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Issue No. 4



ISLES ON AN EMERALLD SEA III

an adventure by Gabor Lux, page 22

RATS IN THE WALLS

an adventure by Jeff Talanian, page 40

Plus:

Beneath the Crossroad

an adventure by James Gervais

...and many more features from Old-School gamers like you!

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KNOCKSPELL

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Credits

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Editor's Note

by Matt Finch

Rats! Yup, this issue has rats. Just like the first level of any dungeon, there are a lot of the little fellers running around in our pages this time around. Jeff Talanian's adventure "*Rats in the Walls*" is only the beginning; but we don't want to spoil the fun by identifying all the places where the referee's favorite furry, disease-carrying little friends appear. After all, it's not just the referees who read the magazine. In fact, there's an article in this issue written specifically for the players — enjoy a few tips on how to organize megadungeon expeditions in *Megadungeon Adventuring Tactics*. Of course, a truly sinister referee might read the article looking for a few nice countermeasures...

Just a note to anyone who's new to the magazine; most of the stats included in the magazine use the Swords & Wizardry (1974 edition retro-clone) format, which can be used without any changes in First Edition (or the OSRIC retro-clone of 1e) and Second Edition. They're also so close to the stats of Moldvay Basic and its retro-clones Labyrinth Lord and Basic Fantasy Roleplaying Game that they can be used on the fly with these games. Some of the material is also specific to OSRIC, First Edition, Labyrinth Lord, etc., but all these games are so similar that any referee should be able to handle it without his/her head exploding. Basically, if you play any edition before third, you'll be able to figure out the stat blocks.

— Matt Finch

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FROM KUROTH'S QUILL # 04

by Allan T. Grohe Jr. (grodog)

“From Kuroth’s Quill” is my regular *Knockspell* design column covering the elements of adventure design (and more-specifically dungeon design, given my interest in that topic). I will also wander through the design of spells and magic items; monsters, traps, tricks, and treasures; PC and NPC classes; planes and pantheons; and likely other topics as well. In the articles, I hope to provide practical examples that will be useful in campaign play, to show theory in action.

Author’s Note: the information and new spells presented in this column are a conclude “The Theory and Use of Gates in Campaign Dungeons, Part 1,” from the third issue of *Knockspell* (Summer 2009). While you don’t need to have read that column to use this one, this article does leverage the terms and concepts defined in its predecessor.

The Theory and Use of Gates in Campaign Dungeons, Part 2: On the Destruction of Gates; and, New Magic-User Spells

On the Destruction of Gates

“And lo! — the fourteen gates of Pesh were sundered and disjoined. And a great Nothing rippled across the plains, swallowing them in utter blackness, and carving the deep abysses that lay there now, where once the Marshals of Law marched against the multitudes of Chaos. Only their echoes remain — forlorn and lost, beyond the edge of time.”

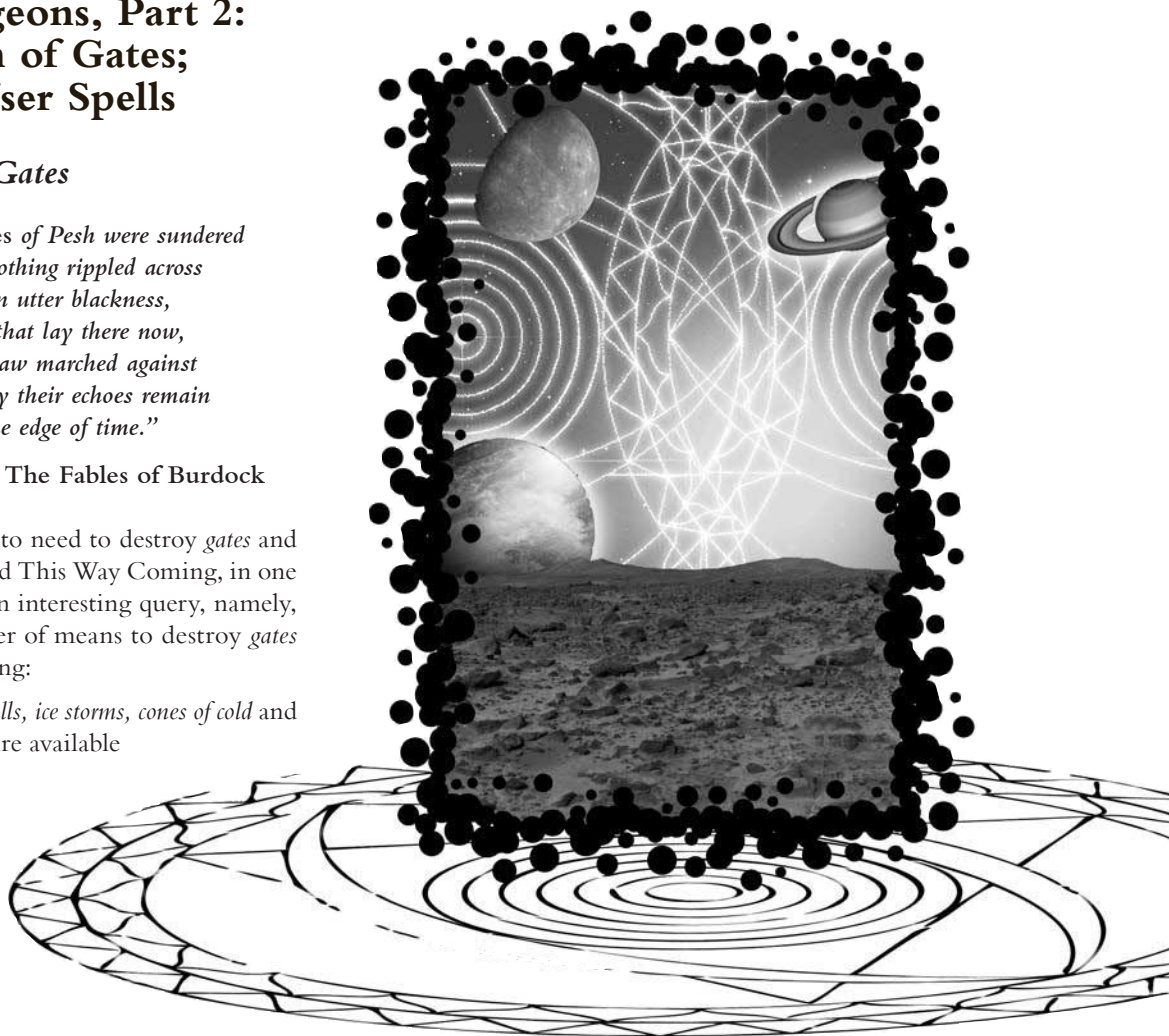
— “The Fall of Aaqa” in *The Fables of Burdock*

Player characters often seem to need to destroy *gates* and portals, prior to Something Wicked This Way Coming, in one form or another. This brings up an interesting query, namely, how is a *gate* destroyed? A number of means to destroy *gates* immediately leap to mind, including:

- hit it with *lightning bolts*, *fireballs*, *ice storms*, *cones of cold* and whatever other attack spells are available
- *disintegrate* it
- *shatter* it

- destroy the *gate’s* grounding frame/location/henge, for without its moorings, the *gate* cannot exist and dissipates into wisps of nothing
- open a second *gate* within the first *gate* (the **Babylon 5** solution)
- destroy all of the portals leading to/from the *gate* (the **Morgaine** solution)

Some or even most of these methods may not be available to most PCs, however, while others offer little to no hope for the characters to continue on in their current setting (C. J. Cherryh’s Morgaine regularly travels from world to world, closing each *gate* behind her — never able to return to her home or to travel back from whence she came). I recommend that you make the methods of destruction for each *gate* unique, but also remain flexible to allow player ingenuity to provide inspiration. That way you can roll on the table below once the *gate* has been nuked successfully!



Result of Destroying a Gate

d100	Result																																													
01-55	Nothing: the <i>gate</i> is destroyed with no ill effects or unintended consequences																																													
56-73	Explosion causing 6-15 d6 damage (roll 3d4+3 d6s) to all within a 50' radius (unmodified save vs. Breath Weapon for ½ damage); reduce damage by 2d6 and extend radius in 50' increments until no further damage dice remain; round down to 0 if only 1 die remains for the final 50' radius increment)																																													
74-79	Implosion: everything within the radius is sucked into the singularity and destroyed; roll d100 again for specifics: <table border="1" data-bbox="259 493 812 703"> <thead> <tr> <th>d100</th> <th>Result</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>01-70</td> <td>Small and slow implosion in a 0-40' radius: ([2d6]-4) x 5'; 1 in 20 small implosions result in the creation of a <i>sphere of annihilation</i>.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>71-100</td> <td>Large and fast implosion in a 50-5000' radius: (5d100) x 10'; 1 in 3 large implosions result in the creation of a <i>sphere of annihilation</i>.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Small implosions allow 1 segment of reaction time per 10' of distance from the <i>gate</i>; large implosions allow 1 segment of reaction time per 1000' of distance from the <i>gate</i>. Gentle and Benevolent game masters may allow PCs unmodified saving throws vs. Breath Weapon to avoid destruction, in which case each PC is cast into a random plane and each item in their possession must make an unmodified saving throw vs. disintegrate or not survive the implosion.</p>	d100	Result	01-70	Small and slow implosion in a 0-40' radius: ([2d6]-4) x 5'; 1 in 20 small implosions result in the creation of a <i>sphere of annihilation</i> .	71-100	Large and fast implosion in a 50-5000' radius: (5d100) x 10'; 1 in 3 large implosions result in the creation of a <i>sphere of annihilation</i> .																																							
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91-97	A reality-maelstrom is unleashed, centered on the previous location of the <i>gate</i> ; roll 1d4 on the table above for Results 1 and 2 to determine its duration																																													
98-99	1d3-1 planes associated with the <i>gate</i> begin to bleed into the plane where the <i>gate</i> was destroyed: matter, flora, and fauna, "invade"; if a 0 is rolled, planar matter from the location of the <i>gate</i> bleeds away into the newly-adjacent plane; duration and extent of the bleed is based on 1d4+1 for Results 1, 2, and 4 above																																													
100	Roll twice. Do not ignore subsequent rolls of 100.																																													

80% of the distortions above are temporary in nature, and will fade within (roll 1d6 for Results 1 and 2 on the time travel table).

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89-100	Planar Rift: the planar boundaries are rent, and a new planar geography begins to emerge in response to the destruction of the <i>gate</i> : <table border="1" data-bbox="966 241 1529 913"> <thead> <tr> <th>d6</th> <th>Result</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>The plane splits in two, over the span of (roll 1d6 for Results 1 and 2 on the time travel table above)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>The plane fragments into 2d4+1 planelets, over the span of (roll 1d4 for Results 1 and 2 on the time travel table above)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>An area spanning (1d3+3 Results 1 and 4 on the time travel table above) sloughs off as a new demi-plane, in (1d3 Results 1 and 2)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>The <i>gate</i> is not destroyed, but is instead amplified as a fixed conduit to a single destination; the <i>gate</i>'s size increases to (1d3 for Results 1 and 4 above)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5</td> <td>The <i>gate</i>'s destruction triggers a planar collision, as 98-99 planar bleed above, but more widespread and catastrophic in nature: the geographies of the plains smash together, their atmospheres mingle, earthquakes and volcanoes arise in response, etc. (think of this as planar plate tectonics: eventually one plane will grind another away, or perhaps they'll simply bounce apart in time...)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6</td> <td>The <i>gate</i>'s destruction triggers a multi-planar collision, in which 2d4-3 planes collide; for any result of 0 or less than zero, treat this as a planar-wide implosion over the span of as the plane collapses into itself over (roll 1d3+1 for Results 1 and 2)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>80% of the rifts above are permanent in nature; if temporary (and actually reversible), they will fade within (roll 2d3 for Results 1 and 2 on the time travel table).</p>	d6	Result	1	The plane splits in two, over the span of (roll 1d6 for Results 1 and 2 on the time travel table above)	2	The plane fragments into 2d4+1 planelets, over the span of (roll 1d4 for Results 1 and 2 on the time travel table above)	3	An area spanning (1d3+3 Results 1 and 4 on the time travel table above) sloughs off as a new demi-plane, in (1d3 Results 1 and 2)	4	The <i>gate</i> is not destroyed, but is instead amplified as a fixed conduit to a single destination; the <i>gate</i> 's size increases to (1d3 for Results 1 and 4 above)	5	The <i>gate</i> 's destruction triggers a planar collision, as 98-99 planar bleed above, but more widespread and catastrophic in nature: the geographies of the plains smash together, their atmospheres mingle, earthquakes and volcanoes arise in response, etc. (think of this as planar plate tectonics: eventually one plane will grind another away, or perhaps they'll simply bounce apart in time...)	6	The <i>gate</i> 's destruction triggers a multi-planar collision, in which 2d4-3 planes collide; for any result of 0 or less than zero, treat this as a planar-wide implosion over the span of as the plane collapses into itself over (roll 1d3+1 for Results 1 and 2)
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I encourage all Dungeon Masters to let loose the hounds of insane imaginings when modifying this table for use in your own campaigns!

New Magic-User Spells

"I have analyzed the dweomers, notes, and formulae within Yagrax's tome, and extracted herein those that bear the most promise for further development. While his efforts demonstrate his facility for conjurations, he is clearly building upon key principles that enable gates to function. These laws are the foundational elements through which we travel the multiverse — Keoghtom clearly mastered these precepts when he forged his rod, but from what sources did he and Yagrax gain their knowledge? I must find their original source — even if from Gresil, and no matter his price."

— *The Witch of Perrenland*, The Demonicon

If you want to establish *gate*-related magics as more-readily accessible in your campaign (as when playing in Michael Moorcock's Eternal Champion multiverse, or in Philip Jose Farmer's World of Tiers settings, for example), consider reducing the level for all of the following spells by one (i.e., *Detect Gate* becomes first level, *Identify Gate* second level, etc.). Similarly, if *gates* are wondrously rare artifacts in your campaigns, feel free to raise the level of the spells by one (*Detect Gate* becomes third level, etc.). In my campaigns, *Identify* is a second level magic-user

spell, which is why *Identify Gate* is one level higher than *Detect Gate* to begin with. In addition to deciding how to adjust the spell levels in your campaigns, you may want to consider the rarity of these spells. Again, in my campaigns, I assign scarcity to all named spells, as well as various others based on how I manage magic in the campaign: spell frequency follows that of monsters — Common (65%), Uncommon (20%), Rare (11%), Very Rare (5%), and Unique — and I generally assign all spells new to the campaign a frequency at least Uncommon, if not perhaps Rare or Very Rare. PCs may need to discover these spells from the long-lost spellbooks of ancient mages, or to perform a *geas* or *quest* for the order that guards their secrets. Drive the availability of the spells by how common the knowledge and workings of *gates* will be in your campaigns, because these tools strongly empower PCs to break the “broken” spells: for example, using *force gate*, a PC can trail a foe who fled “to safety” via *dimension door* or *word of recall* or similar escape magics.

New Magic-User Spells

- Second Level: Detect Gate
- Third Level: Identify Gate
- Fourth Level: Dimensional Anchor, Gatetrace
- Fifth Level: Force Gate
- Sixth Level: Dimensional Lock

Detect Gate (Divination)

Level: 2 (and see below)

Range: 0

Duration: 1 round/2 levels

Area of Effect: 1" wide path, 1" long/level

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 round

Saving Throw: None

This spell enables a magic-user to scan for *gates* and *teleporters*; in a manner similar to *detect magic*, up to 60" may be scanned each round, out to a range of 1" per level of the caster. *Detect gate* also detects extra-dimensional pockets (*rope trick*, *Leomund's Tiny Hut* or *Secret Chest*, a **portable hole**, etc.), *astral spell*, *maze*, *Murlynd's Void*, *phase door*, *plant door*, *prismatic sphere* or *wall* (so long as the violet layer remains in effect), *shadow door*, *shadow walk*, *transport via plants*, and similar magics, as well as a **sphere of annihilation**, **amulet of the planes**, **cubic gate**, **well of many worlds**, etc. if such magic items are within range and actively in use. It will not detect monsters existing in more than one plane (level-draining undead, for example), lesser conjurations (*monster* or *animal summoning*, *beckon*, *implore*, etc.), spatial warping effects (*displacement*, *distance distortion*, *reverse gravity*, etc.), or other near-instantaneous *gates* (*Chariot of Sustarre*, *plane shift*, *prismatic spray*; see below also on recency, however). If any detectable objects are present within range, the caster will know their relative numbers and relative distances within scanning range (i.e., “You discern two *teleporters* to the SW at 5" and 9" ranges, and a *gate* 25" away in the same direction”). *Detect gate* is blocked just as other divination magics are (by $\frac{1}{12}$ " of metal, 1' of

stone, etc.), with the caveat that very strong (or more powerful) *gates* may sometimes be detected even through thick stone walls or perhaps even through lead.

The spell also allows a base 10% for each level above 3rd for the caster to determine one or more of the following outer traits about a detected *teleporter* or *gate*. Some *gates* are easier to detect based on the intensity of their auras, as well as their recency of usage (see below for modifiers); some magic items may also boost these detection percentages. Each outer trait requires one round of concentration with no further scanning for the presence of *gates*; the caster may attempt to detect one outer trait per round, and must begin with intensity, although subsequent rounds of detection may occur in any order desired:

intensity: a measure of the strength of the *gate's* magical and planar auras and connections; detection levels are: none/inactive, dim, faint, moderate, strong (detects +10%), very strong (detects +25%), intense (detects +50%), overwhelming (detects +100%)

recency: a measure of the when the *gate* was most-recently used last; detection levels are: fresh (used within 1 round/level; detects at +50%), recent (within 1 turn/level; detects at +25%), waning (within 1 hour/level, detects at base), dwindled (within 1 day; detects at -25%), stale (within 1 day/level; detects at -50%), lapsed (within 1 week/level; detects at -75%), atrophied (within 1 month/level; detects at -125%), eroded (within 1 year/level; detects at -200%)

ethos: a measure of the alignment components of a *gate's* destination(s) (if any); detects as: none, law, chaos, good, evil, neutrality (no detection modifiers)

If a caster fails the roll, they may receive no reading, or perhaps misinformation about the trait sought — “dim” detects as stronger; while “law” and “good” ethoi result in opposed values or read as none perhaps; recency resolves as at least two places removed from actuality, etc. — the game master must adjudicate such instances.

