

THE CRUSADER™

The Journal of the Intrepid Adventurer

NOTES FROM
THE MANAGING
EDITOR

BY JAMES M. WARD

WHERE GODS
MEET MONSTERS

BY STEPHEN CHENAULT

EXPANDED
SECONDARY
SKILLS

BY MIKE STEWART

THE ANGRY
GAMER

BY A TROLL

GAME REVIEW:
DRAGON TAVERN

BY JAMES M. WARD

TALES OF
THE RINGS OF
BRASS

BY STEPHEN CHENAULT

THE SILLY

BY CASEY CANFIELD

MONSTERS
OF AIHRDE

BY STEPHEN CHENAULT

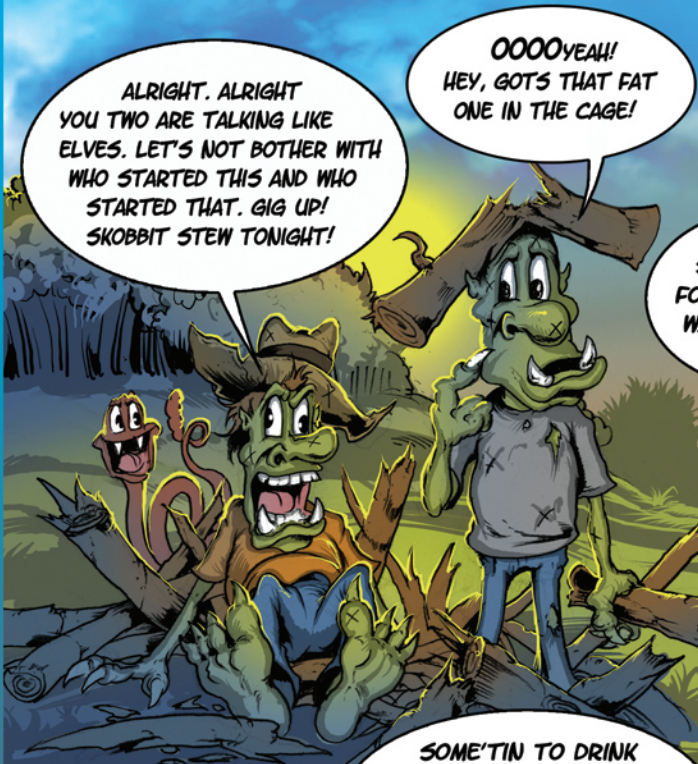


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TROLLS
INSIDE!

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PAGES!!!**

Directly

by Stephen Chenault Art by Jason Walton



END.

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notes from the managing editor



James M. Ward

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

Outline Your Way to Success



I've been designing products since 1974 and I want to use this forum to maybe help a few of you out there who would like to design and make some cash on your own products. I started out a previous article by saying it's tough to break into the hobby industry. I know there are a lot of you like me out there who don't care how tough it may be, they just want to write, so now I'm going to give you a few more tips to help you out.

I'm a firm believer in a good outline. There isn't any writing task in the world that can't be improved by a thoughtful use of an outline. I always create a working outline on whatever project I'm writing. The following is my first outline for the Tainted Lands box set:

1. QUICK START RULES

Inserting the C&C quick start rules.

2. CASTLE KEEPER'S BOOKLET

(Each booklet is set at 10-point type, 10 percent art, and 800 words per page)

- 56-page booklet of horror rules for the Castle Keeper
- (About 6 total pages of art, approximately 40,000 words)
- Setting the horror stage
- Transforming any C&C monster into a horrific creature
- The nature of horror, horror themes
- Running a horror campaign
- Supernatural rules of the game
- Supernatural combat
- Undead, a lot of undead
- Supernatural goals, objectives, rewards

3. PLAYER'S HANDBOOK

(About 4 total pages of art, approximately 25,600 words)

- 36-page supernatural things for the player character
- Creating the supernatural character
- Attributes and supernatural attributes
- Psychic Attribute and its powers
- Supernatural Attribute and its powers
- New Character Classes
- Witch Hunter
- Metals Master
- Portal Keeper
- Vampire
- Supernatural Equipment
- Supernatural Magics

4. ADVENTURE BOOKLET

(About 3 total pages of art, approximately 16,800 words)

24-page horror adventure bringing characters from other games into the Tainted Land

The player characters are introduced to the supernatural world of horror in several scenes of horror. They have the chance to find out what is keeping them in the Tainted Land, but they soon discover the evil power is much more than they can ever match and they won't be able to destroy this horror by themselves.

- Need a good map
- Need to show several different types of horror
- Need to introduce a portal

5. 4-PANEL HORROR KEEPER'S RULES SCREEN

(Screen uses the full cover pictures from the three books and the box set for one side)

The screen has many of the same C&C elements, but it also helps the Castle Keeper with suggestions for horrific elements to put into his campaign.

I used that outline for lots of different things. I included the outline in my proposal to try and convince Steve this was a good idea. The outline was used to tell Steve what type of art would be needed. As I write, I need to know how many words I need to use. In addition, as I write out the topics of the outline, I think of more things I need to add or subtract. This is what my Castle Keepers Handbook has turned into:

LEGAL PAGE

FORWARD

INTRODUCTION

Horror in a Role-playing Game

- Run!
- Fight the Good Fight
- The Nature of Horror
- A Night of Horror

Player Character Attributes

- Psychic
- Supernatural

The Tainted Lands Geography

- Skull Map
- 25 interesting points

Tainted Lands People

- Castle Keeper and the Ruse

Portals In and Out of the Tainted Lands

- Portals in the Tainted Lands mirror portals out past the mists. When you destroy the one in the mists, you destroy the one outside of the mists.

New Tainted Lands Creatures

- Transforming any C&C monster into a horrific creature

Special Magic Items & Spells

- Horror changes things (the idea here is that items change as the characters go up in levels, as do certain spells.)

So, from an experienced old hand at game design to all you newbie's out there who want to get into the business. First, don't quit your day job. Second, always use an outline to begin and end a product.

James M. Ward
Managing Editor

CRUSADER



Castellan's Guide to Arms & Armor



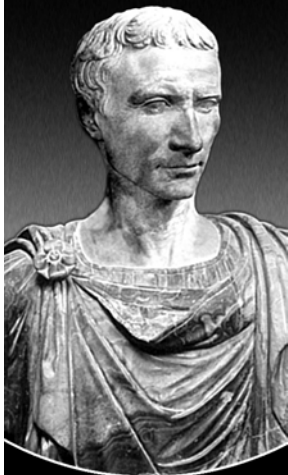
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WHEN CAESAR
STOOD UPON THE
BANKS OF THE
RUBICON LOOKING
SOUTH TO ROME,
HE HESITATED.
BEFORE HIM STOOD
THE VAST, COMPLEX
MECHANISM OF THE
PAST, GLOWING
WITH A HOST OF
INTRICATELY WOVEN
STRATAGEMS.
WITH HIM, HE HAD
BUT ONE LEGION,
WEARY FROM EIGHT
YEARS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



JULIUS CAESAR

ALEA IACTA EST



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

Where Gods Meet Monsters



ne of the major problems with any fantasy role-playing game, and *Castles & Crusades* is certainly not an exception, is how do we as players divorce ourselves from our traditional patterns of behavior and belief. When our wizard or rogue enters the king’s presence but does not bow, it is a reflection of how we as heirs to our modern philosophy of self governance instinctively react to monarchy. It certainly is not a reflection of that rogue’s life experience or cultural adaptations, for if his world were real then that king would be real, and he would more than likely bow for he has grown up under the certain knowledge that force is its own law and the king has command of force and the rogue, if he failed to recognize this, would find his head decorating a pike in swift order. The same holds true for the divine in fantasy role playing games. Ours is by and large a monotheistic world, a world very different from the many varied religious pantheons often presented in fantasy games and presented for the first time for *Castles & Crusades* in our forthcoming *Of Gods & Monsters*. For us to fully incorporate the worlds of make-believe gods into our games we have to dial it back a little, historically speaking, and try to imagine the world of the ancient Greeks, before Socrates took his medicine. Gods can play a defining role in the game, and beyond that they can make the game far more fun by expanding the adventuring landscape into realms that are truly beyond the imagination.

There is nothing anywhere that states that gods have to play any kind of role in the game, though some classes require divine worship in order to gain spells or powers; this is really an understated theme in the game, assumed and not played upon by CKs or players. The role that gods take in the game is often determined by the CK long before the game commences. Many factors influence the CK’s decision—the setting may not call for it, the desire to deal with extra entities is often daunting when the CK already has a bucket full with pesky players and their need for experience points, monsters and their need for hit points, stocking dungeons, keeping up with 187 NPCs, tracking abilities, equipment usage and all the other various and sundry tasks that beleaguer the Castle Keeper. From inside the screen it is often one more “unnecessary” task that the CK just sets to the side with a mental note that, maybe when they are higher level.

Turned the table around, from outside the screen, players often shy away from too much deity

interaction as it creates a whole extra genre of role playing they may not be comfortable with or even wish to deal with. The game can run very fast and it is too easy to forget the necessary salutations needed to gain a god’s favor. Even beyond that there is a serious streak of individuality amongst westerners that can’t be easily shucked at the table and bowing before some all knowing, well equipped magic using god-like creature galls even the most meek and brings out that latent distrust for authority we seem to all share. It takes the rogue-bowing king episode to the extreme. Prostrate is not a position players want their character to take—when they do, it’s usually time to roll up a new one.

But some classes require some interaction with gods, specifically paladins and clerics and to a lesser extent druids and barbarians. Paladins and clerics derive their very abilities from the gods and as such require holy symbols and the like in order to gain their spells or keep their abilities. Druids, though mixed in with clerics too much on a religious scale, do require some interaction at least with the natural world, which basically assumes an animistic religious belief. Barbarians are almost all by and large superstitious, living in societies that find divine intervention in almost everything and whose codes of behavior are defined by the tales of the divine. Gamers play up or down these aspects of their character as they see fit, bringing in as little or as much as they desire.

But this doesn’t have to be—for gods, if used properly, it can add as much fun to the gaming table as monsters and treasure do. Take a moment and think about how much fun monsters add to the table, and what the game would be like without them.

It took me a long while to come to this conclusion, imaging the gods as all-powerful, all-knowing creatures of the ether who can squash the mortal man in his boots. Presented in my mind’s eye were Zeus-like figures, lording over the heavens, watching the mortals squirm and wiggle their way through life, laughing in contempt and dangling strings of hope as often as nooses of despair. I downplayed them as back drops to the whole scheme of the game, kept my nose to the grindstone and created adventures that were more in line with the mundane treasure trove or princess rescue scenario. I used monsters as my opponents in the early days, weaving campaigns around them, or barring that mortal kings and princes who bedeviled the character’s aspirations with all manner

of contrivance. I would use demons and devils without a thought or word about whether their supernatural powers made them more divine than monster or monster than divine. But when it came to gods, their overarching power and heaven born status made me shy away from them. It wasn't until later, probably in some unrealized dream state of the unknown kadath that I came to understand that this is a philosophical thought derived from my modern interpretation of the divine. Actually, though extraordinarily powerful, gods in a fantasy world don't have to be omnipotent, they can be as mortals, with all the accompanying aspirations and flaws.

That thought, that creative leap set the tone for one of the longest running, enjoyable campaigns that I have mastered. What we called the Big Game ran for over a decade and saw a group of characters grow from mid 7th level characters to 22+ level characters. The adventure pitted the characters against Unklar, the Horned God, and from it was borne the whole mythological landscape of the world of Ahrde. Without boring the reader about particulars suffice it to say that, the game saw the characters as bit players on the outside of the Unklar's conquest of the plane, where they served other powers, far greater than they, pitted against the erstwhile enemy did. It involved hordes of dungeon crawls, looking for artifacts, over land quests, battles with priests and cultist, and so on. In short all the fanfair you've come to expect from your adventuring table. All this against the back drop of an epic game that only really began to unfold as they gained levels and power and became those powers they used to serve in the struggle.

A plethora of gods fits the scope of a campaign world beautifully. There are as many gods as there are monsters...perhaps not as many, but there are many...and by using the many varied pantheons we can actually better mimic that world of the ancient Greeks. In those far off days people believed in their own gods, but they also took notice of the gods of others. They may not have paid homage to them, but they certainly recognized them and in many instances incorporated them into their own belief systems. This is a great approach to take in fantasy gaming. Societies, and by that, read adventures, can be built around pantheons. Just because you have an Indian pantheon in the game doesn't mean that everyone has to worship these strange gods, or even that those gods are able to interact anywhere in the game that a more omnipotent god would. We followed the well-worn path of pantheons in the development of Ahrde. Even though there is a pretty clear hierarchy of gods for the setting, there is clearly room for a plethora of gods. The Tageans isles worship the Greek gods; this is as much as stated. The ancient Ethrum worship the Egyptian gods and so on.

By taking the various pantheons offered, whether Greek or American Indian or whatever, and placing them throughout a setting a CK can really enhance a region of play and bring it to life. This is a ready made too use as all the cultural and societal beliefs are clearly outlined for you. It only remains for the CK to find the appropriate area and climate (Greek gods are just not going to play as well in the northland wilderness). Players can use these pantheons to flesh out characters and give them backgrounds that might be unique. These backgrounds shouldn't restrict the conception of play. Imagine Alexandria in ancient Egypt where your wild Numidians and their desert gods, mingling with Persians with all the pomp and gold of their beliefs, are all thrown in with Greeks, Armenians, Babylonians, Assyrians, and so on. It was a virtual cornucopia

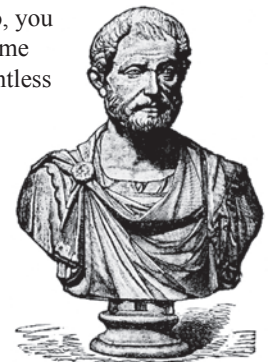
of religious beliefs, mingling without a thought or word about one or the other beliefs. This is the fantasy world, where magic takes on a greater meaning, monsters stalk the dungeons, dragons are a constant threat, and gods are only one of many things that characters have to deal with. Multiple pantheons interacting in the same adventure environment can be easily explained, but far more importantly, they can be really fun.

The fantasy world actually begs for multiple pantheons as creatures like Halflings, dwarves, elves, gnomes, hordes of humanoids, and beyond all have their own very lively belief systems. Orcs are not likely to pay homage to the same gods that give guidance to the dwarves. So without even realizing it most of us already incorporate multiple pantheons. If an orc tribe can dwell one mountain removed from dwarves and have different gods, why can't men?

They can of course, and the explanation of why is the same as the explanation of how, because gods are monsters. Treat them as such. A dragon is every bit as powerful as a god to a first level character, so both should be treated in the same light. That dragon might not be as powerful as a god to a 15th level character, but that only reinforces the very idea that gods are monsters, for the dragon, the most powerful creature in the *Monsters & Treasure* is not so powerful when the characters go beyond the pale in level, hit points, and magic. When the game evolves to that level a whole new generation of monsters is needed, for the challenges must meet and exceed the powers of the players.

In bringing gods to the table, it is best to do so when the characters are low level. The pantheons are perfect back drops for the all important mood of the game. They don't have to set the pace, for they are far more powerful and less concerned about the weak, than they are about the strong. As a backdrop they are perfect for the texture of the campaign comes from how the players perceive their own characters and the CK perceives the game. Skalds pay homage to the Norse and by merely saying this an image of a rough-hewn barbarian with iron shield and iron helm comes to mind. The gods will play no role in Skalds adventures but for the occasional boon or call-out to, for by and large they are concerned with other things. However, when Skalds gain in power and recognition and are able to affect the world around them through their own force of deed then the gods may take a second look and ponder how they can use them for their own purposes, and from these musings comes a host of high-level adventures that can be epic in scope.

This is the value of gods and monsters at the table. They supply the fodder that is the adventure, at high level and low level and all the levels in between. Don't discount them without taking a second look for if you do, you run the potential risk of missing out on some amazing adventure opportunities and countless nights of fun.



A plethora of gods fits the scope of a campaign world beautifully.

Tim Kask

Even though they tried for eight years, the nuns were not able to break his spirit, although they did give him a good education. During the sixth grade, he discovered AH's D-Day and was hooked on wargaming.

Growing up in the Corn Belt, Tim longed to see what else there was out there and mistakenly bought into the Navy recruiter's promise to "Join the Navy and see the world" upon graduating from high school. He saw a lot of SE Asia, but not much else except the flight deck of a carrier.

