Immunity to fire spells, resistance to fire, Scent
SAVES: P
INT: Low

ALIGNMENT: Neutral Evil

TYPE: Magical Beast

TREASURE: 4

XP: 280 +6

The size of a pony, these canines come in all colors and halflings have great fun breeding them for size and look. These canines are wonderful with halfling children, but are fierce protectors when non-halflings come to do mischief in halfling lands. Their fur is very thick and rough allowing them to only take half damage from edged weapons.

Combat: Very intelligent fighters, these canines go for the throats of their foes and failing that, bite at the legs to try and slow down their victims. Halflings often give them heavy spiked collars to protect their vulnerable throats from attack.

Trip: A canine can drag a victim to the ground with a successful bite. The opponent is allowed a save versus dexterity to resist being pulled off their feet. If they fail in the save, they lose initiative the next round.

Special Abilities: The canine is totally immune to fire spells. Its fur always carries a heavy load of moisture making it take half damage from normal fires.

HALFLING THORN HEDGE

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1

SIZE: Large

HD: 6 (d8) per ten-foot section

MOVE: 0 ft.

AC: 16

ATTACKS: Special

SPECIAL: See Text

SAVES: P

INT: Plant

ALIGNMENT: Neutral

TYPE: Magical Plant

TREASURE: 1

XP: 180 +6 per ten-foot section

It's a little-known fact that halflings spend a great deal of time forming and nurturing halfling hedges around their communities. The hedges tend to blend into the countryside and are difficult to spot until one comes within ten feet of them. The hedges are at least ten feet thick and ten feet high. The thorns on all of the vines are extremely sharp and resistant to damage. Just touching the hedge can tear clothes or pull at armor so that one falls deeper into the hedge. Any patch of the hedge does 3d4 points of damage to one trying to chop their way through or pull their way out.

Unknown to those not familiar with the hedges is the fact that the lowest foot and a half of the hedge vines have no thorns. It is easy for halflings to move their way through such hedges.

The oldest of halfling towns have several layers of these hedges surrounding the town with only one opening in the hedges down the main road.

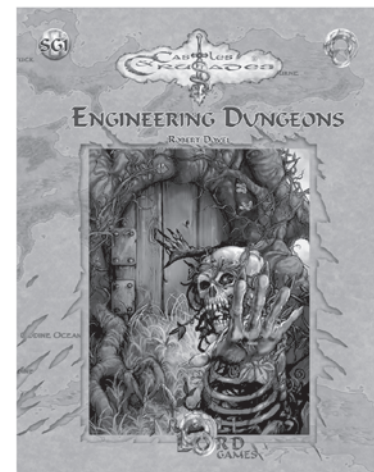
Combat: The nature of the hedge pulls victims deeper into the thorns. Even those in armor have the edges of the armor grabbed by thorns that tug the victim further into the hedge. The thorns rip and tear at the body of the victim doing 2d6 in damage. A victim must make a strength check to pull out of the hedge. Failure to make the check pulls the victim five feet into the hedge, they will have to make two checks to get out the next time, and they are taking damage from the thorns. Even those in armor take damage as the thorns pull at gauntlets, boots, and helms and rip them off in the second and third round of the hedge action. Chopping into the hedge does little as the vines are very elastic and move aside from the action of the edged weapons.



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**THE AIHRDIAN
CHRONICLES**
BEING THE 15TH NARRATIVE
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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. Fresh from a battle with the Hlobane Meltowg rescued Rhul-eye of the House of Vian, a human descendant of the nobles that once ruled this land. He has led them through narrow paths into the mountains to rejoin his tribe, here the Prince heals his wounds, and his men recover.

“So tell me Rhul-eye of the House of Vian, how is it your people can reward me?” Meltowg leaned forward and poked the fire with a brand. Sparks popped and flew into the dark skies, spiraling one around the other until they floated into the breeze where the cool air extinguished them one after another. Meltowg watched the sparks and smiled grim smile as they died for it made him think of his own long road. The camp around him was small and well hidden. The men of Vian were capable rangers, and had chosen the campsite well for it laid hidden deep in the mountains, upon the southern flanks of the Antiquarian Range. A small box canyon served as the hiding place. Reached by several treacherous trails it was both difficult to find but allowed for easy escape. Rangers were posted in the rocks above, ever vigilant for the enemy that now came from every direction.

