

# DUNGEON CRAWL

Issue #3

Summer 2013



## Contents

Editorial.....	2
The Dungeons of Xenopus, Level 2.....	3
The Iscaldean Badlands.....	9
What Trap Charts?: It's a Gas! .....	22
Ready Reference: Populating the Empty Room.....	23
New Magic Items .....	24
Lesser Magic Items .....	25
A Knight in his Castle.....	28
Thinking Like a Fantasy Character .....	31
New Monsters.....	34
Blood Witch .....	35
Art Credits .....	36

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*A final word to the Dungeon Master from the authors. These rules are intended as guidelines. No two Dungeon Masters run their dungeons quite the same way, as anyone who has learned the game with one group and then transferred to another can easily attest. You are sure to encounter situations not covered by these rules. Improvise. Agree on a probability that an event will occur and convert it into a die roll — roll the number and see what happens! The game is intended to be fun and the rules modified if the players desire. Do not hesitate to invent, create and experiment with new ideas. Imagination is the key to a good game. Enjoy!*

*- J. Eric Holmes, Dungeons & Dragons Basic Rulebook, 1977*



## Editorial

Well met and welcome to the third issue of *Dungeon Crawl*!



This issue features some articles with a theme of the 1977 "Basic" set edited by J. Eric Holmes, including a sequel to his "Sample Dungeon" by the editor, and a sampling of minor magic items by Zach Howard, who maintains the excellent Zenopus Archives site and blog (<http://zenopusarchives.blogspot.com/>).

D.L. Johnson provides a desert sandbox in "The Iscaldean Badlands," as well as several art pieces. Dave Przybyla contributes "Thinking Like a Fantasy Character," and Joshua de Santo has a Swords & Wizardry class, the "Blood Witch." It's a pleasure to present an issue with the great work of all of these authors.

My own work fills out the issue. Based on a concept from my OD&D Setting series on Semper Initiatus Unum, I present a fully fleshed-out knight and his retinue for a castle. The gas trap charts from my "What Trap Charts?" series, three new magic items, and four monsters round out the issue's contents.

*Dungeon Crawl* has always been what it says on the box: a group of resources for you to run an old school fantasy adventure game set in dungeons or the wilderness. The format of a periodical gives the authors a chance to experiment both in form and content. My riff on Holmes's classic sample dungeon is much more explanatory than my previous work, but both in style and design I feel like it offers a challenging and interesting experience. D.L. Johnson's hexcrawl presents us an interesting environment and gives a great example of how to set up a world for PCs to interact with. I'm proud that we are headlining these two adventures.

As always, everything here is designed to see use at your gaming table (or hangout, as the case may be). We're practical here, and there is just enough information that you won't feel like we are overwhelming you with detail but you'll be able to run any of these adventures fluidly. Particularly the empty room chart is designed to sit with a referee just like the old Judges Guild Ready Ref Sheets, and for much the same reason.

I'm really delighted by the work our artists did with this issue. My greatest pleasure in running this magazine has been sending ideas to talented artists that only existed in my mind, and seeing them come back fully realized. Particular thanks to Dyson Logos who took a really rough-looking map for the Dungeons of Xenopus and turned them into something beautiful.

Thanks and I hope you enjoy the issue!

## The Dungeons of Xenopus, Level 2

Adventure for Level 2 characters by Wayne Rossi

Cartography by Dyson Logos

This dungeon is meant as a sequel to the "Sample Dungeon" in the original Basic rulebook edited by J. Eric Holmes. The original can be found online at [http://www.wizards.com/dnd/files/Basic\\_1977.pdf](http://www.wizards.com/dnd/files/Basic_1977.pdf)

The assumption is that the northwest corner to the west of room N contains a staircase down. This meets our map in the location marked Up. However, it's entirely possible that this level can be inserted into any other sort of dungeon you may have; it should be around "level 2" but it could be in a megadungeon or on its own.

### Key to Dungeon Level

Up – This indicates a staircase down from the previous level.

A – This hallway has six pillars. The one in the center-right has a secret compartment that conceals six thin gold bars. Each bar is worth (and weighs the same as) 50 gold pieces, a total of 300 GP value. Dwarves should have a 2 in 6 chance of noticing this compartment if they pass by; all other character types have only a 1 in 6 chance if they are actively looking for it.

B – There is a grey ooze living on the ceiling of this chamber. It will drip down onto unwary characters and on a successful hit will do 2d8 points of damage for each turn that it is on exposed flesh. The ooze will corrode through metal armor in 1 turn and thereafter any character struck by it will be considered in bare skin. The ooze can only be killed by weapons or lightning.

Grey Ooze: HD 3, AC 8, Dex 0, Morale 12

C – The back wall of this chamber contains a statue in relief depicting a king. The genitalia of the statue have been gouged out. A careful observer will note that the crown on the statue is actually a switch that can be pushed in. If pushed, the entire statue can be moved aside. There is a niche behind the relief, which contains four pearls (100 GP value each) – but there are also two spiders. The spiders will surprise characters moving the statue aside on 2 in 1d6.

Spiders: HD 1+1, AC 6, Dex 10, Morale 8

D – There is a full-length black mirror in the back of this room. It appears to have a starry image overlaying the reflection. Characters touching the mirror will find that it reacts as if the surface were made of a liquid. A person who goes through will find themselves in room H, with no way back (see that room's description below).

### Wandering Monster Chart

Die Roll	Monster
1	Fighter, level 1 (1-3)
2	Berserkers (1-4)
3	Thieves, level 1 (1-4)
4	Elves (1-6)
5	Gelatinous Cube (1)
6	Orcs (5-20)
7	Hobgoblins (2-8)
8	Gnolls (2-5)
9	Ghouls (1-4)
10	Magic-Users, Level 2 (1-4)
11	Clerics, Level 2 (2-5)
12	Thieves, Level 2 (1-4)
13	Dwarves (4-16)
14	Giant Ticks (1-3)
15	Carrion Crawler (1)
16	Ogres (1-4)
17	Grey Ooze (1)
18	Harpies (1-3)
19	Werewolves (1-4)

E – Room E is always an empty room. Use the chart later in this issue under “Ready Reference” to add items of interest.

F – This room contains four stone giant rats. All are looking toward the back wall. In the center of the room is a pedestal on which is mounted what appears to be a crystal ball. Appearances are deceiving, because if it is touched the ball will disappear and the room will be bathed in an eerie red glow. One turn later, in nearly exactly the position where the stone rats are looking, a cockatrice will be summoned.

Cockatrice – HD 5, AC 6, Dex 14 Morale 7

G – This room is inhabited by 6 gremlins. Each gremlin may choose to “flame on” for one complete turn per day (this will take up a complete combat). If they do so, the gremlins will burn with a magical fire that causes any steel objects within 2 feet of them (either hitting or hit by them) to have a 25% chance to melt. Each magical “plus” reduces this chance by 5%. Objects which are not steel or wood are completely unaffected by this.

There is a loose flagstone on the floor that conceals a bracelet containing 4 emeralds, although there are six settings. The bracelet can neutralize poison if placed on a character's wrist within 1 turn of poisoning, or if worn when poisoned. Each such neutralization causes one of the emeralds to be completely consumed.

Gremlins: HD ½, AC 6, Dex 12+d6, Morale 12

H – The door to this room is locked from the inside. The lock can be picked by a thief character. The room is furnished with beds and an armoire, which appear to be for two small people, at most the size of dwarves.

Inside the room are two gnomes, who are guarding a significant treasure: 6000 CP, a small sapphire and emerald encrusted box, a belt buckle studded with rubies, and a ring set with three diamonds (1000 GP, 1100 GP and 1400 GP respectively). They have a scroll with *fireball* (and can use it) and a potion of *delusion*, and they know what it is.

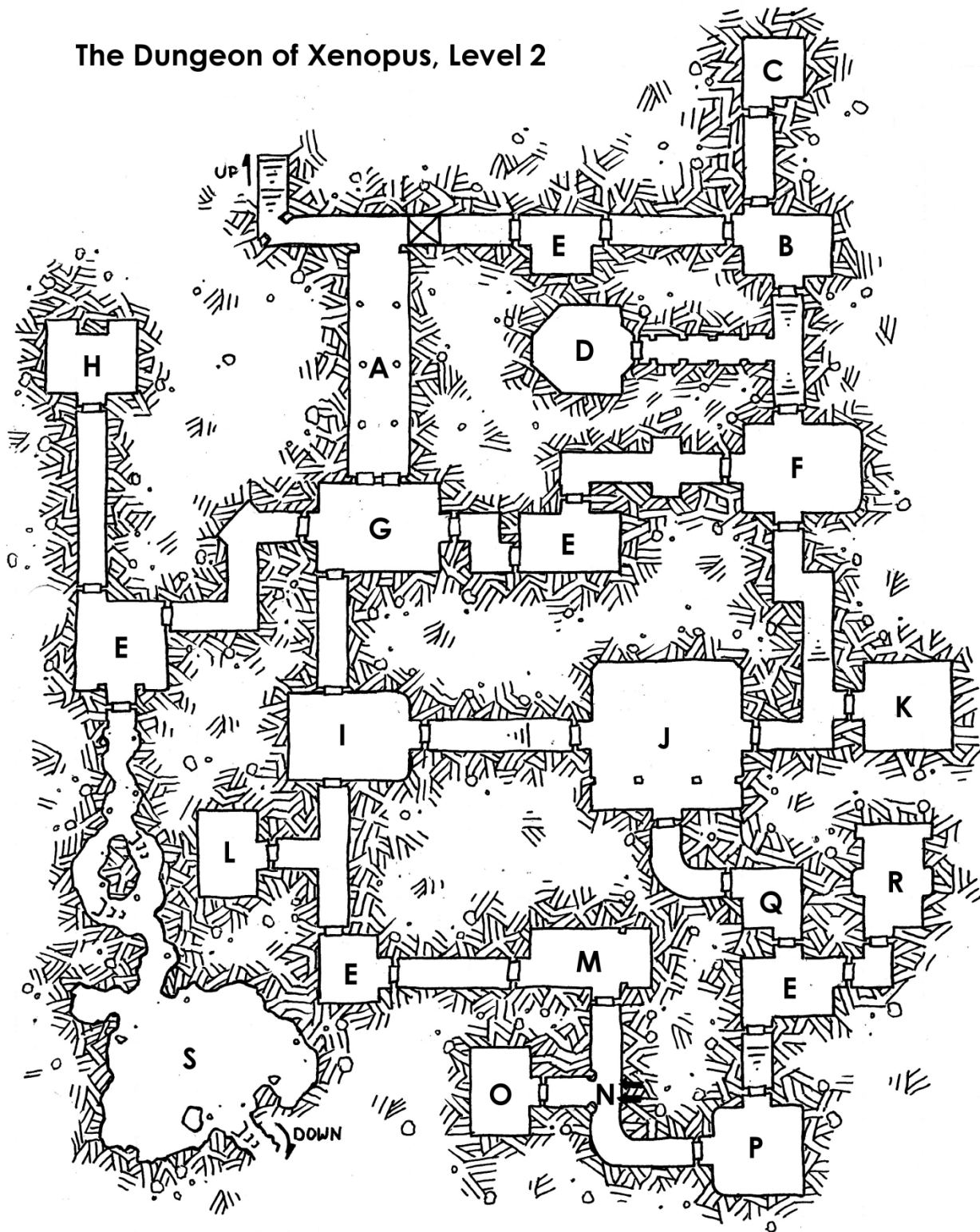
The armoire has a secret compartment that the gnomes hide their treasure in. If they know characters are coming, the gnomes themselves will hide under the beds until they can better ascertain what their intentions are. If characters are at all hostile, they will offer the potion of *delusion* and claim that it is a healing potion. If they are friendly, the gnomes will offer treasure if the PCs bring them an intact claw of the giant lobster in room S (they want to eat it).