Upon his return from RVN, he married a girl that he had known since ninth grade, went to college on the GI Bill and rediscovered gaming and miniatures. This led him to Chainmail.

Chainmail led him to calling up one of the authors, named Gary, which led him to D&D in 1974, which in turn led to a job with a new company in 1975 called TSR editing D&D supplements and starting a magazine called *The Dragon*.

He left the gaming field until just a couple of years ago, resurfacing as one of the celebrity auctioneers at GenCon. He is now busy writing a couple of game columns, answering questions on his thread at dragonsfoot.org, and writing a series of modular adventures for RP games. He is still happily married (39 years in July), has two children and four grandchildren, one of whom obviously got his gaming gene, and two cats in the yard.



I've often been asked how I found the artists and authors that I used first in *THE STRATEGIC REVIEW*, and later in *THE DRAGON (TD)* and *LITTLE WARS (LW)*. The short answer would be that in some cases I was lucky, and in other cases I went after them.

The luck came in two parts: in-house and "over-the-transom"; the former was due to the fact that TSR happened to have a couple of individuals on the payroll that could and did write articles, as well as a couple of "frequent faces" oft seen around the place such as our Esteemed Editor. One of Mr. Ward's very amusing articles gave us in the RPG field an iconic stereotype label still heard when us old-timers gather—the infamous Monty Haul.

To explain the latter, I'll first have to address the fact that a lot of you reading this are probably too young to have seen the old-style, two-piece interior office door. The bottom was the regular door; they could be glass, wood or a combination of the two. Above the door was the transom. The transom was a pane of glass that pivoted in the center to allow breezes to circulate, smoke to escape, heat to equalize, etc.; this was very much pre-air conditioning architecture. Most interior transoms were left open, if you wanted to leave something with someone in the office and they were gone and the office closed, you could slip it "over the transom"; in publishing at that time, we referred to unsolicited manuscripts as "over the transom" submissions.

We had a tremendous advantage at first; we were the only professional market for fantasy art and fantasy gaming articles. I stress that word because it separated us from fanzines and APA-zines like the Berlin Wall separated capitalism from socialism. I made no bones about it then,

nor will I now; with only one (grudging) exception, I loathed and detested them. I saw the 'zines as the worst form of vanity press, and TSR's worst-case scenario in image-spin. A majority of the "writers" were hacks, looneys, fools and demagogues with the very rare good writer hidden in the mix. They were a limited group that sent their stuff to each other; if there were 50 members, you had to make fifty copies (mimeographed or "Xeroxed") of your screed. These were sent to an "editor" (a completely false appellation as they did not correct egregious grammar and spelling) who collated them all, stapled them together and sent them to the members. They looked like bird scat; every shade of paper that you could photocopy onto in every shade from too dark or too faint to make out, with each one having a different font or typeface. Ugghh! If the affront to the eyes was not enough to turn you off, some of the affronts to your intelligence contained therein would surely do the trick. Worst of all, some of these mooncalves were being perceived as mainstream D&D'ers by the rest of the press. Mainstream they were not.

Mainstream D&D was not about Girdles of Sexchanging. For some odd reason, for a brief time in the beginning, the Girdles of Strength and the like were grist for the mill for those players that wanted to use the books as guidelines, not hard and fast rules. I truly believe that part of it was due to the "tee-hee" factor about girdles, which were an item of female apparel fast on its way out thanks to the Women's Libbers at the time. Sort of a Beavis & Butthead response; "Girdle, he-he-he, he said girdle." Well this "writer" had devised what he thought was the ultimate "crock" for the fascination with girdles. ("Crock" was a useful term that had its genesis in the fanzines; to "crock" something was to make

it malfunction, or to give it a side-effect totally unexpected and usually unwanted.) The girdles he hid in his dungeon made you either change sex, become homosexual (actually the more prevalent term in use then) or both. Oh yeah, what a joke on the poor PC that had six months of gaming invested in getting his fighter to 4th or 5th Level. Bad Bob the fighter is now Bad Bobbi, the lesbian fighter? This is just the most egregious example that comes to mind (actually, how do you ever forget something like that?); there were scads of others. I don't even want to consider going into some of the potions some of them proposed. For a while, it was my unpleasant task at TSR to read all of that drivel that found its way to us to check for infringements and the like.

But, once in a while I detected someone with talent, or at the very least some interesting ideas. Those few I pursued and landed most of them for at least one good piece. Some of them were completely rewritten by me, but only the person's whose idea it had been was credited. In fact, a lot of the early articles were completely rewritten by me; saying that I "edited" them was a harmless fiction in my mind. I wasn't looking for "credit"; I needed articles. I even wrote a few using pseudonyms; I was too embarrassed to publish under my own name for fear that some would attribute it to ego on my part. (The 'zines coined another word back then that had a lethally condemnatory meaning—ego-boo. Ego-boo was what you got when you talked to hear yourself talk, or published primarily for the purpose of feeding your own ego and/or for self-aggrandizement; it was food for the ego.)

I was asked once at a Q&A session at an early con shortly after I started *TD* what it was like to tell so many people what to do and have all of that "power". I picked and chose what got printed for a multitude of reasons, most of which supported the answer I gave to another question at one of those early symposiums. That other question was similar in vein to the first, asking if I "got a rush" telling so many people how to play the game. My answer then has a lot in common with why I became a school teacher. I told the questioner "No". My gratification came from knowing that I was reaching into tens of thousands of heads and massaging the owners' grey matter, stimulating the readers to think. Agree, or disagree; it matters not to me if I have caused you to think it through.

Artwork was a different matter entirely. This time our advantage was even greater in that we were the only company publishing *and paying for* fantasy art.

I looked at the art differently than the articles. I saw the art as eye-candy, the cover as the gift wrap on the present. When I published an article, I felt I was giving the author a soapbox to stand on; with the art I used, I saw the mag providing *exposure*.

For today's Internet generation, it must be hard to imagine how hard it was back then to get anyone to even *look* at your art, let alone use and publish it. Before I got to TSR, they were getting stuff sent to them in the mail, over the transom. Judging by today's standards a lot of the art we used in the early days in *Strategic Review*, *TD* and in the early books was execrable. However, it was the best that we had available to us to use, at that time. We were so desperate for art that I, who can't draw

flies on a hot day, drew some art we used in the early days. As we got better stuff to use, the unsolicited stuff got better.

To put it into perspective, this was when Boris Vallejo and Frank Frazetta were first breaking into the market as pioneers of their school of fantasy illustration. It was a brand new field, and younger budding artists were just discovering it all. Even the Hildebrandt Bros were only selling their LoTR calendars in comic stores, bookstores and fledgling game stores.

All of a sudden, all of these neophyte artists and illustrators were looking for exposure; the fact that we actually *paid* for art was like icing on the cake. Strange people started showing up at our booth at cons with a wad of drawings in hand, and strange stuff began to cascade from the transom. Sometimes you hit the mother lode, and it had walked up to you.

I got a real charge out of "discovering" good artists. I really felt a satisfaction in being able to give these artists exposure and perhaps a leg up towards a career. I am delighted that several of the artists that I used became really well known and popular.

Baltimore, 1976, Origins II: A very nice young man with a soft southern accent comes by our booth and says Gary told him to show me his drawings. I said, sure, show me. Five minutes later I am all fired up; ten minutes later I am hyped. Fifteen minutes later I have gotten this guy to commit to some work for upcoming issues of the mag. He's a *D&D*'er, in college, possessed of a sly sense of humor and a very good appreciation of the absurdities of RPG'ing; the best find I ever lucked into. His name? J.D. Webster, father of *Finieous Fingers*, the best comic about RPG ever done.



ADVENTURE SCULPTING

BY RON HEINTZ

Ron Heintz has a youth thoroughly misspent, as may be attested by the copies of Chainmail, Blackmoor, and Eldritch Wizardry stored in a trapped chest in his dungeon. He and his lovely, gamer wife (eat your hearts out, guys) were the creators of FASA's Shadowrun convention scenario system, Virtual Seattle, as well as freelance authors and editors for that system and for WotC/Lucasfilm's d20 Star Wars Campaign, "Living Force". Ron lives in Ontario, Canada.



famous sculptor was once asked, "How can you take a block of marble and end up creating a lifelike elephant?" His reply was, "I just take the block and chip off anything that doesn't look like an elephant."

A statement like that is cute, but not very helpful to a novice sculptor. Still, it does illustrate two important facets of session design in an ongoing campaign. These are: keeping your end goal in sight, and knowing your available tools.

Here are some CK tools to help sculpt your heroic adventures.

PART I: THIS WEEK'S SPECIAL GUEST STAR IS—YOU!

Good CKs and scenario authors put in something for everyone to do, in every scenario. This tool concerns making one character the focus of a particular scenario, while still giving everyone at the table a role. Here is an example of how it can work.

Let's say that you have bought a scenario that should work well for your campaign, and are deciding how to integrate it. It is a straightforward quest to retrieve an item from a bunch of humanoids that have a powerful, wizard leader. The person wanting the heroes to accomplish this is a local noble and the item is a magical shield that is also a family heirloom. Now, you make it *yours*. You know that your party's healer hasn't gotten a lot of love, lately—it's the old "healing battery" story. Great, she's durable and she can whack things semi-competently, but we all know why she's along. Well, not this time; this time she is the Star of the scenario.

You change up the lead-in, slightly. The item is a relic sacred to the cleric's temple and she is contacted via spell or messenger. The villains are the same, but the leader is no longer a wizard—he's a cleric of a temple diametrically opposed to hers. If you know that the cleric's player is willing to take on the role, you could have her temple desire that she be considered the leader. In return, they supply a few useful potions or scrolls. Several of the traps and obstacles along the way, instead of being ones easily circumvented only by Rogues, are clerical magic ones that require phrases or effects to remove: the Cleric's Wisdom check may reveal details from her training, and her spells or abilities may be used to circumvent some of the traps or situations.

You get the idea. Look for relatively minor changes, but make sure that the cleric's skills, spells and other abilities—possibly even her contacts, or other campaign "history" events—are often of use. Perhaps make the main villain so incensed at seeing a rival that he will target her preferentially, or be easily goaded into error by her.

In another scenario, the "star" spot is given to a different hero. Not every session need have a "star", and some players might be too shy to want to be center-stage. But personalization of a scenario can only make it more engaging for your group: who and what they are *matters* in the adventure.

PART II: ALTERNATIVES TO CHARACTER DEATH.

For this technique, the assumption is that you run a campaign that fosters ongoing, heroic legends. Character death is a much smaller issue in "beer and pretzels" or "power" campaigns. In the former episodic style, new characters can just be slotted in. In the latter, an experienced power-gamer can kit out a new "uber-build" in minutes.

Since you run C&C, it's safe to presume that the story is one of your main concerns, and that shared player and CK satisfaction is the other.

We begin with a familiar problem concerning any form of storytelling: no one wants a beloved character to die. Granted, a gaming group with a high trust level and a strong literary sense may be content to have some or all of the heroes sacrifice themselves at a dramatically appropriate point. However, for story-building roleplayers, random or unlucky death is going to impact the whole campaign negatively. On the other hand, you do not want a group to feel that they have "script immunity", or nothing is truly dangerous or heroic.

There has been a long tradition of debates among CKs of RPGs. It could be called the "let the dice lie, versus, fudge the die rolls" thread. There is a third alternative that allows for real danger and the potential for serious setbacks, including death, but which avoids *meaningless* death, even if you make all the rolls openly. Call it "Taking away the toys". Several different flavors follow.

Injure them interestingly. Failed checks or powerful monster attacks can result in long-term injury or disfigurement, rather than death. There are serious drawbacks associated with physical handicaps. In other cases, injuries may harm the victim's appearance or personal charisma: this can be just as serious a loss, especially if social interaction is important in your campaign.

The other side of such injuries is that they can also open up immense roleplaying opportunities. So many people in real life have shown that disabilities can be triumphantly overcome.

Having an arm or leg destroyed during a terrible confrontation will likely take that particular character out of the fight, without having to kill her. The dice, representing Fate, have said that she is out, and she is—just not forever. Of course, some may try to carry on, with certain types of injuries, and that's fine if you deem it appropriate. Otherwise: *"The giant's mace smashes into your shoulder with horrific force, and your world vanishes in a red haze of pain. Mercifully, you fall unconscious, the horrified cries of your friends fading in your ears."* Even though she gets to keep her character, that should introduce enough adrenaline and tension to fuel the remainder of the combat.

After the battle is over, what then? As an example, the hero has lost her off hand. If she is the sort that uses a shield, it may be possible to commission an interesting prosthesis. If she uses two weapons, all sorts of fantasy add-ons suggest themselves, starting with the "interchangeable weapon mount" in place of her hand. If she is a spell caster, then one hand may be enough, and she may be able to use a hook or other prosthesis in place of the lost hand.

Similar results can follow the loss of an eye. Deal with the lack of depth perception, and terrible ranged capability, or seek healing or magical substitutes.

There may be other repercussions, including the potential for social ostracism, if the average person in your world has a prejudice against people that have been disfigured.

If your campaign has a high enough level of magic, then there are alternatives. Spells that might otherwise not see use can become important, if they can reverse such terrible injuries. "Magical technology" may even be good enough to provide a clockwork or "golem" hand, depending upon your campaign's flavor.

Rather than a physical result, the combat shock could take the hero out of action for its duration, and then leave her with a psychological scar, such as a phobia. As long as the result provides a significant and real disadvantage to the hero, it is a reasonable substitute for character death.

Two warnings: first, this method is not appropriate for all groups. For some, a tragic but "clean" death is preferable to the darker realism of serious and lasting injury. Second: the injury must be a disadvantage, if it is an alternative to death. You don't want characters lopping off their limbs because you decided that a golem arm was to be stronger than the real one. If the condition can be reversed, it must not be easy to do. It should involve great expense, or a quest, or both.

Hurt someone that they care about. This tactic, again, must be used with sensitivity. Rather than killing the character, you

could decide that the attack seriously injures or kills a follower, or some other non-player character that is on the scene. This is sometimes known as the "NOOOOOO" effect. If you have a sensitive roleplaying group, this can be just as tragic as if one of the heroes died, especially if it has resulted from overconfidence, or a failure to protect those less capable. Or, it may be that the group's wonderful example to date has inspired a non-player character to make a heroic sacrifice, so that a player hero may continue the fight and destroy the menace. This sort of thing is best used in climactic "now or never" battles. If it happens, then certainly the NPC should figure prominently in whatever epilog the story has: a hero has still fallen.

Failure can hurt worse than death. It tends to be an axiom for many gaming groups that the heroes must always, inevitably, win. They save the kidnapped person, defeat the monster, or foil the evil necromancer's plan, and ride off as the dark tower, inevitably constructed of fitted stone blocks and napalm, crumbles in flames.

While these heroic things should definitely happen, hero failure is also an acceptable substitute for death, and can sting far worse. Note that having your player character group fail can require them to trust you more than occasionally killing them off. Modern media has convinced newer players, especially, that every problem has a solution and it had better be achieved by the time you roll credits. True, it is satisfying to have self-contained and quickly resolved episodes now and then, but story continuity and subplots work best with ongoing, protracted conflicts. No good nemesis ever perishes in the first reel.

So, if you see that the heroes have gotten themselves into a fatal fix, or if the dice have indicated that one of them is about to die gratuitously: capture the person, instead. Magically dominate the character, unleash a major fear effect on the heroes, spring an unforeseen (and perhaps quickly-inserted) trap, or otherwise force them to withdraw. This is *not* the same as ensuring the escape of their adversaries. That could be construed as, "Well, at least the cowardly scum had to run from us." If this is to be a substitute for hero death, then the *player characters* have to be the ones doing the running.

Failure can also provide excellent roleplaying opportunities, as the heroes must recapture the faith of the town, gather new information, heal their wounds and come up with a new and better plan for victory. But, when victory does come, oh, how much sweeter will it taste, as your heroes consider how hard it was to achieve.

Reduce or use the treasure. If your heroes get cocky and you have to cut them some slack to avoid killing them, it is entirely reasonable to reduce the treasure. Also, if the treasure includes useful potions or one-shot items like scrolls, and the enemies are capable of using them, have them use the treasure now! Prolonging the heroes' lives will make it much more likely that they "win" the encounter; there is no need to compound that with free treasure. In other words, in return for keeping up your hero group, beef up the monsters, too.