Rhul lay stretched out on a mat on the ground. His wounds pained him greatly, for the nails that held him to the tree had not been removed so very easily. He looked up at the dark clouds of the Wall of Worlds. He wondered what it was like, to see the stars. He had never seen them though he had heard stories of them, how they sparkled in the night sky and lit the way for travelers. The elders spoke of them. They also spoke of the elves, darkly and with malice, for many accounted the treachery of that race for the downfall of the world and the conquest of the Horned God. “You plucked me from that tree like a fruit. And for that I thank you. The Hlobane were torturing me, trying to force me to reveal the whereabouts of my people. Of course I could not have done that, for we move all the time, living in these tall hills like wild animals.”

“Better free and wild than bound and chained.”

Meltowg looked over at the other men who sat at the fire’s edge. He was hard to look upon, old and grizzled. Scars crisscrossed his face like a patchwork of strings. He was missing an

eye and it looked as if several fingers were gone from his left hand, though it was clinched tight so it was hard to tell.

“Aye, so it is. So tell me Prince, what would you have of us? I can repay you in many ways, but what would you have of me? There are hidden paths we can guide you on to bring you across the mountains and to the Formian River. There are magics or even items I can give you. You have saved me and my people and I are indebted to you.”

Poking the fire again, this time more violently the Prince grunted. “Well I am stranger here and these are some wicked mountains you have. I’ve crossed them once, but that was some years ago and much further to the north. I followed a canyon...”

“One lined with black rock?”

“Aye, that was it. You know it then?”

“It is the Holcomb Trail. It is narrow, but more direct.”

“Dangerous now. The Lords of Aufstrag have built several watch towers upon it. He has placed...creatures there. They watch the road. They not sleep nor suffer from the wants of man. They watch and howl when they see something they do not like or trust.”

“There are dark creatures all through this world, creatures forged in the pits of Klarglich in the bosom of Aufstrag. Those beasts you speak of come from those forges. They are called the Cun-al-Rur, that is the Eye Upon the Road in the vulgate. They have haunted our lands for long years and have spread to the roads further east. They watch everything. I am surprised that you have not known of them.”

“Much of my time has been spent in the west; we came by ship some time ago, and landed on the costs to the south. We saw no creatures there. Though as I said, I encountered some on the road years ago.”

“They are not in the south very much for the Wizard holds his court, Nulak-Kiz-Din and his Hlobane orcs. Those wicked creatures of the Marl.”

“So tell me then of these Hlobane and this Marl that they come from. I have heard of it, legends really, for my people dwelt under the eves of the Rhodope Mountains long ago.”

“Aye, the Hlobane are orcs as you know. They came here at the heels of Aufstrag after their homelands were destroyed. They come from the Marl, a land that the orcs, and other creatures, have occupied for many long centuries, long even before your time I should think. It consists of several mountain ranges, the broad Ash Flats and the Rison Forest. When the orcs came to it, it was mostly free of habitation; only scattered groups of men dwelt there. These men wandered the Marl scratching a living out of the earth, hunting or what have you. It took little effort for the orcs to drive them out, especially after they united under their first King Agorl. They fortified the passes of the Marlberg Mountains; those hills are upon the western ranges. Their main Kingdom was in the Ash Flat, broad flat plains that lie between those mountains and the Lead Hills further to the east. The Rison Forest lay to the north and served their needs as far as that went. In time of course the spoiled all that land. The Flats become ruined and desolate, called now the Ash Flats. Broken county filled with fissure and twisted ridges. Amazingly, the Marl is well watered from the snowmelt in the mountains and a great deal of rain. There are many rivers and streams. The waters flood and cleanse the land from time to time, but the orcs ruin it again. There are many deep pits and lakes, crevices dug by the orcs and filled with water from the streams. It is a hard land, the Ash Flats. The Rison is not much better, they’ve used it for all manner of things, and it is a dark, haunted wood. But it was in the Marl that the orcs founded kingdoms and there that lived and died far from the trappings of the world.