Some clerics are able to cast *detect gate* as a third level clerical spell if it fits within the portfolio for their deity; however, like *detect magic*, most clerical casters are not able to divine more than the presence or absence of a portal, and they cannot discover any of its outer traits. The material component is a small platinum tuning fork, carefully fashioned to vibrate when *gates* are detected (cost 800 gp; the ‘fork is reusable).

Identify Gate (Divination – Conjuration)

Level: 3

Range: $\frac{1}{2}$ " /level

Duration: 1 segment/2 levels

Area of Effect: One *gate* or *teleporter*

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 turn

Saving Throw: Special

This spell allows a magic-user to identify one or more *inner attributes* about a *gate*, *teleporter*, or similar magical transportation feature (pool, archway, etc.). Note that unlike the first level spell *identify*, the magic-user is not required to touch or to directly handle a *gate* or *teleporter* since the spell may be cast at range

(albeit a very short one). The caster has a base 20% chance to identify an attribute, plus 5% per level above 5th. The caster may attempt to identify one or more of the following attributes of a *gate*, in any order, at the rate of one trait per segment:

activation method(s): general details about how the *gate* is activated — by walking through, by command phrase, by proximity of some sort of key or item, by ritual, etc.; specific details beyond walking through the gate often require research via consultation with a sage or bard, *legend lore* or *contact other plane*, or similar efforts to glean the full information

destination(s): the caster discovers how many destinations to which the *gate* leads; if the *gate* can access more than one plane, planes will be identified from most- to least-commonly travelled destinations

periodicity: determines if the *gate* is always on, or periodic; a second check will determine the frequency of the *gate's* operative periods — every other round, once per day, upon command, during the new moon, etc.; a third check will determine the duration for the *gate's* activity cycle — always on during the full moon, one use during a full moon, for one hour after the third person to walk through during a full moon, etc.

sweetness: a measure of the discomfort that passage through a *gate* causes, based on a 14 Constitution; adjust upward or downward from Con 14 using *detect gate's* intensity scale to determine PC impact, if any: none (no effect; the gate is “sweet”), faint (mild dizziness), moderate (dislocation), strong (mild nausea), very strong (nausea), intense (strong pain), overwhelming (unconsciousness); each level of effect is cumulative, and exact effects are left to the game master to adjudicate

symmetry: does the *gate* shift travellers' physical positions during transit, or do they arrive in the same positions relative to one another, to the gate itself, etc.

temporality: does the *gate* shift travelers forward or backward in time, or have a discernible lag during transit time

transit options: is the gate one-way or two-way?

traps: the caster identifies one trap on the gate, if any, along with the trap's level of threat (use *detect gate's* intensity scale)

usage restrictions: identifies whether or not the *gate* restricts usage in some manner, such as by home plane, race, sex, alignment, class, level, eye color, family lineage, etc. ; the first check provides a yes/no response, while subsequent checks provide one restriction per check

After casting the spell, and determining what can be learned from the *gate*, the magic-user loses 8 points of Constitution, and must rest for 1 hour per point in order to regain them. (See the first-level spell *Identify* for further effects of Constitution loss).

The material component of this spell is an alchemical infusion that consists of a 500 gp violet garnet, which is powdered by the magic-user and then mixed with red wine and the ocular juices from a roc, giant eagle, ki-rin, beholder, or similar creature with far-seeing and/or magical vision. The component must be drunk (and is consumed) with each casting of the spell.

Dimensional Anchor (Alteration – Conjunction/Summoning, Abjuration)

Level: 4

Range: 2" plus ½"/level

Duration: 1 turn/level

Area of Effect: One to four creatures

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 5 segments

Saving Throw: Negates

This spell prevents target creatures from employing extra-dimensional travel. The caster may select up to four creatures as targets, and those that fail their saving throw are limned with a deep emerald aura. If three or four creatures are targeted, each saving throw is standard; targeting two creatures reduces saves by -1; if a single creature is targeted, it saves at -3. Forms of movement barred by a *dimensional anchor* include the usage of *astral spell*, *blink*, *dimension door*, *displacement*, *etherealness*, *gate*, *maze*, *plane shift*, *phase door*, *rope trick*, *shadow walk*, *teleport*, and similar spell-like abilities or magic items (including the usage of free-standing *gates* and *teleporters*, **bags of holding**, **cubic gates**, **portable holes**, etc.). A *dimensional anchor* does not interfere with the physical movement of affected creatures, or affect creatures already in ethereal, astral, or shadow forms when the spell is cast. The spell does not block extra-dimensional perception or attacks including the ability for undead to energy drain, nor does it prevent summoned creatures from disappearing at the end of a summoning spell's duration. The material components are one 3" long pin formed from adventurine (green quartz) per targeted creature, as well as a swatch of fine, earthen-hued silk, into which the pins are stuck. The fine silk costs 25gp, and is consumed in the casting; each pin costs 250gp, and may be reused.

Gatetrace (Divination – Conjunction)

Level: 4

Range: 3"

Duration: Special

Area of Effect: one portal

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 4 segments

Saving Throw: None

This spell informs the caster of the destination for the last usage of any *gate* or *teleporter*, including the destinations for the residual and temporary portals created by spells like *dimension door*, *plane shift*, *teleport without error*, a ghost or phase spider entering the Ethereal Plane, psionic *Probability Travel*, etc. In order to trace the destination of a non-permanent gate, the caster must first employ *detect gate* to identify where to focus the *gatetrace* spell (if *detect gate* was unsuccessful in determining a *gate's* intensity, recency, or ethos, *gatetrace* will provide aligning, although equally incorrect, information). The destination is given as a plane, as well as a complex string of multi-planar coordinates, which can be used to arrive at the same destination if the caster has some form of appropriate magical transport available (*dimension door*, *teleport*, *gate*, etc.). The coordinates remain in the caster's memory for one round per level of the caster, and may can be

transcribed by the caster for future usage if he or she does not currently have an appropriate spell memorized or device to enable immediate travel to the destination. Coordinates require 1d4 rounds plus a varying amount of time to transcribe, based on the following table:

Destination is Within	Transcription Time
Prime Material Plane	no additional time required
Demi-plane or other non-standard Prime Material Plane location (other planet, etc.)	+1 round
Alternate Prime Material Plane	+2 rounds
Demi-plane or other non-standard Alternate Material Plane location	+3 rounds
Ethereal Plane	+2 rounds
Elemental or Quasi-Elemental Plane	+3 rounds
Other Inner Plane (Shadow, Positive or Negative Material, Concordant Opposition, etc.)	+4 rounds
Demi-plane within Inner Planes	+5 rounds
Astral Plane	+7 rounds
Demi-plane within Astral Plane	+9 rounds
Outer Planes - The Abyss, Pandemonium, or Limbo	+16 rounds
Outer Planes - all others	+10 rounds
Demi-plane within The Abyss, Pandemonium, or Limbo	+24 rounds
Demi-plane within all other Outer Planes	+12 rounds
Another Multiverse	+ 30 rounds

Instantaneous communication of the coordinates string is possible using telepathy, *ESP*, *Raary's Telepathic Bond*, etc. and the various *Extension* spells will allow the coordinates to remain in the caster's memory for a longer duration, of course. The material component for the spell is a pair of 5" by 1" electrum bars, beaten wafer-thin and finely polished on one side; the two are twisted into an infinite loop during the casting of the spell, with the reflective sides facing each other across the middle of the ouroboros helix. The component costs 400gp and is consumed in the casting.

Force Gate (Alteration – Conjunction/Summoning)

Level: 5

Range: 3" + ½"/level above 11th

Duration: Special

Area of Effect: one portal

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 3 segments

Saving Throw: None

Force gate allows the caster to force open (to fissure) and activate a *gate* that is inactive or that is otherwise unusable by the caster, whether due to unknown activation methods, pre-specified times only during which the *gate* will function, being on the wrong side of one-way transit options, or due to other usage restrictions. The spell affects permanent and temporary *gates*, including those portals created by *abjure*, *word of recall*, *transport via plants*, *blink*, *dimension door*, *maze*, *astral spell* and similar transportational and conjunction/summoning spells and magic items.

In general, the forced *gate* remains open and available to use for 1 turn plus 1 turn per level above 11th; during that time it can be used normally by any creature, with or without the presence of the caster. For spells with instantaneous durations, such as *teleport without error*, the forced *gate* remains open for 2 rounds plus 1 round per level above 11th. The spell functions for just one side of a portal: thus, if an MU and party pass force a *gate* and pass through to the other side, the first casting of force *gate* will not allow them to use the *gate* to return unless it is normally available for their usage.

Note that there is no material component for this spell.

Dimensional Lock (Alteration – Conjunction/Summoning, Abjuration)

Level: 6

Range: 1/2"/level

Duration: 1 day/level

Area of Effect: Special


Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 hour

Saving Throw: None

This spell creates a shimmering emerald ward that prevents extra-dimensional travel into or out of the area of effect. The caster may effect up to a single 40' cube in volume, plus another 40' cube per level above 13th. All forms of movement barred by the fourth level spell *dimensional anchor* are warded against by a *dimensional lock*. In addition, a *dimensional lock* prevents the physical crossing into the area of effect while in an extra-planar form (ethereal ghosts must materialized in the Prime in order to cross into a *dimensionally locked* room, for example). It also blocks extra-dimensional perception into the prescribed area of effect, so that ethereal creatures, for example, cannot see into the area of effect, nor could cross-planar scrying originating from outside the plane of the warded area. Once the *dimensional lock* is in place, it may be concealed or be built-over — such cosmetic changes do not impair its protection. *Dimensional lock* may be made permanent.

Some variations on *dimensional lock* allow the caster to designate creatures present during the casting of the spell to be immune to the dimensional lock, and therefore they are permitted to travel into and/or out of the circumscribed area while others cannot. The material component may take a variety of forms, depending upon the exact application of the spell in the target environment; in general, the material component consists of a four gallons of a magical paint, wash, or mortar, which outlines the protected area to be warded. The formula for the planar sealant requires three months to distill per 40' volume affected, and costs 640 gp — but ten times that if the spell is to be made permanent! It is consumed in the casting of the spell.

Various other gate-related magics have been rumored to exist, or to have been used by mages prior to the twin cataclysms. Such legends speak of mages who temporarily blocked a *gate's* functionality, and who diverted the *gate* to an unexpected destination (to catch a pursuer unawares); wizards would peer through a *gate* to scry all of its destinations, and bind *gates* into servitude. Others could track and follow a creature fleeing across the planes, no matter how many gates and planar changes to its destination. Archmages would banish one or both terminuses of *gate*, and could hide a *gate*, even one of overwhelming intensity. These spells are just the beginning — the possibilities are endless! 

BENEATH THE CROSSROADS

An Adventure by Joshua James Gervais

A simple roadside shrine hides the secret sanctum of a cult devoted to a rat demon. This adventure is appropriate for characters of second to fourth level.

The Cult

It all began with Cecil, a man who dedicated his life to family and faith; who lost the former and then the latter. His wife and daughter died in a fire that left Cecil's left arm a useless stump, and his faith died when his church did nothing to aid him. He turned to darker means after discovering some fragmented notes concerning the demon Naezu, which came in the form of a rat and granted favors to those that managed to summon it.

Cecil spent twenty years attempting to perfect the ritual to summon Naezu. During this time, he has sacrificed many lives with limited results. He has also built a small cult following of others who wish to summon the rat demon: a wealthy merchant at the end of life who has become desperate for more time (Theo), a mercenary with no real loyalty to the cult beyond what they

can buy (Meric), and a man horribly warped by one of Cecil's unfinished rites years ago, who now serves as caretaker for the cult's sanctuary (the Caretaker). The sanctuary is a fairly recent addition to the cult's resources: not long ago, Cecil found a roadside shrine with a secret basement hidden beneath it. It seemed perfect to Cecil to hide his unholy deeds under a holy place. Moreover, the shrine is located next to a crossroads, excellent locations for rites intended to pierce the barriers between worlds.

Cecil is ready to attempt his rite once more.

Cecil

Cecil is the leader of the cult, and a cleric of the rat-demon Naezu. He has been driven mad by his obsession with the rite to summon Naezu, and has completely lost sight of his original goal to bring back his family.

Cecil wields a thurible as a weapon, if he does 4 or more points of damage with this weapon, the thurible shatters, releasing the burning incense inside and dealing an additional point of damage.

Cecil: AC 9 [10]; HD 4; Atk thurible (1d4+1); Save 13; Move 12; CL/XP 5/240; Spells: 1st—*Cure Light Wounds* (reversed) x2, *Detect Magic*, *Purify Food and Drink*; 2nd—*Bless*, *Hold Person*; 3rd—*Cure Disease* (reversed).

Theo

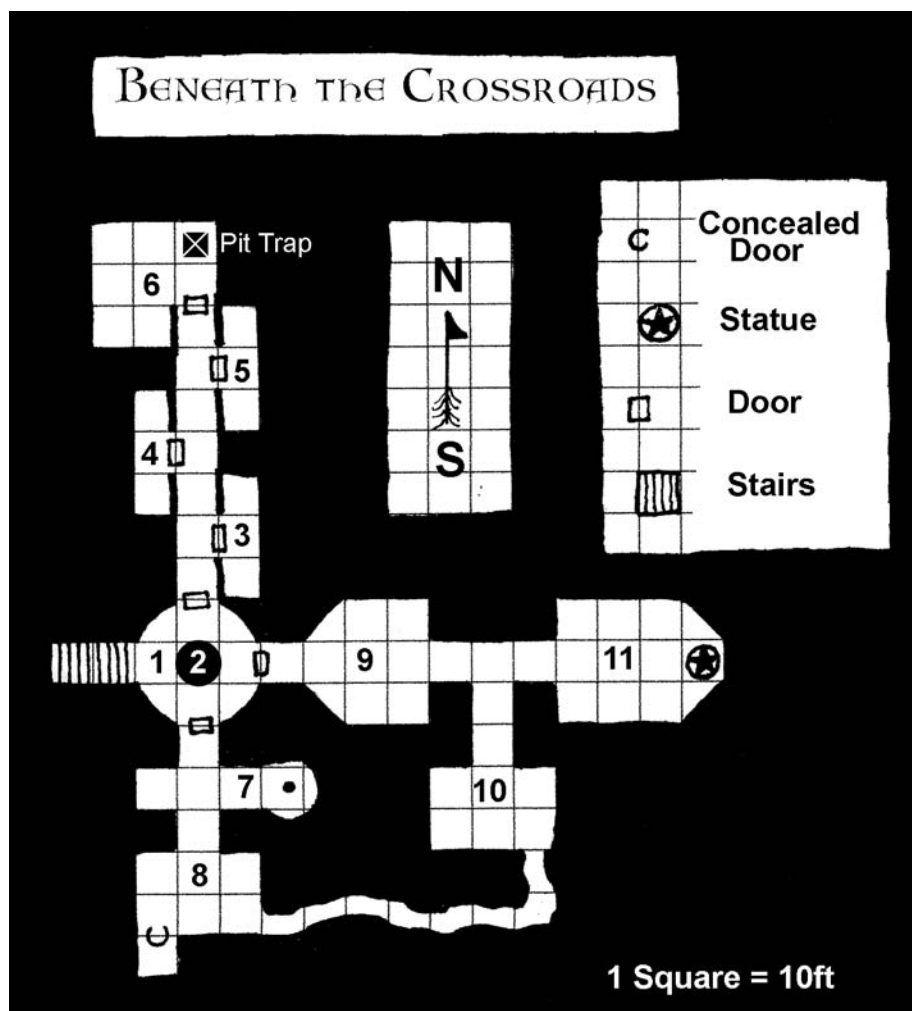
Theo is an aged merchant who joined the cult in hopes of extending his life. He is an outsider to the area and spends most of his time in the sanctum, resting and waiting for the strength of youth to be returned to him. His donations paid for the silver statue of Naezu that sits in the Altar Room. He also donated two servants who originally accompanied him here, but these were sacrificed in another of Cecil's unsuccessful attempts to summon the demon.

Theo wears a ring worth 150 gp.

Theo: AC 7 [12]; HD 2; Atk dagger (1d4); Save 16; Move 12; CL/XP 3/60.

Meric

Meric is a soldier who has decided to use his sword to make his own way in the world. He is beginning to become



distrustful of Cecil after seeing the length that the man will go to reach his goals.

Meric has a black-bladed sword that he always keeps beside him, which prevents the many rats in the sanctum from attacking him. It may have other properties at the referee's discretion. He also carries 60 gp.

Meric: AC 6 [13]; HD 3; Atk Bastard sword (1d8); Save 14; Move 12; CL/XP 3/60. Special: magic sword.

The Caretaker

The Caretaker's body is massive and grotesque, covered in patches of dull gray fur, which he continuously sheds. His face resembles a rat's snout and he has a thin whip-like tail that twitches when he is nervous.

The Caretaker is quite mad, and utterly loyal to Naezu and the rats, for the rats whisper Naezu's secret will to him – not to Cecil. He knows that Cecil's rite will never be truly complete, and he knows that each "failed" attempt makes Naezu stronger. If Cecil were even to show signs of doubt about his continually failing attempts at summoning the demon, the Caretaker would kill him and find someone to take his place.

The Caretaker spends the majority of his time with the cult's rats and has caught a number of diseases from them. His connection to Naezu keeps most of these illnesses from hindering him, but he is contagious if he bites someone. The nature of the contagious disease is up to the referee.

Caretaker: AC 7 [12]; HD 3; Atk 2 claws (1d3), 1 bite (1d6); Save 14; Move 9; CL/XP 4/120; Special disease.



The Sacrifice

This is a youth taken from one of the nearby villages, who has been deprived of food, clean water, and sleep since being taken. The Sacrifice will claim that one of the cult's rats came down into the pit to whisper foul secrets in his ear, which might be a hallucination brought on by fatigue and malnourishment, or might indeed be true.

Other Cultists

Cecil may have other helpers in the surrounding towns and villages, which can be anything from full members to paid informants. These cultists may have a usually number of rats around their homes or businesses. If there are more than one cultist exists in a particular community, the rats will build tunnel systems that connect each cultist's home.

Adventure Set Up

At the start of the adventure, the location of each cult member is determined randomly, though afterwards they can move about in response to activity in other rooms. Roll d6 for each member of the cult (and for the Sacrifice).