Take away their toys. We have come full circle. Another interesting substitute for character death is to take away a prized

piece of equipment, weapon, magic item, or something similar. Now: with a really good group, in a well-supported storyline, you may be doing this anyway, as a literary vehicle to get them to certain places or events. However, if this is not a tactic that you commonly use and that your players accept, then the loss of a magic sword or the destruction of a magical bag (and its contents?) can be a serious setback, and an alternative to killing the hero. The item bore the brunt of the attack, not her—but it is gone, now.

This should not be overused, but can be mixed with others of the techniques mentioned. Heroes will realize that there are dangers to fear besides death.

PART III: STORY IS KING—BUT DO THEY TRUST YOU?

This section dovetails with both of the previous parts, because the “sculpting” concept and the alternatives to player death both depend upon the lyrical campaign’s most fundamental requirement: trust in the storytelling CK. The CK and the players can tell truly powerful stories cooperatively. This requires mutual trust that all will be sensitive to each other’s story development, and the sweep of the campaign. Here is a list of some specific hallmarks of player trust:

- The players accept failures or escapes in specific encounters, confident that the story is being advanced to a satisfying conclusion.
- The players lose major items without whining, to support the ongoing story. This also provides the CK a way of

letting a hero retain an otherwise “encounter-breaking” item: it is stolen or deactivated for now, but the hero could get it back later.

- The players recognise major literary themes and cooperate with them. Some of these include: the escape of the major villain, the endangered loved one, consequences for inappropriate hero actions, and threat or damage to player reputation or holdings. These increase dramatic tension and player concern for the scenario.
- The players are willing to forestall closure on major plot or subplot arcs, letting them run across many encounters or scenarios. There is no way to build up a true campaign Nemesis for a hero, if every obstacle must be resolved by the third play session. Richer, deeper themes and conflicts—and rewards—take longer to craft well.

Your job: if you, as CK, wish to be graced with such exceptional players, it is necessary to earn and keep such trust. You should not be arbitrary or preferential in your adjudication. You need to have a good sense of story, and mine the best media for sweeping and heroic concepts for your campaign. Many of the previous articles in this magazine have addressed such needs. It helps to be able to incorporate player ideas for your campaign, without necessarily pandering to them: the line between being autocratic and insipid. Neither the Adversarial CK, nor the Monty Haul CK can run a rich, ongoing campaign.

Now: time to get back to sculpting your own heroic fantasy adventures!



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

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Auld & Wurmish

Wisdom from an Old Master by Mike Stewart

Expanded Secondary Skills



In the guidelines of one of the truly classic Fantasy RPGs of yesteryear, a simple system was suggested for granting “Secondary Skills” to player characters. Put simply, a Secondary Skill is the skill or skills a Player Character gained by growing up and before they embarked on gaining a class and the training they’d need for the adventuring life. After all, few children train from birth to become freebooting adventurers! Most will be trained in the craft of their parents, be it farming, fishing or other such skills.

The system below is an expanded view of such Secondary Skills, though not quite as detailed as the procedures Gary Gygas presented in the *Castle Zagyg: Yggsburg* supplement. In this system, each character may obtain at least one—sometimes two—skills as befits their background. The newly submitted secondary skills will be described briefly at the end of the article.

The exact method of checking for such skills is left to the choice of the player and Castle Keeper. In my campaigns, I usually use a Secondary Skill check as something similar to a racial ability but protected as a class skill. That is, no matter how intelligent a character is, if they don't have the Alchemy Secondary Skill they can't make an INT attribute check to try to concoct a potion. If you'd rather be more generous, a Castle Keeper might allow a Secondary Skill check be considered a Prime. Either way, it makes the skills of a Player Character's early life an interesting addition to any *Castles & Crusades* game. It may even provide an idea to the character's player in deciding the character's background and history instead of the generic fighter who just appeared with X amount of gold and gear ready to delve the depths of the earth!

The Castle Keeper may insist on the players rolling randomly for their Secondary Skill,

or allow free choice as appropriate to your campaign. Generally, I'd let a player roll 1D4, with 1–3 being one Secondary Skill and a 4 being two skills. A bit random, but then learning skills in a Medieval setting (other than your father's trade) was pretty rare in any event.

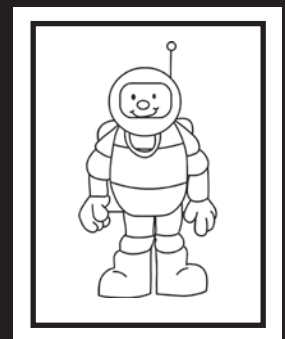
Table I: Secondary Skill List

2D12 Dice Score	Result
02	Acrobatics
03	Alchemy
04	Animal Handling
05	Appraisal/Bartering
06	Ars Magica
07	Blacksmith
08	Construction
09	Courtoise
10	Farming
11	Fibercraft
12	Fine Arts
13	Forester
14	Gambling
15	Jeweler
16	Leatherworking
17	Mariner
18	Mythology
19	Performing Arts
20	Physicker
21	Scribe
22	Strategos
23	Weaponscraft
24	Terrain Lore

Some of the secondary skills are similar to the various abilities of many of the classes available for play in *Castles & Crusades*. However, it must be remembered that while a Secondary Skill gives a character a basic



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



understanding of the field in question they will always be inferior to the expertise in the same skill provided by a class. For example, while a character with the Forester Secondary Skill might have a basic grasp of the various aspects of the woodlands in the climate of his early life, the character will never equal the capabilities of even a 1st level Ranger. The same would apply to a cleric with the Performing Arts Secondary Skill; he or she would have a basic knowledge to perform acceptably but could not equal a 1st level Bard.

Skill Definitions:

While the name of each Secondary Skill is rather self-explanatory, a few words of greater definition are given below. Please note that the precise definition and when/where the skill can be applied is entirely left up to the Castle Keeper.

Acrobatics (Dexterity): This skill allows a character to double their attribute bonus when evading attacks or making any attribute checks or saving throws regarding Dexterity. Acrobatics may also be used if a character has been thrown back by recoil and wishes to land on their feet (successful Acrobatics check). If this check is successful then the Character does not lose a combat round in order to return to the fight. The Castle Keeper will determine if the use of an Acrobatics skill is possible in a given situation.

Alchemy (Intelligence): Alchemy is usually found only among spell casting sorts such as Magic Users, but certain exceptions may be found in a large town. The skill provides the knowledge of how to brew certain potions and balms, but the Castle Keeper determines costs and time to create such potions. Please note that any creation of magical potions/balms/ointments must follow the rules set out in the Monsters & Treasure Tome. Another use of this skill is to determine what a potion or other unguent is by using senses (Intelligence check using Wisdom, but the Intelligence attribute bonus is added as well.)

Appraisal/Bartering (Charisma): A character with this skill is well versed in determining the general worth of items as well as the discrete techniques for haggling without giving offense. The successful use of this skill allows a modification of 10% of an item's cost per attribute bonus point of Charisma the skilled appraiser has.

Animal Handling (Wisdom): The skill of Animal Handling provides the character with knowledge of domesticated animals common to their culture, and their treatment, upbringing, and breeding. Simple training is capable as well, though more complex training is at the discretion of the Castle Keeper.

Ars Magica (Intelligence): This skill encompasses all the various minor disciplines any student of the Arcane is familiar with such as Witchcraft, Occult, Numerology, Demonology, etc. It is also useful in the further study of the Magical Arts and a greater proficiency in dweomercraft. A character with this skill may perform an Intelligence check to be able to recognize a number of spells on a scroll or other surface equal to their Intelligence attribute bonus (always at least 1.)

Blacksmith (Strength): The skill of blacksmithy provides the character with the ability to forge simple tools or make

small repairs to simple metal items. Weapons cannot be forged or significantly repaired with this skill, as such falls under the Weaponcraft skill. However, armors can be repaired and simple (i.e. non articulated) pieces can be forged or repaired.

Construction (Intelligence): The Construction skill is a catchall category for carpentry, woodwork, and simple masonry techniques. A character with Construction can reduce the time period for a given construct to be completed by 10% per attribute bonus point the character has. For a large project overseen by such a skilled person also has its construction costs reduced by the same percentage as well.

Courtoise (Charisma): This skill notes that the character is proficient with manners, social mores on their particular level of social class, and how to act among those superior or inferior to them. Public Speaking is also part of this, as is the many methods society uses to segment itself (such as heraldry, Regalia, etc.).

Farming (Wisdom): The Farming skill reflects a character's innate understanding of growing domesticated plants and trees, along with an ability to gauge seasons and general weather patterns if they are within a terrain similar to their homeland.

Fibercraft (Dexterity): A character with the Fibercraft skill has a general knowledge of textiles and woven crafts such as cloths, and reed weaving. Characters with this skill can gauge the quality of fibers and the robustness of wicker crafts and could even distinguish a cloth or wicker's origin and worth.

Fine Arts (Intelligence or Charisma): The skill of Fine Arts covers the entire gamut of artistic expression in its physical sense, from design to sculpting to poetry and prose. At the Castle Keeper's discretion, the character can use their Fine Arts skill to double the attribute bonus for any check involving their artistic skill and its effect upon an audience. Art for art's sake would be strictly an Intelligence check, while trying to please the audience would fall under a Charisma check.

Forester (Constitution): The facets of the Forester skill can cover a wide range of abilities, such as woodland lore, fire starting, setting small snares, identifying trees & ivies, etc.

Gambling (Intelligence or Wisdom): The Gambling skill grants the character a proficiency in games of chance, to be specified as either gambling (Wisdom) or leisure games (Intelligence.) Whenever engaged in such a game, the character can make an appropriate attribute roll and add double their Attribute modifier to the check as appropriate.

Jewelry (Dexterity): This skill notes the character's ability with gem cutting, setting and crafting of fine jewelry and the use and appraisal of precious and semiprecious stones.

Leatherworking (Dexterity): Leathercrafting covers a broad skill set, covering everything from leather cord weaving, tack and saddle craft and even simple leather armors. A character with this skill can repair rens and rivets in armor, bridles, tack and even leather clothing with a degree of quality and decor.

Mariner (Constitution): The Mariner is someone with long experience with boats, boating and fishing. Depending on whether this skill is based on a background of fresh or salt water, this can include net fishing, use of sails, knots, undertow, sand

bars, barging, and other such tricks of the trade. The player and Castle Keeper should work together to determine the details of this skill and what type of experience the character will have. In a low-magic world, the above might be sufficient but in medium or high magic worlds, some knowledge of magical aquatic creatures and sorcery might be expected.

Mythology (Intelligence): This skill (chosen either with emphasis on History or Religion) allows the character to have knowledge of either local history or of other locales near the character's residence (DM's choice). The Religion aspect involves a knowledge of one's own worshipped pantheon/deity and their deeds, as well as a passing knowledge of other common pantheons as defined by the Castle Keeper in their campaign.

Performing Arts (Charisma): The skills of Performing Arts comprise any method of artistic expression that entertains an audience by physical activity. This can encompass acting, singing, juggling, etc. and the parameters should be specified between the player and Castle Keeper.

Physicker (Intelligence): The skill of Physicker notes a character's ability with medieval healing theories and some rudimentary knowledge of healing herbs and their application for minor ailments.

Scribe (Intelligence): The Scribe's skill is that of penmanship, writing, and ink and paper preparations. Simple illumination is possible, as well as other writing abilities.

Strategos (Intelligence): This skill indicates that the character is well versed in the strategy & tactics of military formations both small and large.

Terrain Lore (Wisdom): The skills of Terrain lore denote a character's familiarity with an unusual (i.e. not Forester, Farming, or Mariner) terrain type that they lived in for some time before adventuring (or is the predominant area they adventure in). Only one terrain per skill is allowed and must be declared upon character generation.

The various facets of the Terrain Lore skill can cover a wide range of abilities germane to the terrain in question; such as woodland lore, setting small snares, identifying local flora and fauna, etc. Terrains that can be chosen are Woodland/Prarie, Artic, Mountainous, Desert, Oceanic, marshland, and any other deemed appropriate by the Castle Keeper for their milieu.

Weaponscraft (Constitution): This skill is much more intricate than the blacksmithy skill, and as a result does not come into use as often. If a weapon is to be forged, or if weapons need repair then this skill is vital. Weapons, especially those with blades, spikes or chains; require honing and balance, and the character with this craft (and tools) can refurbish most weapons at need or if sufficiently supplied could forge them as well. The Castle Keeper will define the exact parameters of this skill, but most weapons that are damaged due to chipping, bending, or in certain limited circumstances even broken can be repaired with sufficient materials and time.

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Castles & Crusades

Dragon Tavern Online Game



he mountain dwarf, Wardoz, explores the mountain region of Ravenwatch. Walking those paths, he comes across a Banished Cobal Vengeance Seeker, a 23 level demon. He knows he has a 50% chance of success against such a creature. He enters the battle and wins, gaining 694 points of experience and 377 gold pieces. He didn't even take a wound and he continues.

I go on the Troll Lord forums every day. I don't think any of you CRUSADER readers miss out on these boards, but if you don't you should get online and go over there. They are a lot of fun, and great for Castle & Crusades fans. So, on those boards I see this banner ad for the Dragon Tavern. I don't know many people who pay attention to banner ads. However, the full figured tavern wench at the bar in that banner ad looked uncommonly good. (The only bad point in this entire review is that you NEVER see her again. What's the deal?) Anyway, I clicked on the ad and a month later, I'm still having fun.

Welcome to the practically empty homepage of Rowdy Baron Games!

Rowdy Baron Games is the owner and operator of Dragon Tavern, and is a company affiliated with Trident Games.

For all inquiries, please contact Thomas or if it's a question in relation to Dragon Tavern, please contact Dragon Tavern Support.

Rowdy Baron Games Pty Ltd
3310/68 Market Street
Sydney, NSW
Australia 2000

Who made this game?

Dragon Tavern was created by Rowdy Baron Games and launched on the 16th of May 2008. For all inquiries, please email dragontavern@rowdybarongames.com.

The DRAGON TAVERN has a great description about itself...

From outside, the sound of music and rowdy behavior, along with the occasional snippet of a tall tale can be heard flowing from inside the legendary Dragon Tavern. Famous for being situated between the three nearby great realms, and for a zero tolerance stance on conflict inside its walls or in the grounds immediately outside, where a range of shops, training facilities and merchants hoping to acquire exotic treasures from returning adventurers can be ...From outside, the sound of music and rowdy behavior, along with the occasional snippet of a tall tale can be heard flowing from inside the legendary Dragon Tavern. The tavern is famous for being situated between the three nearby great realms, and for a zero tolerance stance on conflict inside its walls or in the grounds immediately outside, where a range of shops, training facilities and merchants hoping to acquire exotic treasures from returning adventurers can be found.



The tavern itself is open at all hours, having a range of accommodation to suit all budgets and needs, as well as a range of fine food and drink to suit any taste. (more)

FAQ

I like the information found in the FAQ.

What do I do now?

Your first job as a champion of your realm is to use the Travel option to get out into a location and start exploring. It's highly recommended that you start in Skyclaw Mountains or the Shattered Highlands, as they're the most friendly for new adventurers. From there, you hit explore and watch as your character gets into battles with foes, defeats them, and claims their treasure. Keep an eye on your wounds however! If you die, you'll be sent back to the tavern with none of the items you've picked up since you last arrived.

One of the fun features about the game is finding the rare areas to explore.

Besieged Dockyard (10 explorations)

Everything went well until they had nobody left to fight. The three captains and their ships then began making none too subtle moves against each other until a fully-fledged battle between the ships ensued. The dockyards, home to the watery graves of the poor Ravenwatch Navy who was destroyed before they could even get their anchors drawn, have become the scene of a secondary battle between the pirate factions looking to control the most valuable strategic point in the... Everything went well until they had nobody left to fight. The three captains and their ships then began making none too subtle moves against each other until a fully-fledged battle between the ships ensued. The dockyards, home to the watery graves of the poor Ravenwatch Navy who was destroyed before they could even get their anchors drawn, have become the scene of a secondary battle between the pirate factions looking to control the most valuable strategic point in the city for moving their ill gotten gains onto their ships, and then off onto their respective destinations.