Gnomes: HD 1, AC 5, Dex 10+2d4, Morale 8

I – This room contains two wire mesh pens that are full of chickens, a total of two dozen. All of the chickens here are female, and each has a nest. Roll 1d10 for each nest investigated: on 1-3 it will have an egg, and if the roll is exactly 3 the egg is fertilized. (A candle can be used to distinguish fertilized eggs.) If the wire is not opened with extreme caution, 1d4 chickens will escape.

The chickens are kept by the hobgoblins in room J. Each turn that the characters are in the room, there is a 5% chance that a hobgoblin will happen through to check for fresh eggs. If the chickens are significantly disturbed (i.e. the pens are opened), this chance increases to 25%.

# The Dungeon of Xenopus, Level 2



J – This is the lair of 12 hobgoblins. If the player characters have previously encountered hobgoblins as wandering monsters, and they escaped, the hobgoblins will be ready for the player characters.

The hobgoblins only use the west and south entrances to the chamber. The east entrance is a booby-trap; anyone walking through it will find themselves doused in oil, and the hobgoblins will attempt to shoot flaming arrows at anyone thus affected. The stone on the floor just after the entranceway has been tampered with so it will break away with more than 50 lbs. weight, and there is a 2' deep hollow beneath filled with jagged stones. Anyone stepping there must save versus paralysis or become stuck for 1d6 rounds. In combination, these two factors can make the east door a particularly nasty thing to walk through.

Around the room there are five jars which contain a total of 1600 silver pieces. However, there is also a sixth jar, similar to the others, which when opened releases a lethal poison gas. The jars are each marked with a number of lines; it is the jar with four lines that is poison. All the hobgoblins know this.

Hobgoblins: HD 1+1, AC 6, Dex 8+1d6, Morale 8

K – This room contains a crystal clear pool 6' in diameter at its center. There is a glyph at the center of the pool. If it is touched, the glyph will shimmer and the reflection of a bearded magic-user will appear in the surface of the water. His name is Risfal, and he speaks a somewhat archaic-sounding dialect of the Common tongue. If spoken with civility he will relate the essential details of his story.

Risfal's story: When Xenopus ruled the dungeon, Risfal and his companion Gaithwil were fleeing from the evil wizard's minions. They decided that escape was not possible, and Risfal used his *ring of three wishes* to secret himself into the pool, with the ability to cast spells from within it, until someone spoke a word known only to Gaithwil. Risfal believes that Gaithwil – who would have died a century ago – wrote the command word down.

Reality: Gaithwil died on the fourth level, but he secreted the word on a wax cylinder that is hidden on the 3<sup>rd</sup> level. Risfal will cast a single magic-user spell up to 4<sup>th</sup> spell level to help the party if they promise to help free him. If they do free him, he will make up to 3 spell scrolls for the party, and use one of his wishes exactly as they request.

L – Two ogres live in this room. Both ogres are armed with long clubs and do from 1 to 10 damage per attack. They will generally not attack player characters immediately, though one ogre might consider them good eating, particularly if there is a hobbit in the group. Clever players can distract the ogres by setting them to fight against one another. The ogres each carry from 100-600 GP with them in giant sacks. There is also a 550 GP silver chalice in the room.

Ogres: HD 4+1, AC 5, Dex 6+1d6, Morale 10

M – There are 4 giant ants in this room. They have been stuck in the room for some time, and are quite eager to get out. The ants are fire ants, and any successful attacks they make will become infected. A character with untreated infections will suffer for 1d6 days with pustules and red

spots, and generally be at -1 on to-hit and other rolls requiring intense concentration for the duration.

Giant ants: HD 2, AC 5, Dex 12, Morale 10

N – Each character has a 2 in 6 chance of springing this spear trap. If the panel is stepped on, 3 spears (arranged wide to hit 3 characters walking abreast) will spring out from the south wall. Each character walking in the front of the line must make a save versus wands to dodge the spears. Failure to save means the spears hit for 1d6 damage.

O – 3 ghouls lair in this room. There is an obscene copper statue (weighs 600 coins, worth 30 GP); a set of fine silver (weighs 150 coins, worth 200 GP) and 976 electrum pieces all in a chest that is covered by a blanket and generally ignored by the ghouls. The chest is locked, and the lock conceals a poison needle. A thief must disarm the needle or fall victim to it.

Ghouls: HD 2, AC 6, Dex 2+1d6, Morale 9

P – A frog-man (Dagonite) and three human servitors are camped out in this room. The Dagonite wears a green hooded cloak and carries a poison dagger. On his first successful hit, the victim must save versus poison or die. On a favorable or neutral reaction roll, the Dagonite will stay in the background and the servitors will negotiate with PCs. Their goal on this level is to get the scroll of *fireball* from the gnomes in room H, and they will spin tales about gnomes as evil goblin-like creatures to sell this. The Dagonite has a pouch with a small evil idol made of gold; if characters try to sell it in town, it will cause a good deal of grief as good citizens are horrified, but if melted down the gold is worth 100 GP.

Dagonite: HD 4, AC 5, Dex 16, Morale 12

Servitors: HD 1, AC 8, Dex 2d8+4, Morale 9

Q – This room is the home of an evil Conjurer. There is only a 25% chance that he is in the room at any given time; if he is not present, he will not be more than a room or two distant.

The room has two cots, a desk, a dresser and a rack. One cot has a chest by it. On top of the dresser is the conjurer's spellbook. If the spellbook is removed from the desk, it will reveal a *Magic Mouth* that is rigged to go off if anyone but the Conjurer reveals it. The *Mouth* will yell, at a volume





high enough to be heard for a hundred feet around, "INTRUDER ALERT" twelve times, followed by "INTRUDER" one last time. If the Conjuror is present or has not been defeated in combat in any case, he will come within 1d3 turns.

If the Conjuror is present, he will be along with his bodyguard, a Veteran he has used *Charm Person* on to make his servant. His first action will always be to attempt to *Charm* the most powerful fighter in the party.

Conjuror: HD 3d4, AC 9, Dex 14, Morale 10

Veteran: HD 1d8, AC 5, Dex 9, Morale 6

R – There is a trap door in the northeast corner of this room, concealed as a secret door. Characters searching the area for secret doors will find it, but the referee should roll on a d10 instead of a d6 when they search. Beneath it is a shallow chamber containing a *ring of fire resistance*, a *cursed scroll*, a sack with 92 platinum pieces, and three 500-GP rubies. The scroll is cursed so that a person reading it will summon a wandering monster of the referee's choice to their current location.

S – This cavern is peopled by an enormous lobster, big as a man. The lobster lies in wait in the cavern, and will spring out to attack any hapless foes who come into the room.

There are puddles of water in the cavern, but certainly none large enough to support a giant lobster. Its very presence in this room is something of a mystery. If the lobster is killed, cooked and eaten, it will take a very long time but the lobster will be excellent eating.

Giant Lobster: HD 5, AC 3, Dex 7, Morale 7



X – This is a pit trap. Characters walking over it will trigger the trap on 2 in 1d6. Falling into the pit trap will deal 1d6 damage to each character who walked into it. The trap resets automatically after 6 turns.

Z – The rubble in this area conceals a tunnel leading down to another level. The referee can link it to a third level, or any other dungeon or dungeon complex beyond.

# The Iscaldean Badlands

By D.L. Johnson and Nathaniel Hutchins

What happens when good people do bad things for short-sighted gain, when even the best of intentions turn perverse? 'The Iscaldean Badlands' are a scorched, living testament to the slow corruption of magical experimentation, a high-fantasy Chernobyl wasteland, just waiting for a crew of PCs to start digging beneath the sun-bleached sands.

'The Iscaldean Badlands' is a small sandbox setting, multi-session hex crawl, and light dungeon romp for old school fantasy gaming. The content and challenges contained in the sandbox are aimed at groups of 3-6 players between levels 3 and 5. Our formatting relies on Labyrinth Lord rules, but any classic fantasy gaming system based on the OGL will play nicely with the information presented here.

We've assembled set pieces, tables, area information, and dynamic NPCs which can be moved around based on the needs of the gaming group and its current campaign and gaming style. While the invasion of Iscaldea itself contains specific story entrances and exits, we've tried to keep as many options open as possible so as to avoid railroading. Nothing is written in stone!

## **Iscaldea: But First, A Short History**

Iscaldea is an ancient, long-abandoned elven observational outpost constructed beyond the edges of their former woodland territory. As an observational outpost, Iscaldia's design was intended to facilitate the study of supernatural beings in the region, with a special bent toward dragon-kin. Numerous strange and devious devices were constructed to aid the elves in their research. Because of Iscaldea's distance from proper elven civilization, the outpost was built with an eye toward defense.

For the five decades, the study of dragons remained fairly subtle, simply watching and observing. Eventually, after learning little more than they already knew, the elves of Iscaldea began more invasive experiments. They began capturing dragons, testing unstable magics on them while in captivity. They learned far more from these inquiries, enough so that they could create useful equipment sharing physical and magical traits with their captive specimens. With these items, they could capture progressively more powerful species . . . and with a steady increase in power, their tests grew proportionately in perversity.