	1-2	3-4	5	6
Cecil	Shrine	Entrance	Cecil's Room	Altar Room
Theo	Entrance	Storage Room	Theo's Room	Altar Room
Meric	Entrance	The Test	Meric's Room	Altar Room
The Caretaker	Shrine Storage	Rat's Nest	Caretaker's Room	Altar Room
The Sacrifice	Cell	Cell	Altar Room	Altar Room

Rumors

The towns and villages near the crossroads shrine are abuzz with rumors of disappearances within the last two months, which include:

- A strange foreign merchant (Theo) with two servants.
- A local youth (the sacrifice).
- A well-known drunkard (who is unrelated to this adventure).
- A talented silversmith who was working on a secret project (the idol of Naezu).

Each of these four was heading in the direction of the crossroads before they went missing.

Roadside Shrine

The shrine, located at a crossroad, is an unremarkable stone altar to a local deity associated with travel or roads, sheltered by the overhanging roof of a building (20 ft wide and 10 ft deep) directly behind it. Passers-by often stop to pray at the shrine and occasionally to shelter from bad weather under the overhanging roof.

The building serves as a storehouse for the shrine and contains assorted foodstuffs and a disproportionately large amount of grain, though the supplies are kept safe behind a locked door. A faint odor of decay permeates the storeroom, although the origin of the odor is elsewhere.

A portion of the storeroom's southern wall is a secret door. Sliding it to the side reveals a small set of stairs leading downward. Some scuffmarks on the floor near the door might betray that something is odd about the southern wall.

If Cecil is here, he will be dressed as a member of the order that built the shrine, and will pretend to be the shrine's caretaker. Since he believes that his next rite will be successful, he will want to dispose of any visitors to the shrine as soon as possible.

If the Caretaker is here, he can be clearly heard carrying bags down to the sanctum. There is a 2 in 6 chance that he will neglect to close the secret door properly.

The Underground

The walls of the underground area are, for the most part, uniformly constructed from red-orange stone, with crumbling mortar. When it rains, water seeps into every crack and crevice in the complex and lingers for days afterward.

The cult attracts many rats that have, over time, burrowed out numerous tunnels that link various rooms. There is a 1 in 6 chance that there will be 1d4 giant rats in any given room (including rooms that have already been explored). The cult's rats are more aggressive than most, and will attack to protect their territory if they have sufficient numbers.

- 1. Entrance:** A circular room with many small niches where candles and sickly-sweet incense are burnt. A metal grate in the center of the floor serves as the only entrance to a small cell where the cult keeps prisoners due to be sacrificed.

Any member of the cult might be found here. Cecil and Theo will both flee from conflict if found alone, but Meric may attempt to engage a group of four or fewer intruders.

- 2. Cell:** The cell underneath the metal grate is 5 feet tall, with a 5-foot diameter. Since the cult normally uses relatively weak victims for their sacrifices, the weight of the grate is sufficient to keep said victims from escaping. The bottom of the cell is covered with 6 inches of cold, stagnant water. To the north, there is a doorway that has collapsed in upon itself.

If the sacrifice is here, the rite has not yet begun.

- 3. Cecil's Room:** Cecil's room contains a simple cot, piles of notes relating to the perfection of his rite, and a small metal chest where he keeps two set of vestments—the clerical robes he uses when pretending to be the shrine's caretaker—and the black robes he uses to officiate for the cult. There is also a large locket that once belonged to his wife.

The locket has suffered significant smoke damage (from the fire which killed Cecil's family) but the thumbnail painting of a young Cecil and his family inside is still recognizable. It is extremely unlikely, but if confronted with the locket and a very convincing speech, Cecil might reconsider his path.

If Cecil is here, he is mostly likely preparing himself for the rite, and those listening at his door will hear him softly chanting in an unknown tongue. While making his preparations, Cecil secures the door with a bolt-lock.

- 4. Theo's Room:** Theo's room contains a cot with a pile of heavy blankets piled on top of it – he is used to a warmer climate. He also has number of scroll cases filled with

maps of foreign lands where he has traveled in his career as a merchant.

If Theo is here, he is most likely sleeping and can be easily subdued.

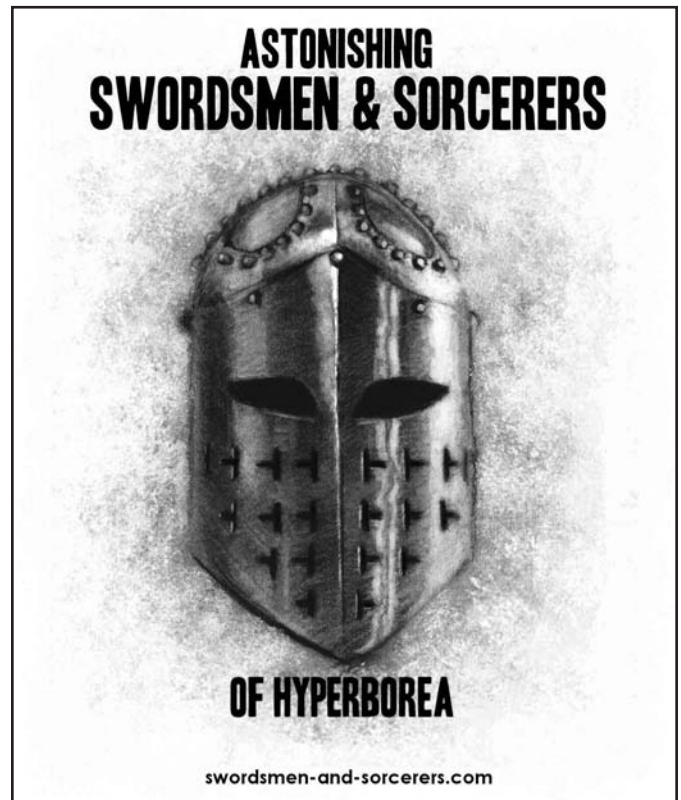
- 5. Meric's Room:** Meric's room contains an unused cot, a backpack with 25 gp worth of miscellaneous adventuring gear, and 95 gp. He coated the inside handle of the door with a contact poison that deals 2d4 damage or (1d4 with a successful saving throw). A bent nail is driven into the door, which is how Meric actually opens it from inside.

If Meric is here, he will be pacing the floor of his tiny room trying to figure some way out of this situation, and will be especially susceptible to attempts to turn him against the rest of the cult. Listeners at his door will hear him mumbling to himself about how much he distrusts Cecil.

- 6. Storage Room:** This room is used to store the cult's non-perishable goods. There is a pit trap just north of the room's entrance, which only Cecil and Theo are well aware of, since they are the only members of the cult to frequent that room.

The cult's current funds, 400 gp in various coinages, can be found in a small chest as well as various items stripped from former sacrifices (such as some tools used by a silver smith and some strange weapons from a foreign land). This room also contains spare clothing and other mundane supplies that might be useful to the cult.

If Theo is here, he will be making an account of the cult's supplies. He will attempt to engage any intruders in conversation, hoping to make an escape or maneuver them into the pit trap.



7. The Pit: This room's only feature is a putrid smelling pit 3 feet wide that the cult uses to dispose of its waste. The pit goes down roughly 100 feet; any item dropped down the pit will land with a wet plop.

8. Caretaker's Room: The caretaker's room contains a cot and a dresser—both have been badly chewed by the cult's rats. Searching the dresser will reveal some fragments of Cecil's diary where he laments the loss of his family (in the same script as his research notes), a small steel mirror, and a 100gp diamond.

There is a small alcove hidden behind the dresser, which contains three metal tubes. Each tube leads to a different room and allows a person to hear what's going on in that room. The tubes lead (from right to left) to the shrine above, the Entrance, and the Altar Room. There is a 1 in 10 chance that a rat will be in one of the tubes, which blocks any sound (and it may attempt to attack anyone trying to listen to that tube).

If the Caretaker is found in this area, he will be listening to one of the three tubes. He will attempt to flee to the Rat's Nest rather than fighting here.

9. The Test: Rats from the Rat's Nest will swarm over any person that enters this room from the western entrance. As long as the person remains calm, the rats will remain calm as well. If the person is agitated or nervous, the rats

will see this as a sign of weakness and attack at once, biting each round for 1d4 damage.

The rats will withdraw if the person they are attacking leaves the area.

If Meric is found in this area, he is traveling through it from the Altar Room. It's obvious that the rats avoid him for some reason.

10. Rat's Nest: A room with a low ceiling (4 feet high) where most of the cult's many rats nest. At any time there are 2d6 rats in this area. The nests are made of scraps of paper, worn pieces of cloth, and the odd bone. The remains of the cult's sacrificial victims are thrown outside the rats' nest.

A person can make their way through the nest, but there are many rats, and they will attack anyone who enters the nest except the Caretaker or someone with Meric's sword. The Caretaker uses the corridor that links his room with this room (which has the same low ceiling as this room) to access the nest without bothering the other cultists.

If the Caretaker is in this area, he will fight any intruders with the aid of the nearby rats.

11. Altar Room: A silver statue of a humanoid rat with a bulbous belly, sitting atop a pile of skulls, is positioned at the eastern end of the room, the demon Naezu. There is a summoning circle in the middle of the room, surrounded by bloodstains both old and new, etched into the center of the room. Once melted down, the Altar of Naezu produces worth 600 gp of silver.

Cecil can use the summoning circle to conjure a rat demon. This requires him to perform a fresh sacrifice in Naezu's name.

If the sacrifice is in this area, then the rite will begin soon; if both Cecil *and* the sacrifice are here, the rite may already be underway.

Rat Demon: AC 7 [12]; HD 4; Atk Bite (1d6); Save 13; Move 9; CL/XP 4/120; Special Summons 2d4 giant rats once per day.

Every combat round, there is a 1 in 6 chance that the rat demon will turn on Cecil.


To provide a greater challenge, the rat demon could be given the ability to be hit with only silver or magic weapons—increasing its challenge level/XP Value to 5/240. In this case, Meric's black blade should be counted as a silver weapon, since he would not work for the cult without a way to protect himself from the beasts they summon.



The Aftermath

After the cult has been taken care of, there is still some adventure potential beneath the crossroads.

The statue of Naezu is worth a good deal, but the dark rites performed before it may have tainted it requiring some sort of cleansing before it can be safely melted down.

Moreover, the cult's sanctum was found rather than built, and there are still areas of it left unexplored—unblocking the doorway in the Cell might lead to some of those areas. 

ARTIST INTERVIEW!

Christopher Burdett

One of the things we've always wanted to do with *Knockspell Magazine* is to focus on some of the great art that's coming out of the "Old School Renaissance." Christopher Burdett has worked with some major productions, including *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Angel*, and *Firefly*. He's also a frequent contributor of art both to *Knockspell Magazine* – in our last issue, he illustrated the module "Labyrinth Tomb of the Minotaur Lord." We asked Christopher a few questions about himself and about the techniques he uses to create adventurous art.

Tell us a bit about yourself, first of all.

I am a working fantasy artist based in north Florida where I live with my wife and our pride of deadly house cats. Being a sixth generation Floridian I have unsuccessfully tried to escape Florida twice to the less humid climates of Los Angeles.

How did you start with fantasy gaming? Are you a gamer?

I have loved games and gaming all my life, but never really found the time or a decent group to play with until I was an adult. The gaming bug bit me when I was very young though, I must have been under 10 years old when it happened. I was at a friend's house and his older brother was painting miniatures – and I was captivated. He explained they were for some sort of dungeon game. I immediately ran home and started drawing monsters, which I then made into small clay sculptures. A year or two later I came across a strange book called the *Dungeons and Dragons Monster Manual* at a flea market for a couple of dollars. It was a book filled with strange and crazy monsters, and with even stranger and crazier drawings. In that singular moment my fate was set. I knew what I wanted to do with my life, I needed to make monsters.

A career in making monsters? Did it work?

I continued to make and draw monsters over the years and as I faced graduation from college with an art degree I was desperate to find a career that would allow me to make monsters. I thought my options consisted of movies or video games. So in the summer of my last year at school I jumped at the opportunity to work on a low budget vampire movie that was actually being made locally. Turns out the guy that was overseeing the makeup effects had his own shop in LA and in the end upon graduation I was heading to LA to work in the movies. I worked in LA for about a year on various low budget TV and movie projects until the internet bubble pooped in 2000 and work all but dried up. I headed back to Florida to where I worked with a scientist making 3D models or various microscopes and equipment for his

educational websites. During the next two years I made a lot of microscopes, missed making monsters, but in the end I found a wife. As fate would have it after I found myself returning to LA this time with my wife and back at work with my former boss. The two years had been good for him and he called me back out.

That's when you started working on the higher profile stuff, yes?

This time around I cut my teeth on projects like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Angel* and *Firefly* as well as a various monster and horror movies. This time around we were in LA for about three years before the stress of the city got to us. Let me jump in and say that LA is amazing, awesome, fun and exciting with MANY opportunities and chances that can't be found anywhere else, so please go if that is your dream, but please be aware that it is dog eat dog, and can be hard and cold sometimes. I would never trade the time that we lived there and I would not be the artist I am today without having lived there, but some of the hardest times of my life were in LA. I miss the friends and places, but not the stress. After LA, we were back in Florida, where I worked for a design firm that dealt with a lot of state and local governmental clients. I promised myself that I would continue making the art I wanted to make, and I continued to keep up with contacts in the gaming industry I'd made while in LA. Within a couple of months after moving back from LA I found myself doing miniature turnarounds for *Wizards of the Coast* and never looked back. Looking back over the last four and half years I have worked in the gaming industry I realize that I am best suited for this industry out of all the art carriers I have had.

What sort of work do you do, now that you're in the gaming industry?

As a fantasy artist I have worked for *Wizards of the Coast* doing miniature designs for *Dreamblade* and *Dungeons and Dragons Miniatures*, concept design for *Dungeons and Dragons 4th Edition* monster and armor, and illustrations for *Dungeon and Dragon* magazines and (my crowning achievement and childhood dream) the *4th Edition Monster Manual 2*. This past year I have branched out to a lot of new clients including *Paizo Publishing*, *Fantasy Flight Games*, *Catalyst Labs Games*, and *Hero Games* as well as many other smaller companies. For *Paizo* I have been working on illustrations for several of their *Pathfinder* books and campaign settings. I have finally been able to work on some cards for *FFG* on their *Talisman* and *Runebound* titles, and most recently some more miniature turnarounds for an as-of-yet announced project. Needless to say, I have been keeping very busy.

Back to games... then and now... over the years I would occasionally play D&D, various super hero rpgs, and of course a brief but bitter affair with Magic: the Gathering. I currently play Dreamblade with my father in law whenever possible and I have been playing D&D 4th Edition with a good group since right after 4th Edition's launch. I have a special place for Dreamblade and 4th Edition, so I really enjoy playing them. It has been years and years since I played Talisman, but would love to play again. Many of my friends that have much more free time to play really want to get me playing more FFG times, and I think I just might to take them up on it.

Tell us some specifics about your art. What kinds of methods?

For most of my career I have worked mostly traditionally in black and white media, be it pencil or ink pens. Starting in LA on Buffy and Angel I started moving back into digital media. I still very much enjoyed working traditionally, but work required more and more of my time to be spent in Photoshop. I have been using Photoshop in 1991, so I was familiar with the software and didn't mind the transition. Once I left LA, I continued to work both traditionally and digitally, doing all of my miniature

work in pencil. I continued to do a lot of my color monster work in traditional mixed media of marker and colored pencil, but my client base really responded well to my digital color work so I switched to completely digital finished work. I still start all my projects with pencil on paper before scanning them in and digitally painting them in Photoshop. If the project is for miniature turnarounds where the final product is the line drawing, I stay completely traditional. For the pieces I created for Knockspell I started with a pencil drawing to work out my ideas with the art director and to get final approval. I then scanned the drawing in and used Photoshop to ink the drawings if I was inking with a pen. The pieces in Knockspell #3 I wanted to make really textured and gritty, so I added a lot of line work and half tone patterns (the dot pattern) to try to add as much texture as I could while still making the images readable. In all of my work I enjoy texture and details, the more the merrier. I hate working on smooth and simple. So needless to say I like filling in everything with marks and texture. The pieces in Knockspell #3 got a lot of line work and texture while the pieces in Knockspell #2 got a lot of black negative space and line work. I also wanted the work I did for each KS to feel separate and unique to that issue. I am not sure if that is readily apparent, but that was my intention. As far as more specifics on what I



Minotaur Skeleton by Christopher Burdett (Knockspell #3).




Poison Wine by Christopher Burdett (Knockspell #2).

use to make my work, I draw exclusively on Bienfang Graphics 360 marker paper and use only Prismacolor black pencils. The paper comes in many different dimensions to suit the project and the pencils go down beautifully onto the paper. The paper can take a beating as well as hold up to wet media. I also employ an electric pencil sharpener and electric eraser: both are invaluable. For my digital work I use a Mac. I have a desktop and a laptop, so I can work anywhere I need to. As mentioned before, I use Adobe Photoshop to paint in. I have both a Wacom tablet and Wacom monitor to suit my mood and local when working. Also, on any current project I am working on I have at least 4 backups of my work, which are on computers, portable media and online storage. You can never be too careful and cautious.

What about influences on your artistic style? Are there any artists who have been major influences on you?

A short list of artists that have influenced me, helped me either personally or from afar, or have just gotten stuck in my head... in no particular order: Carlos Huante (for kicking me in the butt when I needed it most), Jim Nelson (for being awesome, helpful, friendly, and who I want to be when I grow up), Steve Prescott (for being awesome), Lars Grant-West (for making my monsters look cooler than I ever could make them, and for also being awesome, helpful, friendly, and who I want to be when I grow up), Neville Page (for opening my eyes and being the first to really



show me how to be an artist and to draw), William O'Connor (for that awesome thing you do), Todd Lockwood (for without him we would not know the meaning of awesome), Scott Purdy, Jeremy McHugh, Patrick McEvoy, Ralph Horsley and so many other amazing and talented people I look up to and call my peers. I know I can't list them all and even if I tried I would forget someone important. You can see more complete lists in the blogs I follow: <http://www.blogger.com/profile/17006535822300071138> or my watch list on Deviant Art: <http://christopherburdett.deviantart.com/myfriends/> Go there, check out all the amazing art these folks are making and who humble me and make me honored to be counted amongst them. 