My character looks like this:

Wardoz

Class – Dwarven Berserker

Type – Normal

Status – Active

Realm – Mountain Kingdoms

Level – 22

Total XP – 342,698 (37,502 more to level 23)

Gold – 1,416

Current AP – 23

Current Wounds – 2/12

Skill Points – 0/14

Equipment

Armament primary – Gore covered Tri-Flail (AR: +220)

Protection primary – Rugged Mail vest and leggings (DR: +192)

Protection secondary – Leather Headguard (DR: +6)

Support primary – Glass Bottle of Gnollbuster Bitter (AR: +64 / DR: +64)

Total AR / DR: – 284 / 262

Personal Details

Lineage – Blister Peak Mercenaries

Hair Type – Tied Back

Eyes Type – Hazel

Skin Type -- Dark

Body Type -- Muscular

Distinguishing Feature -- Body tattoos

Mannerism -- Surly

Advantages

You have no Advantages.

Bottom line: this is basically a find the monsters, fight the monsters, take its treasure sort of game. There are lots of very imaginative bits of text through the game that are fun to read. I'm ranked 839th among my dwarves. It isn't great, but I'm still working at it. Come on into the tavern and maybe we can tip a few, I'll buy the first round.

James M. Ward

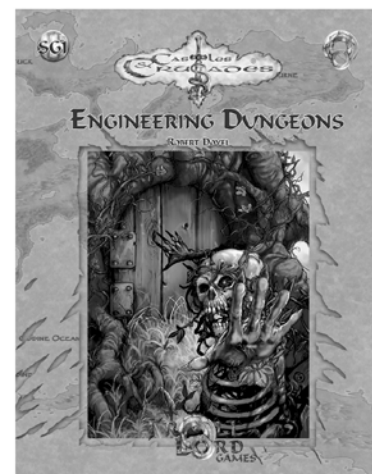
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CRUSADER

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THE FOURTH CRUSADE

STEPHEN CHENAULT



his has already been a whirlwind of a year. It started out strong for us, with many releases stacked up from 2008 hitting the streets, about six books in as many weeks. February followed a similar pattern with a few less. Then March hit and we found ourselves moribund. Suddenly nothing was working, office, mail room, print shop and warehouse were in shambles, and orders were piling up, machine problems and more slowed things down to a crawl. It became a classic brutal bar fight for us to get through it. April came along like a banshee and hasn't stopped to catch its breath. It's already the 24th, we've launched another PDF sale, topping off our 10/5 sale, and have been working on multiple projects seemingly without direction. But one thing has kept my spirits up and has generated a little excitement around here, the pending release of the 3rd printing of the *Monsters & Treasure*. Why does this printing have me in a good mood? It's the precursor for what's coming.

FOUR TOWERS

The 3rd printing of the *Monsters & Treasure* book ships on April 29th. Late last year we noticed an increase in the restock levels of both the *Monsters & Treasure* and the *Players Handbook*. I thought we had a good supply set in for both, but I miscalculated, not anticipating a late in the year bump. This was good news but nerve-wracking for even as we were focusing on *Of Gods & Monsters* and the *CKG* we were going to have to take a step back and revisit the two anchor books. But it was fortuitous as discussions about a new line look were common around the offices, a rebranding of the game. Opportunity knocked. Now, we could do it all at once, so we hit the drafting boards hard. It was like beginning the Crusade all over again. It was like a new Crusade, but as with the first Crusade, this one needed a firm foundation.

I chose the *Monsters & Treasure* book as the important release of year as it has been an anchor for the game, but one that, arguably, is not as important as the *Players Handbook*. By releasing it first it serves as a clear signal to anyone interested, and even to those not interested, that *Castles & Crusades* is as fresh and cutting edge as when it debuted in 2005. The book and line has taken on a new, bolder look, one which heralds greater things to come. It has a new, bold look, with a more defining title logo and most importantly an amazing new cover piece by Peter Bradley.

The *Monsters & Treasure*, 3rd, is the perfect tower for the castle that is the foundation of *Castles & Crusades*.

CASTLES & CRUSADES MONSTERS & TREASURE

Product Type/Format & Price: 8.5 × 11 hardback, 128 pages; \$19.99

Written By: Stephen Chenault & Robert Doyel

Ordering Info: TLG 80113

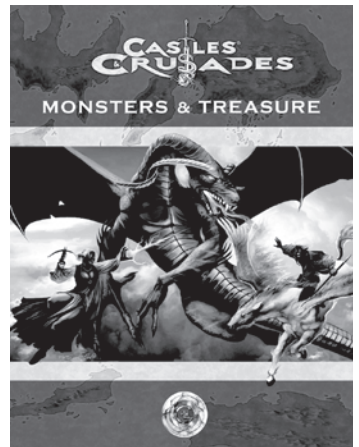
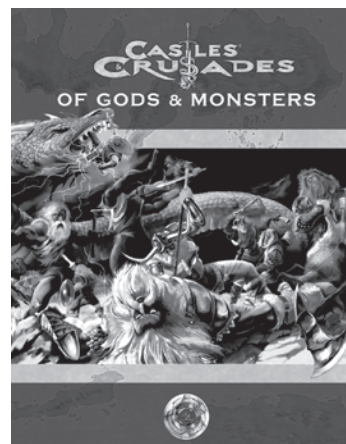
Of all four the M&T has the least changes in it. There are a number of new art pieces by Peter Bradley, some minor rules cleaned up, mostly removing irrelevant data from the poison section and a few editorial things here and there. It is largely as

it was and serves to replace dwindling stocks and set the tone for the next release.

What to release next? Which of the three books would get the treatment first? The *CKG* was right out as it was/is still incomplete. So it was a toss up between the reprint of the *PH* and the new *Of Gods & Monsters*. Both had advantages, so I put them very close together, one month apart, which in real terms is at the same time.

Of Gods & Monsters releases early this summer. It's a hallmark book by James M. Ward and serves as the perfect companion piece to *Monsters & Treasure*, by expanding the game beyond the normal keen of monsters and into the divine arena. Mr. Ward has worked tirelessly to bring together a plethora of pantheons and to make them playable. By creating avatars of each god he brings the divine off the 'do not touch' list and to the playing table. When he pitched this concept to me it took me awhile to grasp it, but when I did, I loved it. What a fresh approach to the age old question about all powerful gods. By expanding the rules into this arena he also made gods and their servants a vibrant portion of the C&C experience. Now it goes beyond just who or what your cleric, paladin, druid or whatever they worship and makes paying homage to the gods an added component of the game.

CASTLES & CRUSADES OF GODS & MONSTERS



Product Type/Format & Price: 8.5 × 11 hardback, 164 pages; \$29.99

Written By: James M. Ward

Ordering Info: TLG 8017
ISBN: 978-1-929474-30-1

One of the truly great things about *Of Gods & Monsters* and one of the reasons it stands out in the C&C library is the sheer volume of material. Each deity comes with magic items associated with that deity and each pantheon comes with new associated spells and

new monsters. *Of Gods & Monsters* opens up a whole new arena beyond the material, which leaves open the door for all manner of planar material, all the while maintaining the commonsensical C&C approach which is its stock and trade.

Of Gods & Monsters strengthens the foundation by adding another tower to the bastion that is this Crusade.

The *Players Handbook*, the mainstay of the game, the corner stone, the Keep if you will. This is the centerpiece of this game and it is being revisited, as it never has before. We aren't changing the Siege Engine; we aren't rearranging things or making a new system for combat that call for a new edition. We are only adding to a book that has proven its value time and time again. We tapped James M. Ward again for this project, and he heartily agreed to write over 40 new illusionist spells. This class, neglected by some, was in need of a second look and it seemed best to give him that look by giving him more resources. The illusionist is something more now. The only real changes the 4th printing see, context wise, are found in the barbarian. Long neglected and much maligned we decided to revamp this (it might be because Mac played one in the Wednesday night game and said it needed something). We changed abilities and added some new ones, most notable the ability to terrify! What made a Comanche warrior terrifying to the early settlers? Was it because his socio-cultural environment dictated he wear animal skins instead of pants suits? No. Was he ignorant or a raving lunatic? No. Was he able to go into an insane rage and run around like mad taking multiple wounds until he died? No. What made him terrifying was the fact that he represented the unknown, the primordial animal in all of us. Part of being a barbarian is living beyond the normal modes of what defines civilization, it's not easy to quantify and therefore it terrifies. We weaken in our knees when we see the Viking leap off his boat and into the surf, axe and shield in hand, undaunted by what he see and lusting only for our destruction. We are scared. We fight, but perhaps not as well as we should.

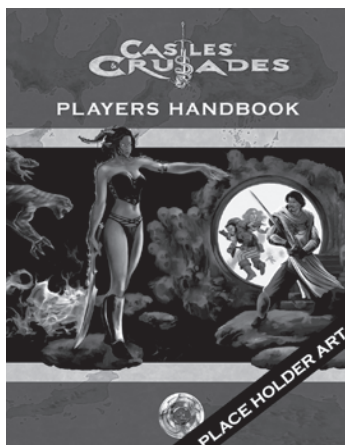
So look into the eyes of the new barbarian and know fear, for it's coming with this release early this summer.

CASTLES & CRUSADES PLAYERS HANDBOOK, 4TH PRINTING

Product Type/Format & Price: 8.5 × 11 hardback, 128 pages; \$19.99

Ordering Info: TLG 80104

The *Players Handbook* is the game. It is *Castles & Crusades*, for the Siege Engine lies within its covers. It is integral to this game we all love to play. Its simplicity is in its form and this new form, with a new amazing cover by Peter Bradley, is coming this June.



If the *Players Handbook* is a tower, it is the Keep that holds it all together. But what will make this Keep a castle comes this August, at Gencon

The *Castle Keeper's Guide* has been the focus of our attention for many long months, years some would remark (but truthfully, not until last year did it dawn on me about the importance of this book. And the day of its release is nearly upon us. I am excited about this book like no other for somehow, in my mind's eye when it hits the shelves, it will complete the game. Its release opens up for us the opportunity to do what we have never been able to do

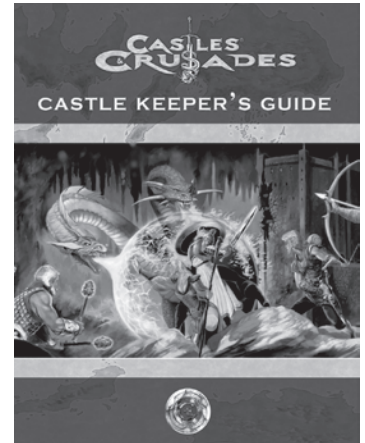
and that is sell a game without question for it complements the other three core books, the screens, character reference sheets, adventures and the soon to be countless supplements that already exist for C&C.

CASTLE KEEPERS GUIDE CASTLES & CRUSADES (CORE BOOK)

Hardcover, \$29.99, 220+ pages

Stock Code TLG 8015; ISBN 978-1-929474-68-4

The *Castle Keeper's Guide* overflows with information, for a sample see previous Crusader articles or check the website out. But suffice it to say we are trying to craft a toolbox that any CK or player can access and use to run to games or make setting or play in games. In truth, it is misnamed for there is as much for the Players, well almost as much, as there are for the CKs.



This is the fourth tower for the castle of our Crusade and with its completion it allows us to take the community by storm and to begin, at last, this, our Fourth Crusade.

THE FOURTH CRUSADE

This is exciting stuff. The Fourth Crusade is the second great launch by TLG to build the game up and make it a bulwark in its own right. Why not the second, or the third? The name, the Fourth Crusade, derives from the fact that we are printing the 4th edition of the *Players Handbook*, given double meaning when we realize that we are printing four core books this year.

Since its release in 2005 the *Players Handbook* as been reprinted once almost every year and thousands of copies have found permanent homes on game shelves. It proves the game has grown beyond its roots and that people, gamers, find in it something more than they originally thought. I often hear people refer to the game as a D&D knock off or a game for the old school. This is just not true. It's a game that captures in the simplest tones, with the easiest rule set, our imagination. Captures isn't the right word, because it gives our imagination the freedom it needs to create and run games of our own devising. It is a game that empowers our imagination by giving us a simple tool to create and devise worlds and adventures of our own making. That is the source of the game's appeal and its success; it is the bedrock of the game.

This bedrock, is the base upon which the Four Towers of our foundation stand and that foundation is the castle of the Crusade from which we now begin the Fourth Crusade!



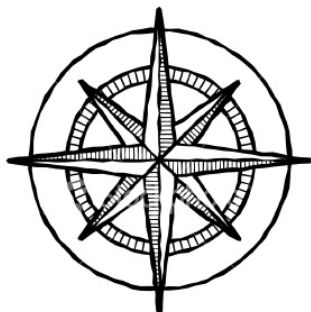
Troll Lord Freebies (just for you!)







Casey Canfield has been playing and game-mastering RPGs since 1983. Casey currently plots the deeds of nefarious characters and creatures from his lair just outside of Endicott, New York.



The Silly



I've never played an RPG on a regular basis that did not degenerate into outright silliness at times. We all remember those sessions where the heroes won the day, or the nasty monster was slain, or the epic treasure was recovered. We also remember the silly moments—the moments where we let our collectively warped gamer senses-of-humor bleed into the play of the game itself. I'm probably not alone in that I remember the hilarious moments with more clarity than some of the more serious, dramatic events.

I've been in games where the referee was dead-set against "the silly," as I call it. It can be a nuisance, leading to cross-talk and diversions from the focus of the game, but going overboard while trying to prevent it takes away from the enjoyment of playing a great game with a bunch of great friends. It's tough to strike a balance between "the silly" and "the serious," but finding a way to do this is a necessary part of any successful RPG experience.

Our stalwart Managing Editor and Editor-In-Chief have both hinted at an emphasis on humor for the April issue, so for this installment of *H&A*, I've decided to veer away from the "advice column" approach. Instead, I'm going to take a little of my own advice from *Crusader #1* and improvise.

Here are some of the funny moments that influenced me as a gamer and provide some of my fondest memories of being at the gaming table. I hope it inspires all of you to let "the silly" take over every now and then.



The Tale of Ernst Sofabane, or Pavlov's Furniture

An ongoing joke I've seen in multiple groups is that Gygax modules always have a treasure in some creature's stomach.

Back in college, I was running my second campaign using a classic Gygax module. This particular group was filled with brilliant gamers—every last one of them having an impeccable sense of humor and timing.

One of these players controlled a lively character named Ernst. Ernst was a daring fighter, strong of spirit and greedy in appetite. After cleaning out a den of priests, Ernst was helping the party ransack their quarters. They searched the bodies, and chests, and usual places to stash loot, but Ernst decided to check one final place. He drew his sword and cut open the upholstery of the sofa, pulling its stuffed guts out all over the room, searching for the elusive hidden treasure in the thing's "gullet." He did so with such verve that he soon had everyone at the table tearing up with laughter.

I knew the sofa contained no treasure according to the official description of the room. My players didn't know that. So, after Ernst gutted his foe, the vile sofa, he found a gem. Nothing expensive, just something that fell out of a pouch at some point and ended up in the innards of the couch. As I declared this, Ernst's player, with a straight face, the laughter fell from the tabletop onto the floor, and we all needed about ten minutes to compose ourselves. Not only did the moron just gut a couch, but it was the right thing to do.

Ernst, now dubbed Sofabane, was henceforth a hero, vindicated in his certainty that there was indeed treasure in the gullet of something in every single Gygax adventure. Of course, my actions encouraged the disemboweling of more than one piece of furniture in subsequent adventures, a Pavlovian

response if I've ever seen one. I refused to place more treasure inside furniture, but this didn't seem to matter. There was one time that Ernst Sofabane was successful, and therefore it could happen again.



Fortune Favors the Bold

In the same campaign, another player had, and still has, a great gift for one-liners. A certain town in the campaign, an outpost for the scum of the region, had fallen under the domain of an evil werewolf that I created. The werewolf, of course, had more powerful masters, but ruled the town as its local constable.

Needless to say, our intrepid party saw fit to challenge the local river pirates. A drunken bender, followed by a fit of rage, led our stout-hearted dwarf to firebomb one of the pirate ships docked on the northern part of town. This impulsive (some would say stupid) action caused acute fear in the rest of the party, as their cover would be blown.

The inferno and subsequent battle at the docks was epic, and when the constable-werewolf arrived with his cronies, it became doubly so. The public gathered at a safe distance to watch the swords clash and magic fly. After a period of time, where the battle raged all the way back to the center of town, the werewolf was defeated. The party was exhausted, having used all of their resources to fend off the pirates and constabulary, and were ready to collapse.