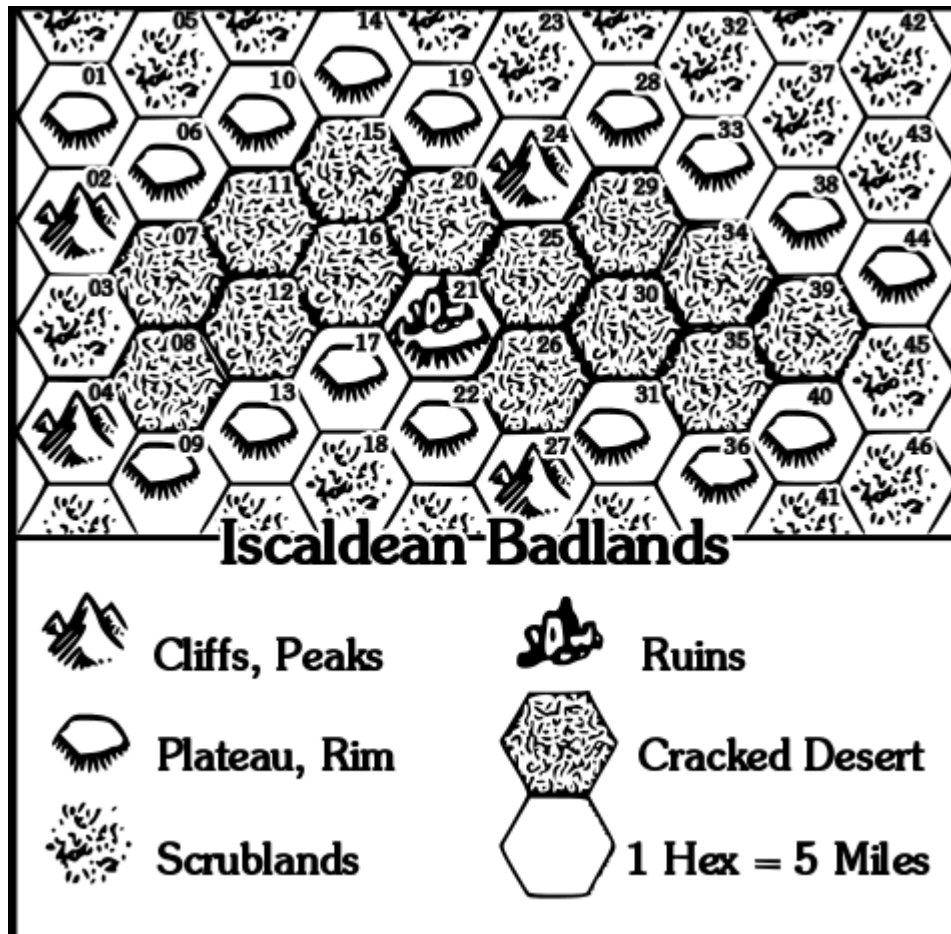
A mere three years after their change in methods, they captured Graktalanarot, a massive elder dragon. The elves pushed Graktalanarot to his limits, and as final suicidal act of vengeance, he siphoned the energy of surrounding area and turned the outpost into a magical prison. The world around the outpost was devastated and all life for miles died instantly. The lake was vaporized, leaving behind a parched valley. The woods burned for a year and a day, the animals fled, and the souls of the corrupted elves were bound to the ashen remains of the lands they inhabited. All of the siphoned life energy became trapped in Iscaldea, along with all the knowledge of the elves.

Currently, the place is inhabited by hobgoblin raiders. The hobgoblins, led by an Ogre Magi named Tak'anar, use Iscaldea as a fortification, and under the ogre's orders, continually seek a

way into the central courtyard and thereby the science wing. Tak'anar knows some of the history about the place, and delights in unearthing perverse elvish secrets.

### Iscaldea and the Badlands Beyond

The Badlands are defined by a small mountain range and parched desert valley surrounded by desolate scrubland. The mountains are short and rocky, but a few solitary peaks stretch toward the sky. Between the mountains was once a teeming lake, but it's now a sea of dunes and cracked mud flats. The valley is devoid of obvious features save a lonely road running east-west. The road comes to a bottleneck a few miles wide nearest the ruins of Iscaldea to the south. The outpost is in surprisingly good shape; the great oak trees which comprise its outer walls have retained their green leaves for millennia.



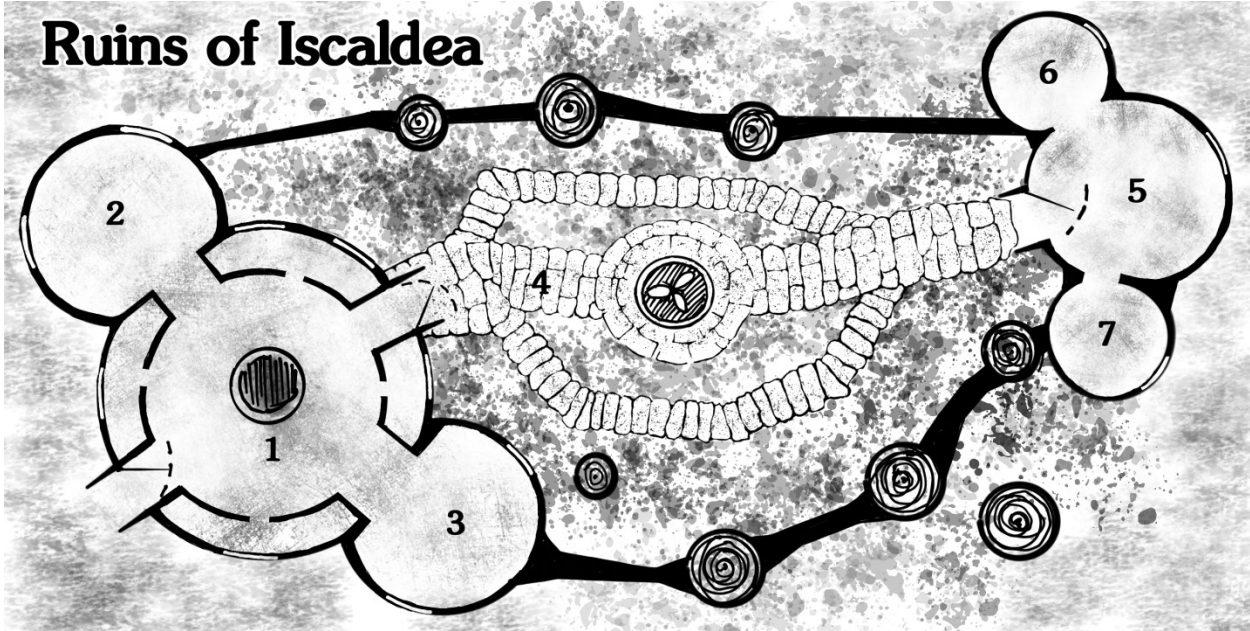
### Hex Map Key

- 01 - Bleached bones of a doomed caravan.
- 02 - Fires can be seen at night on the cliff ledges; fires extinguished and abandoned if approached.
- 03 - Infestation of small lizards.
- 04 - Broken tablets can be found along the base of the peak, worn and illegible writing.

- 05 - Herd of malnourished goats foraging the scrub.
- 06 - Partially exposed, long-abandoned fire rings along the rim's edge.
- 07 - Loud noises may trigger rock slides near the rim.
- 08 - Boulder field on the valley floor.
- 09 - Buzzards gather by the hundreds on the edge of the rim at sunrise/sunset.
- 10 - Ruins of mud and adobe huts; structures built with wood frames.
- 11 - Scree slopes spill from the rim to the valley floor.
- 12 - Salt flats.
- 13 - Horse bones and broken chariots half-covered by shifting sand.
- 14 - Stumps of trees felled long ago, worn by wind and sand.
- 15 - Geothermal pools bubble amongst boulder groupings.
- 16 - 1 in 6 chance of finding open cave mouth amongst dunes; albino fish in pools.
- 17 - Broken cobble roads along the rim leading to Hex 21.
- 18 - Hobgoblin supply cache.
- 19 - Family of religious fanatics holed up in adobe compound, sentries around perimeter.
- 20 - Valley narrows to canyon pass; plenty of shade from opposing peaks. Small oasis (5 gallons potable water/day).
- 21 - Ruins of Iscaldea. Footpaths lead up the rim wall, broken roads lead to ruins atop the rim.
- 22 - Rubble of temple to a forgotten sylvan deity.
- 23 - Wild berries grow in scrubland; colorful field birds and bold coy dogs abound.
- 24 - Footpath leads up peak to large covered fire pit (old lighthouse) whose flames are visible across the entire valley when lit.
- 25 - Ruined hulk of an ancient warship sits half-sunken into the dunes here.
- 26 - Ancient burial site of Deep Ones/ Fishmen.
- 27 - Giant pale frogs feed on oversized bugs in a hidden grotto and mineral pool below this peak.
- 28 - Dirt road leads from peak in hex 24 to a switchback trail leading down to the valley floor.
- 29 - Partially fossilized bones of giant sturgeon (20' long) protrude from the cracked mud flats here.
- 30 - 1 in 6 chance of finding sunken cargo (50% chance of having gold value).
- 31 - Network of caves honeycomb this section of the valley rim. 1 in 10 chance of cave collapse.
- 32 - Snake field; 1 in 8 chance of disturbing a rattlesnake den.
- 33 - Hobgoblins rally here at night when splitting loot.
- 34 - Fossilized logs scatter the valley floor.
- 35 - Broken and partially disintegrated lake boats blown over by sand. Former docking area.
- 36 - Crumbled remnants of a long-forgotten fishing village.
- 37 - Lizardmen hunt this area in small parties of 3-5 members; 1 in 3 chance of surprise.
- 38 - No man's land.
- 39 - Shallow end of the valley floor. Terraced ground, abundance of edible flora.
- 40 - Small grouping of mud huts built by ogres.
- 41 - Grasslands.
- 42 - Scrublands give way to high plains with deep sluices; seasonal creeks in ravines.
- 43 - Burrow mounds used by lizardmen as holding pens for prisoners and livestock.
- 44 - Wind-blasted plateau.
- 45 - 1 in 4 chance of meeting pilgrims on the road to more hospitable climes.
- 46 - Green things occasionally grow here.



## Ruins of Iscaldea



### Room Keys

#### *Iscaldea (Outside):*

The walls are all one-piece wood sculpted with elven plant-shaping magics long forgotten, and the entire building sparkles and shines. On closer inspection, fractures can be seen in the walls. The trees are very tall and very healthy, and sparkle and shine like the walls to which they connect. The trees have moulded themselves around the walls, with no apparent break. The buildings themselves are built of sand-scoured stone blocks.