“Of course the orcs, being orcs, tore themselves apart. They lived and died as I said, far from the walks of the world until their wanderings brought them to the borders of my people’s land here in Aenochia. We fought them and they wandered on and through infesting all the lands to west. But these trackless creatures were little more than vagrants. That is until the Winter Dark.

“When the Winter Dark came the orcs were not surprised but rather drawn to it. They flocked to his banners in great numbers. In fact, the armies he first used to subdue the lands west of the straights of Ursal were made up of as many orcs as Aenochians. They drove the war hard and he loved them for it. Exactly where the Hlobane came from is not known to many people, but I am a wizard of some repute and I have followed their trail even into the Far East upon the southern rim of the Ash Flats.”

“You have been there?”

“I have. I am a wizard and may travel upon the winds when it suites me. It is dangerous work for there many members of the Paths of Umbra, the dark guild of wizards and they watch the sorcerers roads even as the Cun-all-rur watch the earth bound.”

“There is a great gap between the southern wings of the Marlberg and Lead Mountains. It is called the The Claws of God. And there, in those barren hills lived a small tribe of orcs.

They were intelligent, far more so then their northern brethren. From what I gather they served the immortals of Katha, those strange men from the far south and east who walked the heavens on ships of air and drank of the waters of life. But the Hlobane left their service but brought with them a great knowledge of orders of the world.

“When Unklar first found them, there was but a small group of them in his armies. This band was little more than a group of adventurers who stuck together and fought better than all the hordes of Aufstrag. He too followed their path and found them in the lands they called home. His disguised himself as a great golden dragon and fell upon the towns and homes. He burned them with gas and fire and drove them into the wilds. He changed his shape back again and came upon them in the wild as if unexpected. He gathered them together and offered them magic and riches if he would serve them in the east in his towers of Aufstrag. They thronged to him and followed him across the great expanse and into our domains. Here he has awarded them with power and wealth, magic and guise. Lately he has given them the Red Hills and much besides. They are his most loyal soldiers.”

“Ah, the lies of Unklar run even amongst the rivers of his allies.”

“Indeed, there is nothing in his towers that is forward and true, lest it be the Dwarven smiths he enslaves to work his forges.”

“Well, so be it. The war is over for many, but I will soldier on. And I will cause as much pain and suffering to the dark lord as I may. These Hlobane are but another group of fools that I can make suffer for the evil he has visited upon the world. Though I must confess this land you speak of, the Marl, it interests me, and I would like to see it sometime.”

“Does not your errand carry you back into the west?”

“It does. I go to the Twilight Wood. But I must go afoot, for I have not the sorcery to change myself, my horses, and men into birds and travel the roads of the air as you do my wizardly friend.”

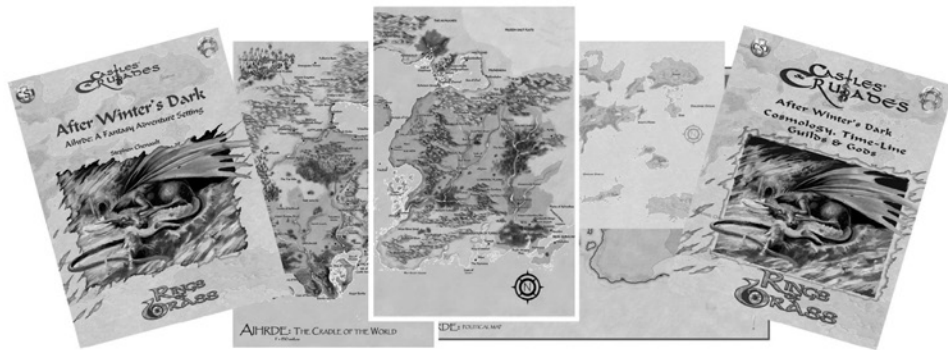
“Then you will be seen by the Cun-all-rur, and we have come to the end of my question and I have the answer. I have magics I can lend you to keep the eyes of the watchers off of you and help to guide you through the lands from here to the Ursal. Beyond those straight the watchers have not gone.”