This is when they noticed the townsfolk surrounding them, clutching weapons, and looking menacing.

Cue the King of the One-Liner. This time, though, he wasn't as succinct. He began a tirade that lasted five minutes of real-time, in which his character proceeded to posture, belittle, and otherwise attempt to shame and intimidate every single one of the more than two hundred hostile residents of that town. He left no insult unused, and no warped logic untapped. The rest of us, sitting around the table, stared at him slack-jawed as he ramped up his soliloquy of doom, threatening the absolute destruction of all they hold dear if the town did not let him and his companions pass.

Then we started laughing. He was still ranting, a real "You want some of this?!" stem-winder. The rest of us were howling. I was on the verge of losing my breath, tears running down my face. He was on a roll, and his rage wasn't slowing down.

When he finished, he was literally breathless, his face flushed. I managed to compose myself long enough to look at him seriously, saying, "They part before you like the Red Sea." Then the entire room erupted in laughter again.

The player was instantly awarded an extra 1000 XP. The award was a no-brainer. In one act, he made all of us laugh so hard while staying in character, and he effectively rescued the entire party from destruction with the biggest bluff I've ever seen in a game. It was the single greatest moment of in-character role-playing I've ever witnessed, and as a bonus, it was funny.



The Band of the Flaming Pew

Parties containing paladins are ripe for high comedy, and this game proved to be no exception. While on their way into a small town, a party passed by an old church at dusk. The ranger, taking point, was convinced he heard a noise from inside the church.

Fearing desecration of the holy ground, the paladin tromped up to the window of the church to look inside. At least he had a modicum of caution. Of course, there was nothing to be seen except a door to the sanctuary that was ajar.

The paladin wanted to investigate further, and without discussing the matter, moved around to the front of the church to enter through the front doors. Drawing his weapon, he advanced through the doors and weaved his way around the wreckage inside, toward the sanctuary door. The rest of the party followed, as quietly as they could manage with an armored zealot in the lead.

The sanctuary was ransacked, making the paladin extremely angry. He loudly vowed to take revenge upon the desecrators. The ranger, once again, heard noises from behind another door in the sanctuary, and not having the wisdom or inclination to keep his mouth shut, informed the paladin of the sound. The paladin strode to the door, and flung it open, in a righteous rage. Rather than another room, the door revealed a stairway leading downward into a basement. In the basement, naturally, were the orcs that the paladin alerted through his raving anger. The orcs proceeded to shoot the paladin full of crossbow bolts, taking him temporarily out of the fight while the dwarf cleric ministered to him.

In the meantime, the ranger and thief began returning missile fire down the staircase. Both sides found themselves at an impasse. Several rounds of combat later, the paladin was back to nearly full strength, and was even more infuriated. He vowed to charge down the stairs and engage the orcs head-on.

The rest of the party members knew this would be suicide, and tried to talk him out of the rash maneuver. He was having none of it, though, and girded himself for the attack.

It was then that the dwarf cleric, with sudden inspiration, doused one of the broken pews with a flask of lamp oil, and set it aflame. The lamp oil slowly began to burn. Crying for help, the cleric began to lift the blazing pew and move it to the staircase. The ranger moved to aid the cleric while the paladin stared at them, stupefied.

The orcs, meanwhile, noticing a lull in the return fire, decided to mount an attack of their own.

They were halfway up the stairs when the pew hit them. The lead orc was killed instantly, the rest tumbling back down the staircase, followed by the blazing pew. The paladin, screaming about the fires of purification and righteousness, followed in its wake, sword drawn. Leaping over the remnants of the

blazing pew, the paladin laid into the orcs that remained, and his companions soon aided him in dispatching the orc band.

They put the fire out, and then stopped to rest for a bit. The paladin admitted his zeal had gotten the better of him, but wondered aloud what had possessed the dwarf cleric to do such a thing.

The dwarf replied that the paladin was such an idiot he was hoping to block the stairwell with the pew so that he wouldn't run down and get killed. His player shrugged, and we all laughed for a good, long time.

After a time, the party proceeded to the town, and checked into the local inn. In the ale room that evening, the thief regaled listeners with the tale of the events at the old church. Amazed and filled with good humor, the locals dubbed the party the Band of the Flaming Pew, and they were known as such for the rest of the campaign.



The Insane Archmage's Cow

Like many dreamy-eyed gamers, I had my own imaginings about the lair of a certain lunatic Archmage, and I put pen to paper and began to detail a dungeon. I was quite young at the time, and my version of the dungeon reflected this. My version was peppered with all sorts of eccentricities, like blink dogs in a hall of mirrors, working video games, secret passages to nowhere, and magic mouths.

While the first group that adventured within the dungeon had a fun time, the best encounter was deep within its confines. After crossing an underground river and passing through several empty rooms, the party opened a door to find yet another empty room. Empty save for a single cow, that is.

Unmoving except for the occasional tail swish, the cow stared at the party, apparently unsurprised. The party, of course, began dissection of the issue, trying to determine precisely how a cow managed to get this far into the dungeon, and trying to determine what to do with it.

Finally, the druid decided to try to speak with the cow, to determine what to do next. He greeted the cow using his special ability to communicate with animals. The cow said nothing in response, but stared at the druid.

Frustrated, the druid tried again, asking the cow if she understood him.

The cow spoke then, saying only, "Moo. Got any grass?"

The table erupted in laughter, and it was then the party realized that this cow was put here by the mad Archmage as a joke. The cow never aged, never hungered, never thirsted, and never relieved itself, and it was just there to confuse anyone passing through. The party liked my version of the Archmage's humor and left the cow alone, to chew its never-ending cud.

Cursed?

Our largely happy gaming group had a malcontent for a player. He was the only player that refused to cooperate with party goals, insisting on making himself the center of attention at every turn. He insisted he would have a pet chicken trained to hide at the first sign of danger. He made a fool out of himself whenever the rest of the party tried to have a serious conversation. He would pick fights with monsters the group wanted to avoid, and avoid fighting when the situation demanded it.

In short, the player was a nuisance. At that point, no one wanted to just kick him from the group, but at the same time, patience was wearing thin. I decided that if he wanted to be the center of attention, I'd give him what he wanted.

In the next set of treasure, I placed a cursed scarf. Made of iridescent silk, the scarf was obviously magical. The player fell for it, and demanded to be given the scarf. The party wished to identify the properties of the item first. He insisted, and the party, expecting the player's normal behavior, eventually relented.

Flush with victory, the nuisance's character immediately wore the scarf. Instantly, a change went over him, for the scarf was the much-hated scarf of fashion sense, a dread artifact. I pulled the player aside, and informed him that his character was immediately compelled to obtain new clothing, as his horribly drab outfit just wouldn't do. The glory of the scarf required better coordination. In addition, he simply couldn't be seen with the rest of the party if they insisted on dressing so poorly. He was compelled to insist they travel to the nearest city at once to obtain the newest fashions. If they refused to go, he would go alone. He would also never remove the scarf, all other articles of clothing being boring in comparison. Finally, he would subject every single living creature he encountered to the same fashion standards and scrutiny. He enthusiastically nodded, seeing this as a chance to make a spectacle of himself.

He fell into my trap willingly, seeing this as a ripe opportunity for attention-seeking behavior. After that session, the rest of the players asked me what I was doing, and asked them simply to trust me for one more session. I did not want to inform them of my plan because I did not want them to be accused of conspiracy with me.

During the next session, the nuisance had done his homework, and began spouting off about the poor taste of his fellows, and the surrounding populace at large. He demanded they travel to a city, and demanded that they all upgrade their wardrobes to keep from sullying his glorious fashions. They all reluctantly agreed since they needed to resupply anyway.

They passed through two small towns on their way to the city. It was in these towns that the rest of the players got a feel for what I was doing. In the first, I prompted the player by noting that he thinks the hand at the livery stable was dressed horribly. The preening nincompoop took the bait and purchased a much more stylish shirt. The hand was stunned when the character demanded he wear this new shirt, and fought back when the character tried to rip off his old shirt in frustration. He was laid flat by a left hook and convinced to leave at the end of a pitchfork.

In the next town, the player, whose character was a thief, decided to rob a fairly wealthy merchant. So, in the dead of night, while the rest of the party slept, the thief snuck out to burglarize the merchant's store. The break-in itself was successful, and there was a modest amount of coin appropriated. Being greedy was in this player's nature, and so he snuck into the merchant's residence. Convinced of his ultimate skill and stealth, he started to search the place, looking for more to steal. He managed to stay quiet until he spied the merchant in his wife asleep in their bed...wearing horribly gaudy nightclothes. The scarf took over from there, and he was compelled to wake the merchant's entire family and explain to them why they should take the money he just stole and purchase an entirely new wardrobe.

The player was getting frustrated now and no longer wanted the scarf. He tried to take it off, and couldn't. The party cleric refused to remove the curse. None of the local NPC clerics could remove the curse for him. He grew increasingly frustrated that there were consequences for his actions, and that his acting out was now a drawback. Naturally, this was all my fault, and he made his opinion known. I simply said that no one forced him to demand the scarf before it was identified.

On the way to the next town, the party encountered some hobgoblin brigands. They formed up to do battle, the thief taking his usual place on the flanks. Once the fighting began, however, the scarf exerted its will. I informed the player that the hobgoblins were dressed dreadfully and he was compelled to do something about it. The player recognized the danger and complained. I simply said the scarf compels him to do something, but he needs to decide what that is.

He proceeded to walk up to the rampaging hobgoblin leader and critique his wardrobe choices. Stunned, the hobgoblin stared at him for a single round before summarily smashing his head in with a large hammer.

The player left our group immediately, after a spittle-flecked rant about how we all conspired against him, and he never returned once he stormed out.

Not all cursed items bring death or corruption upon the bearer. In many cases, they simply make the owner a laughing stock. In this case, the cursed item proved to be one of the most useful of all—in showing a player how being a preening jackass ruins the fun of the game for everyone.



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Dirty Bowbe's
Roadhouse

Didjer's Crab House

by
CHRISTINA STILES

Type: Tavern

Alignment: Chaotic Evil

Setting: Any seaside town or city

The smell of crab, baked, stewed, or deviled, leads hungry patrons to *Didjer's Crab House*, a dockside tavern. Inside, the tavern holds twenty round tables that seat six patrons each. Didjer, a dark-haired retired pirate, works the rectangular bar in the tavern's center, where twenty or more swarthy men bid for Didjer's attention, each begging for a tale of his sea adventures.

BACKGROUND AND DESCRIPTION

Didjer's Crab House is named for its owner, Didjer Blackstock, a former pirate-turned-tavern owner. *Didjer's* specializes in cooked crab, the best around, and the place is a local favorite among fishermen, pirates, and the occasional sea-tested adventurers.

The tavern is open from noon to the wee hours of the morning, but no matter the time, at least 15–20 patrons are always present. The food is good and the proportions hearty, but the ale is watered-down. No one complains about it, though; Didjer killed the last complainer—cut his throat where he stood. Nowadays, everybody respects Didjer, and no one would ever think to argue with him.

Didjer's Crab House caters to men of the sea, rowdy and quick-to-brawl men whose tempers rise and fall like the tides. These men brave sea monsters and bad weather on a daily basis, so few things scare them (except Didjer), and their drunkenness raises their courage even more. Didjer remains the only man immune to their fights.

Didjer Blackstock (chaotic evil), 6th level fighter, HP 45, AC 14, MV 30 ft., primary attributes: dexterity 13, strength 17, wisdom 16. He uses a +2 dagger (1d4 +2), +1 leather armor, and carries valuables worth 100 gp at all times.

1. Common Room

The noise is deafening in the common room; peals of laughter rise and fall, as winning sailors celebrate their small victories in drinking games, arm wrestling, dagger throwing, and cards. Of course, curses, fists, and gleaming daggers fly when these victors revel too much in their triumphs—for the losers need to save face on land to protect their reputations. From the looks of the place, blood is no stranger to the tavern; its stains streak both the walls and the floor. Even the ceiling's been splattered occasionally, and the red globes that bathe the common room in a hazy light do little to hide this fact—if that is their purpose.

Five women (working girls) of various ages and beauty wait the tables, their clothes and hair in an obvious state of disarray. One or two of them can be seen accepting coins from male patrons for other “services,” whereby they lead them through

one of the six guarded doors (the red-light rooms) lining the northern wall.

Working Girls (Golda, Aila, Katera, Matilda, and Eugenna) (chaotic neutral), 0 level characters, HP 1, AC 10, MV 30 ft., primary attribute: physical. They each use a dagger (1d4) in battle.

Didjer occasionally allows patrons to sleep in the common room for 1sp a night. The only rooms he has available (the red-light rooms) are rented by the half hour.

2-7. Red-Light Rooms

For privacy, the women from the common room bring their patrons to these quarters, which contain a disheveled bed and a red-globed light (to hide the blood stains of patrons who failed to pay for the girls' services). A heavily muscled man in chain mail (Dren) guards the doors, and a much smaller, weasel-like man (Hark) takes the coinage from the women before allowing them and their guests entrance.

Dren (chaotic neutral), 2nd level fighter, HP 15, AC 14, MV 30 ft., primary attribute: strength 17, constitution 14, wisdom 13. He uses a +1 short sword (1d6 +1), a dagger (1d4), and a chain mail shirt. He commonly carries 15 gp at all times.

Hark (neutral evil), 3rd level rogue, HP 12, AC 14, MV 30 ft., primary attributes: dexterity 14, wisdom 13, charisma 12. He uses a two +1 daggers (1d4 +1/1d4 +1) in battle, wears +1 leather armor, and has a potion of invisibility and carries valuables worth 35 gp on him at all times.

8. Didjer's Office

The office door is always locked (CL 6), though nothing of value lies inside, just business papers and a well-made, polished oak desk with a fancy but comfortable leather chair.


9. Didjer's Bedroom

Didjer's locked bedroom (CL 6) contains a high-quality bed with scenes of sea battles etched into the mahogany headboard. He has a locked armoire (strong lock, CL 8), a comfortable sofa, and a full-length mirror in the room. The locked armoire contains a set of fine clothing, his adventuring gear (a light crossbow with 30 bolts, a hand axe, +2 short sword, a cloak of resistance+2, and a ring of water breathing. The chest also contains 4500 gp in gold and gems.

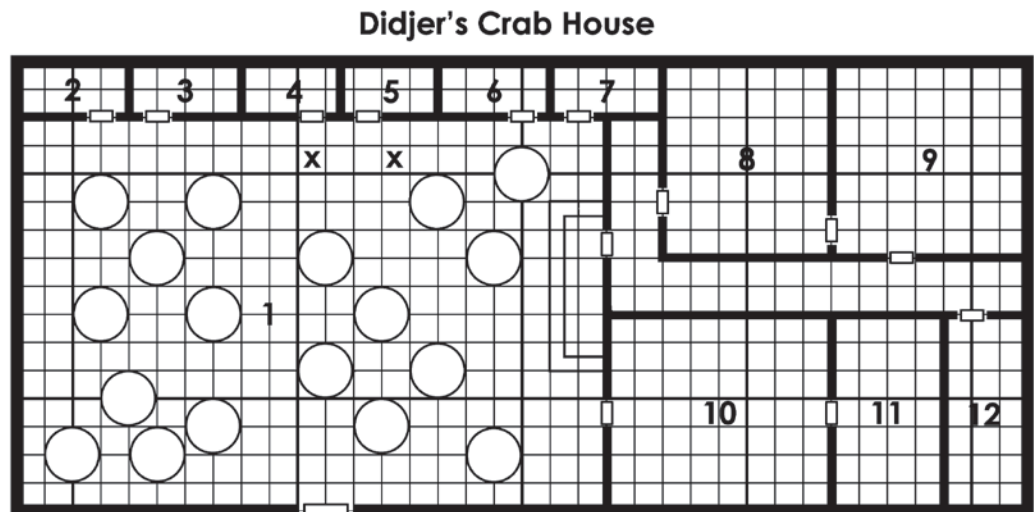
10. Kitchen

A huge, eight-foot-high iron kettle sits in the center of the room over a magic-enhanced fire pit. A three-foot-high walkway surrounds the kettle, allowing Kellun, the cook, to stoke the Askalan (crabmen) they use for meat in their stews and pies. Enormous crab shells and claws litter the floor. When the large pot is boiling, the heat in this room is intensive, and it often spills into the common room, making it very warm.