MEGADUNGEON TACTICS: MISSION-BASED ADVENTURING

Defining the Mission

By Matt Finch

The recently coined term “megadungeon” refers to a really big underground complex with multiple, large levels. The advice in this article actually applies to adventuring in other types of areas as well, but the specific examples are all geared toward the traditional “great big dungeon” environment. The focus of the article is to define a few optimal methods of organizing an expedition, or a series of incursions, into a megadungeon.

Since every dungeon is different, there's not a single, all-purpose program to exploring all dungeons of any referee. However, that doesn't mean you should abandon the mission-based approach to dungeon exploration. Far from it: indeed, you should embrace the idea of equipping and planning your expeditions appropriately for a specific mission rather than trying to go in equipped for everything, carrying the kitchen sink. Certain challenges are best faced with certain configurations of equipment, spells, and other resources. In each successive mission, try to gain information by mapping and observing so that you can choose your *next* mission and plan for it intelligently.

So, even though there's not a universal program, there is a (relatively) universal *set* of mission guidelines. The trick is figuring out which one matches up with what you're actually going to encounter.

The First Two Missions

Expedition #1: Map the Corridors

The optimal first step for exploring a megadungeon is usually to run a fast-moving reconnaissance mission to explore the corridors.

The main objectives of the corridor-mapping expedition are (1) to map as much of the complex as you can get by exploring only the corridors, (2) to identify the escape routes, pinch points, good fallback points, and weak defensive positions, (3) to identify shortcuts, and (4) to identify hardpoints (I'll discuss hardpoints later on in the article).

The two keys to the method here are (1) fast-moving and (2) focusing on corridors. Why?

Let's discuss corridors first. When you start getting into the heavy stuff – the rooms with monster lairs or the big obstacles like lava rivers – you will encounter situations in which you need to run away or fight a running battle with opponents that may split up or take shortcuts to cut off your PCs. The best way to be prepared for this eventuality is to already have a good idea about the flow of the corridors. The corridors are your flight path when you cut and run, leaving the plate-mailed dwarf and his slow movement rate behind. Incidentally, never leave your only copy of the map with the slowest-moving party member. That's bad planning. (In fact you should have at least two mappers, in case one gets disintegrated or drowns in a pool of acid, or whatever). Mapping the corridors will identify places where your party, instead of the monsters, will hold the advantage of better terrain, better escape routes, and better cover. Keep in mind especially that corridors which circle back to other corridors are *very dangerous* in running battles, because they allow enemies to hit you from more than one direction at the same time. Whenever you find a corridor that intersects with another one you've already mapped, you have just identified a circular pathway that can probably be used to tactical advantage, by someone, in a running battle or a retreat.

The second point about corridor mapping expeditions is that they should be fast-moving. Why? Because large dungeons are usually constructed to have periodic checks for wandering monster encounters. Wandering monsters don't offer much loot – their treasure is in their lairs, not their pockets. So fighting with wandering monsters is simply unproductive. In general, the referee will be doing "checks" for wandering monsters every few turns, possibly when you get into (or complete) combat, and definitely when you set off explosives or do anything else particularly noisy. Thus, your goal is to (a) move as quickly as possible (which means fewer wandering monster checks per ten feet traveled), (b) to avoid combat, and (c) to keep quiet. This is the time when you might want to switch out the plate mail for something lighter, to keep the party's movement rate at 9, or 9", or whatever speed lets the entire party move as fast as possible without *everyone* having to suit up in wizard robes. (If you decide not to wear any armor, of course, you might as well all dress like wizards – it might scare some monsters off. Possibly. If you're really lucky.... I wouldn't recommend going quite so far with this strategy, but basically, keep your movement rate high enough to run away from the slowest wandering monsters. Keeping it quiet is another reason to leave the plate mail behind – but don't leave the dwarf behind: if at all possible, bring a dwarf and an elf on this expedition, even if you have to hire them. (Hire them for a share of the treasure, too, because this sort of expedition brings in basically zilch). Dwarves can identify strange stonework – possibly including some traps, depending on the referee – and elves have at least a chance to notice secret doors in passing. Since you're not slowing down to check for secret doors, it's a bonus if the elf spots one – secret doors are important to know about. One piece of equipment you should carry, though, is whatever type of hacksaw, bar-spreader, or bolt-cutters you can get your hands on. Portcullis traps are often

located in the same corridors you'll be breezing through. And a 10ft pole to check ahead for pit traps, obviously.

Speaking of traps and reconnaissance, if your party is higher than first level you might have access to some "utility" spells that can assist in a pure mapping expedition. Clerics with *find traps*, *silence 15' radius*, and *locate object*, and magic users with *read languages*, *detect magic*, *hold portal*, *knock*, *web*, *wizard lock*, *clairaudience*, and *clairvoyance* can come in very handy when you are doing a fast mapping sweep. It means sacrificing some of your combat potential, but your plan isn't to engage in combat – the plan is to run like utter cowards when threatened.

One other point about mapping. See if captured monsters can fill in part of your map, and check in "the Tavern" to see if there's already a partial map available from previous adventuring expeditions. These maps might contain false information here and there, but they can save you a lot of time, too!

Expedition #2: Recover Lost Cash Flow

Your first expedition didn't get you any measurable treasure, and your bar tab is getting high at the local tavern. It's time to start some serious, profitable adventuring. The first step is to take a look at your map and find a nice, treasure-concealing door, or an area that looks like it's got several of them. Your objective is to plan a route that won't require you to keep retracing your steps. Dungeon movement is slow, and every backtracking means more wandering monster checks. Plan for a straight-line path into a profitable-looking region of the dungeon – this isn't a scouting expedition like last time. For this sort of mission, go in like you mean it: armor up, bring those noisy hirelings along,



and bring a cart for one of them to pull. If this is only your second expedition into the dungeon, you probably aren't going to find the best of the treasures, but since you've already gotten the lay of the land (via your corridor map), you can plan for combat and treasure-haulage. You might as well be optimistic; if you have to run, carts are pretty cheap and disposable, and a cart might even slow down monsters if you abandon it in the middle of a passageway. (Rolling it down a slope is even cooler, if you found a slope in your first expedition; and setting it on fire before you roll it is the coolest of all).

Bash down doors, fight monsters, and make sure you check their lairs for secret doors that might lead to the real treasure. If something looks like a trap, don't screw with it. If something looks like it does something weird, don't screw with it. Your focus here is to check through the easily accessible rooms for easy, uncomplicated, hack and slash treasure gathering. Grab the low-hanging fruit, as it were. This will not only pay the bar tab, but it will expand your map(s) a bit. Moreover, exploring rooms will now start to suggest places where intensive secret door checks should be made. This is especially true if the top levels of the dungeon use the old TSR model of thin walls and closely-packed rooms. If this is the case, your map might now start showing some areas that are surrounded by rooms and corridors but, strangely, don't have an entry. If you get this sort of "surrounded but unknown" configuration on your map, you may have identified a secret room, or even a secret area. Places like this usually contain the best treasures; they will be an objective of the next expedition. Not an objective of this expedition, though! Wait for the next time before going into these potentially most-dangerous areas.

Expeditions After the First Two

At this point, you've got a quick map (or two) of the corridors and whatever portion of the level that you mapped, up until the point where treasure or wounds caused you to wrap up the "cash flow" mission. Now what? Now it's time to get down to business and look for the real stuff: the big treasures that are found in secret rooms, on the far side of obstacles, and behind weird tricks like rotating, talking statues. This section covers the variety of different ways to move on from this point.

Type #1: Rinse and Repeat

If the dungeon is really large, your first two expeditions might not have covered enough mapping territory to identify good prospects for the types of expeditions mentioned later on. If this is the case, you might want to repeat the sequence of mapping corridors in one mission and then grabbing the easier loot in the second expedition. If what you really want is just to find the stairs to the next level down, because you're ready for a bigger risk-to-reward ratio, this might be your approach if you think the stairs are going to be out in the open (as opposed to being hidden behind a secret door or on the other side of an obstacle you're skipping with corridor searches). Keep in mind, though, that you're leaving more distance between your PCs and the exit as you explore deeper into a level.

If the pattern of mapping and then sweeping isn't working out well, try doing some monster-negotiation when you're

moving through in the heavy armor (monsters respect people who look shiny, sharp and deadly). You might be able to expand your map quickly with the help of some captured goblins.

Type #2: Checking for Details

Up until now, or in a particular area, all you've done is to dash through it mapping the corridors, and then to go through the obvious doors without doing much checking for secret doors – and definitely without approaching anything that looks like it's a "Referee Special," such as statues with gems in their eyes, shiny floating jewelry, or rickety bridges over rivers of molten lava. Now it's time. Your map may show places where secret doors could be located, or you might have noted down a couple of interesting things ("shiny jewelry floating in air here"), or you might have seen things like murals or runes that you haven't tried to read or examine yet. If you don't eventually start checking into the details, you're going to miss the big treasures and the important clues. And possibly you won't find the stairs, either; that's kind of a dirty trick on the referee's part, but dirty tricks are the referee's trade.

In preparing for a general detail-gathering expedition, part of the process is obviously going to depend on what sort of "special" you're tackling. If you've got nothing but possible secret doors, you'll approach it differently than if you've got nothing but evil altars and gem-studded statues, and differently still if you've heard noises that sound like an orc tribe on the other side of a door labeled "Orc Tribe – Keep Out." For most detail-gathering missions, bring all the ingredients you need to bake a cake, except sugar: that is, flour, water, eggs, oil (the flammable kind, though!), and a way to start the fire. Flour is useful for detecting invisible objects. Also, flour dust is rather explosive, so a trail of oil leading to a place where you smacked open a bag of flour can make a nicely distracting little noise if you've got wandering monsters looking for you. And don't think for a second that medieval people didn't know that flour dust explodes. Water can be used to test the slope of a passageway, and can be mixed with your flour to make dough (yes, dough sometimes comes in very handy). Eggs are one of the few things monsters like to eat that don't have a smell until they are thrown. An excellent distraction if you're being chased. Don't pack them with the spellbook. Oil is brought along for obvious reasons, especially if your referee allows the super-flammable Greek fire type of fantasy lantern oil. Bring a crowbar for getting past locked doors in (relative) silence. Bring rope in case you have to climb down something, and don't forget that most uses of rope can be improved with a grappling hook. Get a couple of loop-rings welded onto your grappling hook so it can also be put at the end of a pole for hooking things down from ceilings and high alcoves. If you've got a cart, bring something really heavy like an anvil too: you can abandon it when you find treasure, and in the meantime you can use it for all those situations where you need to find out what happens if a person steps on something, only without using an actual person. Wrap it in cloth to reduce noise.

Balance the need for thoroughness against the wasted time that does nothing but increase the likelihood of fighting (unprofitable) wandering monsters. Chances are, you'll never check the area carefully a second time, so this is your one chance

I played in Tim Kask's OD&D game at North Texas RPG Con last summer, and we were confronted with a statue that demanded food. It ate all the rations we tossed into its mouth, and Tim gave us an evil chuckle: "It doesn't work; it wants something different."

"I offer it a wheel of cheese," I said.

Tim's eyebrows shot to his hairline. "You've got a wheel of cheese on your character sheet?"

I tossed the sheet over.

"Damn," he said.

Motto of the Story: Never underestimate the value of unusual equipment.

Actual Result: Ultimately, the statue didn't want the cheese either, but the "real food" kept it talking to us. A partial victory.

to find secret doors and other interestingly-hidden things. On the other hand, it's just not worth it to burn time checking every inch of every long corridor. In most really large dungeons, there are *lots* of empty rooms that are truly empty, so don't get caught in the assumption that there must be something you're not noticing. There definitely may NOT be anything hidden or special at all present in that curious gap on your map(s). Identify the places where interesting things are likely to be, and focus there. This means places where corridors turn, areas where there is a strange, room-shaped gap in the corridor pattern, areas where everything seems symmetrical except in one place (especially if a wall seems to be blocking off the symmetry), and places where there is an inexplicable dead end. Seriously check floors and ceilings in those dead ends. They are ideal places for pit traps, stone drops, and portcullis traps. (And check the interesting pits for secret doors too!) Don't drink anything you



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didn't bring in with you. Even if it looks like a potion, drink it after you get out, preferably in the company of a reliable cleric and/or a stomach pump.

Type #3: Deep Excursion

You've found a long corridor or a way into a whole new part of the level, and you're going to be hiking in a long way from the exit sign. Whether you're going on a mapping expedition or heading out in force, that distance should be a matter of at least minor concern. Bring whatever navigational resources you have (a dwarf is usually the best you can get; but if the referee allows a compass, bring one, and then ask if the campaign has GPS locators). Navigation isn't the only peril to a deep excursion. Getting cut off from the exit can be a nasty development too, whether by monsters or by the dungeon itself (moving walls, corridor collapses, portcullis traps, etc.). Consider establishing one or more supply dumps along the way. Obviously, leaving a pile of ham sandwiches in the middle of a corridor isn't going to do you much good – all it takes is a single troll or gelatinous cube passing by and you've traded your sandwiches for a stalker. However, if you've explored the region fairly well, all those places where the referee carefully hid treasures away are now your sandwich-storage locations. Put in a spare suit of armor, a couple of spare weapons, a backup light source, food, water, and a crowbar. Anything bulky you think you might need to come back for – especially if you anticipate the expedition might turn into a Gizmo-using mission (see below) – stash the heavy gear in one or more secret rooms along the way. We're working from the assumption that getting out of the dungeon can be almost as dangerous as working your way in, and if this is the case, you might very much want to hang out in the *middle* until you've got your strength back. Plan for this contingency. If you have access to a *wizard lock* spell, or any other spell that can be used to create a permanent defense, use these to make your bolt-hole/supply base more secure.

Type #4: Rescue and Recovery

One of three things has happened: you left a dead party member behind, one of your party members was taken prisoner, or you know where a valuable hostage/prisoner is being held inside the dungeon. The very first thing to remember in this sort of scenario is negotiation. You don't necessarily have to fight your way through every obstacle (and don't forget the possibility of "negotiating" via *charm person* too!). If your plan is to sneak in (i.e., you're not wearing much armor or bringing many people) consider leaving reinforcements behind at a hardpoint. Stealth operations are one of the few times when it makes sense to split the party (or at least, split the characters from the henchmen and hirelings). What I mean by a hardpoint is this: a highly defensible place – preferably with an escape route that can't be used as a second way in – where you can fall back and gain the benefits of a superior tactical position. The top of some stairs, for example, will generally give you a fairly significant combat advantage. If you've got a room where you can store a heavy table (for use as cover) or other cool weaponry (tossing a bunch of caltrops down the stairs is a neat idea), so much the better. Another useful thought about a rescue and recovery mission is to customize your spell use; it's common practice for adventuring parties to automatically load up with as many combat

spells as possible, to the exclusion of utility spells like *knock*, *ESP*, *find traps*, and *silence 15ft radius*. A rescue operation involves stealth and alertness in a very small theater of operations. Assuming you know where it's all going to come down, you might want to augment your powers of stealth and detection more than you want to be loaded up with combat spells. Keep a couple of combat spells in case things go bad, of course, but plan for the mission.

Type #5: Gadgeteering, Gizmology, Amateur Siegecraft, and Buildstuffological Engineering

Sometimes, you know you're headed toward something that's going to need some heavy-duty adventurer-rigged engineering: getting down a chasm; assaulting a massive, orc-filled chasm; moving a twenty-ton statue ... all of these are Gadgeteering missions. What distinguishes a Gadgeteering mission is usually that you need to carry in lots and lots of stuff. Some embarrassing things can go wrong – a twenty-foot long battering ram might have adequate ceiling clearance, but it won't go around a 90-degree turn in a corridor that's ten feet wide. The geometry is against you. Figuring out how to disassemble things (or getting them specially made that way) can solve a lot of headaches. Assaulting positions where the monsters have good cover and can shoot you with arrows? Consider a mantlet – a disassembled wooden wall with arrow-slits – to even up the odds. I mentioned

bolt-cutters, hacksaws, and wheels of cheese already, but there are innumerable gadgets that can be used by a party of adventurers: block and tackles, tall iron tripods (for using a pulley to raise something), long levers with a tall fulcrum to pry things up at a distance – these are just a few examples. Equipping yourselves and preparing spells for a gizmo-use type of mission really depends on what you expect to find on the other side of the obstacle. If you don't know what's on the other side, wear the armor and carry the combat spells.

If you've established a bolt-hole somewhere in the dungeon, consider taking one expedition specifically to fortify it (as mentioned above in Types 3 and 4). Load the magic user up with *wizard lock* spells, load the fighters down with caltrops and lumber, and transform your hideaway into an underground fort! (Do as much as possible of the hammering on the surface, or wandering monsters will probably test your defenses before you've finished putting them up).

This isn't an exclusive list of the ways to organize a mission, but it should help a great deal to get your party thinking in terms of a specific mission, and whether you're bringing the materials and the tactics you need to execute that mission as safely as possible.

And with the most loot, of course.

Happy Adventuring! 

RANDOM TAVERN GENERATOR

By Robert Lionheart

What is a tavern? In fantasy adventures, a tavern is dwarves drinking hearty ales and buxom beauties serving hot meat pies. It is crackling fires dancing in silver moonlight with melodious bards singing tales of old. And don't forget the mysterious stranger in the corner!

The traditional fantasy tavern has become a stereotype, because the setting is both evocative and immediately recognizable. For the referee, taverns provide an easy platform to introduce NPCs and rumors leading to new adventures. Also, the tavern offers the referee a chance to engage the player's five senses with warm descriptions of food, women, wine and song. This is a pleasant change from the usual repertoire of adjectives depicting the horror of monsters and the slashing violence of combat.

The goal of the Random Tavern Generator is to enhance this wonderful aspect of adventuring by adding variety to the tavern experience. With a few 3d6 rolls, the referee can quickly generate the Quality of the Establishment, the Disposition of the Patrons and the Aura of Mystery.

Instead of rolling randomly, referees may enjoy picking and choosing from the lists to build unique taverns for their various towns and city-states. Maybe an area of your game world is renowned for its hospitality and cuisine, or lack thereof. My hope is that your taverns will become favorite locales players remember fondly and visit again and again.

Quality of the Establishment

Not all taverns are created equal. Roll 3d6 to determine the Quality of the Establishment. Then roll 1d6 for Patronage, which tells you how many tables are occupied when the adventurers arrive at the tavern. The better the food and drink, the more likely there will be a crowd. In general, a Table will have 1d6 people in their group.