“Then teach, Rhul-eye of the House Vian. Teach me your magics.”



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HLOBANE ORC

NO. APPEARING: 10–5000

SIZE: Medium

HD: 2(d10)

MOVE: 30 ft

AC: 16

ATTACKS: By Weapon (+1 to hit and damage)

SPECIAL: Dark Vision 60 ft, Immunity to Poison, Light Sensitivity

SAVES: P

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Lawful Evil, Lawful Neutral

TYPE: Humanoid

TREASURE: 2

XP: 27 +2

The Hlobane are orcs, of a rare particular breed. In general, they are tall for their kind, with large chests, long muscular arms, and legs as thick timber. They are very muscular, priding themselves in their fitness. Only the very old or very wealthy Hlobane tend to the heavy side. Those are grossly fat, living off of a lifetime of spoils. A Hlobane's skin is always a deep green, mottled almost black in the joints of their legs and arms. They have broad faces with a wicked under bite. Fangs that rise from the lower jaw are often shaped and capped with steel or bronze. Their eyes are deep yellow with narrow pupils and filled with an intelligence that their lesser kin do not possess.

The Hlobane (pronounced Hu-Lo-Bane) Nation is a vast and powerful tribe of orcs. Many mercenary captains prize them, for they are highly militarized and famous for their iron discipline and an unwavering courage in the face of battle. It is rare to hear of a Hlobane who retreats or flees from a battlefield. The Hlobane generally keep to themselves, speaking to few, and those who do, serve the interests of their paymaster or Lord. They are fiercely loyal to each other and if one is in trouble it is more than likely that the others will rush to his aid. Some do venture from the Nation in order to gain glory in arms.

The Hlobane have always been a settled orc nation. They dwell in towns made of stone or built into the sides of hills and mountains. They are accomplished craftsmen ordering and fortifying their dwellings along military lines. Their entire society is one based on military principles, even to the ordering of their family households. At the head of each household is a patriarch, who in turn is followed by a matriarch and their children, any brothers and sisters the patriarch has as well as his parents and in some cases his mate's parents. The patriarch is not chosen by age but by strength. As soon as a patriarch becomes weak or is slain the remaining males in the family group contest each other for the role of patriarch. There is almost always a second in command however and these family disputes rarely break out into open brawls or contests.

Each family group belongs to a larger clan. The clan consists of several related family groups, usually ones related through the female, but not always. The size and numbers of the clans shifts constantly depending on circumstances. Clans frequently break up due to deaths of when one group decides to break free from the bonds of one Clan to join another. The Clans make up the Hlobane Nation and they serve a Council of Elders who are

chosen not from each Clan but from those elder warriors who have gained the most fame in battle. Each Clan supplies soldiers for the Nation in time of war, which is almost always. Sanjaks lead the troops, a title they adopted some time ago. The Sanjaks are chosen by the Council for their skills on the battlefield.

The most accomplished warriors always lead Hlobane troops. For every 10 encountered, at least one Pit Orc is present, of 2+2 hit dice and with an armor class of 16. For every two or more Pit Orcs, there is one Overseer of 4 hit dice present, with an armor class of 17. For every 4 Overseers there is one Over Lord, with 9 hit dice, and an armor class of 19. Over this troop is the Sanjak, usually the general in charge of the Hlobane army.

By the time a Hlobane reaches the age of six the males are attached to older males outside their family unit. They serve an apprenticeship for several years. The old males wean the younger from their mothers and teach them the arts of war. The younger orcs serve the older in all manner of capacity, from cleaning their armor to fetching food. When they reach the age of 13 they are considered warriors and allowed to enter any of the Warrior Societies that thrive in the Hlobane communities. The Societies serve as the backbone to the Hlobane military strength. They prize discipline, sacrifice, battle skills above all else.

The Hlobane shun magic for the most part. Their society has few shamans or wizards. Orcs shamans have some spellcasting capability from both the wizard and cleric classes. Shamans are allowed a maximum of 24 spell levels, with no spell greater than 4th level. Example: An orc shaman with six 1st, four 2nd, two 3rd, and one 4th level spell has the maximum of 24 spell levels. The dark gods they worship are called upon only to play witness to their bravery or their deeds.