- 1 Common Room
- 2-7 Red Light Rooms
- 8 Didjer's Office
- 9 Didjer's Bedroom
- 10 Kitchen
- 11 Pantry
- 12 Bodyguards' Room

 = 5 feet

X = Guards



Kellun the cook, half-orc (chaotic neutral), 2nd level fighter, HP 14, AC 11, MV 30 ft., primary attributes: strength 14, constitution 13. He uses a throwing hand axe (1d6) and a dagger (1d4). He's has a leather coat he can quickly put on in times of trouble, and always carries 10 gold.

11. Pantry

Kellun throws just about everything in this room, including the foodstuffs that are supposed to be in it. Currently, the room contains numerous crabmen shells, Kellun's old adventuring equipment (non-magical weapons and armor), ten kegs of various beers and ales, and the body of a man Didjer recently asked him to kill and which he hasn't had a chance to dispose of—and who will likely be thrown into the cooking pot at some point.

12. Bodyguards' Room

The companions bodyguards, Dren and Hark, share this room. The room contains two beds, two locked chests (CL 3), and has clothing strewn everywhere. The chests contain 130 gp each.

PERSONALITIES

TAVERN STAFF

Didjer Blackstock has owned and operated the Crab House for three years now. His pirate past is widely known, and he was once imprisoned for his robberies upon the seas. These days, Didjer remains firmly rooted to land. Instead, he sponsors a group of "fishermen," who provide Didjer with the tavern's fare, which is mostly crabmeat. The fishermen are actually scavengers led by his right-hand-man, Malachai.

Dren and Hark watch after Didjer's side prostitution business. The two beat and poison (Type I: roots/contact/constitution check 1d6 damage/2d6 damage) anyone who tries to harm the five women: Golda, Ajla, Katera, Matilda, and Eugenna.

Kellun is Didjer's former pirate companion. He has no qualms about cooking up crabmen, nor will he tell others what's going on in the kitchen, so Didjer trusts him with the job of cook. All in all, Kellun thinks it's a pretty good gig, and he gets paid decent money to do what he does. As cook, Kellun also gets

to eat the choicest pieces, crabmen eyes and claws being his favorites. As a half-orc, he would prefer to hide in the kitchen than socialize with the patrons.

PATRONS OF INTEREST

Malachai is Didjer's lieutenant, and none of the other patrons mess with the man they know runs Didjer's "fishing" business. Under Malachai's leadership, Didjer's men attack wounded ships, steal anything of value from abandoned ones, and search out rumored pirate treasure troves—and he and his men occasionally fish, too, though Didjer also has a "legitimate" boat to do most of that. On one such treasure hunt, Malachai and his men stumbled onto a tribe of askalan (crabmen), and an idea was born. They captured one of the large creatures alive, stored him onboard in a water-tight box with some water, and took him to Didjer. When they found a pot large enough to boil him in, they discovered the meat was far superior to the regular stuff. They put it on the menu, and to their surprise, the unknowing patrons found it delicious. They even clamored for more.

Some people know Malachai's not an innocent fisherman, but no one will discuss this in the tavern; they value their lives too much. Malachai always has three sailors (1st level fighters) with him.





OFFERINGS

Didjer's menu favors crabmeat, which he gets in bulk thanks to his pirate comrade Malachai, and his heartless band.

Beverages	(per mug)
Ale:	5 cp
Beer:	3 cp
Beer, heavy:	5 cp
Mead:	1 sp
Wine:	5 sp

Victuals	(per serving)
Bread:	2 cp
Cheese:	2 sp
Shark:	7 sp
Halibut:	2 sp
Marlin:	6 sp
Didjer's Crab Stew:	4 sp
Crabmeat Pie:	3 sp
Turtle Stew:	3 sp
Turtle Pie:	3 sp
Calamari:	4 sp

SERVICES

The standard companion services that Didjer offers cost 3 sp.

USAGE & ADVENTURE

Didjer's is a nautical-themed tavern, but it's also a wretched hive of scum and villainy. If it's not what you're looking for, it's easy to convert all the staff and patrons to normal ex-seamen, but you may enjoy the opportunity to let your players get mixed up with pirates. They can also experience Didjer's business first-hand in the companion adventure, "Baked Askalan." After they play through that adventure, depending on their alignments, the player characters may wish to come back to the tavern to exact some revenge for the crab men, seek a percentage of the business, or squeeze Didjer for hush money. Future adventure ideas are included at the end of that adventure, but player characters may also find themselves as enemies of Black Dog, a very formidable foe.

Sailors (×3) (chaotic neutral), 1st level fighter, HP 6, AC 14, MV 30 ft., primary attributes: strength 12, constitution 11, dexterity 13. They use a short sword (1d6) or dagger (1d4), and wear leather armor and carry a buckler, and each wear a pouch of 1d6 silver.

Malachai (chaotic evil), 5th level fighter, HP 52, AC 17, MV 30 ft., primary attributes: strength 18, constitution 17. He uses a +2 longsword (1d8 +2), wears a +1 chain short, and carries a potion of haste, potion of cure light wounds, and a pouch with ten 10gp gems at all times.

Dogrok, aka "Black Dog," is a notorious pirate who enjoys starting trouble and making weaker pirates beg for mercy, especially newcomers. He does not bother Didjer or his men, mostly out of respect. The dark-haired Dog is a seven-foot-tall man of considerable girth and strength. Six pirates (3rd level barbarians) always accompany him. His ship, a heavily armed corsair, is called the *Death Bringer*.

Black Dog (chaotic neutral), 9th level barbarian, HP 105, AC 17, MV 30 ft., primary attributes: constitution 18, dexterity 18, strength 17. He uses a two-handed sword (2d6), wears a chain shirt, and carries a pouch with a 10 sp and a 100 gp gem.

Black Dog's Pirates (×6) (chaotic neutral), 1st level barbarians, HP 10, AC 14, MV 30 ft., primary attributes: constitution 15, strength 14, dexterity 13. They use a war hammer (1d8) or dagger (1d4) or sling (1d4) in battle, wear hide armor, and each carries a pouch of 1d4 silver pieces.



MONSTERS & TREASURE

A 3RD PRINTING

“Upon wind-swept battlefields, they seek their glory. With weapons of steel, stout shields, and sorcery, they drive ever onward, seeking the grandeur of conflict with creatures of terrible wrath or beasts of legend. In all hours of every day, they gird themselves for war and struggle, to drive those evil beings of foul intent to doom and oblivion. But before glory can be obtained, before fame and riches can be won by these heroes of renown, they must face and overcome those that would oppose them - MONSTERS.”

What Lies Herein

CASTLES & CRUSADES MONSTERS AND TREASURE is a core rule book for the CASTLES & CRUSADES ROLE PLAYING GAME. It is designed to be used with the CASTLES & CRUSADES PLAYERS HANDBOOK. In it, you will find a wealth of information about roleplaying monsters, handling combat with monsters, creating monsters and defining and awarding treasures. Monsters & Treasure is divided into two parts.

Part One brings to you, the Castle Keeper, a host of monsters that you can use to populate your adventures and your campaign world. Listed alphabetically, they include monsters like the ever popular dragons, orcs, and giants, as well as unusual creatures like the chimera, the lamia, and the shambling mound. Each monster is fully described, complete with important statistics, for your ease of use.

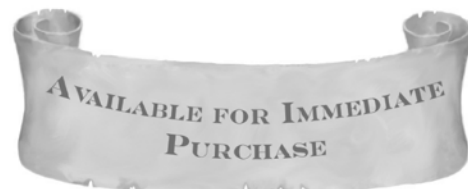
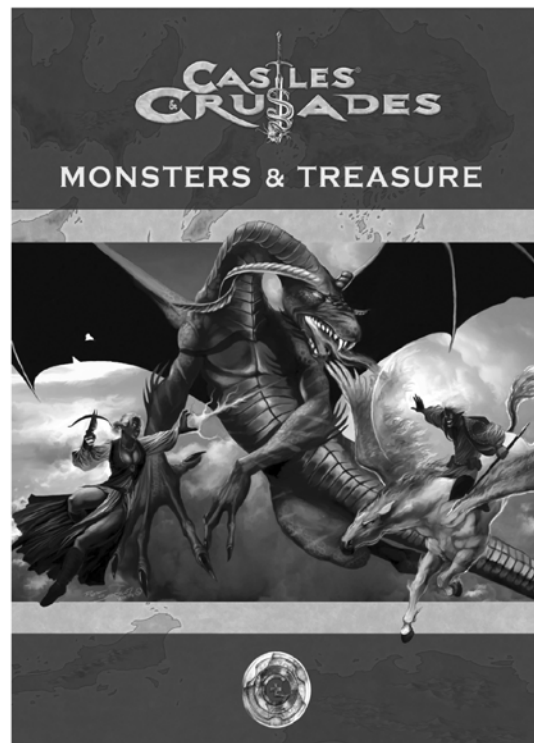
Part Two deals with the adventurer’s favorite topic: treasure. For your reference, this section discusses specific treasures that can be found by brave and enterprising adventurers, and provides advice about how to award them. This section also contains a discussion about the mundane or extraordinary items that can comprise treasure, rules for the creation of magic items in CASTLES & CRUSADES, and random treasure charts to serve as an aid for the Castle Keeper.

What’s new in the 3rd printing of the M&T? We’ve added more monster pictures, revised some of the magic items and cleaned up the text a little!

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THE FOURTH CRUSADE!

The Angry Gamer

by Some Angry Troll Dude



BOXING THE BOXERS

So this angry troll or trolls as the case may be likes to take up this column and whine about how hard he works (oooo I have to make games today, this is so hard, I wish I had an easier job, sitting at a desk in a cubicle), what food his friends eat when they are visiting his house on game night (as if he would have friends without the game), and how horrible it is to have a cell phone (as if, hmm well it might be horrible to have a cell phone). But I have a legitimate gripe to toss back at the trolls.

Every year, in March, you do this big 10/5 sale, or ten dollar sale. You've done this sale for four years now. Every year, you do it. You know that every year in March you are going to have this sale. And every year you run out of everything. Without fail, it happens without fail. Within a few weeks of announcing the sale you are out of packaging, then you are out of select books, then some *Crusaders*, then more packaging and tape. Then you are out of all your books and your supposed mail room (which I'm beginning to think is Mark in a van, down by the river) is out of everything and completely breaks down (which again I suspect is something more nefarious such as Mark misplacing the van down by the river).

I've noticed a definite pattern. If I order early in the sale I get the books real fast. The order goes in, I get a reply, and the order ships either that day or the next (yes some of us check the post mark dates) and booms I have it in hand. But as the sale progresses things begin to break down. Response comes slower at first. The lag time extends to a few days. The shipment goes out two or three days after I order it. Then it gets here a few days later. This is okay but about when you announce the sale is coming to an end in a week or a few days it seems to completely break. Orders get no response for days if not over a week with some mumbled apology that in some way references the CKG taking up your time.

Then it really hits the fan. If you take advantage of the sale in the last few hours, before the light goes out until the next sale

(the Twelve Days of Christmas I believe) you face certain doom. It's like you're Gandalf waiting at the gates of Mordor for Frodo to toss the ring in. You're waiting, the orcs are attacking. You're waiting, waiting, the orcs are coming closer. You're waiting still. Frodo, you call!! Where are you Frodo! Weeks pass and still nothing from the trolls so you fire over an email to see if they got the order. A note comes back in short order. Order received but the trolls have run out of...

Okay, so here's an idea. Just a suggestion. Nothing big, you don't have to follow it. But before I give it to you I want to say I love the games you guys do and don't want to get a lot of hate mail about this gripe. But here goes, this is just a crazy idea. Out of this world crazy idea. Can't believe someone hasn't thought of this before and mentioned it to you, or that even you haven't thought of it.

STOCK UP BEFORE YOU ANNOUNCE THE SALE.

Get enough books in stock. Get enough packaging in stock. Get the tape you need in stock. Labels? Preprint them and stack them up. Stock everything up and stack it all around the van, er I mean the "mail room" and be prepared. As soon as those orders come in start filling them up and then...

Wait for it...

Wait for it...

RESTOCK YOUR SUPPLIES!

You know its going to happen. You know your going to sale the heck out of these games, especially those items that don't get a lot of talk out in the wide world. Those are the items you're going to sell. So **STOCK UP**.

We love the trolls and we love C&C, but you gotta wise up and stock up!

Now pass this on to Mark in the van and let's look forward to this year's Twelve Days of Christmas sale, because you know I'm going to be there waiting for that reply that never comes...

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CONVENTION BLOG

by Richard McBain

Troll Con 2009 is quickly approaching and we are working hard to bring you another great gaming event. Last year's event was our first back home in Little Rock, and while it small, the event was a success. Troll Lord is looking to build on last year's event to bring you larger, expanded event. We are still working out several details for Troll Con, but here are some of things to look forward to this July.

- Guest of Honor **James M. Ward** will be at Troll Con VII, gaming, available for questions, hanging out, and running *Tainted Lands*. Plus James will be on hand to sign his latest release, *Of Gods & Monsters* for Troll Lord Games, which will be making its debut at Troll Con VII.
- **Tracy Wilson** with the Arkansas Squad, Star Garrison, of the 501st will be at Troll Con available for pictures and just hanging out in general. So make plans to bring the kids to have their photo taken with the best the Empire has to offer.
- A Troll Con exclusive. The Fourth Printing of the *Players Handbook* will be available for purchase. This is your chance to get your hands on the brand new layout for a *Castles & Crusades* core book, with updated rules for the Barbarian and Illusionist classes plus much more.
- **Imagine Hobbies & Games** will be on hand, running several CCG game events and tournaments. Plus they will have gaming items for sale.
- **Larry Fosche** will be at Troll Con again this year running some *Warhammer 40K* goodness. If you haven't seen one of these games up close, you're missing out.
- The Troll Con game library will be available for Con attendees again this year. Check out a game from the TC Library to try before you buy.
- Sign up to play a *Castles & Crusades* event with the games creators **Steve and Davis Chenault**. Beware though; these games are not for the faint of heart.
- A weekend full of open gaming of every type. From RPGs, to Tabletop, to CCGs, to Minis and much more. Troll Con VII will have a wide assortment of gaming.
- **Peter Bradley** will be at Troll Con with many of his works of art for sale. Come by and get your hands on some quality fantasy pieces (I own several myself).
- **Casey Christofferson** will be on hand to give gamers a sneak peak at exclusive *Castle Keeper's Guide* content, *Fields of Battle* mass combat rules system. Get a chance to play in one of Casey's games at Troll Con.

There are other events that we are working on for Troll Con so check the website and forum for updates. I was hoping to have the official Troll Con VII event schedule out by the end of the April but I'm holding off releasing it, to give more time for someone wanting to run an event.

Also remember that our early bird registration of \$10 for the entire weekend will be ending at the end of May. So make sure to sign up now for Troll Con and don't miss out on the summer's best gaming event.

Troll Con VII will be held at the Hampton Inn in West Little Rock on 1301 Shackelford Road. To reserve your room at the special Con rate of \$89 a night, make sure to tell reservationist that you are with "Troll Con". The Hampton Inn is located within five minutes of over 20 restaurants to choose from. As well as two theaters, shopping centers, and other Little Rock attractions, all within a 20-minute drive from the Hampton Inn.

With over 40 attendees at last year's Troll Con, this year's event looks to be even bigger. We look forward to seeing everyone this July.

If you have any thoughts, suggestions, or ideas for Troll Con, feel free to contact me at Richard@trolllord.com



Richard McBain

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



WHAT SHOULD I CHARGE FOR MY WORK?

ADVICE FROM PETER BRADLEY



a know, I am asked this question a lot. “What should I charge?” Well, the answer is many fold. It depends on several factors. What you think you’re worth, what the market will bear, how much of the rights to the work you want to give away, and largely, what your customer can afford.

The first, your own self-value, is not something anyone but you can set. Some folks do this because they enjoy it, and having another income, they can indulge more in the art for art’s sake for a nominal fee, which gives them pocket money. Those who are more in it for the money, besides me saying ‘good luck!’ need, perhaps, to be a bit more mercenary and delve into various avenues of swag marketing. This includes T-shirts, calendars, post cards and the like.