The entire building will alight whenever detect magic is used in the area; however one tree in particular shines brighter than all the others. The building cannot be dispelled; but the tree can, and if it is, it reveals it is not a tree, but an area illusion cloaking a door into the courtyard.

On the full-moon, the building glows incredibly bright and can be seen from miles.

On the new-moon, the building appears almost see-through (if you were to look at it, you could perceive the vague form of the desert beyond it).

On each visit to Iscaldea, roll a d3. If the result is a 1, the outpost will be guarded by two hobgoblin raiders, but the inside is empty. In this case, in 1d20 minutes, a medium or large sized hobgoblin raid will return, but will be tired. If the result is a 2, the outpost will be guarded and will be host to a medium or large sized hobgoblin raid. If the result is 3, the outpost will contain a small raid and 1d3 Hobgoblin Shamans.

#### *1 — Main Room:*

PCs do not need lights to see, as the walls radiate sufficient light on even during the darkest of nights. The main room can be accessed via a singular corridor from the outpost entrance. In the center of the main room is a large fireplace designed for cooking and heating, embedded into the fireplace is a plaque that says, "The Heart of Iscaldea."

The bedrooms are full of bunks, some with etched-in labels such as, "Dragon Tamer," "The Great Gardini," and Lady Escala.

Hallways lead off the main room in three directions: the northern [to 2] and eastern [to 4] corridors lead to closed and locked doors, and to the south [to 3] an open door. Four other doors lead to group sleeping quarters.

#### 2 — *Pantry / Food Storage:*

When opened, cold air rushes out, and a look inside reveals an incredible amount of fresh food totally undamaged by time and environment. There appears to be enough food for sixty people for two months stocked here.

Treasure — There is a crystal cube, Gardini's Box, on a shelf next to some of the food, and a diamond-shaped talisman is partially hidden behind the opened door.

#### 3 — *Armory:*

The armory is a large room arranged in a semi-circle. The south side has a few dummies for practice, and a part of the floor is partitioned off for sparring. The rest of the room is full of boxes and wall racks for weapons and armor. Most of what is left is rusted and old.

Treasure — There are four chests in the northern corner, looking through the chests reveals a small key inside a rusty helmet, and the various loot the Hobgoblins have collected over the years for a total worth of 6,182gp [12]. The key unlocks the Pantry / Food Storage room.

#### 4 — *Courtyard:*

Upon first visit, the courtyard door is magically locked, and must be unlocked. The door has a slot for a stretched diamond-shaped imprint but no keyhole. On subsequent visits, the courtyard may have been visited. There is a secondary door to the courtyard inside an illusion of a tree.

The large courtyard is mostly filled by the skeleton of an immense green dragon frozen in place. All around it, green scales have fallen like leaves. Upon first glance there does not appear to be anything holding it up, but six transparent glass chains are tied to its neck, legs, and tail. Upon touch, the skeleton crashes to the ground, chains and all, crumbling to dust.

In the center of the courtyard is the remains of an old fountain, now crushed and scattered. Near the base is an old bent plaque that says, "The Soul of Iscaldea." Close to sixty pieces of rusted armor and weapons lay around the courtyard, as if abandoned in battle, but no other bones or remains other than the dragon exist.

The courtyard itself is shaded by the trees and is cool, compared to the blistering desert outside.

Treasures — Green Scales; most fall to dust upon touch, but there are 42 scales that are able to be collected. A silver statue of an elf lays crumbled where the courtyard's fountain fell.

#### 5 — *Science Wing:*

The Science Wing contains all the testing areas of the outpost. There are numerous tables inlaid with gold, instruments of precious metal, devices for testing and measuring magic, and other, more obscure and unsettling tools.

Treasure — The Journals of Lady Escala lay flung to a darkened corner of the room, but it will reflect light sources. The Wand of Wanderlust is laying on one the largest tables in the room, and is easily spotted.

#### 6 — *Library:*

The northern attached room is the library. In it can be found extensive notes and observation concerning dragons, including ways to make dragon-scale armor and potions that bestow dragon breath attacks, as well as instructions on enchanting armor with magic-resistance.

Treasure — Research Detailing How to Make Dragon Scale Armor is scattered on five different sheets around the room. If the party finds all five, they can make superior armor. A Spell Scroll (Dragon Breath) is laying on a book shelf.

#### 7 — *Holding Pens:*

The southern attacked room are the Holding Pens. Inside this room you'll find cages of various sizes and sturdy chains attached to the walls.

Treasure — Ring of Dragon Control is laying on the floor next to one of the cages, and a Dragon Tamer's Necklace is hanging from a hook on the wall.

### **Encounters**

#### *Random Wilderness Encounters: Badlands of Iscaldea (d20)*

1 - 3 — Find one of the three Nomadic Bands.

4 - 6 — Find one of the three Nomadic Bands. After 1d6 minutes, they are ambushed by a hobgoblin raiding party.

7 — Find one of the several miscellaneous traveling groups.

8 - 9 — Find one of several outlander groups. After 1d6 minutes, they are ambushed by a hobgoblin raiding party.

10 - 12 — A hobgoblin raiding party ambushes the PCs!

13 - 14 — Stumble upon a hobgoblin encampment.

15 — Stumble across 2d3 herd of camels.

16 — Stumble across a camp of 1d2 + 1 Ogres (1 in 3 chance of ambushing the ogres instead).

17 - 20 — No encounter occurs.

#### *Random Hauntings Table (d12)*

Roll after an hour of entry into Hexes 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 25, and 26, and on every 8th hour spent in a given Hex. While in Hex 21 roll twice as often in a given day.

1 - A group of four elves run screaming away from the direction of Iscaldea before being temporally stretched and sucked back in.

2 - Dragon apparition appears in the sky and swoops at the party several times, breathing a gas on them, no damage, disappears.

3 - Hear screeching, find a baby dragon flapping its wings, throwing itself against a ghostly cage. It disappears when players approach within 20'.

4 - Loud and anguished animal(dragon) roar pierces the air as light illuminates the party from

direction of Iscaldea This is immediately followed by a boom, a flash of light, and then an eerie silence (only people who are facing Iscaldea hear or see it).

5 - Two elves argue off in the distance. As the players get closer, the argument intensifies, until one of them steps back, and roars in a dragon's voice, emitting a cloud that chokes the other, who falls to her knees. The illusion then vaporizes.

6 - An elf struggles to drag an incredibly large chest across the ground. As the party gets closer, the chest falls over and thousands of dragon scales fall out, disappears within 5 feet of the apparition.

7 - An elf holds the body of a baby dragon, crying and whimpering that she "didn't want this to happen," disappears when approached within 20'.

8 - Plants blossom and wither in frightening succession around the party for several minutes. As soon as a PC reaches out to touch or pluck one of the plants, the phantasm ends.

9 - A deafening, high decibel screech disorients the players during a particularly quiet moment of travel. As the screeching intensifies, it appears as if the colors of everything around the party are sucked out of existence one by one. When all color has faded and everything has turned grey, the noise ends and the environment appears as it did before the phantasm began.

10 - 12 Nothing happens.

### **Hobgoblin Camp**

Happening upon a Hobgoblin Camp is no small deal. They're usually pretty compact, with several tents arranged around a small, hot fire. Camp can be broken within moments, as the hobgoblins are natural guerrilla fighters.

### **Regrowth**

— Killing a Shadowborn causes some plants and such to grow near it's place of death. These may die quickly as a desert is no place for a veritable vegetable.

— Dispelling (a) door to the courtyard — The sand around the outpost begins melting into opaque glass and a glassine grass begins popping up within only a few minutes.

— Touching (and therefore breaking) the dragon bones — The cracks in the walls become more apparent and larger over the course of the next 1d2 hours. All hauntings and apparitions cease.

— Breaking the walls of Iscaldea — The explosion of the walls of Iscaldea removal of chaotic forces in the area allows the final release of bound life forces in the Badlands, causing a rapid regrowth of the entire valley. Within 6 hours each hex surrounding Iscaldea regrows its fauna. Within 24 hours all lands elevated above the valley floor begin to turn green with wild grass. Within a week the valley begins to fill with water again, and the cycle of life begins to stabilize.



## Non-Player Characters

### Nomadic Bands

Nomad Herders

AL L, HD 3, 18 HP, Dmg 1d8, AC 5, Dex 13, MV 120, Morale 9

Nomad Warrior

AL L, HD 4, 26 HP, Dmg 1d6/1d6, AC 4, Dex 14, MV 120, Morale 10

### **Hakara Meek** (*Mikath*)

The Hakara Meek is the largest of the three nomadic bands, having six herders and ten warriors. The band has on average twenty-five camels. Gender does not play a role in this group, as one of the strongest warriors is a woman named Sendoa.

*Mikath* is very patient. He believes in only what he has seen, and he has seen life grow in a barren desert. He is helpful, and kind to his tribe, and a sharp trader. If asked if he has seen a long diamond-shaped item, he will produce one. He will trade it for (a large quantity) of food, or may give it to the party if they succeeded in fighting off Hobgoblin raiders as a gesture of gratitude.

Mikath

AL L, HD 4, 32 HP, Dmg 1d6/1d6, AC 4, Dex 14, MV 120, Morale 10

### **Agurnik** (*Ragdar*)

The Agurnik are smaller, but faster than the Hakara Meek. They have six warriors and two herders with rarely an extra camel. They rely more on hunting and gathering, and recently have started counter-raiding the hobgoblins for supplies.

*Ragdar* doesn't care much for stories, he only has time to keep his people alive. They're constantly hunted, and constantly on the move. He is lean, strong, and very short spoken.

Ragdar

AL N, HD 5, 38 HP, Dmg 2d4/2d4, AC 5, Dex 15, MV 120, Morale 10

### **Kradaneen** (*Unar*)

The Kradaneen are more traders and herders than fighters. They have only three warriors, but have nine herders with a large herd of forty to fifty camels. They move very frequently so as to make scarce targets for the Hobgoblins.

*Unar* is old, and keeps the old beliefs; that the Iscaldean Badlands were once part of a lush and verdant forest and that respect for even the smallest life will hasten the return of prosperity to the region. With prompting, he will inform a PC party that his people were brought to this land to bring back the forest.

Unar has a necklace that hides the wearer and those near him from 'unfriendly eyes.'