Hlobane don't get along with many races. They tolerate any and all who they feel can serve their greater purpose. They detest other orcs as weak, unworthy creatures. They have a grudging respect for dwarves and halflings (this last may only apply to the battle hardened halflings of Airhde). They have had little contact with elves and as such do not possess the normal orc hatred of those creatures.

The Hlobane speak their own tongue, which is much concerned with military terms and military organization.

Combat: The Hlobane fight as they live, with discipline and order. They fight as a unit when they can; they are able tacticians if not strategists. Even younger Hlobane are able to take in and take advantage of the terrain and fighting conditions in which they are going to fight. Though they do not retreat, they also do not, by their own volition, knowingly throw themselves into a position that will be obviously overrun or cause the unit to be wiped out. If a leader they respect orders them into such a position, they will obey without question. They favor heavy armor, shields, helms, and large cleaving weapons such as the glaive, halberd, and the like. For close quarters they use short swords and axes. They are more partial to crossbows than bows.

Immunity to Poison: This creature gains a +2 on all saving throws against poison.

The Hlobane Orcs In Aihrdhe

The Hlobane originate in the Austsern, the Claws of God, a land far to the east of the Cradle of the World, in the southern Marl. They were an insignificant tribe until they came into contact with an outcast sorcerer from island kingdoms of Kath who used them as his servants. The sorcerers of Kath were immortals who worshiped the Dragon God of their own land. After several generations the Hlobane changed markedly in their behavior and abilities. The sorcerer used them in his wars and in various enterprises. After many years he left them, returning into the south but the Hlobane were changed forever.

They continued to live in the Austern until Unklar found them. Greatly impressed by what he saw he immediately desired to bring them to his realm as servants, so he took the guise of a black dragon and fell upon the villages and towns, slaying many and driving the others into the wilderness. There, in his true form he 'found' them and rescued them, offering them promises from his own hand in his own realm. The Hlobane were beguiled and followed Unklar into the west to his towers in Aufstrag. There he remade them into warriors and a cultivated them until they were the most trusted and fierce of his lesser servants.

During the long Winter Dark, they served him well and were settled in and around the Red Hills where they guarded the southern approaches to Aufstrag. They served in the guards of many of the great Princes of his Empire. During the Winter Dark Wars, at the Battle of the Tree, or as some call it the Ten Day Battle, the Hlobane Nation stood firm against the Council of Light. So it is written in the histories, "Only the Hlobane, the Orcs of the Red Hills, retired in order, for their pride has always been their strength and they could not be sundered."

The Hlobane are numerous and powerful and still hold to the old ways of the horned god. Their shamans worship him and their warriors fight under his banner. They are a prideful people for they alone survived the catastrophe of the Totem Fields. They prefer heavy armor and weaponry and are generally skilled in the use of it. They live in townships with large dirt parapets surrounding them. They carry the banner of their lord, a crescent moon into battle and frequently wear it upon their shields.

Most also speak the Vulgate (Common). The more intelligent ones (14 intelligence or better) speak Dwarf and Goblin.



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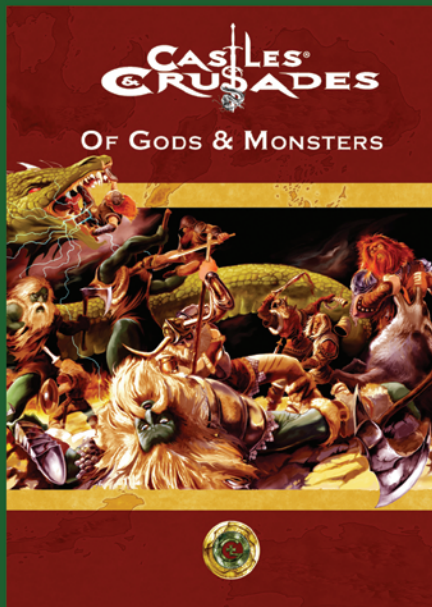
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