What the market can bear is closely related to what your customer can afford. The only fixed price ratings I am aware of is the *New York Publishing Houses* set guides for illustrators and commercial artists. In addition, quite honestly, only the largest of the RPG game market publishers can afford that. Most of the smaller companies tend to stick to a given range between \$20 and \$100 on average for interior black and white, and roughly \$200–\$500 for color.

Generally, as an aside, I like working with the small to mid-range companies much more than I do with larger companies. The small to mid-range guys tend to be a lot more personable and generally more amenable to negotiation than the larger companies. Sure, the money is often better with the larger companies. However, for my part I tend to be picky about who I work for, and would rather it be for someone I can get along with.

Now, the prices that companies are willing to pay as well as what you are willing to accept depend on how much of the work you want to give away. Now, for all practical purposes, most of the small to mid range companies are cheap, because they want a profit on their products. When you factor in costs of production, the company doesn’t see a whole lot after they have spent money on art and the like. So they are open to negotiation.

This is where various terms like first rights, print rights, exclusive rights and a few others come in. As well as terms like royalties. Now most of the smaller companies are sensible enough to not want to own your picture entirely, and I’ve never understood the logic of why they would want to. So this is where you can dicker over compensation. If a company wants to own everything, make them pay through the nose.

Seriously.

This is because even when you’re an unknown, you can over the long run make more if you retain the right to make reproductions of your own work for other areas of marketing. This includes t-shirts, coffee mugs, post cards, art books, prints and other methods of getting a lot of mileage out of a particular picture. This is not the fine art world. Not everyone has an

absurd amount of money to spend on gigantic paintings of paint spatters that they’ll hang in the airplane hangar-sized den.

I know a number of commercial illustrators who’ve made a ton of money in this profession because they know how to market.

Most companies are happy to acquire first rights, which is essentially them buying the use of your work for a given fixed product, for use in that product alone, and preferably not sold for usage to another company for a short fixed time frame. This is where you can charge a lower fee, usually significantly lower, than someone wanting to own your original. This is why companies generally go for this method, because it saves them money. Plus, you can often work out a bit of cross-product advertising doing this. I talk to a lot of artists at various shows I go to as well as publishers who don’t take advantage of one effective marketing tool.

Word of mouth.

See, it works like this. I am willing to offer to put the company name and address on a print of work I have done so when someone sees the work they might go check out the product it’s in. In addition, I have no problem talking up the product as well, if I know anything about it—which I generally make a point of finding out. Some companies are even willing to offer web link exchange where you put a banner on their site, and they put one on yours, and you get a lot of cross-traffic.

Incidentally, just because someone has bought your original as a private purchase, does not mean they now own the rights to reproduce it and make money off it. This is an important thing to remember, because people have tried this. Make sure your customer or client understands this. Most publishers do, but most folks typically have no idea on this sort of information. In addition, often, you have to get this in writing. I find it tedious to deal with contracts and the like, but it’s as much for your own protection as for the companies.

Oh yes, a word on royalties, often referred too as ‘licensing’ your work as well. This has its good and bad side. The good side, especially if you’re doing something for large companies like the Franklin Mint, you can make a ton of money.

The downside, if the product you’re doing it for goes south, as well as the company, you’re basically shafted.

Make sure you get a good vibe from the company. Do they do a successful product? Have they been around for a while? On this, as well as other types of payments, check with other artists. There are quite a few of us out there, and we do talk to each other about what companies to work for, and, often more important, who to watch out for.

Specifically, it’s generally a good idea to avoid working for what is referred to as ‘spec’. This is where someone offers you a lot of smoke and sophistry in exchange for your work and expects to pay you “if their product is successful”. We’ve all

heard it. In addition, most times we only have to fall for it once to not do it again.

Often, the best deal you can get is a bit of money up front and more if the product does really well. However, that doesn't happen all that often. At least not in my long experience. Again, a lot of these factors depend on your own experience and what you are wanting out of the art business.

Ok, now that I've rambled on incoherently about what one does when working with a publisher, perhaps a bit more on self-marketing might be of use. This is where you spend time slogging around various science fiction, fantasy, and other genre conventions both locally and around the country. There's a good reason to do this. Publishers and authors go there, too. You can meet people who can often put in a good word for you with their particular publishing houses if they like your work. And often more people are willing to work with a person they have met face to face than someone they've just seen the work of on the internet.

Pretty much every person I've ever worked with is because of face-to-face meetings at these conventions, including Troll Lord Games. As an aside, I'd first met Davis Chennault of TLG at a Tulsa convention called Conestoga back around 2000 or so.

As well, there are a few perks about becoming known at conventions. Often once the convention staff get to know you, they may start offering perks to get you to show up at their event from year to year, especially if your work is a 'draw'. **coughs**

There are various 'barter' methods that can be negotiated sometimes for a bit of a deal on table or art show space if you're willing to do a bit of flyer clip art or badge art design for the convention. Again, it's a matter of getting to know folks. In addition, knowing your own worth.

Yes, you do have to learn to talk to people. It's a pain in the butt, especially for us introverted artist bohemian types. However, most folks at these conventions are pretty understanding of unusual personality types.

I've been trundling around to a set of local conventions for the better part of ten years, in some cases more. In addition, the people there are more or less used to me now, and get me to talk on various subjects for a deal on convention passes. It's practical, because more often than not the cost of attending the convention can nibble into your profit margin, and every little bit helps.

I should mention, aside from the practical remuneration of being a good artist is a certain amount of social remuneration. Folks love having their picture drawn, and you can make a lot of new friends that way.

Incidentally, most artists learn this sooner or later, but it bears noting, all these expenses can be written off. Keep track!

Oh yes, as James Mishler was good enough to remind me, there's another angle to consider when marketing your own work. The cost it takes you to produce it. Not necessarily the cost of supplies, which depend entirely on what sort of media you like to work with, and equipment, but prints and the like.

I have discovered, in my own humble opinion and long experience, that it's best to get your hands on your own equipment if you can. That is not as dirty as it sounds. Your own printer is a

good idea, which generally is not that expensive these days. I tend to stick with Epson, which have proved reliable over the last decade or so. Epson, as well as one or two other companies, have wide format printers that can do up to 17 inches wide and 44 inches long for a fairly reasonable price to acquire.

In the long run, when you can 'print on demand' as it were, it costs a lot less than going to an offset press for lithography, which require a set minimum number of prints made. In addition, while this has its pros and cons, unless you're fairly well known or have a large audience this can end up leaving you with a lot of stock lying around if your work isn't popular.

The fine art worlds and the self-printing angle are starting to blur a lot lately. These days one can find certain types of archival paper, including canvas, watercolour paper, and other sorts of fine art paper, and inks for home printers that can produce fine art quality style lithographic work. However, the standards of the 'fine art' community haven't quite caught up with this idea. But then again, when photography came out, it wasn't really considered 'art' either.

Incidentally, I do like to make distinctions between the terms, fine artist and commercial illustrators. Fine artists tend to be eccentric nutty sorts more interested in the art than the money, like yours truly. This is quite different from the more practical sort of commercial artist who has sense enough to find what makes money and goes with it.

The term for this is 'giclée printing'. You'll probably hear this term a lot at various conventions, not to mention at some fine art shows, since it's the new-ish trendy term for do it yourself fine art printing. The name came from a French language word 'le gicleur' meaning 'nozzle'. A chap named Jack Duganne back in the 90's coined the name to represent any ink-jet based digital print used as fine art.



TALES OF THE
RINGS
of
ORASS

THE AIHRDIAN
CHRONICLES
BEING THE 16TH NARRATIVE
OF THE
LAY OF THE LOTHIAN PRINCES

The Elven Warlord, Meltowg-Aet-Ohd, Prince of Lothian, travels west with his Vale Knights and a company of mercenaries on a journey to find the fabled Castle of Spires. The Castle of Spires, ruled by Melius the Wise, is rumored to hold gates to other worlds, wherein the Elven hosts of old have taken refuge. The Prince is possessed of a grim determination to open those gates. His journey has led him west across the Blighted Screed, through the northern reaches of the Kellerwald and into the Red Hills which have recently been conquered by the Hlobane Orcs, fierce servants of the horned god who rules in Aufstrag. Fresh from a battle with the Hlobane Meltowg rescued Rhul-eye of the House of Vian, a human descendent 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.



he troop moved along the eastern flanks of the Antiquan Mountains for many days, coming at last to the southern edge of the Luneberg Plains. Here the wilderness ended and the devastation of Unklar began. Once lush farmland, thriving beneath the benevolent rule of the men Aenochia the plains were now deserted, the cities and castles in ruins and the people long gone to dust. The mountains ran into the plains like a fence and it was this fence that the troop would have to navigate to come to the river valleys that would eventually lead them to the coast.

All these long days Meltowg pondered the magics that Rhul-eye had given him, the wisdom that this wizard had passed on. Reluctant suspicion had given way to trust and desire as Meltowg learned the true depth of the man's power and his hatreds for the horned one, his servants and his rule. "I care not whether the old world returns," the wizard swore one night over a sparkling warm fire. "Only that he die and in his death endure untold pains and suffering." They had spent days in long concourse, joined only by Sedgwick who himself was a wizard of no mean skill. Rhul-eye spoke long of the magic spells, the incantations that he knew could empower objects as well as men. Some of these he taught to the two elves, others he scribbled on scrolls and handed to them in orc bone scroll cases. He offered this sorcery freely. He seemed to know that its use would bring discomfort to the horned god and cause him some consternation.

For his part Rhul-eye seemed to know of the brooding elven Prince and his war, at least he seemed to grasp it quickly. He spoke often of path ways that only wizards could travel, by mastery of rune spells, the winter runes he called them. And he spoke of having traveled these paths, charting passageways through secret dimensions and that upon these roads he met strange creatures and watched the world unfold as if through a

watery glass. On these roads he heard rumors of Meltowg but little beyond that and he had not put any credence in them until the Prince came over the hill. He wondered too, and queried the Prince for his opinion, if this was no chance encounter or if the Prince was fated to meet him.

Meltowg refrained from comment as he put little trust in any kind of fate, but rather relied upon his sword and armor to set the path of his destiny.

But the sorcery was good and it gave the Knights a slightly larger arsenal from which to ply their trade of war against the Dark in Aufstrag.

Now they searched for the Holcomb Trail for it alone seemed to offer the egress to the river valleys. Besides it would shield them from the watchful minions of Aufstrag or even the horned god himself. But the plains were open and clear, covered in thick blankets of snow. The mountains that flanked them were little better, jagged and broken, huge packs of snow and ice clinging to their flanks, chipping away at their edges making the rock that remained sharper than most any normal rocks.

Upon the edge of the plain Meltowg ordered the men to set up camp, spread out in the small gulches that abounded in this country. He called to his lieutenants to come to gather around the fire. He instructed them that the road would be swift and hard. That they would not stop until they came within sight of the Holcomb Trail. Once in sight they would stop and hide themselves in the flanks of the mountains and he alone would go forward to clear the opening of the pass of the Cunulrur that he knew dwelt there. Once there were slain would he return and the troop would move into the pass and travel with haste to the western flanks. Only when they entered the forests that spread along the banks of the Fromia River could they rest. The men consented without complaint or question.

As the wane light of the sun faded the men gathered themselves up, ate a light dinner and prepared their steeds and themselves for a hard ride. Within a short time they were mounting up. "Break up into your squadrons and rendezvous at yonder outcropping, where the ledge appears as a finger pointing down." In short order five groups of horsemen were cutting across the very southern edge of the Luneberg.

They rode hard and fast, regrouping every few miles and breaking apart again. In this way they created a host of confusing tracks that criss-crossed and appeared to paint a picture of one group or more chasing another. The night passed quickly and quietly and the troop moved unmolested. Here, even the children of Unklar dared not tread for the ruin of the land was complete and few could manage it for long. And this was not lost on Meltowg as the early morning dawn brought the faint light of the Winter Sun to the band of desperadoes.

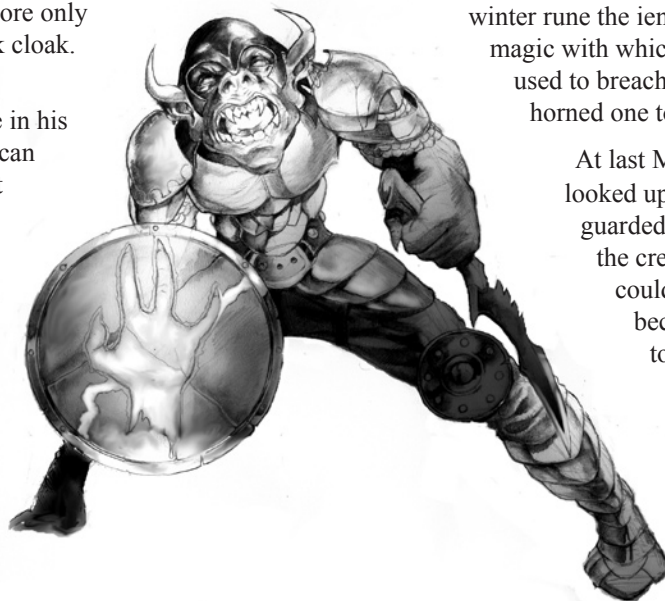
The morning gave way to afternoon before they spied a deep, dark slash in the mountains and what could only be Holcomb Pass. Meltowg remembered it from his earlier visit here and he wondered at the wisdom of their venture.

Shrugging off his doubts he gathered his men and spoke brief words of encouragement and instruction. As he left his horse and equipment behind he started off on foot. The cunulrur dwelt in a nest high above the pass's mouth. There were four of them according to Rhul-eye and they used their perch to spy those coming in and out of the pass. The ledge itself clung to the cliff a thousand feet above the earth.

The stopped and spread out throughout the gulches and took cover, building shelter from the cold for here the winds blew out of the east, cold and bitter, holding the stench of Aufstrag, the city of which was almost due east. In small pairs and groups the men set up tents, canvassed white to blend in with the snow, the horses and gear were brought in with the men and several guards posted to watch the country for enemy.

"Do you think it will work? This magic shield?" Sedgwick watched Meltowg unlimber the shield with the strange cryptic ihneal rune drawn across its face. He had already stripped himself of his armor and wore only his heavy breeches, shirt and a thick cloak. Noxmorus he strapped to his back.

"Aye. I do. Rhul-eye was genuine in his hate and his power. Now whether I can climb that cliff and come to the nest to slay them is another thing." The wind picked up his hair, whipping it about his face and shoulders so that it stung him not a little. "But cousin let us give this a try. If I do not come back by morning I am dead and the alarm has been sounded. Take the men south into the hills and scattered them. Rendezvous back at the ridge where the old Ineng Tree stands. If I do live and escape I'll search for you there."



Without a word further he turned and began a slow jog across the country, cutting a lonely trail through the snow. He bore the shield ever before him, trusting in its magic to protect him.

High above him, and a few miles further, stood the gateway to the trail and the towering cliffs that housed the strange cunulrur. These beasts Unklar fashioned in the highest reaches of this tower. He bore them through sorcery and bound several creatures into one and gave them the gift of true seeing. Their vision was unsurpassed by any other creature and they could see into the realms invisible, past illusions and through dense fogs. In the early days the horned one refused to let them leave his towers for he loved them not a little. He set them in nests and they bred and multiplied until packs of these strange six armed bird like creatures roamed the upper reaches of his tower. Eventually they began to leave the roost and search hunting grounds to call their own. In ones, twos, three and fours they left and at last Unklar gave them his leave and began setting them upon the roads of his realm so that he could watch through their eyes all the traffic of the world.

With long tails, six clawed arms, and a bird like beak they were strange creatures, but somehow their white feather like fur and their long tenuous bodies gave them a certain grace and beauty. Perhaps it was this beauty that most struck Unklar for of all his creations few bore the marks of a kindly visage. They were not wicked either, but possessed only of a desire to please the horned god and make a home of their own in the wilderness.

So they watched the road and the Holcomb Trail, perched upon the windy ledge in the high cliffs, ever looking for movement. When any creature, man or beast, crossed into the pass they were aware, they sent their warnings to Aufstrag, and the wardens of the tower determined if these movements were a threat or normal traffic.

Into this watchful world Meltowg strode, shield held in hand. He walked now free of armor and left little trace in the snow and the shield allowed his image to pass into other dimensions or through them so that the cunulrur saw little but a slight drift through the snow as if a wind blew. The rune held. A minor winter rune the ienhen rune was possessed of that same magic with which the wizards of the Paths of Umbra used to breach the Wall of Worlds and bring the horned one to the world.