Referees may choose to add an additional Table of patrons during "Happy Hour" and maybe subtract a Table during off-hours, such as late into the night. In poor quality taverns, it is quite possible the adventurers are the first customers all day, maybe even all week!

3. Worst Toilet in Scotland

Patronage = 1-4 Empty, 5-6 one Table

Eating or drinking the food here may result in saving throws versus food poisoning! The fare is rotten rat meat (at best), the wenches are ugly and the drink is stinking swill. But it's cheap, and the portions are big!

4. I Don't Like You Either

Patronage = 1-3 Empty, 4-6 one Table

While the patrons might be friendly, the owner and his staff are downright unpleasant. Prices are high, the food poor,

and the service rotten. Maybe the “tavern” is just a false front for unsavory and illegal activities; so roll twice on the Aura of Mystery table.

5. Tourist Trap

Patronage = 1-3 Empty, 4-6 one Table

This dive is avoided by locals and caters to foreigners, travelers and merchants drawn in by the shiny lanterns. The wine is watered down, the ale is stale, and the turkey is an under-cooked sparrow. If the pork chops were any drier, they’d be mummified. Of course, the prices are higher than usual.

6. Order Off the Menu

Patronage = 1-2 Empty, 3-4 = one Table, 5-6 = two Tables

The cook is laughably incompetent, but he can do one dish surprisingly well. Or maybe the moonshine is wretched, but the brandy is terrific? If the adventurers are observant or make local friends, they will be told in advance what they should order. Otherwise, the other patrons will enjoy a bad joke at the adventurer’s expense.

7. Hole In The Wall

Patronage = 1-2 Empty, 3-6 one Table

This place is nothing more than a few stools in back alley, or a rundown hut at the side of the road. Roll 1d6. On 1-4, the quality of food, drink and décor are poor; on a 5-6, the food and drink are quite good and the décor is unusual.

8. Run By Foreigners

Patronage = 1-2 Empty, 3-4 one Table, 5-6 two Tables

The tavern keeper (and maybe his staff) are not local to the area; maybe demi-humans or even a humanoid monster. The locals are sure to point out this fact repeatedly. The food is good, often spicy, and with unrecognizable ingredients. Do you really want to know what goblins put in their goulash? The prices are standard, but locals complain that the place charges too much.

9. Wretched Hive Of Scum And Villainy

Patronage = 1 Empty, 2-3 one Table, 4-6 two Tables

This tavern is usually located on the wrong side of town. The bartender is hairy, snarling and nasty...and so are the serving girls! The food is okay, the prices standard, and the booze never watered down. However, the place caters to a rough bunch of ugly-looking troublemakers. On the Disposition of Patrons chart, any result of 10-12 should use entry #14 “Thieves & Thugs” instead.

10-11. Classic Tavern

Patronage = 1 Empty, 2-4 one Table, 5-6 two Tables

This is the classic fantasy tavern, complete with burly bar-keeps, tasty turkey legs, and plenty of ale on tap served by flirting wenches. It is the most common result on the table because the Classic Tavern has served us well for decades! Prices are standard and the fare is good.

12. We Love This Place!

Patronage = 1 Empty, 2-4 one Table, 5-6 two Tables

The wenches are beautiful, the meat pie has no gristle, and the beer is always fresh. Prices are standard, but the quality is outstanding. Of course, no good meal can go unpunished. Roll twice on the Aura of Mystery table!

13. Local Favorite

Patronage = 1 one Table, 2-3 two Tables, 4-6 three Tables

This tavern is located off the main road within the residential area of the community, and the décor is never flashy. The locals will be surprised (and maybe dismayed) that out-of-towners found their watering hole. On the Disposition of Patrons chart, any result of 13 should use entry #8 “Inquisitive Authorities” instead. The GM may decide this place is so mundane that there is no possible Aura of Mystery.

14. Delver’s Rest

Patronage = 1 Empty, 2-5 one Table, 6 two Tables

This tavern caters almost exclusively to adventuring folk, but the owner takes bribes from various merchants and haughty strumpets who want to get close to the dungeon gold. Prices are standard and the fare always good. On the Disposition of Patrons chart, re-roll any result of 4, 5 or 8. Also, such a concentration of adventurers obviously requires an additional roll on the Aura of Mystery table. In campaigns where adventurers are rare, such taverns would instead cater to wealthier pilgrims, wandering knights and the lesser sons of nobility.

15. Brewery (1D6 Groups)

Patronage = 1 one Table, 2-3 two Tables, 4-6 three Tables

This is no mere tavern, but a full-fledged brewery that serves the area. The food is usually mediocre, but the beer, ale and mead are fabulous. Maybe the brewery is run by dwarves? What a crazy idea! Alternatively, the brewery could be a winery instead. Probably run by elves.

16. Oktoberfest Beer Hall

Patronage = 1-2 two Tables, 3-4 three Tables, 5-6 four Tables

Beer halls are much larger than most taverns, catering to several dozen or even hundreds of patrons. Individual tables are bigger, holding 2d6, 3d6 or even 4d6 people. Beer halls will be packed with families and revelers on most local holidays. The food is good, served in huge portions with always flowing tasty brew. Prices are standard. Half the Tables will use entry #12: “I Love You Man!” on the Disposition of Patrons chart, while the rest roll normally.

17. Temple of the Party God

Patronage = 1-2 two Tables, 3-4 three Tables, 5-6 four Tables

This tavern is actually a shrine, temple or even cathedral to a chaotic deity whose worship demands eating too much, drinking too much, gambling like mad and other unprintable raucous good times. Think Bacchus, Dionysus, and any Hollywood movie fraternity party. *Neutralize Poison* is a great hangover cure and usually offered half price by the clerics after nights of heavy devotion!

18. Staying at The Ritz

Patronage = 1-4 one Table, 5-6 two Tables

Finally, an establishment worthy of royalty! Such places have strict dress codes and expectations of behavior, burly guards who keep the peace, and possibly some magical or monstrous protection. Maybe it is called “The Dragon’s Lair” for a reason! Almost any exotic food, drink, sin and pleasure is readily available. Prices are extremely high to keep out the common scum. Start with ten times higher and work upward. Think five star luxury resort, gilded in gold and probably enhanced with magic. Even the *Unseen Servants* wear fine robes! On the Disposition of Patrons chart, re-roll any results of 4, 8 or 14. Depending on the campaign, this tavern may automatically have entry #8 “Enchantment” on the Aura of Mystery chart in addition to any others.

Disposition of Patrons

Roll 3d6 for the Disposition of Patrons for each occupied Table in the tavern. This chart generalizes their background and attitude toward the adventurers. Will the surly dwarf ever get to drink his beer in peace? Let’s find out!

3. Of All The Gin Joints...

The front doors open and the adventurers are confronted with a motley assortment of old foes, deadly rivals, past girlfriends and their angry fathers. Think fast, or roll initiative!

4. I Don’t Like Your Kind

Pick a race which is not native to the area whom these patrons consider equal to a monster. Verbal confrontations will easily become violent. Patrons will not share information with friends of the “monster” and may work themselves into a vile, drunken stupor before starting a fight. At the referee’s discretion, the tavern keeper will not serve the “monster” or accept his gold. His friends, however, may pay double.

5. Fear of Strangers

These patrons are obviously unsettled by the presence of strangers. The innkeeper may also share their worries. Fortunately his greed overcomes his fear as long as the strangers do not balk at paying double for everything.

6. Angry Drunks

This group wants nothing to do with the adventurers or anyone else. They sit, drink and brood. After a while, the brooding may become slurs, curses, threats and assorted pre-brawl agitation. All too often, angry drunks turn out to be the town guards, or spoiled sons of nobility.

7. Except That Guy

The locals may not approve of the adventuring lifestyle, but everyone enjoys their wild tales...except THAT guy. The town drunk, village bully or uppity punk takes an instant dislike to them. Nobody really likes the troublemaker, but he is a local. Dealing harshly with him will have consequences. Remember Wiglaf from the saga of Beowulf?

8. Inquisitive Authorities

The table patrons may be town watchmen, burgomasters, village elders or other local authorities. They demand the adventurers identify themselves and their business, and probably

lecture them on local customs and laws. Taxes and other extortion may have to be paid before the adventurers can enjoy their beer.

9. Throw the Bones

These patrons are eager to gamble away their pouches of coppers, silvers and maybe even a few gold. If the adventurers want their attention, they must risk coins and throw the knucklebones. The more the adventurers lose, the more gossip they get.

10-11. Bard’s Tales

These patrons are eager to hear stories. The adventurers will be pestered to tell their tales, and a rousing saga may earn a round of ale. This is the most common result because it makes for fun and boasting. This table will contain good candidates for NPC hirelings.

12. I Love You Man

The patrons are happy drunks who want to drink the adventurers under the table. Somehow their drinks wind up on the adventurer’s tab. This group also may contain good candidates for NPC hirelings. If you are using the Random Hireling Generator from Issue One of *Knockspell*, most of these guys will be Useless Drunks. Or are they just a bunch of pickpockets, liquoring up the adventurers while pouring their own drinks into the potted plants?

13. Travellers

These patrons are not local either. They are passing through, coming from Point A and going to Point B. Roll 1d6 to find their route.

1-2. Just came from the direction where the adventurers are going.

3-4. Going in the same direction as the adventurers. Wanna caravan?

5. Going Far and Away - traveling to another land, foreign nation or even another plane of existence. May pay for useful information.

6. Just came back from Far and Away. May have goods and tales.

14. Thieves & Thugs

This table of patrons will carefully watch the adventurers, then decide how to part the fools from their bags of gold. They may use local informants, a compliant serving girl or greedy children as scouts. These rogues are looking for easy marks, not bloodbaths. Depending on the outcome, this group may also be good recruits. If using the Random Hireling Generator (editor’s note: *Knockspell* #1), they will be Traitors.

15. Rich Guys Pay

If the adventurers’ exploits are publicly known, this table of louts exaggerates their success to anyone who will listen. If not, these guys make up stories of how wealthy the adventurers have become. In exchange for this ego-boosting notoriety, they expect the adventurers to pick up the tab for the evening’s entertainment. This is the classic “celebrity posse” which can drain great wealth. If refused generosity, this table will spew less flattering stories around town. Why ain’t us locals good enough to drink a beer with you fancy elves?

16. Who's With Us?

Inebriated and itching for trouble, these patrons loudly declare the adventurers to be their bestest friends and steadfast allies. Then they proceed to drunkenly incite trouble such as a robbery, slander against local nobles or just a barroom brawl. Again, they may be good recruits. If using the Random Hireling Generator (*Knockspell* #1), they will Loyal.

17. A Chance Meeting

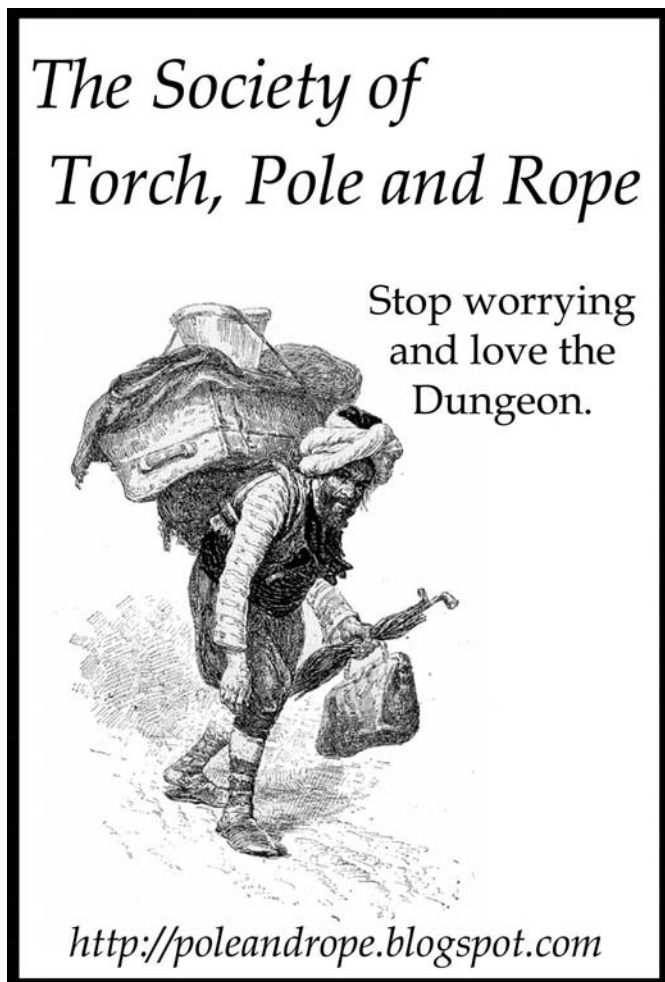
This table is sociable and engages in pleasant, respectful small talk. They are also adventurers, usually of equal or higher level. Unbeknownst to either these patrons or the adventurers, their paths may cross again in the future at a time of great crisis. But will they be on opposing sides?

18. Old Friends

These patrons are actually loyal friends of the adventurers. What a coincidence seeing you here! Of course, gain another roll on the Aura of Mystery chart.

Aura of Mystery

Wherever adventurers go, danger and intrigue always follow! The Aura of Mystery helps turn a simple rest stop into a springboard for exciting role-play and action. Pulp author Raymond Chandler said suggests that when things get boring, kick the door open and start shooting into the room. This is the Swords & Wizardry equivalent.



3. Dead Man's Party

Everyone looks fine at first glance, but everyone at this tavern died a long time ago. They may not be violent undead, just restless spirits casting an illusion to interact with the living. Or maybe the adventurers are the evening's entertainment! Why was the tavern built on top of a haunted graveyard?

4. Cursed

The tavern suffers under a terrible curse. Are the locals are causing the problem or are they also afflicted by the diabolical secret? Curses include beds that shrink the adventurers down to mouse size, charms that plant subconscious triggers into their minds or even taverns which are simply traps laid by hungry cannibals. What exactly was in that delicious meat pie?

5. Such a Quiet Evening

Roll on the Wandering Monster chart and charge the slaver-ing beasts and hatchet-wielding nightmares into the tavern, intent on bloodshed.

6. Secret Coven Meeting

The adventurers stumble into a tavern just when the forces of darkness converge to plan their future devilry. The Disposition of Patrons is unaffected, but all Tables share a common cause with hidden gestures, identical tattoos and knowing looks. If the adventurers realize what is going on, will they be allowed to leave?

7. Winds of War

Tavern conversation is dominated by talk of war. The region is either being invaded by enemies or going to war against a hated neighbor, or maybe with itself. Maybe it is just idle gossip or the misinformed ranting of fools? Maybe it's the king's spies checking out public opinion and looking for dissenters? Unfriendly patrons may accuse the adventurers of being spies for the other side.

8. Enchantment

Some permanent magic affects the tavern itself or even the patrons. Maybe it is as simple as a *Light* spell instead of lanterns, a *Magic Mouth* door greeting, *Unseen Servants* instead of serving girls, a sudden *Alarm* whenever a weapon is drawn, bartenders who throw *Hold Person* on anyone starting a brawl or maybe the saucier is really a zombie, reanimated just to keep doing his job?

9. Not What They Seem

One table of patrons has wicked plans for tonight, but not directly involving the adventurers. Maybe they are assassins intent on kidnapping the queen's baby, a doppelganger looking for a merchant to impersonate, a wizard cloaked in illusions to carry out horrific vengeance, or just thugs about to knock over the tavern's coin chest. The adventurers may wake up the next morning, hear the terrible news and suddenly realize they met the attackers over dinner! If the adventurers socialized with that table, the local law may consider them suspects too.

10-11. Rumors of Gold

The bard sings a saga of a lost dragon hoard, a grizzled miner mumbles about caverns full of emeralds, or some fool starts showing off his half-torn treasure map. This is the most common Aura of Mystery because it allows the referee to weave in adventure hooks, letting the adventurers hear rumors of nearby dungeons and other locations of interest.

12. Cloaked Stranger

A mysterious cloaked figure sits quietly in the shadows, minding his own business. There is something clearly odd about his dress, mannerisms and the way he drinks his wyvern-tail ale. Do the adventurers recognize him? Or just think they do?

13. He's Eyeballing Me

The cloaked stranger in the corner is clearly focused on one of the adventurers. Maybe the stranger recognizes him? Maybe he has a message? Or maybe he was just staring into space and the adventurer is being paranoid.

14. You Are My Only Hope

Someone (maybe a beautiful but treacherous someone) throws herself upon the adventurer's mercy. Roll 1d6. On 1-3, something very bad has happened. On 4-6 something even worse is about to happen. Either way, this someone has no one else they can beg for help. Will you fall into her trap, err ... I mean save her?

15. Wrong Place, Wrong Time

What are the odds that a bunch of villains fitting the description of our innocent adventurers have just committed a terrible crime? And now the town guard, the king's knights or a rabid, angry mob is on their way to the tavern to apprehend these "criminals" and deliver a much deserved "justice."

16. Dungeon in the Cellar

There is a dungeon underneath the tavern. How convenient! Maybe the dungeon entrance is a hidden secret, or public knowledge as part of the tavern's charm?

17. Portal to the Outer Planes

Somewhere in this tavern is a very special door. Maybe it's carved from a remarkable wood, or covered with strange runes, or hides its true purpose. Once opened, this door is a portal to another place, quite often another plane of existence. Does the door always open to the same place, does the magic only work on some nights, or when the knob is turned a certain way or when a certain phrase is uttered in the right tongue? Maybe the door isn't even a door!

18. In the Presence of Gods

A powerful being, such as a polymorphed dragon, shape-shifting demon, or a disguised deity is among the patrons this evening. Are they just kicking it with lesser mortals or have they come bearing a challenge?

Late Arrivals

The referee may also choose to have one or more tables of patrons arrive after the adventurers sit down for their brew, stew and brauts. Simply roll on Disposition of Patrons to discover something about the late arrivals.

Sample Taverns

As always, I simply chucked the dice and quickly interpreted the combination of results. Also, the Happy Hour table and the Late Arrival table are listed just in case these extra patrons are needed.