Unar

AL L, HD 2, 10 HP, Dmg 1d4, AC 8, Dex 10, MV 120, Morale 12

## **Travelers**

### *Baran Craft (Merchant)*

Baran Craft and his apprentice frequent this desert to trade with the Nomads for livestock and anything they can scavenge. His apprentice, Torr Patter, is uninterested in being a merchant, and a possible retainer. Unless Baran is payed to take his apprentice, he will be incensed with the party, and will refuse to trade or talk with them.

Baran is aware of the Iscaldean ruin, but not of its name. He will tell you (for a price) that sometimes he has seen a strange light coming from the ruins on moonlit nights. He knows nothing about Ogres in the area, but will say that Hobgoblins numbers are up.

Baran Craft

AL L, HD 3, 18 HP, Dmg 2d4, AC 7, Dex 13, MV 90, Morale 10

Torr Patter

AL N, HD 3, 22 HP, Dmg 1d6, AC 6, Dex 12, MV 90, Morale 9

### *Mayl Cardolan (Headhunter)*

Mayl Cardolan is a headhunter looking for a powerful escaped Ogre. She will ask if the players have seen any Ogres, and be very interested if so. The Ogre Magi is not actually the Ogre she is looking for. She will join the players or fight them if they are so inclined. She does not know about Iscaldea, but is very interested if told.

She has a magical compass that points her in the direction of strong magic.

Mayl Cardolan

AL N, HD 4, 30 HP, Dmg 2d6, AC 5, Dex 14, MV 90, Morale 9

## **Enemies**

### **Iscaldean Shadowborn**

Many of the enemies encountered in Iscaldea are considered "Shadowborn." This is given by one of several characteristics. The most common and easily-noticed of which is a bark-like skin which can reflect light in a very similar manner to the trees of Iscaldea. A deeper characteristic is an affinity for magic, a higher, but more chaotic intellect, and a chaotic bent.

The Shadowborn are created from the energy slowly escaping Iscaldea mixed with the nightmares and dreams of those who have died violently in the area, most notably, the elves and dragons. When the Shadowborn die, that residual energy escapes and the ground near to where they died begins sprouting green plants.

## Ogres

### *Tak'anar the Ogre Magi*

AL C, HD 4 + 1, 30 HP, Dmg 1d10, AC 5, Dex 10, MV 90, Morale 11, Fort 4

Fire Ball, Lightning Bolt, Web, Detect Magic, Invisibility 10'

Most of the Ogres of the Iscaldean Badlands are Shadowborn, and Tak'anar is one of the strongest of them. He has a natural attraction to the area, and as such, can be found. If found, he may talk to the PCs, and may be confronted, but will not risk his life, and will attempt to escape (aided by Invisibility) if it looks like he's losing.

His first priority is getting inside Iscaldea, and put that before anything else. He's not above running from the PCs to preserve his life if necessary, and may give them information on Iscaldea that they do not know in the hopes that they'll unlock it for him, that he can then steal from them.

He knows that Iscaldea was an elven outpost, and he knows that they tested on dragons. He thirsts for the power that they gained from studying the dragons. He does not know about the secret door, and does not know the significance to the stretch pyramid necklaces found in Iscaldea.

He will confront the PCs when they enter the courtyard, either immediately if they go through the main building, or 2d8 + 4 minutes after witnessing the dragon's skeleton crashing to the ground if they came in another way.

He will be accompanied by his two apprentices, and 1d4 Hobgoblin Shamans.

When he is defeated, his energy will explode outward and shatter the walls of the courtyard outwards, and ten to twenty large trees will shoot up out of the ground directly around Iscaldea. His body and all other physical objects nearby will remain unharmed and unmoved.

### Ogre Apprentice, 2

AL C, HD 3 + 1, 25 HP, Dmg 1d10, AC 5, Dex 10, MV 90, Morale 8, Fort 1

Web, Invisibility

## Hobgoblins

### Hobgoblin Raider

AL C, HD 2, 16 HP, Dmg 1d6, AC 7, Dex 11, MV 90, Morale 8

### Hobgoblin Warrior

AL C, HD 3, 24 HP, Dmg 1d8, AC 5, Dex 12, MV 90, Morale 8

### Hobgoblin Raid Leader

AL C, HD 4, 28 HP, Dmg 1d6/1d6, AC 4, Dex 14, MV 90, Morale 9

When the PCs kill a Hobgoblin Raid leader, roll a d6 for loot additionally to normal loot. If the roll is a 1 or a 2, the raid leader also drops a courtyard key in the form of a necklace he's wearing

around his neck. Alternatively, a description may be given of the raid leader wearing such a necklace.

Hobgoblin Shaman, 2-6

AL C, HD 3, 18 HP, Dmg 1d8, AC 5, Dex 12, MV 90, Morale 8

### **Hobgoblin Raid**

Small raid — 1d4 + 1 Raiders, 1d2 Warriors

Medium raid — 1d6 + 1 Raiders, 1d3 + 1 Warriors, 1 Hobgoblin Raid Leader

Large raid — 1d8 + 1 Raiders, 1d4 + 1 Warriors, 1 Hobgoblin Raid Leader

### **Hobgoblin Camp**

— 1d10 + 1 Raiders, 1d6 + 1 Warriors, 1d3 Hobgoblin Raid Leader

### **Rumors**

If a specific character does not have any pre-knowledge of a given topic, use the rumor tables to find out what they have heard.

Random Rumors (Tier 1)

Use this table until 5 of 6 rumors have been heard, then use the second table.

- 1 - The ruins of an ancient elven outpost can be found somewhere in the desert. (True)
- 2 - Have seen ghosts wandering around whispering "Iscaleea" or "Issscaaaaldea" etc. (True)
- 3 - There is a Hobgoblin camp 1 Hex (five miles) away. (Mostly True, 1d3 chance of being False)
- 4 - Iscaldea is the name of a giant tree-creature. (True if the speaker is knowledgeable) (False)
- 5 - Saw a dragon flying overhead in the direction of Iscaldea. (True)
- 6 - Sometimes ghosts can be heard wailing across the dunes. (True)

Random Rumors (Tier 2)

Use this table once 5 of 6 rumors of the first table has been heard.

- 1 - A powerful piece of elven magic can be found somewhere in Iscaldea. (True)
- 2 - There is an old and potent Ogre Mage stalking the ruins of Iscaldea. (True)
- 3 - Great lizards hunt the rim near Iscaldea at night, devouring travelers. (False)
- 4 - The lakebed hides an entrance to an ancient underwater civilization. (False)
- 5 - The valley used to be a great inland sea and the rim used to play host to a dense forest. (True)
- 6 - Tradition speaks of a way to restore the Badlands to a wet and verdant land again; if only someone could lift the curse of the desert. (True)



## Conflicts

### *Major Conflict: An Ogre and His Dragons*

The Ogre Mage Tak'anar, has recently taken over the largest group of Iscaldean Hobgoblins, and has been pushing further into the desert and mountains surrounding the area looking for either a way deeper into Iscaldea or someone who will do it for him.

### *Minor Conflicts: Nomadic Tension*

The three Nomadic tribes are constantly butting heads over land to graze their stock. The recent increase in pressure from the Hobgoblins has only increased tensions.

### *Minor Conflicts:*

Hobgoblins pushing in on the travelers and nomads have increased the tension in the region. The Nomadic bands may reward adventurers who help them deal with the menace.

## Treasures

I - Research Detailing How to Make Dragon Scale Armor. It takes 38 full scales to make a full set of armor. (4 AC, 15lbs) (2000gp) — Library

II - Ring of Dragon Control (60', 5d4 rounds, once per day) (800gp) — Holding Pens

III - Spell Scroll — Dragon Breath (Chlorine); Level: 3; Range: 20' long, 20' wide, cloud, chlorine gas; The caster exhales a chlorine gas cloud 20' long and 15' wide and lasts for 2 turns. It deals the caster's current (not maximum) hit points in damage to each creature in the cloud. Creatures immune to poison take half damage. (3000g) — Library

IV - 42x Green Dragon scales (50gp ea., 2100gp total) — Courtyard

V - Dragon Tamer's Necklace. Grants wearer immunity to gas poisons. Normally fatal poisons imbibed by the wearer are no longer fatal, but may render the wearer very weak or unconscious for the duration of the day, or until treated. — Holding Pens

VI - Unar's Necklace - Hide the wearer and friends nearby from unfriendly eyes (800gp) — On Unar

VII - Compass of Roratza - Points user in the direction of powerful magic, usually coming from a person (800gp) — On Mayl Cardolan

VIII - Courtyard Key - There are several of these lying around. They radiate magic, but have no magical powers. They are silvery-metallic, assumed to be valuable, and have a hole drilled through one end to make a necklace. (800gp ea.; Maximum 5, 4000gp total) — Hobgoblins, Nomads, Food Storage / Pantry

IX - Silver Statue of an Elf - The small silver statue of an elf lays toppled in the courtyard. It is obviously very old but does not look damaged (1400gp to Historian, 1000gp otherwise) — Courtyard

X - The Journals of Lady Escala - Silver Inlaid Book - This book contains a brief history of Iscaldea and its dragon observation/studies in journal format. The journal stops before the capturing of Graktalanarot, but details how the writer, Lady Escala, disapproves of the change in motives, and has arguments with the elf in charge of the change, Caranse. The end hints that Caranse may be trying to remove her. (1800gp to Historian, 2200gp to Elven Historian, 600gp otherwise) — Science Wing

XI - Wand of Wanderlust - No one knows where the name comes from, but anyone who picks up the wand immediately what its called. Perhaps it makes the wielder long for the open roads, perhaps it gravitates towards people who love to wander, or perhaps it's just named such because the first owner never stopped moving. When used, it opens or closes a hole in space that acts like a Bag of Holding that can fit an object 10'x10'x10' and holds up to 800 pounds. (600g) — Science Wing

XII - Hobgoblin Chest -- Contains loot from various travelers the Hobgoblins have plundered over the years. There is a total of 293 gold coins and 53 pieces of jewelry worth 5,989 gp. (6,182gp total). — Armory

XIII - Gardini's Box - Gardini's box is a crystal cube with a small gold beetle inside. When viewed out of the corner of one's eye, the beetle appears to be moving, but is otherwise still. While not apparent, the presence of the box prevents food from going bad for twice it's normal length of time. (1600gp) — Food Storage / Pantry

## What Trap Charts?: It's a Gas!

by Wayne Rossi

These charts can be used to determine the effects of gas traps.

First, roll to determine the type of gas. All gases take effect unless a saving throw versus poison is made.