At last Meltowg came to the cliff face and looked up at the high perch. Here he was guarded by the very steep edifice for unless the creatures peered over the side they could not see him. But just in case one became curious he strapped the shield to his back, covering the sword and began to climb. A light snow began dusting him and the temperature began to drop as the sun dipped beneath the pale horizon. Darkness stole across the cliff face quickly as the sun vanished behind the mountain fence.

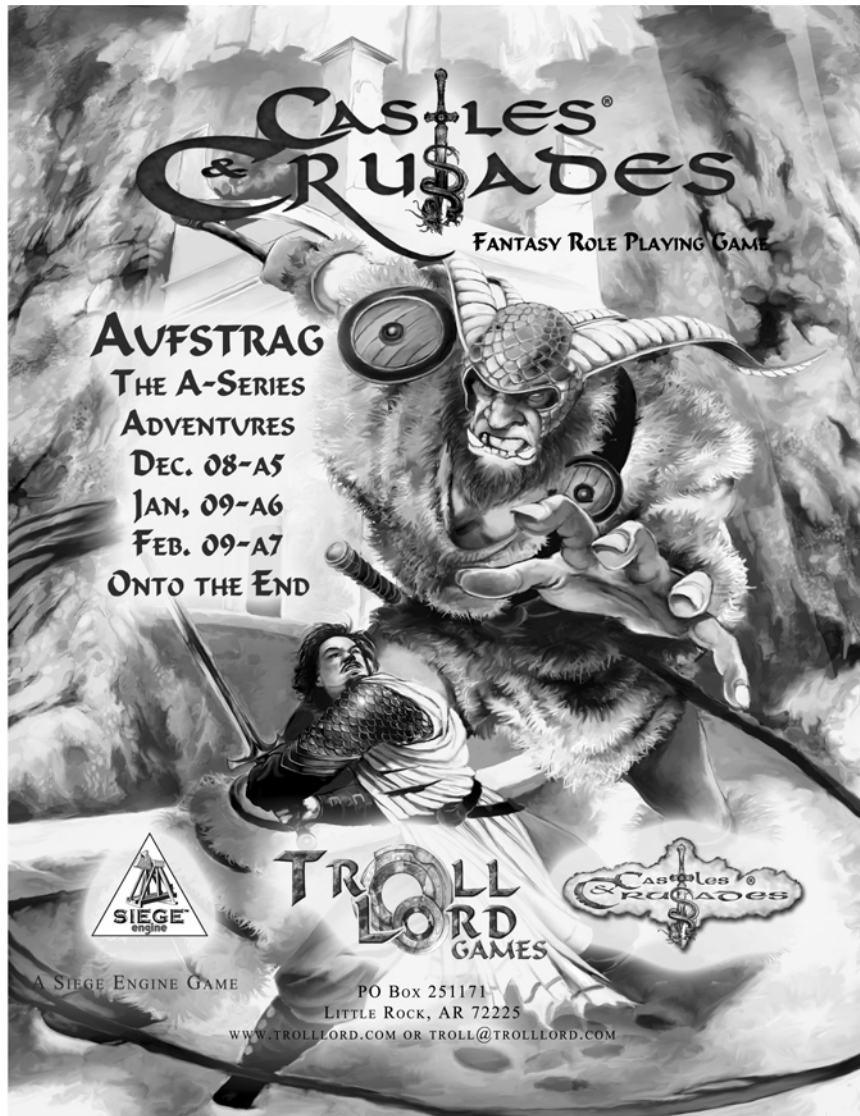
The Prince did not slow his ascent but pushed on through wind, snow and the chill cold night. His fingers grew numb as they clutched to the cliff face, ever prying open small crevices for a purchase. His knees scraped and bruised as the hit rocky outcroppings and his toes were lost in the strain of holding too much weight too long. He pushed on. His face grew numb and ached from the cold sting of winter's bite. His cloak whipped about him. He pulled and climbed, at times he jumped across to thin ledges, at other times he leapt straight up the cliff face, hands groping for an outcropping that if he missed would spell certain death. But his power was beyond that of normal men as he was an adventurer in body and spirit.

At last the climb gave way to a ledge, broad and long. The cliff ended here and he pulled himself over and onto the dusty snow covered walkway. Before him, coiled up, upon itself was one of the dreaded cunulur. He slept the sound sleep of one secure its lair. Two others lay not far behind the first and a fourth clung to the cliff face that rose beyond the ledge. For a moment this creature started right at him but he swung the shield around quickly and the creature stared in confusion. It moaned its frustration, calling upon the strange howl that marked these creatures's only voice.

The other three woke in an instant and peered around. Meltowg could see that they communicated with each other, voiceless, proving the rumors that these creatures were telepaths. He drew Noxmorus from its long scabbard, the iron grating on iron and strode across the ledge to the nearest creature.

Instinctively it felt the dark humming of that evil blade and coiled back on itself but it could not see a threat only knew one loomed near. It heard a wishing sound and saw the hurling snow swept aside as the blade cut the air and severed its head. For a brief moment their foe appeared but as quickly vanished into the whirling snow.

The others sprang forward to attack the foe, enraged by their fallen mate. But they were fearful for they could not see him, and there was nothing that they could not see. This fear slowed them and Meltowg fell upon them with a fury. He appeared again for a moment but turned and was gone and they keened and howled and died upon that wind swept ledge, never quitting a fight they could not win. They failed to send for aid so great their confusion and fear. When the last one fell, the Prince turned, and cast back the message spell that Sedgwick had taught him and told his cousin the road was safe...for now.



MONSTERS OF AIHRDE

BY STEPHEN CHENAULT



CUNALRUR (THE EYE UPON THE ROAD)

NO. APPEARING: 1–4

SIZE: Medium

HD: 5(d8)

MOVE: 40 ft, 80 ft (fly)

AC: 14

ATTACKS: 4-6 claw (1d6), 1 bite (1d8)

SPECIAL: Climbing, Rake, See Invisible, Telepathic, Unaffected by Illusion

SAVES: P

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Lawful Neutral

TYPE: Magical Beast

TREASURE: 6

XP: 320 + 5, 80 + I, I, I, II, II



Man sized, six legged beasts the Cunalrur are swift runners and able fliers. They have tenuous bodies, covered in light fur-like feathers. An equally lengthy tail gives them advantage on dangerous inclines as they are able to use it much as a monkey does his. They have thick, dark claws that serve them in their purchase in trees, cliffs and the like as well as they do as weapons. They have a thin membrane that grows between their hind and fore legs which enables them to fly or glide for great distances. Their brows are high, shaped more like a wolf's, but they have no snout, but rather a large eagle-like beak. They are apt climbers, have the ability to fly and run at tremendous speeds.

The Cunalrur are pack animals traveling in small groups of up to four. They are asexual, laying 1–2 eggs every couple of years. They bury their eggs, or hide them in a secure place, after that they are left entirely on their own. As the eggs mature they grow until after 6–7 weeks the fully mature adult Cunalrur hatches.

They are highly prized as guard animals, because they are very territorial and possess extraordinary vision and have some minor telepathic abilities. They can see tremendous distances, several miles on a clear day, and are able to discern details even through a fog or obscuring mist. Part of their vision is based on “seeing” with small pours that line their beaks. These pours detect even the smallest electrical patterns that all living creatures put off. They are also able to see invisible creatures, whether natural or magically induced. They can see through illusions as well, gaining a +5 on all their checks against illusions.

They communicate with a simple form of telepathy which allows them to project images of what they see to each other and others as well. They can only make a hollow calling sound with their voices, that sounds more like a howl than anything else. They do this only when they desire to warn each other or their masters.

COMBAT: The Cunalrur is not a particularly aggressive beast but they are dangerous when cornered, hunting, or forced to fight. They

attack by rearing up on their two hind legs and using their claws to gain purchase on their target. If they score a successful hit with any two claws or the beak they are able to leap upon the victim. In the following round they use their rake ability, ripping them with the remaining four or six claws. They prefer to attack with their claws saving their huge beak's to rip through hide, flesh, bone, armor, or muscle.

Rake: If a Cunalrur successfully bites a victim or strikes with two of its claws, it can make four-six rake attacks with its remaining free legs in the following rounds. These attacks hit automatically for 1d6 points of damage each.

The Cunalrur In Aihrde

“They watch the road. They do not sleep nor suffer from the wants of man. They watch and howl when they see something they do not like or trust.” ~ Rhul-Eye of the House of Vian, Wizard

Unklar bred the Cunalrur upon the heights of his towers in Aufstrag after many of the wars were fought and he reigned over all of Aihrde. He labored long over them for his needs in those days were great as his enemies were still strong if scattered. So he set within them a great deal of his own of his own power and they bread upon it and flourished. For many long years they lived in the high perches overlooking the swelling swamps below.

Eventually he trusted them to his outer works and they eventually spread from their into the wider world where they flourished. They were prized by all manner of people as it was found that they could be hatched early and trained to a master and there by become the perfect watch dog. They always yearn for Aufstrag though as the species has a remarkable ability to pass its memories down through generations.

Their eggs bring an extremely hefty sum in the markets of Aihrde, ranging upon the needs of the purchases from 1500gp to 10,000gp.

The rare Rune of Iahnael obscures the creature's vision by generating a false electrical pattern for it.

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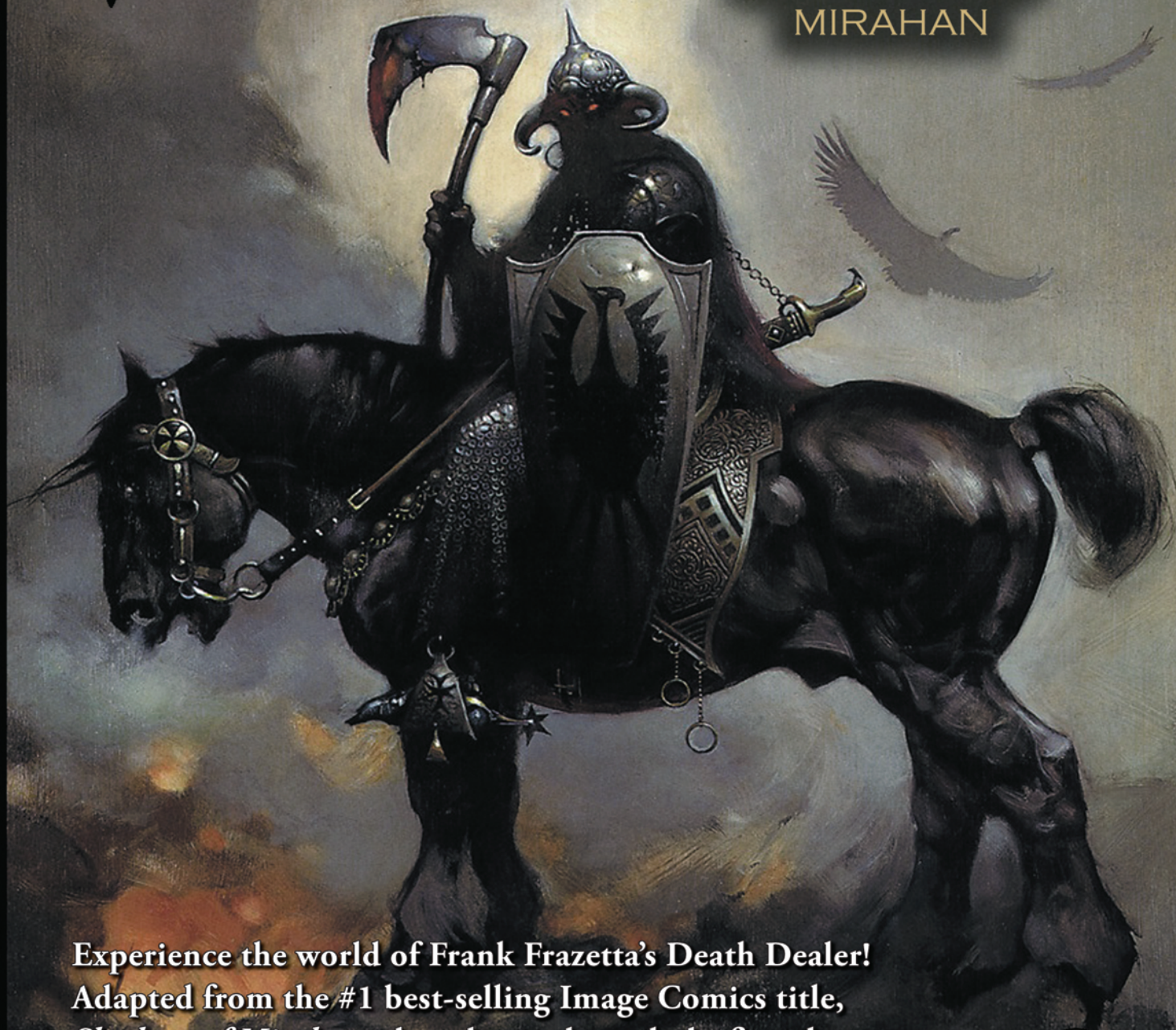
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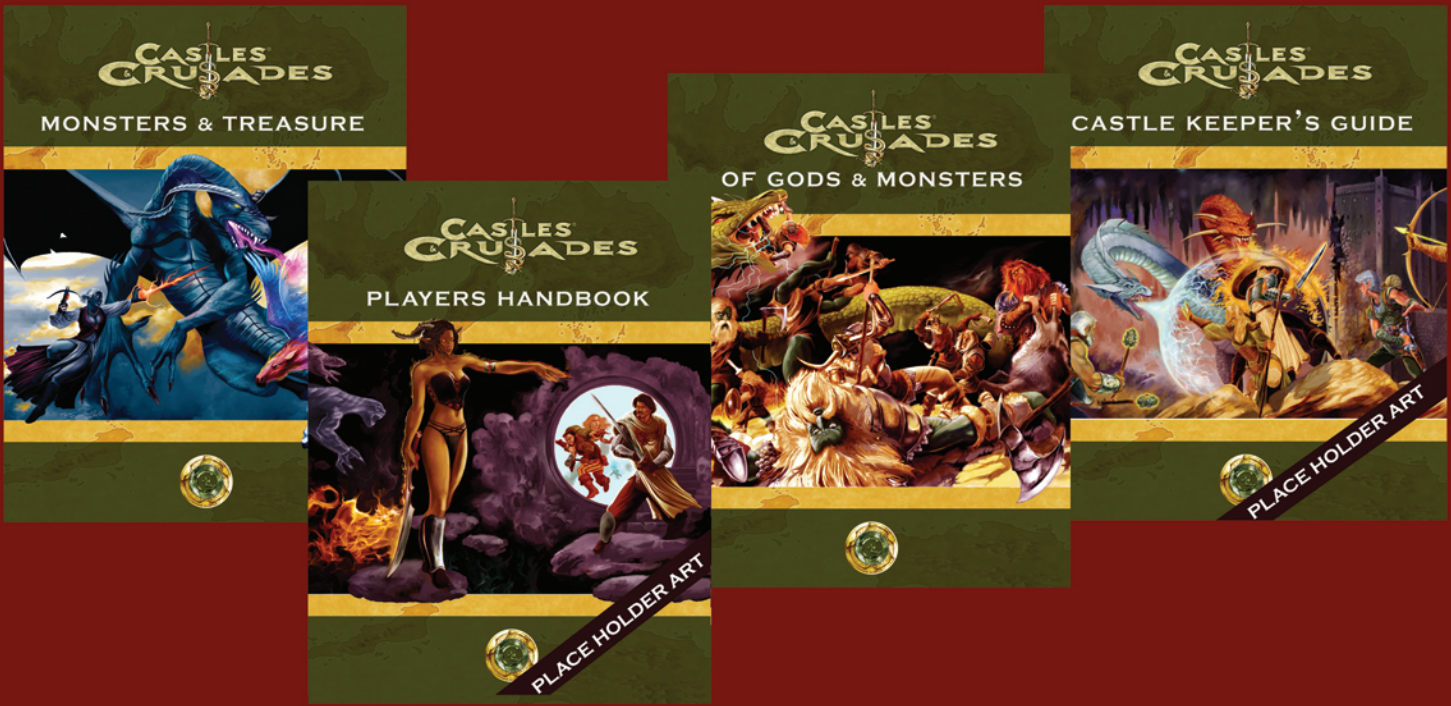


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