Ye Olde Fork in the Road

Quality: Tourist Trap

Tables: None

Happy Hour: Inquisitive Authorities

Mystery: Rumors of Gold

Arrivals: Don't Like Your Kind

Ye Olde Fork in the Road sits outside a large town. The inn caters to travelers who miss the closing of the town gates. The adventurers will be the first customers of the day if they arrive before sundown. Road wardens show up at suppertime with concerns of banditry. If the adventurers are not local, they will be questioned. While the adventurers are dining, some rough fellows arrive who have an ugly dislike for dwarves. The owner is a lazy innkeeper, but he's a treasure-trove of gossip about the ruins of the ancient city upon which the current town now stands.

Goobers, Dubbers and Schmidt

Quality: Run by Foreigners

Tables: Bard's Tales

Happy Hour: Fear of Strangers

Mystery: You Are My Only Hope

Arrivals: Rich Guy Pays

Goobers, Dubbers and Schmidt is a small tavern built for small patrons. Goobers and Dubbers are gnomes and Schmidt was their loyal wolfhound, now dead many years, but always fondly remembered. The tavern is famous for their burneye berry pies with cayenne & raspberry! Any time of day, one table is occupied with gnomes and pixies eager to hear about the adventurer's last dungeon delve. At meal times, the women and children of the wee folk arrive, but they are scared of anyone over 3 feet tall. Once word gets around that adventurers are there, some little troublemakers show up to flatter egos and put drinks on their tab. Sadly not everything is happy pudding, and soon Goobers will make his desperate plea for help.

Cult of the Sacred Flesh

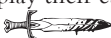
Quality: Temple of the Party God

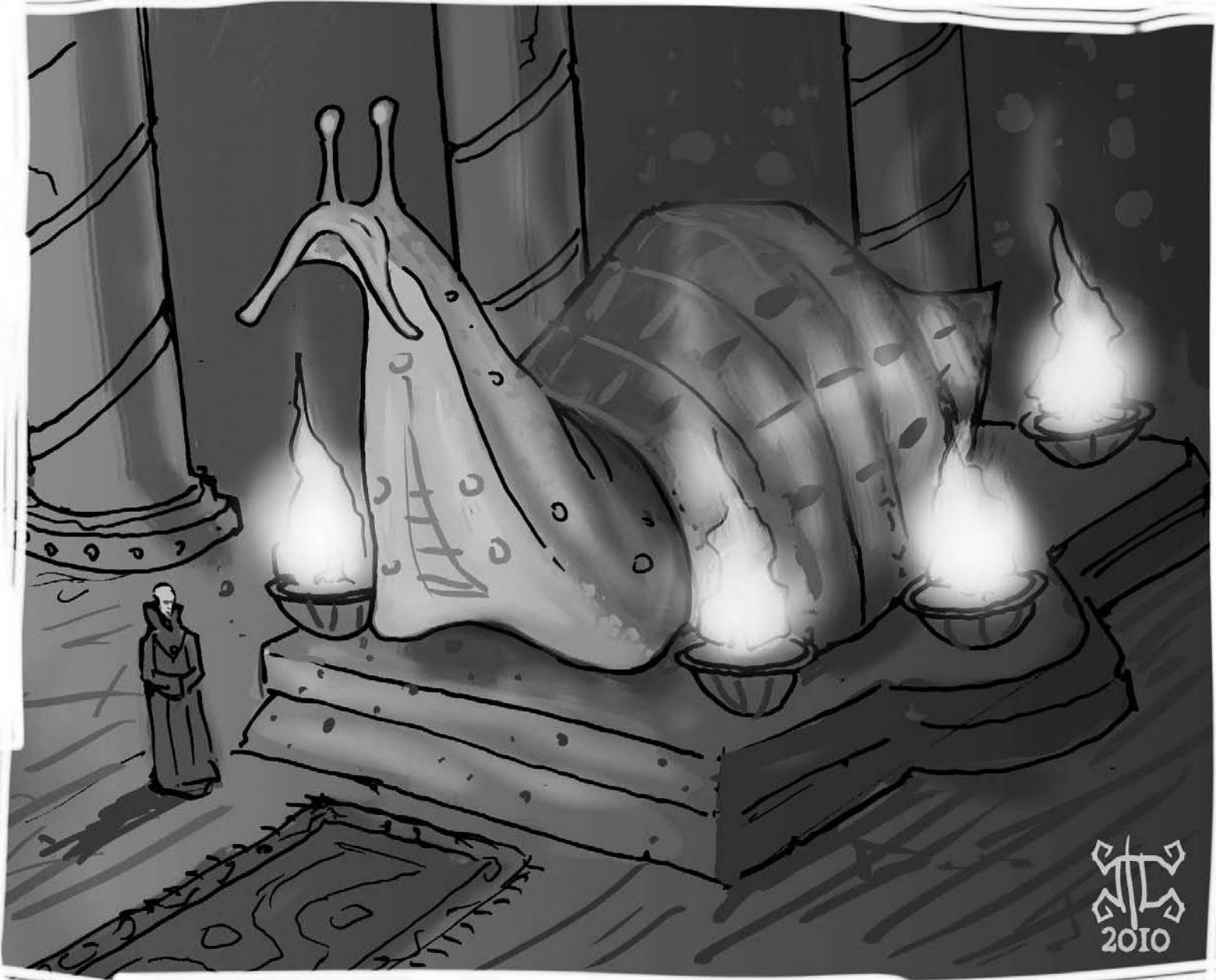
Tables: Of all the Gin Joints, Angry Drunks, Throw the Bones

Happy Hour: Travelers (Going Far Away)

Mystery: Secret Coven Meeting

Arrivals: Who's with Us?

The Cult of the Sacred Flesh is a hedonistic den of iniquity, only tolerated because powerful nobles are always shown a good time. On any other night, the temple would be a raucous palace of wine, women and song. But one night each year, the worshippers gather to devour children. Guess which night your adventurers arrive? Trouble starts immediately with a few violently displeased rivals. If the adventurers survive that altercation, other cultists are drinking themselves into an angry stupor to steel their nerves for tonight's gruesome murder and meal. The odd clerics are content to just play knucklebones ... with the fingers of last year's victims. In the early evening, a table of acolytes will be discussing their travel to a far destination to raise up another temple. If the adventurers stay for drinks, a rowdy group of acolytes will mistake them for fellow cultists and suggest they join in on tonight's kidnapping and cuisine. If the adventurers don't play their cards right, they might be the new meat on the menu! 



ISLES ON AN EMERALALD SEA III

An Adventure by Gabor Lux

*Playtesters: Gabor Acs, Kalman Farago,
Laszlo Feher and Gabor Izapy*

The Isle of Molonei

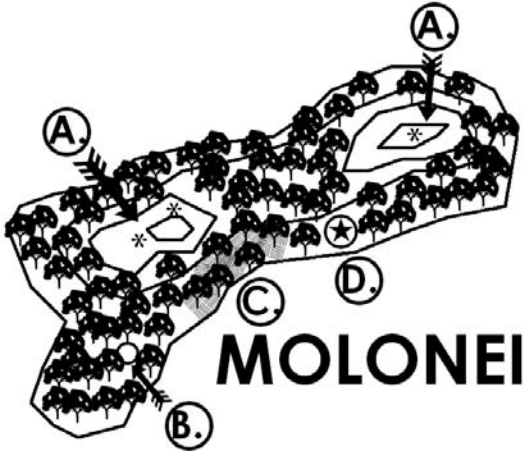
From afar, the Isle of Molonei resembles the spine of a fantastic creature – a row of mountain peaks towering over thick woodlands. Where now only the shadows of pterodactyls sweep, there stood fabulous Molonei, a utopian refuge of refined hedonists. Now the city is a tangle of fantastic ruins and the inhabitants have retreated under the mountains, leaving behind the open air for the security of their temple and the plenty of their munificent god. However, the refuge has

Editor's note: stats for monsters in this adventure are presented in the Swords & Wizardry format, and are thus easily usable without conversion in the Original, Basic, and Advanced (First Edition) editions of the world's most popular fantasy roleplaying game, as well as with OSRIC and Swords & Wizardry's Core and WhiteBox versions.

turned into a gilded cage: outside the confines of Molonei's subterranean plaza, amoeboid horrors prowl the corridors in pursuit of prey; outside, under the waning sun, the claw and beak of the pterodactyl are a danger no less real. Therefore, Molonei's people have grown fewer over the last generations, leaving behind even the strange customs that were a shadowy side to their easygoing nature: inviting and warm, their greeting is 'Come, come with us in beauty and abundance, while the sun burns and the gods give'.

Encounters on the island occur with a 1:3 probability; in the mountains, they will always be with 2d4 pterodactyls; in the woods, wildlife (apes, tapirs or colourful birds) or pterodactyls; and in the ruined city, either a group of hedonists or yet another group of pterosaurian horrors. There are a total of 24 pterodactyls, and they all lair in one of the three nests (A.) among the jagged peaks.

Pterodactyls (24): HD 3; HP 14, 12, 12, 22, 20, 10, 19, 6, 11, 13, 16, 12, 11, 18, 12, 12, 6, 13, 17, 13, 11, 17, 8, 10; AC 5[14]; Atk beak 1d6; Move 3 (Fly 15); Save 14; CL/XP 4/120; Special snatch and carry victim up into the air



A. These are pterodactyl nests; hard to approach via conventional means, the westernmost contains the armoured shell of a giant crab and a rusted helmet; the one in the centre,

6 fuzzy young playing with a large opal (300 gp); the one to the east, nothing.

B. A tremendous, dim sphere of glass half-sunk into the earth is the favourite sunning place of 8 giant lizards. Weird lizard skeletons are imprisoned within the glass by the dozens.

Giant Lizards (8): HD 3; HP 10, 16, 12, 16, 12, 16, 14, 16; AC 5[14]; Atk 1 bite (1d8); Move 12; Save 14; CL/XP 3/60; Special None

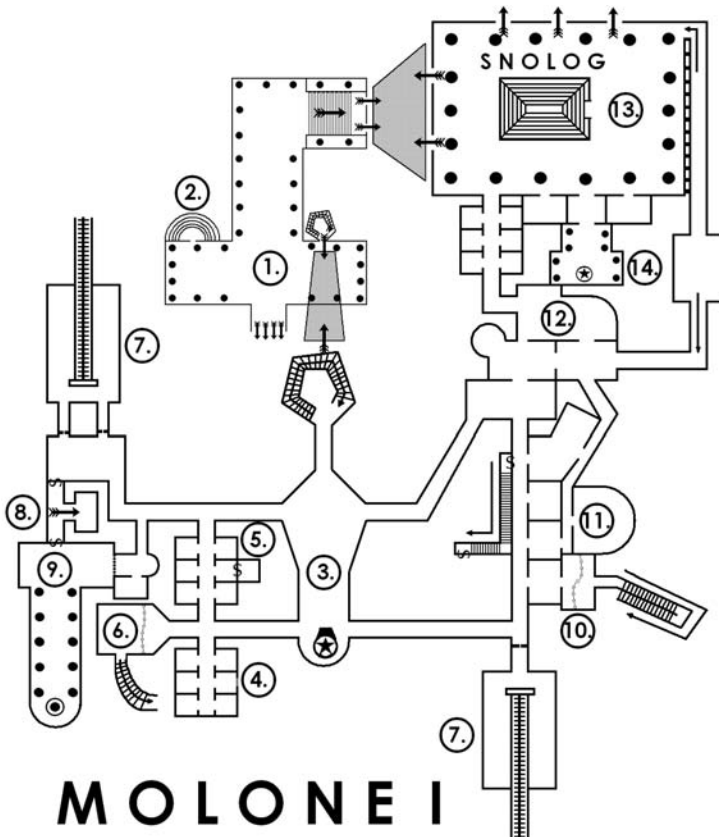
C. Here are the remains of terraced agriculture now covered by dense vegetation.

D. The city of Moloneï is built into the side of the mountains, a sequence of bulbous shapes and eccentric geometry rising from the abandoned harbour to the foot of the cliffsides: here are the colonnaded terraces, steep stairways, hollow domes and empty palaces of an affluent civilisation. The city shows no signs of destruction, only abandonment: its marble and limestone ruins were given over to the lemures and the shrill cries of the simurgh.

There are no treasures among the ruins. If humans are encountered, they are either a larger group (3d4) who have ventured out to enjoy an ancient vintage, the sunset and the thrills of danger on the melancholy terraces, or a smaller company (1d3+1) seeking amorous pursuits. In either case, they are cautious at the sight of armed men, but welcoming if they see no sign of malice.



The entrance to the subterranean city opens from a columned hall at the base of a great towering building. There are no other entrances to the main complex, although alternate routes may lead to smaller, isolated labyrinths. Underground, random encounters are rolled semi-hourly unless stated otherwise. On the entrance and 1st level, they occur on a 1:3 chance, with either 3d4 hedonists (unarmed) or one of the grey oozes inhabiting the lower levels. On the 2nd level, they are with 1d3 grey oozes or a black pudding; the puddings will come periodically until they or the intruders are all killed. There are 13 oozes and 4 puddings in Moloneï.



Grey Oozes (13): HD 3+3; HP 12, 22, 21, 13, 9, 18, 10, 17, 25, 24, 17, 22, 12; AC 7[12]; Atk slime 2d6; Move 1; Save 14; CL/XP 5/240; Special corrosion, transparency, impervious to blunt weapons, fire and cold

Black Puddings (4): HD 10; HP 48, 45, 36, 58; AC 6[13]; Atk 1 attack (3d8); Move 6; Save 5; CL/XP 11/1700; Special Acidic surface, immune to cold, divides when hit with lightning

1. The giant entrance hall fills the entirety of the tower, with the grandeur of skyscrapers and railway stations. Beams of light fall on the debris below, and there is a layer of dust disturbed by the occasional trail leading north. The northern hall is dark, and eventually emerges at Snolog's Plaza.

2. A semicircular amphitheatre or auditorium in a side-building, now no longer in use.
3. Decorative hall with a succession of marble stelae depicting the bustle of a forum. To the south stands a statue of a bearded man in a toga, right hand raised in benediction; below the pedestal, there is a dry font. The statue and pedestal both show signs of decay, with porous and crumbling surfaces.
4. A series of bare chambers cleared of all valuables. To the south, one is a portal flanked by marble urns, bearing the inscription, **“SEE ANOTHER IN THE VARIETY OF THE IDENTICAL”**, a phrase which activates the portal if uttered aloud. A character looking through the grey sheen sees himself slightly changed – clothing colour, complexion, eye hue and other small details may be different. Changes are towards the dramatic in characters of chaotic disposition and uniformity in the lawful; the chamber works its adjustment to bring outwards appearance in line with inner inclinations. Stepping through the portal brings 3d4 mirror images into being while the character disappears; the images attack at the character’s normal melee effectiveness via touch. Once the images are slain, the character returns, clothing turned into a swirl of bewildering hues and imbued with +1 enchantment (as cloak). If left to their own, 1/3 of the images wander off, and when the character returns 1d6 x10 minutes later, he will be weaker by 1 HP for each image lost.

Mirror Images (3d4): HD 1; HP 8 each; AC 10[9]; Atk as character, touch (3d4); Move as character; Save 17; CL/XP 2/30; Special only susceptible to melee attacks

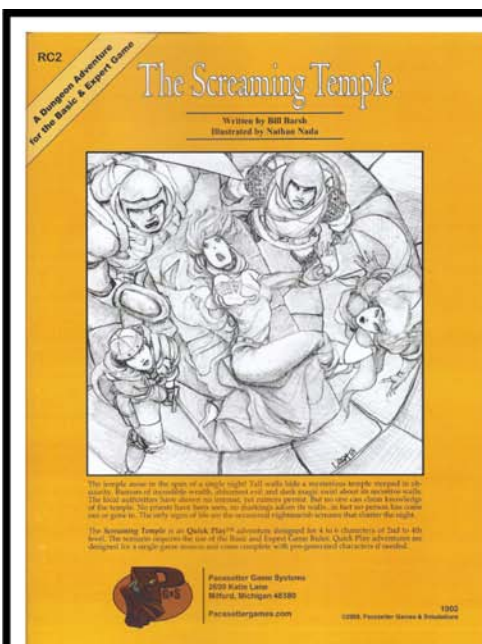
5. The treasure room beyond the secret door contains chests of brass ingots, 100 sp, 500 electrum, 15 platinum, a 300gp silver dagger with an opal grip, a 20gp soapstone figurine and a *chain shirt* +1.
6. A frescoed room: the procession of human figures has been reduced into porous blackness below waist height. A makeshift barrier has been erected against slimes: copper rods and spear hafts fashioned into a set of bars, further reinforced by heavy, corroded brass plates. This setup is effective vs. puddings, but not oozes.
7. Both of these locations are barred by heavy metal blast doors inscribed with the following phrases:

=ΤΕΡΜΙΝΕΧΥΣ=
 =ΜΑΓΗΤΟΦΟΡΑ=
 =ΟΚΕΑΗΟΣ=

(TERMINEXUS MAGNETOFORA OKEANOS; south)

=ΤΕΡΜΙΝΕΧΥΣ=
 =ΜΑΓΗΤΟΦΟΡΑ=
 =ΣΤ ΓΑΜΜΑ=

(TERMINEXUS MAGNETOFORA S.T. GAMMA; north).



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The doors are opened by an electronic panel with two blank „eyes” – an application of electricity or sharp light activates the mechanism. Beyond the blast doors lie domed rooms, stops to a long-defunct monorail system. Further doors bar progress. The southern door fails to open for any reason as the tunnels beyond have caved in, but the other may be operated. Half an hour down the sloping tunnel, a sign is found (← **MOAOHEI** ↻ ΣΤΓ →); further on, there is a great downward shaft with a massive cargo lift and a supply depot hanging over unknown depths.

8. This secret chamber contains a cache of abandoned ceremonial objects. There are six thick and voluminous robes of shaggy fur, supplemented by black leather masks with hanging tentacle-like appendages; similar buskins and gloves, as well as sets of glass eye-stones (one pair is polished ruby, worth 2000gp each). Furthermore, there are odd brass candelabums, a set of heavy braziers, scented oil, and a heavy, gnarled brass-alloy rod terminating in a cluster of six tentacular appendages. The vestments are used to protect against ****UUARAM**** the Hairy Mound, the monstrosity imprisoned on the flooded levels of the city, while the rod, which has no magical properties, may be used to control it.
9. A sinister basalt temple of thick cyclopean pillars and dark slabs depicting unwholesome abstraction. The entrance has been blocked with thickset brass bars that seem of more recent construction. Around the well to the south, the following inscription has been written: **“UUARAM THE HAIRY MOUND”**. The well leads to the semi-flooded
17. and the chained plug stone there.