Die Roll	Type of Gas	Effects
1	Poison Gas	Death
2	Noxious Gas	Retching for 1d6 turns
3	Sleeping Gas	Magical <i>sleep</i> for 4d6 turns
4	Tear Gas	Blinded for 2d6 turns
5	Flammable Gas	None, unless it contacts an open flame; then causes 2d6 fireball.
6	Laughing Gas	Laughter for 1d6 turns
7	Helium Gas	Squeaky voice, no spellcasting for 1d6 turns
8	Carbon Monoxide	After 1d6 turns, characters will suffocate in 2 turns without fresh air.

Next, roll to determine where the gas comes from.

Die Roll	Source of Gas
1	Wall
2	Door
3	Masonry, statue, etc
4	Fountain
5	Ceiling
6	Floor

Next, roll to determine the dispersion pattern.

Die Roll	Dispersion pattern
1	Jet
2	Cone
3	Cloud
4	Sphere

Finally, determine the trigger for the gas trap.

Die Roll	Trigger
1	Floor panel
2	Trip wire
3	Opening lock
4	Opening door
5	Touching an object (statue, etc)
6	Moving an object (chest, etc)



# Ready Reference: Populating the Empty Room

by Wayne Rossi

## Type of Room Contents

**d10 Roll** Contents Subtable

<b>1-3</b>	Junk and Decrepit Items
<b>4-5</b>	Minor Valuables
<b>6-7</b>	Red Herrings
<b>8-9</b>	Strange Room Effects
<b>10</b>	Oddities

## Junk and Decrepit Items (Roll 3 times)

**d12 Roll** Items

<b>1</b>	Weapons rusted beyond use
<b>2</b>	Debased coins from a fallen empire
<b>3</b>	Useless leather boots
<b>4</b>	Spoiled food / rations
<b>5</b>	Broken pieces of glass
<b>6</b>	Worm-eaten clothing
<b>7</b>	Used blotting sheets
<b>8</b>	Rusted chains and manacles
<b>9</b>	Burst wooden barrels
<b>10</b>	Bottles of wine gone to vinegar
<b>11</b>	Spent torches
<b>12</b>	Warped wood furniture

## Minor Valuables

**d12 Roll** Minor valuables

<b>1</b>	Tea brick (25 GP)
<b>2</b>	Saltcellar (35 GP)
<b>3</b>	Blank book (50 GP)
<b>4</b>	Set of silver spoons (25 GP)
<b>5</b>	Alabaster statuettes (50 GP)
<b>6</b>	Nonmagical gold rings (40 GP)
<b>7</b>	Ornate flask (15 GP)
<b>8</b>	Paintings (10-100 GP)
<b>9</b>	Musical instrument (10-50 GP)
<b>10</b>	Bolt of silk (50 GP)
<b>11</b>	Silver candlesticks (45 GP)
<b>12</b>	Rare spices (10-30 GP)



## Red Herrings

**d6 Roll** Guaranteed Distractions

<b>1</b>	Meaningless book by a madman
<b>2</b>	Map to already-found treasure
<b>3</b>	Phylactery of a defeated lich
<b>4</b>	Altar to a dead god
<b>5</b>	Wrong map for a labyrinth
<b>6</b>	Plans for an invasion that failed

## Strange Room Effects

**d6 Roll** Odd Effects

<b>1</b>	Absolute silence
<b>2</b>	Unusually hot/cold (flip a coin)
<b>3</b>	Smell of cinnamon/bitter almonds
<b>4</b>	Colors appear muted
<b>5</b>	Gravity is 1/6 normal strength
<b>6</b>	Spells are automatically reversed

## Oddities

**d8 Roll** Strange Things

<b>1</b>	Glass eye
<b>2</b>	Jar with preserved body parts
<b>3</b>	Peg leg, dwarf-sized
<b>4</b>	Trepanning tools
<b>5</b>	False chicken
<b>6</b>	Ancient fertility idol
<b>7</b>	Book in unearthly language
<b>8</b>	Graffiti in eldritch tongue

## New Magic Items

by Wayne Rossi



**Bear Coat:** This is a magic item that is normally possessed only by *berserkers* (q.v.). The skin of a bear slain by a warrior must be cured and tanned in a rigorous two-month ceremony that involves using one of the bear's own teeth to carve runes into the skin. Once complete, the coat serves as leather armor, but its main special properties are that the wearer receives no damage from iron weapons or mundane fire. If magical fire is used, the berserker will automatically make a saving throw. Steel weapons are only 50% effective against a bear coated berserker. While wearing it, a berserker or other character is incapable of withdrawing from combat until victorious or killed. The coat cannot be traded or sold, or it will lose these abilities; only defeating the original wearer in combat preserves its powers.

**Hand of Glory:** This is the pickled, preserved hand of a hanged man. It must be salted and pickled for at least two weeks, at which point it may be used for its purpose, which is

to hold a candle where the wax is mixed with the fat of a hanged man (whether the same or a different man). Anyone who sees this candle's light must make a saving throw versus spells, or be paralyzed for 2d6 turns.

**Diviner's Sage:** This is a potent herb that is harvested wild, and a juice extract is made from the leaves. This extract is ingested after being mixed with a tea. It is a powerful hallucinogen once ingested. Once taken, the character must make a saving throw vs. poison; if it passes, there is no side effect. If it fails, there is a secondary effect. However, the primary effect is a powerful reality-distorting vision that *doubles* the effect of any divination spells (*locate object*, *ESP*, *clairvoyance*, *clairaudience*, *wizard eye*, etc) both in terms of area of effect and duration. If side effects occur, they last for 4d6 hours. Side effects marked with an asterisk (\*) prevent spellcasting.

Die Roll	Side Effect
1	Glossolalia (speaking in tongues)*
2	Uncontrollable laughter *
3	Temporary megalomania
4	Body numbness
5	Interactive hallucinations
6	Nausea and vomiting*
7	Acute panic
8	Synesthesia (altered senses)
9	Paranoia & confusion
10	Overlapping realities
11	Excruciating headache*
12	Catatonic hallucinations*



## Lesser Magic Items

by Zach Howard

In the introductory module B2 Keep on the Borderlands, Gary Gygax wrote, "If only two or three player characters are to adventure, be sure to have a non-player character or two go along, as well as a few men-at-arms. In addition, give the player characters a magic dagger or some magic arrows and at least one potion of healing - family bequests to aid them in finding their fame and fortune when they go against Chaos" (pg 2).

This is great advice, but instead of standard D&D items, why not give each new character a more unique low-power magic item? Some examples are provided below in the form of a table. Have each character roll a d20 for one starting item. Simply re-roll if it is a type the character can't use due to class restrictions. After an item is used, replace that entry with another of your own devising. Many of the items below have charges or doses, and are intended to be used up and replaced by greater magic items found while adventuring. These items were designed with Holmes Basic D&D in mind, but should be usable with any old school D&D rules, and can also be used as standard monster/NPC treasures.

### Table of Lesser Magic Items (roll 1d20)

1. Foxfire Lantern - The interior of this hooded lantern contains a living phosphorescent fungus. The lantern sheds light in only a 5' radius, but it will never go out as long as the fungus is fed rations daily. To keep the lantern lit the character owning it must always buy and carry an extra supply of rations.

2. Dungeon Dust - A jar containing desiccating dust harmful to the "cleanup crew": slimes, oozes, jellies, puddings, molds, gelatinous cubes, etc. A successful hit with a handful of the dust inflicts 2d6 damage. The jar contains 1d6 + 2 handfuls.

3. Brazen Head - This appears to be a human head made of brass. Once per day, if fed five gold coins, the head will relay one local rumor, which may or may not be true. It must be carried uncovered or it will start wailing. It will also talk randomly while adventuring, providing advice or commentary that may or may not be helpful.

4. Lucky Rat's Foot - The mummified foot of an albino Giant Rat. It allows the re-roll one Saving Throw of choice per day. It absorbs the bad luck and loses power after 1d6 + 2 successful re-rolls are made.

5. Image Mirror - Once per day this otherwise ordinary-looking steel mirror can store the reflection of a creature to be used





later that day as a Mirror Image (per the M-U spell). The Mirror Image will imitate the motions of the caster, and per the spell it disappears if touched. After creating 1d20 + 20 images the mirror loses its power.

6. Harpy Axe - If this hand axe is thrown and does not strike a target within its range (30') it will return to thrower's hand, up to three times per day. Harpies are said to enchant these so they are reusable during aerial combat.

7. Resolute Arrow - A sturdy arrow that never breaks whether it hits its target or not, and can always be found.

8. Hearing Cone - A small cone that enhances the ability to listen at doors, +1 per charge used. The number of charges to be used must be chosen before listening. Has 1d100 charges.

9. Loadstone - A small stone carved in the shape of a mule. If a charge is expended, the wielder's movement rate is improved by one category for the rest of the day. 1d20 + 20 charges.

10. Golden Throat - A potion that vastly improves the imbiber's parleying skills for 6 turns, giving a +6 on reaction rolls. The flask contains 1d6 + 2 doses.

11. Mask of Restfulness - This soft mask is worn over the eyes while sleeping. It doubles overnight healing, but the character cannot be awoken unless the mask is removed, in which case benefit is lost for that night.

12. Nimble Feet - Boots that allow the character to always strike first during one combat of choice each day (giving a dexterity of 19 for purposes of Holmes Basic initiative). After 20 + 1d20 combats the boots lose their power.

13. Nutcracker - This small (1' tall) wooden construct remains inactive until a command word is spoken. Once activated, it will serve the character, including in combat. It has the following stats: AC4, 1 hp, attacks as a Normal Man with a miniature sword for 1 point of damage. Fights at +2 vs Giant Rats.

14. Miniature Item - A large item magically shrunken to fit in the palm of the hand. Once per day it can be commanded to return to full size or shrink. Thus, once enlarged, it can't be reduced until the next day, and vice versa. The character speaking the command word must be touching it to cause the change, which is slow enough to move out of the way. The item can change size 1d20 + 20 times before losing power and remaining full size. Roll 1d6 for item: 1 = 10' Ladder, 2 =





Wagon, 3 = Small Boat, 4 = Large Chest, 5 = 18' pike, 6 = 10' Boulder (smooth and rollable by combined 36 strength).

15. Heat Shield - This shield has the power to Resist Fire, once per day, as the Cleric Spell. After being exposed to fire 1d20 + 20 times it reverts to a normal shield.

16. Healing Salve - One dose will heal 1 hit point per character per day. Additional doses during that same day have no effect. Comes in a jar with 1d20 + 20 doses total.

17. Ring of Escape - If placed against a stone ceiling, this ring will expand to the diameter of a man-hole cover and provide a magical passage upwards to the first space above, up to 30'. The tunnel is easily climbable by anyone that can reach the ceiling. After use, a command word will cause the ring to appear at the top of the passage. It will function only once per day, and has 1d20 + 20 charges.

18. Thirsty Waterskin - Once per day, this otherwise ordinary looking waterskin will locate the closest fresh, drinkable water.

19. Troll Cheese - This loaf-sized lumpy green cheese tastes "off" but is edible, and provides enough food for one person to survive for one day, although no hit points are gained if resting. Furthermore, the cheese will regenerate overnight if not fully eaten. Stomach acid prevents the consumed portion from regenerating inside the eater. Fire, including cooking, will destroy it.

20. Vermin Slayer - A sword +0, +1 vs ordinary or giant vermin such as insects, spiders, rats and bats.

Notes:

The Brazen Head is a variation on the item of the same name from medieval lore.

The Harpy Axe is inspired by one of the earliest D&D games I played in. Our characters, riding on a magic carpet, battled harpies wielding returning axes. Thanks to Donald S., our DM.

Visit my blog Zenopus Archives (<http://zenopusarchives.blogspot.com/>) for more resources for Holmes Basic D&D.



## A Knight in his Castle

by Wayne Rossi

This is an encounter inspired by the castle inhabitants in the original rules. It is suitable to be placed in any fantasy setting where there are knights and castles.

The castle of Dransual Crag sits on a cliff above the river Dranai. The area below it is thoroughly wooded. The castle's fortifications are strong, and its garrison consists of 75 light footmen armed with crossbows, and 75 heavy footmen. It is ruled by Sir Uchtryd, a self-made knight.



If characters pass within 3 miles of the castle, there is a 50% (3 in 6) chance that Sir Uchtryd and his retinue will come out. If they hail it, he will always come out and greet them. If there is a fighter of at least 4<sup>th</sup> level in the group, he will be desirous of a joust. See the jousting rules below if this is the case. If the characters refuse or have no worthy opponent, Uchtryd will demand a toll for passing through his lands of 1d6x100 gold pieces. This is extortion, and he will bargain down to half of the toll. If characters refuse to pay, he will ask Howel to send the PCs on a quest of some local nature.

In addition to its knightly ruler, the castle is home to five 5<sup>th</sup> level fighters and a 5<sup>th</sup> level cleric. All six are detailed below. All the bodyguards have chain armor, long swords and shields unless otherwise noted.

Sir Uchtryd of Dransual Crag

Str 17, Int 11, Wis 13, Con 16, Dex 11, Cha 10

Neutral Fighting-Man level 8, HP 46, AC 1

Sword+1,+3 vs. Trolls; Shield+1

Uchtryd is a rough-and-tumble knight. He has long, dark hair and a long mustache that he is inordinately proud of. He is a fanatic for jousting and combat, and has a scar on his face to prove it. Uchtryd is fair but not particularly benevolent, and resents any treatment that borders on trickery. He is hospitable towards guests out of custom but goes no further.

Uchtryd's blade is a *Sword +1* without any intelligence or special powers. He also has a *Shield +1* and wears plate armor in combat.

Kyner

Str 10, Int 10, Wis 11, Con 10, Dex 8, Cha 11

Lawful Fighting-Man 5, HP 11, AC 4

Kyner is a plain, unassuming man who has risen to being Uchtryd's right-hand man because of his diligence and honesty rather than any particular natural talent. He is the most senior of the bodyguard and is resented for this by Madoc. He is loyal to Sir Uchtryd to the point of death.

Kyner has a *Sword +1* with the following abilities: Note Shifting Walls & Rooms, Detect Sloping Passages, Detect Magic. It is Lawful in its alignment. He is particularly proud of the sword.

Daguenet the Daft

Str 16, Int 5, Wis 8, Con 11, Dex 3, Cha 5  
Neutral Fighting-Man 5, HP 16, AC 2

Poor Daguenet is a big brute of a man, who is almost as stupid as he is oafish, and as ugly as sin. The others whisper that he is actually the offspring of a union between a woman and an ogre, between his height, his muscular build, and his general brutishness. Daguenet is clumsy to the point of self-injury but he is strong like a bull. He listens to Lailoken, who is the only person who bothers to talk to him.

Daguenet has a *Shield +1* that he has named Oliver.

Lailoken

Str 15, Int 11, Wis 11, Con 12, Dex 9, Cha 10  
Neutral Fighting-Man 5, HP 17, AC 3

Lailoken is a man of fair hair and complexion, with a strong build. He is a relentless perfectionist in his exercise and spends most of his time in the castle's yard convincing Daguenet to run in exercises with him. Lailoken is vain about his strength and somewhat envious that Daguenet is stronger than him.

Lailoken's armor is *chain mail +1*. It is of dwarven make, which he treats snobbishly.

Madoc

Str 6, Int 14, Wis 14, Con 7, Dex 11, Cha 11  
Chaotic Fighting-Man 5, HP 21, AC 4

On first glance, Madoc seems unassuming, if a bit greasy. He is rail-thin and sickly, hardly the picture of a warrior, but nonetheless knows where to put the point of a blade. He is also painfully aware that he is the smartest member of Uchtryd's retinue. Madoc is always hatching schemes, using Elidure as his unwitting patsy. If someone would sell out Uchtryd for a price, it would be Madoc.

Madoc's weapon is a *Sword +1* with no intelligence or additional powers.

Elidure

Str 12, Int 7, Wis 12, Con 10, Dex 9, Cha 11  
Neutral Fighting-Man 5, HP 20, AC 3

Nothing much stands out about Elidure. He is a bit stupid, but not as monumentally dumb as Daguenet, and otherwise untalented and unassuming. He considers Madoc his friend and gets a bit chatty with his chum; he loves a bit of good gossip and Madoc feeds it to him while training

Elidure to get more information on his own. If Madoc betrayed Uchtryd he would side with Madoc.

Howel

Str 14, Int 9, Wis 15, Con 14, Dex 7, Cha 12

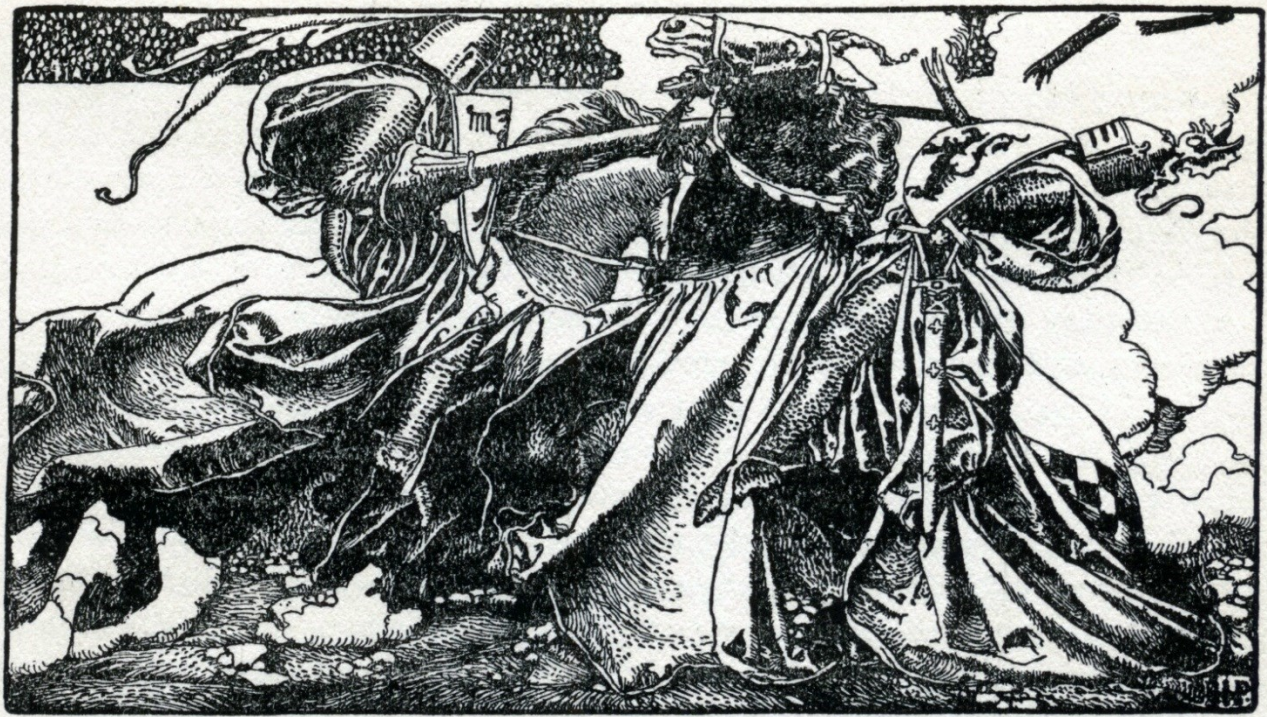
Lawful Cleric 5, HP 15, AC 4

Howel is a serene cleric, who stands aloof from the bodyguards. He wears his holy symbol above his clothing as a matter of course and can become unbearably preachy if given the slightest opportunity. He is held in high esteem by Kyner and tolerated by Uchtryd for his abilities, but the rest of the retinue avoids him. Madoc in particular detests Howel.

If the characters get engaged in a joust, use the following procedure:

For each pass, each character rolls to hit versus an opponent in plate mail and shield (AC 2). Dexterity bonuses should not be applicable. On each successful hit, the character rolls 1d10 (add appropriate bonuses for high Strength characters). A result of 9 or better means the opponent is unhorsed for 5 points. A roll of 1 means the lance shattered (no matter what bonuses apply) and the joust is awarded no points. Otherwise the opponent is hit for 2 points. After four passes, or two unhorsings, the joust ends and the character with more points wins.

In the event of a tie, the combatants fight with blunted longswords. Do not roll damage, but track successful hits; the first character to 3 hits wins.





## Thinking Like a Fantasy Character

By Dave Przybyla

When playing a character in a fantasy game, I often find myself solving problems and making decisions using the same thought processes I employ in modern life. While this might make sense for deciphering puzzles and traps, why should it hold for other phenomena?

My fantasy characters usually inhabit a low technology world where gods, demons, and magic unambiguously exist. Modern notions of cause and effect do not hold. Yet I tend to treat those fantastic elements as window dressing when making decisions. The other players don't notice anything amiss because they are caught in the same fiction. We all find it difficult to transcend the modern world.