Using the vestments, rod and braziers from 8. and performing a human sacrifice will break the chains below, and ****UUARAM**** will come forth to pay its conjurer obeisance. The rod may then be used to control the formless demigod or command it back to its watery demesne. If the methods are incorrect (e.g. one of the conjurers doesn't wear vestments, the eye-stones are not set in their place in the leather masks, or some other error is committed), ****UUARAM**** is eligible to a saving throw, and if successful, proceeds to devour the characters.



****UUARAM** the Hairy Mound: HD 13; HP 104; AC 3[16]; Atk mass 4d6 + hairs 3d4 + engulfment (may attack simultaneously in three different directions); Move 15; Save 3; CL/XP 16/3200; Special +2 to hit, 30% magic resistance, immune to mind-affecting spells and rays Editor's Note hit points in S&W WhiteBox will be 78**

****UUARAM**** is an amoeboid being of semi-divine power. Its great mottled bulk towers above men to a height of 15', although it can fit into lesser places and batter down most barriers. As it progresses, it emits an unpleasant, inarticulate mixture of wheezing, piping and bellowing. The mass of the demigod is studded with a thousand sharp but delicate hairs which are the strength of supple daggers.

Furthermore, it is sheathed in a golden halo, a sign of the magic resistance. The halo is also efficacious versus laser projectiles and rays of all sort. ****UUARAM**** may engulf those it hits, causing automatic damage and consuming them utterly once dead. Its intelligence is either negligible or extraordinarily unconventional.



10. A barrier identical to 6. has been set here.
11. A storeroom filled with heavy, lime-encrusted amphorae. 2/3 of the vessels contain a heady and fragrant vintage of great antiquity. Together, the haul is worth some 3,100 gp – although it is very bulky.
12. An advance outpost of Molonei, this place is manned at all times by eight men. The total combatant forces of the subterranean city number 30 fighters and 12 thieves. In times of great danger, all citizens retreat to Snolog's Plaza.

Fighters (30): Ftr 2; HP 7, 6, 10, 6, 10, 10, 9, 14, 13, 8, 7, 7, 10, 7, 10, 8, 13, 9, 11, 10, 6, 6, 10, 9, 5, 14, 11, 8, 6, 2; AC 5[14] (ring, shield); Atk spear 1d6; Move 9; Save 13; CL/XP 2/30

Thieves (12): Thf 3; HP 7, 12, 12, 16, 7, 8, 15, 13, 9, 12, 8, 10; AC 5[14] (Dexterity, leather, shield); Atk shortsword 1d6 or crossbow 1d4+1; Move 12; Save 12; CL/XP 2/30; Special thief abilities

13. Snolog's plaza is a great underground hall supported by mammoth columns, the higher reaches obscured in darkness

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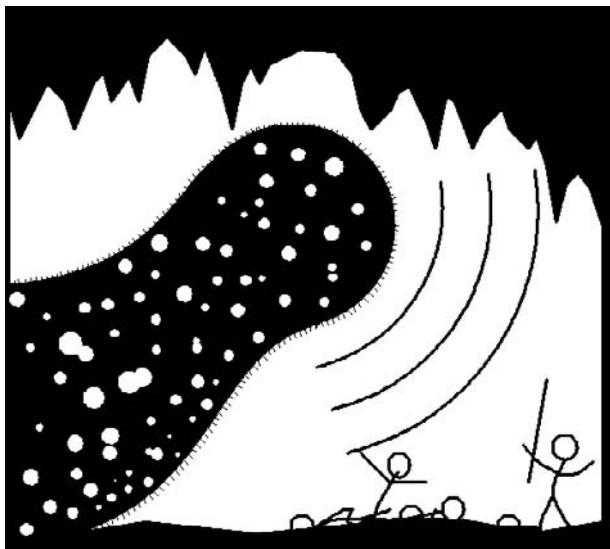
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despite the plentiful braziers. In the centre stands the columned temple of Snolog. The idol of the benevolent snail-god rests on a bloc of marble within. At its leisure, it may synthesise any amount of varied and wholesome (although salt-free) food for its followers, project two eye-beams per round (striking at the 9th level of ability and inflicting 6d8/6d8 damage on hits), or exude an area-effect *charm monster* spell, filling subjects with all-consuming lust.

The plaza also functions as an agora and general gathering place for Molonei's citizens, and there is always a mass of hedonists male and female, young and old, on hand. When encountering strangers, Molonei's citizens elicit a mixture of curiosity and perplexity that there is still a world outside their utopia: most would not think of setting foot on the surface, let alone off the island. They are content to drink, love, and, when grown tired of life, breathe in the divine vapours at 14. and thus depart the mortal coil. Above all, they desire to see an end to the amoeboid monsters that have dragged off so many. This sentiment is not shared by a small sect of citizens who secretly venerate ****UUARAM****. This group consists of 6 fighters, 2 thieves and the "high priest", a fighter who also possesses a paralytic projector (save vs. immobilisation in cone-shaped area; also inflicts 3d4 points of non-lethal damage; 14 charges).

Beyond the plaza lie networks of domiciles, baths, meeting points and storerooms too numerous to enumerate: most are now abandoned and empty. The place of most interest is a disused library: the collection of engraved copper plates mostly involves satirical rhyme and bucolic hymns, but an hour of research turns up a plate that functions as a spellbook of illusionist spells (improved illusion, greater illusion, suggestion, phantasmal killer, Lankwiler's prismatic missile and dreamspell, or Referee's choice) as well as one bearing an ominous image:



14. A sanctum draped with heavy curtains and swimming with a heavy, resinous odour. On a marble pedestal stands the statue of a naked woman. If someone stands before the

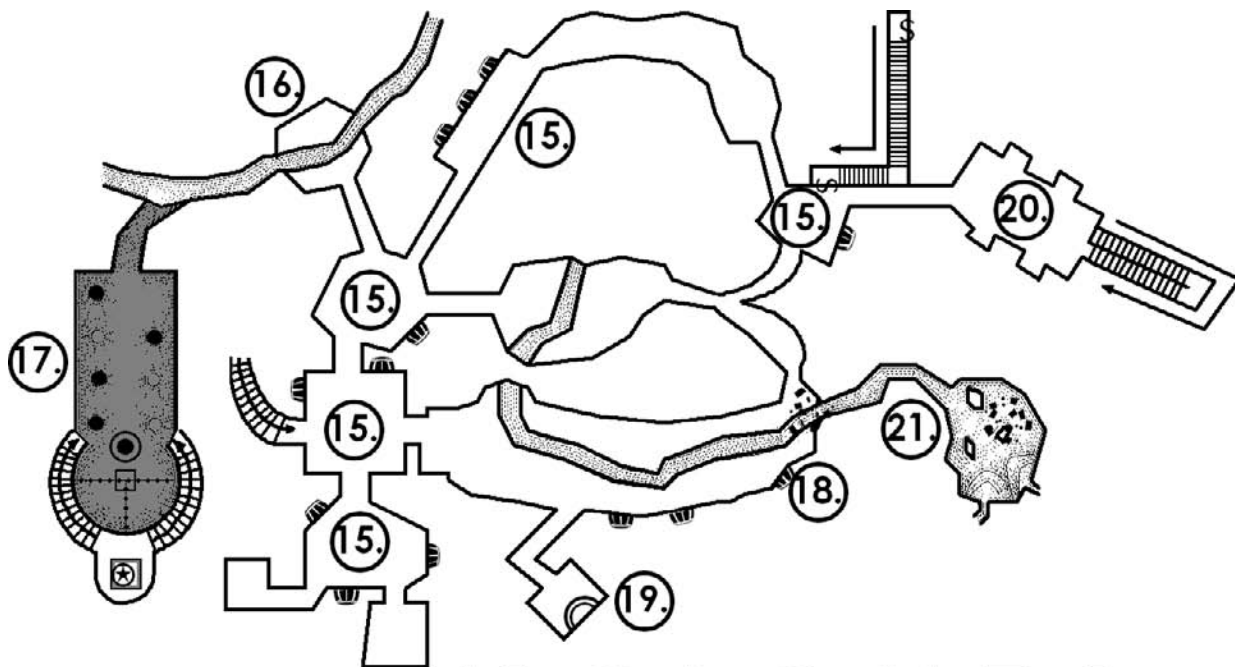
idol and bows or kneels, it breathes a cloud of sweet gas that brings joyful death (save at -4).

15. The chambers of the lower level are irregular, humid and dank. Barred openings in the wall lead to black mouths too small for men to squeeze through. Within lurk the gelatinous horrors of Molonei. All rooms are identical except the one to the northeast, where the bas-relief of an armed fighting woman opens as a secret door to stairs leading up.
16. An underground stream running through the level. To the west, it deepens to ultimately open above a submerged tunnel. This passage leads to 17.
17. This hall has been half submerged in dark and cold waters. As the characters swim by, stern warriors peer down on the intruders from bas-reliefs. In the centre, the water is only breast-deep. A round well above leads to the temple of ****UUARAM**** (9.), while three chains bind the stone plug blocking the entry to the dark spaces where the formless demigod is slumbering. It is a great difficulty to remove the plug; thereafter, it takes 1d3*20 minutes for ****UUARAM**** to emerge unless explicitly called via ritual. ****UUARAM**** can climb up the well to 9., and will then proceed through Molonei, killing all it comes across until contained or defeated.

The circular stairs lead to a platform above the water. Under the domed ceiling stands the statue of a woman, surrounded by a faint, rectangular force field. Letters in the floor read, "**DIASKARE SEES THAT WHICH IS, AND AIDS HE WHO ASKS.**" The statue is a false and inaccurate oracle, giving advice that leads to strife and dissent. If approached or otherwise molested, the "force field" tumbles forward, seeking to engulf its prey – revealed as a gelatinous cube!

Gelatinous Cube: HD 4; HP 19; AC 8[11]; Atk 1 (2d4) + paralysis; Move 6; Save 13; CL/XP 5/240; Special Paralysis 6 turns, transparent, immune to lightning and cold

18. A long irregular cavern, bisected by a small stream emerging from behind a collapsed cavern wall. This gap is a favourite hangout of amoeboids (1d6): 1-4 grey ooze, 5-6 black pudding.
19. Side-chamber containing a peculiar contraption: two stone wheels half-embedded into the wall, one smaller and set into the other. The surface of the wheels is notched irregularly with radial lines, and there is also an iron needle pointing above them. The wheels may be turned in synchronised or opposed direction, leading to periodic clicks. The device has no discernible purpose, but it is perfect to waste time while slimes sneak up on the interlopers.
20. There are broken stumps of statues in the niches of this inordinately high hall, their surface porous and crumbling from decay.
21. The spring chamber is a low grotto. It is wet, filled with knee-deep water, and also contains 180gp worth of crystals.



MOLONE I

The Islands Miscellaneous

The Isle of Kaikar: A wind-swept, barren expanse of land dissected by several deep fissures. All living vegetation is burned off by Kaikar, a mindless iron automaton.

Kaikar: HD 6; HP 25; AC 1[18]; Atk 2 slams 1d10; Move 6; Save 11; CL/XP 8/800; Special fiery breath once per 3 rounds for 6d6 HP (save for half damage), impervious to fire and mind-affecting spells

The Isle of Miralf: Long sand bank with a tall row of basalt organs in the middle. 15 ghouls have made camp among the ruins of a fishing village, and they light a beacon if they see a ship approach.

Ghoul: HD 2; HP 12, 11, 4, 11, 9, 6, 10, 10, 10, 7, 8, 9, 12, 4, 2; AC 6[13]; Atk 2 claws (1d3), 1 bite (1d4); Move 9; Save 16; CL/XP 3/60; Special Immunities, paralyzing touch

Editor's Note: If using Swords & Wizardry WhiteBox, these ghouls would be worth as many as 240xp each due to the multiple attacks and high hit points

The Isle of Umman Akthan: A dark basalt isle. Crude steps lead from the shore to the island plateau, where the ruins of a tomb-palace lie abandoned. At night, the shadow-form of Umman Akthan weeps over the sacking of his resting place, and pleads for help. If approached or talked to, he responds with a shrieking laugh, sending his "slave-women", 3d4 flying jellyfish against the characters. If Umman Akthan's curse is lifted, he reveals the location of his last treasure, a jade-gold amulet (600 gp).

Umman Akthan: HD 3+3; HP 19; AC 7[12]; Atk touch 1d4 + 1d6; Strength drain; Move 12; Save 14; CL/XP 5/240; Special Strength drain, +1 to hit, incorporeal, hit only by magic weapons

Flying Jellyfish (3d4): HD 3; HP 16, 14, 14, 8, 17, 11, 11, 8, 20, 13, 16, 11; AC 8[11]; Atk 4 tentacles (1hp + poison for 3d6 damage); Move (Fly 12); Save 14; CL/XP 5/240; Special poison for 3d6 (saving throw for half damage)

The Isle of Iskander Khan: 30 fanatical nomad warriors, all grey and stooped with age, guard the stone tower of their comrade, Iskander Khan. The greatest khan to walk the lands of Fomalhaut has been sent here in his twilight years to avoid the shame of senility and decay. A witness of 230 years, the khan has his bejewelled +3 scimitar still (worth 4000 gp for the gems alone). His comrades have an additional 1100 gp worth of valuables among them in this island paradise.

Nomad Warriors (30): Ftr 3; HP 11, 15, 7, 12, 7, 10, 12, 3, 14, 10, 11, 4, 11, 13, 12, 9, 9, 8, 13, 4, 12, 12, 17, 7, 18, 18, 11, 13, 3, 13; AC 8[11] (Leather, Dexterity); Atk 2 longbow (1d6) or scimitar (1d6); Move 12; Save 12; CL/XP 3/60

The Isle of Askor: Shoals encircle this wooded island, the extinct cone of a former volcano. In the moss- and vegetation-covered crater, echoing with bird-cries, dark statues look inwards, most fallen and crumbling. On the bottom, there stand the vine-grown ruins of a rectangular basalt-temple.

Therein lies the colossus of Askor on its back: great head, maw full of crude conical teeth, short but muscular arms, over-emphasised genitalia, and stumpy legs broken off by the heel. Before the fallen idol, there is a sacrificial fire-pit full of ashes and soot; a heavy brass globe hangs from the ceiling

and letters are visible on the floor: **“NONE WILL LEAVE THE ISLAND, NOT WITHOUT HUMAN SACRIFICE BEFORE ASKOR”**.

If the temple is left without heeding the omen, the seven intact statues that remain in the crater animate to fulfil it themselves by slaying the blasphemers. These opponents, although ferocious, possess the same faulty weight distribution as Askor, and may be tripped with some ingenuity on the rockslide. If human sacrifice is performed before Askor’s fallen colossus, the great body heaves with a tremendous roar, trying to stand with enormous effort. Those who remain on their feet by rolling a –4 saving throw (may be adjusted based on circumstances), may learn the spell *slave in stone* (Eldritch Weirdness) or employ it as a one-use spell if not a Magic-User of sufficient level. Within the brass globe, there is 1200 gp worth of crushed ruby dust.

Living Statues (7): HD 4; HP 12, 17, 13, 27, 17, 26, 23; AC 2[17]; Atk 2 strikes 1d8; Move 6; Save 13; CL/XP 5/240; Special immune to fire and cold, +1 to hit, unstable

The Isle of Women: Amazonian civilization of Ishtar-worshippers. The utopian interpretation of the mystery-faith has led to dogmatic inflexibility in the face of real circumstances; consequently, the population of the only urban centre, Disium, is close to collapse. Nevertheless, even now, every man is exiled after the birth of his first child, while surplus population is expected to be acquired via raiding.

The city of Disium is a conglomeration of globular buildings covered in bronze sheets and white ceramics, patina-covered domes and long colonnades. The central building is the temple of Ishtar, also serving as an agora. Here, citizens (grown women) may pay obeisance to, and in exchange experience, the Five Immutabilities. The city is governed by Ishtar’s Dreamers, who possess limited but potent illusionist powers. The dreamers can collectively employ the *dreamspell*, using this dangerous method to influence the reality governing the city; however, due to discord within their ranks, this has not taken place for two decades. Disium is surrounded by olive groves and fields of wheat. The surrounding isles are surrounded by jungles, where giant butterflies are common (encounters 1d6; 1 = 2d4 butterflies, 6=group of 15 amazons).

Ishtar’s Dreamers: HD 4; AC 0[19] (chain shirt, shield, Amazon, collective psionic); Atk spear 1d6; Move 12; Save 11; CL/XP 6/400; Special dream, nightmare or phantasmal killer spell 1/day

Amazons: HD 3; AC 1[18] (chain shirt, shield, Amazon, collective psionic); Atk spear 1d6; Move 12; Save 14; CL/XP 3/60

Giant Butterfly (2d4): HD 2; AC 7[12]; Atk tongue 1d4 + poison (soporific); Move (Fly 12); Save 16; CL/XP 4/120; Special Soporific poison tongue, pollen

Pollen (1d4)

- 1 - irritation (save or -2 to rolls)
- 2 - narcolepsy (save or fall asleep)
- 3 - paralysis (save or held 2d4 t.)
- 4 - poison (save or 3d4 HP)

The Isle of Oymlienk the Hazar: The thick jungles of this paradisaical island are filled with noises and scents. Six king tigers hunt in this

magnificent land, and they all speak the tongues of men: so has Oymlienk the Hazar gained a strange, divided new life beyond death. His step-pyramidal tomb, constructed of black, rustproof iron, holds a heavy jade bowl worth 1000 gp, a *mace +1* and the *ring of silence* (renders wearer completely silent, but also mute). The tigers aren’t necessarily hostile, although they **will** eat grave robbers.

Tigers (6): HD 6; HP 29, 22, 36, 25, 21, 31; AC 5[14]; Atk 2 claws 1d6 and bite 1d10; Move 15; Save 11; CL/XP 7/600

The Isle of the Dead: Among the hills of this island lies a small settlement of ramshackle huts. The inhabitants of the small colony are infected with corpse-weed, a parasitic growth of grey filaments that first turns the skin grey, then slowly dries the body into a cadaverous husk sprouting patches of miniature seeds (corpse-weed can be cured via submersion in boiling water during the first week of infection, and spells afterwards). The villagers hate the healthy, and commit everything within their power to infect them; those of them who are too sick to move and work are thrown into a deep pit to starve.