Let's look at an example from ancient history. More than once the Spartans missed a fight after being delayed for religious reasons. One prominent example is the battle of Marathon in 490 B.C. I find it easy to assume that the Spartan's motives were entirely political and that religious observances were an excuse. If my government gave a similar reason I would never believe it.

But the world had a different psychic landscape 2,500 years ago. Those people did not necessarily think like us, and we should not ascribe our motives to them. Similarly, the characters in a traditional fantasy roleplaying game should not be modern people placed into a "medieval" world while retaining modern motivations. They should experience the fears of pre-modern times: dread of the unknown, of strange monsters, of evil working unseen to subvert the good, of the horrible powers wielded by mages.

Can players divest themselves of modern thought and accept a world where there are other explanations for natural processes, explanations that make the world very strange and our place in it very precarious? I believe that they can, and I look to history for my inspiration on how it might be done. Consider a situation where religion supplies the explanations. Mark Whittow discusses this topic in *The Rise of Byzantium: 600-1025*.

After the last Western Roman Emperor was removed in 476 A.D., the Eastern portion of the Roman Empire continued until the Ottomans conquered Constantinople in 1453 A.D. It is this Eastern Roman Empire that we now call Byzantium. In the seventh century, the armies of Islam conquered substantial Byzantine territory. Whittow discusses the reasons for these losses in a way that illuminates differences between Byzantine thought processes and our own.



So far the crisis which overwhelmed the late Roman Empire at the beginning of the seventh century and the Byzantine Empire's ability to survive has been presented in strategic and structural terms. Would this analysis have made sense to contemporary Byzantines?

On one level the answer is clearly yes. Given the information that was available...the Byzantine ruling elite certainly made coherent strategic plans... However, it is clear that to the Byzantines these were essentially secondary considerations.

The Byzantines were thrown into a spiritual crisis after the spread of Islam deprived them of the crucial provinces of Egypt, northern Africa, and the near east. As Muslim raiders pushed into Asia Minor, the Byzantines struggled to understand how this calamity had befallen them. The answer they found was not merely that their military was defeated due to its shortcomings, or poor weather, or terrain. These material explanations, while true, were not sufficient to explain the losses. There was a deeper explanation that required faith to understand.

Being the inhabitants of a divinely inspired empire, ruled by a Christ-loving emperor who dwelt in the God-guarded city, it was natural [for the Byzantines] to think of themselves as the new Israelites, a Chosen People.

This self-perception might be expected to have encountered difficulties when it came to the Chosen People's failures and defeats, but in fact this was surmounted by the very deep-rooted belief that God was punishing them for their sins. As obvious as the presence of demons in Byzantine sources is the basic Byzantine tenet that set-backs at all levels were caused, or at least allowed, by God as a punishment for sin, and that repentance and the turning to a more Godly life would allow them to be spared.

The only answer within their system of beliefs that offered any reassurance for the future was the familiar one of God's punishment of sin, which in turn, given the scale of the disaster which had overwhelmed the empire, implied the need for a fundamental reassessment of their relations



*with God if he were to restore them to his favor. Much of the history of the Byzantine world from the seventh to the ninth century can be seen as a series of attempts to make the empire pleasing to God so that they would be able to drive back the God-detested Arabs.*

The Byzantines were certain that their explanations of the misfortunes were correct. Most of us accept a similar certainty in the validity of science. We do not question that the Earth exists as a consequence of natural laws or that the development of life can be explained by evolution. However, in most times and places, we would be the odd ones with a bizarre understanding of the world.

Here's another example from Byzantine history. In 542 A.D., bubonic plague appeared in Egypt and was carried across the Empire by rats on grain ships. The Byzantines did not understand how the plague spread or how to cure it. Some people reported being touched by a ghostly presence before they became ill. Criminals gave up their lawless ways to become right in the eyes of God and avoid the sickness. Once the plague had run its course, Emperor Justinian issued a law officially declaring the end of the plague and called it "God's Education".

The Byzantines did not weigh their religious beliefs against the scientific method and find science wanting. Rather, they did not have a scientific method. When playing a character with such a background, we must turn off the part of our minds that have been trained to demand scientific explanations.

Suppose a character contracts the plague in a fantasy game. Our modern minds might assume that another person or a rodent infected the character. But within the game we must no longer think that way. Instead, the victim was possessed by a demon or malign spirit, or offended his god. If the character survives, perhaps he showed the proper reverence by offering his god a suitable sacrifice. If the character dies, his evil actions or impiety justly consumed him.

These conclusions seem ridiculous and unsupportable to our modern sensibilities. Yet they are perfectly reasonable within a Byzantine framework and are reinforced by the culture of that time. Events may seem capricious or justified by the victim's actions, but there is no doubt as to why they occurred.

The Byzantines provide an example of how we can inhabit the minds of our fantasy characters so that they actually are fantasy characters. Think about this the next time your character offers a scientific explanation to a group of NPCs and they stare at you like you're crazy.



## New Monsters

by Wayne Rossi

### Beastmen, Hircini

# Appearing: 2-8

Move: 120' (12")

Armor Class: 7

Hit Dice: 1+1

Treasure Type: D

Attacks: 1 weapon or ram

Damage: by weapon or 1d6

Alignment: Chaotic evil

Of beast-men, hircini were created by unholy demons who merged humans with goats. They have goat heads, including slit-shaped eyes, and the long curved horns of a wild goat. They are fierce rivals with other humanoid types. Hircini are demon worshippers and in a group will always be led by 4<sup>th</sup> level anti-clerics. Spells cast by such clerics will be reversed if possible.

### Beastmen, Ostinati

# Appearing: 1-6

Move: 150' (15")

Armor Class: 6

Hit Dice: 1

Treasure Type: D

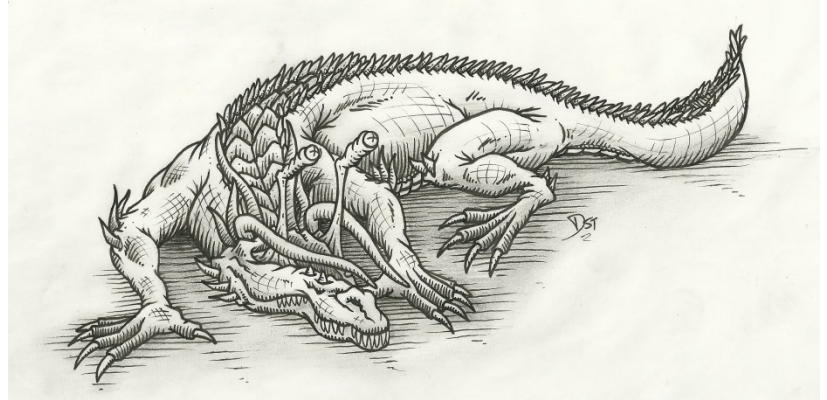
Attacks: 1 weapon

Damage: by weapon

Alignment: Neutral

Ostinati are donkey-headed beastmen. They are a generally civilized tribe, and are not evil like most humanoids, but have no particular liking for humanity. Ostinati are most famous for their stubborn natures, true to the donkeys they resemble. They are inflexible and will not tolerate their territory being crossed without some acceptable contribution. If they are won as allies, ostinati are reliable.

Ostinati leaders fight as 5<sup>th</sup> level fighters, and have bodyguards who fight as hobgoblins.



### Horned Caimanid

# Appearing: 2-8

Move: 150' (15") / 75' (7.5") swimming

Hit Dice: 2

Armor Class: 7

Treasure Type: Nil

Attacks: 1 Bite or Horns

Damage: 1d6 or 1d4

Alignment: Neutral

Horned Caimanids are small, alligator-like lizards that live near underground water sources. Their appearance is quite distinctive, with 6" long eyestalks giving them particularly sharp vision. The eyestalks are protected by curved, pointed horns. They are dark blue in color, with patches of lighter blue and bright white underbellies. A horned caimanid measures about 4 feet from the tip of its tail to the tip of its snout. Most frequently it will bite, only using its horns to attack close-up.

Horned caimanids are scavengers by nature and will not hunt anything larger. As reptiles, they are attracted to sources of warmth.

## Blood Witch

by Joshua de Santo

The Blood Witch is figure feared and whispered of in the rural lands of Eira. A strange being, who lives alone in the marshes and forests. Unlike the Magic-User who learns of the arcane of the energies of the world through study and training, the Blood Witch comes to it by instinct and personal sacrifice. To the Blood Witch the magic sings inside of her, tells her secrets, a whispers of the glories of the universe. To a Blood Witch the Magic-User seems like a child grasping at air and dead things. To her, the Magic-User's magic seems lesser because she cannot hear it sing, cannot hear it whisper.

Unfortunately the Blood Witch's connection to the arcane comes at a grave price for anyone who pursues the path of the Blood Witch soon gets lost in the song of magic and may not see the world for how it is. Furthermore the Blood Witch must use her own body to focus her spellcasting and it has not been unheard of for a Blood Witch to kill herself in the midst of her spells.

**Prime Attribute:** Constitution 13+ (5% experience bonus)

**Hit Dice:** 1d6

**Weapons permitted:** Dagger, staff, short sword

**Armor Permitted:** None

**Tough:** Constitution scores over 16 grant an additional +1 to HP per level

**Shattered Soul:** Every day the Blood Witch has a 60% chance of losing herself in the song of magic. If this occurs the Witch will be able to cast 1 level above her level, however, she cannot know what is real or delusion.

### Blood Witch Class Abilities

**Spell Casting:** Unlike the Cleric who must pray to his god for his power and a Magic-User who must study from a book, a Blood Witch can cast her spells spontaneously. However, to cast her spells the Blood Witch must make a sacrifice of herself to free the magic. This means that essentially the Blood Witch must injury herself to cast a spell. As such, every spell cast by the Blood Witch inflicts 1+spell level of damage to the caster per time the spell is cast.

**Knowing spells:** A Beginning Blood Witch has access to all first level arcane spells and has no limit (outside her own health) to how many times she can use magic during a day. With each increase in level the Blood Witch gains access to the next higher level of spells.

**Saving Throw Bonus:** Blood Witches receive a bonus of +2 on all saving throws against spells and spell-like abilities.

Level	EXP	HD	Saving Throw
1	0	1	16
2	3,000	2	15
3	6,000	3	14
4	12,000	4	13
5	24,000	5	12
6	48,000	6	11
7	96,000	7	10
8	192,000	8	9
9	384,000	9	8
10	450,000	10	7
11+	+66,000	+2	6

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