The “demon” of the island-dwellers is Pangrolm the jackalwere, an object of hatred and fear. Immune to the sickness and conventional weapons, Pangrolm enjoys to torment villagers with his malevolent tricks, but is friendly to outsiders. He lives in a small tower, where he trades in rare objects. Treasures/wares include: 300 electrum, 500gp, opium, poisons, jade dagger 350gp, engraved stone egg 60gp, ancient purple drape 130 gp (laced with deadly poison), leaden mask 70gp, mummified, leathery paw with amber fingernails 350gp (relic of primordial serpent-man magic-user, extremely valuable/dangerous), copper idol of the bat-god 170gp, electrum bell 20gp, box of strange black material 90gp (bakelite), 6 matte ceramic prisms (25gp each).

Pangrolm the jackalwere: HD 4; HP 19; AC 4[15]; Atk bite 2d4 or shortsword 1d6+poison; Move 15; Save 13; CL/XP 8/800; Special sleep gaze, silver or magic required to hit



ARTIFACT TYPES & ATTRIBUTES

for Original Edition (and *Swords & Wizardry*) & First Edition (and *OSRIC*)

by Scot Hoover

Bolverk's laughter joined his. "Aye, wield it in glee," said the Jotun. "Smite your foemen—gods, giants, mortals, it matters not. The sword is loose and the end of the world comes nigh!"
— Poul Andersen, *The Broken Sword*

From the Biblical Ark of the Covenant to Arthur's Excalibur to Tolkien's One Ring, powerful magical artifacts and relics have always been an important staple of mythology, folklore and fantasy fiction inspiring quests, pilgrimages and heroic sagas. Similarly, history and folklore is full of stories of places of great and often mysterious power – the kinds of places where the gods dwell and where the stairway to heaven begins.

Just so, fantasy role-playing would not be the same without these unique and powerful creations to inspire an adventure or an entire campaign. With that in mind, a procedure for quickly generating these kinds of unique artifacts, relics and magical sites is provided herein, so just grab your dice and a notebook and let's get started!

Definitions

Artifacts are unique magical or divine items, specially constructed with a variety of different shapes and functions by powerful, sometimes unknown beings. There are three type of artifacts described here: *Sorcerous*, *Sacramental* and *Extra-dimensional*. Artifacts will vary in form, from mighty weapons & armor to elaborate sorcerous machines, and multi-part utensils. While the exact methods of their construction may be unknown or misunderstood, in some cases several different 'copies' may exist independently. All artifacts display, in some manner, both the personality and abilities of their creator – important clues (or warning signs!) for those attempting to possess and use such objects.

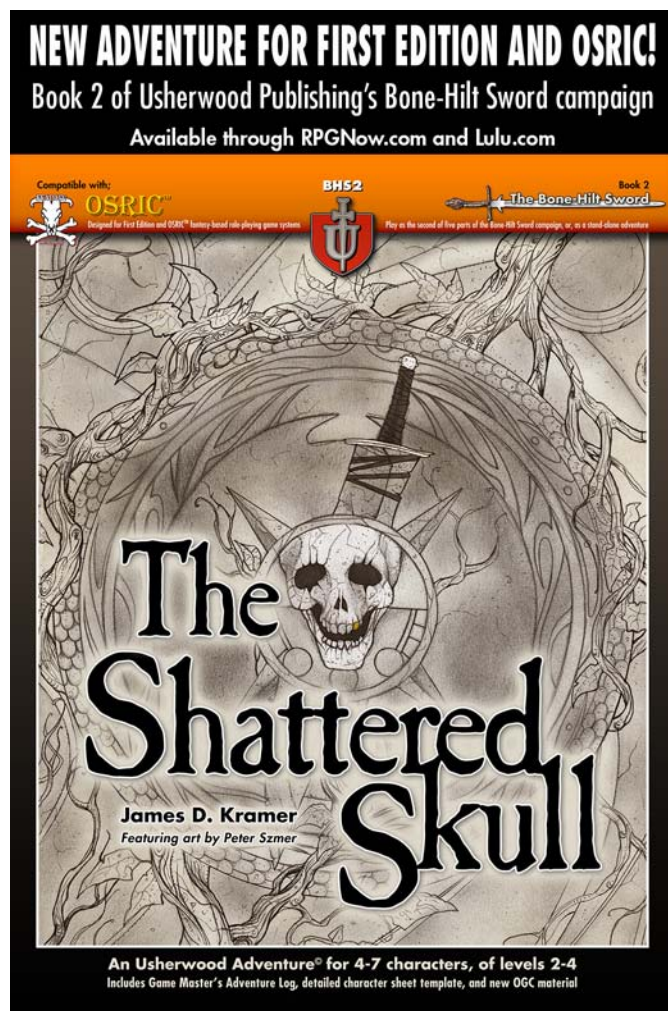
Relics are the physical remains, personal possessions or other important items belonging to a powerful being such as a saint, goddess, or demon prince; and only one type, *sacramental*, is covered here. Relics are even more closely tied to their creator than artifacts, and cannot be duplicated for obvious reasons. Great care and attention to their many restrictions is necessary, as the unwary handler can suffer dire consequences.

Finally, **sites** are mystical places, located either in this dimension or elsewhere that function similar to artifacts or relics. As these are permanent locations, they may, at the GM's discretion have one or several guardians as well as traps or other natural hazards.

Segmented artifacts and relics are objects with several parts or pieces that have limited functions individually, but may be combined into a much more powerful whole. These items are considerably rarer, and in many cases a lengthy quest may be necessary to re-unite the missing pieces.

Artifacts, relics and sites all share certain characteristics which can be generated using the tables provided here. *Restrictions* (Table 5) detail which special requirements must be satisfied in order to use the item. Some artifacts may impart *Minor or Major Drawbacks* (Tables 11 & 12) to the user, which are similar to a *curse* (although a *Remove Curse* spell will almost certainly not affect an artifact). Additionally, some artifacts may impart a *Minor or Major Transformation* (Tables 8 & 9), which affects a physical or mental change to a first-time user, often permanent.

Major and Minor Powers (Tables 6 & 7) are inherent abilities possessed by the item and available for use. In most cases, these powers function similarly to a particular spell. These spells will be cast at the level of the artifact, as determined in the generation procedure. Some powers however are unique and are detailed



in the appropriate table. In the majority of cases, powers will be subject to limits on the frequency of use, as generated on Subtable A: Frequency Usage.

Primary Powers (Table 10) are unique abilities of world-spanning power. The entries are deliberately brief, and it is up to the individual GM to detail the exact extent and effects of these abilities according to his or her campaign.

Finally, some of these objects and sites will have *Possession* as a characteristic. While all artifacts, relics and sites are sentient in some respects, these items actively seek to impose their will on their users and use them like a slave or automaton. The first time the artifact is touched and each time a power is used the user must make a Saving Throw vs. Spells. If the saving throw fails, the character becomes a powerless thrall to the artifact's will and should be treated as a NPC under GM control thereafter. If the saving throw succeeds they may carry on as normal – this time.

The final generation step is determining the method for destruction of the artifact (Table 13). There will generally be only one method for destroying a particular artifact or relic. Sites are slightly different, requiring both the complete razing of the physical site itself and a further ritual desecration, which should be quite expensive and/or difficult to accomplish in itself.

Below are briefly the steps necessary to create a new artifact, relic or site, while *Artifacts by Type* details the requirements for each individual type, as first generated in Table 1.

Artifact Generation Procedure

1. Determine Artifact Type (Table 1)
2. Determine Artifact Alignment (Table 2)
3. Determine the Artifact Form (Table 3)
4. Determine the Artifact Source (Table 4)
5. Determine the method for the destruction of the artifact (Table 13)
6. Consult the Artifact Type description
 - a. Check for Restrictions, if any (Table 5)



- b. Determine Number & Types of Minor Powers (Table 6)
 - i. Determine Usage Frequency for Spell-like Powers (Subtable A)
- c. Determine Number & Types of Major Powers, if any (Table 7)
 - i. Determine Usage Frequency for Spell-like Powers (Subtable A)
- d. Determine Type of Primary Power, if any (Table 10)
 - i. Determine Usage Frequency for Spell-like Powers (Subtable A)

Note: While random tables are provided to inspire creativity, Gamemasters are advised to hand-pick entries for the best results.

Artifacts by Type

Table 1: Artifact Type

d%	Type
1-10	Minor Sorcerous Artifact
11-20	Minor Sorcerous Artifact
21-30	Minor Sacramental Relic
31-35	Minor Extra-Dimensional Artifact
36-42	Major Sorcerous Artifact
43-50	Segmented Sorcerous Artifact
51-60	Major Sacramental Artifact
61-65	Segmented Sacramental Artifact
66-75	Segmented Sacramental Relic
76-96	Site
97-100	Major Extra-Dimensional Artifact

Sorcerous artifacts are constructed using powerful, and permanent sorcerous dweomers, typically by ancient high-level magic-users or illusionists in the distant past. Segmented artifacts have 1d8 components which have abilities both singly and in conjunction with their assembled whole.

Alignment: Any; but 60% will have the same alignment as the creator

- Minor:**
- 20% 1 Restriction
 - 1d2 Minor Powers
 - 45% 1 Major Power
 - 10% chance 1 Primary Power
 - Radiate Magic in a 1d4 x 5' radius
 - Spell-like powers cast as a level 1d12+10 magic-user (or illusionist)
- Major:**
- 50% 1d2 Restrictions
 - 1d4 Minor Powers
 - 1d3 Major Powers
 - 50% 1 Primary Power
 - Radiate Magic in a 1d4 x 10' radius
 - Spell-like powers cast as a level 1d20+15 magic-user (or illusionist)

Segmented: **Single part**
+d2 Minor Powers each
Radiate Magic in a 5' radius
Spell-like powers cast as a level 1d12+10 magic-user (or illusionist)

Completed whole
40% 1d2 Restrictions
+d2 Major Powers
+50% chance of 1 Primary Power
Radiate Magic in a 1d4 x 10' radius
Spell-like powers cast as a level 1d20+15 magic-user (or illusionist)

Sacramental artifacts may either be a gift from a deity, demigod or the like, or a powerful religious item created by a group of their mortal followers. Segmented artifacts have 1d12 components which have abilities both singly and in conjunction with the assembled whole.

Alignment: Any; but these artifacts will always have an alignment identical to that of their creator or patron being

Usage: 75% of these artifacts can only be used by a cleric of the creator/patron deity; the remaining 25% can only be used by a cleric of the same alignment as that of the creator/patron deity

Minor: 60% 1 Restriction
1d3 Minor Powers
60% 1 Major Power
10% 1 Primary Power
Radiate Good/Evil in a 1d3 x 5' radius
Spell-like powers cast as a level 1d12+10 cleric (or druid)

Major: 1d2 Restrictions
1d4 Minor Powers
1d3 Major Powers
75% 1 Primary Power
Radiate Good/Evil in a 1d3 x 10' radius
Spell-like powers cast as a level 1d20+15 cleric (or druid)

Segmented: **Single part**
1 Restriction
+d2 Minor Powers each
Radiate Good/Evil in a 5' radius
Spell-like powers cast as a level 1d12+10 cleric (or druid)

Completed whole
60% +1d2 Restrictions
+d2 Major Powers
+50% chance of 1 Primary Power
Radiate Good/Evil in a 1d3 x 10' radius
Spell-like powers cast as a level 1d20+15 cleric (or druid)

Sacramental relics are the fragments or belongings of a saint, demigod, arch-devil or other powerful spiritual being. Segmented

relics have 1d20 pieces which have abilities both singly and in conjunction with the assembled whole. These objects always have an alignment identical to that of their creator.

Alignment: Any; but these objects always have an alignment identical to that of their source

Minor: 1 Restriction
1d2 Minor Powers
60% 1 Major Power
Radiate Good/Evil in a 1d2 x 5' radius
Spell-like powers cast as a level 1d8+10 cleric (or druid)

Major: 1d2 Restrictions
1d4 Minor Powers
1d2 Major Powers
75% 1 Primary Power
Radiate Good/Evil in a 1d3 x 5' radius
Spell-like powers cast as a level 1d10+10 cleric (or druid)

Segmented: **Single part**
1 Restriction
+1d2 Minor Powers
Radiate Good/Evil in a 1d2 x 5' radius
Spell-like powers cast as a level 1d8+10 cleric (or druid)

Completed whole
50% +1d2 Restrictions
+1d2 Major Powers
+50% 1 Primary Power
Radiate Good/Evil in a 1d3 x 5' radius
Spell-like powers cast as a level 1d10+10 cleric (or druid)

Extra-Dimensional artifacts originated on an unknown plane or alternate universe, and exhibit characteristics often inimical to natives of the Prime Material. These artifacts tend to have bizarre, often technological forms & abilities and a surfeit of unpleasant side-effects.

Alignment: Any; determine alignment randomly

Minor: 1d4 Minor Powers
75% 1 Major Power
Radiate Magic in a 1d6 x 5' radius
Spell-like powers cast as a level 1d12+10 spellcaster

Major: 50% 1 Restriction
1d4 Minor Powers
1d3 Major Powers
75% 1 Primary Power
Radiate Magic in a 1d10 x 5' radius
Spell-like powers cast as a level 1d20+10 spellcaster

Magical or Sacramental Sites are special areas 1d10 x 10' in diameter and function like artifacts or relics.

Alignment: Any, but 75% of these places have an alignment identical to that of their creator(s) or patron(s), while the rest have a randomly determined alignment

Details: 1d3 Restrictions
 1d6 Minor Powers
 1d3 Major Powers
 75% 1 Primary Power
 Radiate Magic/Good/Evil in a 1d6 x 10' radius
 Spell-like powers cast as a level 1d20+10 spellcaster

Artifact Generation Tables

Table 2: Artifact Alignment

d%	Result
01-35	Lawful (d10: 1-4 Good, 5-6 Neutral, 7-10 Evil)
36-65	Neutral (d10: 1-2 Good, 3-7 True Neutral, 8-10 Evil)
66-100	Chaotic (d10: 1-2 Good, 3-4 Neutral, 5-10 Evil)

Table 3: Artifact Forms

1d12	Artifacts	Relics	Segmented	Extra-Dimensional	Sites
1	Weapon	Tooth / Teeth	Rod, Staff, Wand	Polyhedron	Grove
2	Apparatus	Skull / Head	Chain-links	Armor	Cave
3	Armor	Mummy	Deck of Cards	Weapon	Island
4	Gem / Jewelry	Hand / Finger	Keys / Seals	Rod, Staff, Wand	Pool / Well
5	Clothing	Skeleton / Bone	Jewelry	Book / Tablets	Megalith / Henge
6	Book	Writings	Pages in a Book	Vessel	Tomb
7	Vessel	Mask / Shroud	Teeth / Bones	Gem / Jewelry	Altar
8	Rod, Staff, Wand	Cradle	Machine	Apparatus	Mountain Peak
9	Ark / Chest	Skin / Nails	Idol / Statuette	Automaton	Oasis
10	Musical Instrument	Horn / Hair	Armor / Clothing	Vehicle / Ship	Shrine / Temple
11	Utensil / Tool	Footprint(s)	Vessels	Machine	Pit / Chasm
12	Idol / Statuette	Ashes	Stones / Gems	Implant	Grotto

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Table 4: Artifact Sources

1d12	Sorcerous	Sacramental	Segmented	Extra-Dimensional	Site
1	Archmage	Patriarch	Monster	Elemental Earth	Law
2	Illusionist	Saint	Deity	Upper Plane	Dragons
3	Demi-human Hero	Sect / Cult	Sect / Cult	Lower Plane	Elemental Magic
4	Demigod	Demon / Devil	Demigod	Astral Plane	Humanoids
5	Deity	Demigod	Archmage	Ethereal Plane	Sorcerous Magic
6	Necromancer	Deity	Patriarch	Alt. Universe	Illusionary Magic
7	Demon / Devil	Demi-human Hero	Demi-human Hero	Elemental Air	Demi-humans
8	Witchdoctor	Lich	Lich	Negative Plane	Clerical Magic
9	Lich	Archdruid	Demon / Devil	Pocket Universe	Demons / Devils
10	Humanoid Hero	Dragon	Archdruid	Elemental Water	Undead
11	Demonologist	Magical Creature	Humanoid Hero	Positive Plane	Druidic Magic
12	Dragons	Humanoid Hero	Dragon	Elemental Fire	Chaos

Table 5: Artifact Restrictions

1d12	Details
1	User's alignment must be the same as that of the artifact
2	User must be a blood descendent of the artifact's creator
3	User must be level 1d10+10 or higher
4	User must be a spellcaster (MU for Sorcerous artifacts, Cleric for Sacramental artifacts)
5	User must have exactly the same alignment as that of the artifact
6	User must be of the same race as that of the artifact's creator
7	User must be a man/woman

1d12	Details
8	User must allow their soul to be permanently entrapped in the artifact
9	User's Ability Scores must all be 15 or higher
10	User must be a virgin
11	User must be a ranking member of the same religion or order as that of the artifact's creator
12	User may only use the artifact in service to it's intended purpose or suffer immediate pain or death

Table 6: Minor Powers

1d8	Sorcerous	Sacramental	Extra-Dimensional	Site
1	1st-lvl MU/Illusionist Spell *	1st-lvl Cleric/Druid Spell *	Major Transformation	Minor Transformation
2	2nd-lvl MU/Illusionist Spell *	2nd-lvl Cleric/Druid Spell *	(1d4)th-lvl Cleric/Druid Spell *	Minor Transformation
3	3rd-lvl MU/Illusionist Spell *	3rd-lvl Cleric/Druid Spell *	(1d4)th-lvl MU/Illusionist Spell *	Major Transformation
4	4th-lvl MU/Illusionist Spell *	4th-lvl Cleric/Druid Spell *	Minor Transformation	1st-lvl Cleric/Druid Spell *
5	Minor Transformation	Minor Transformation	Minor Transformation	2nd-lvl Cleric/Druid Spell *
6	Minor Drawback	Minor Transformation	Minor Drawback	3rd-lvl Cleric/Druid Spell *
7	Minor Drawback	Minor Drawback	Minor Drawback	4th-lvl Cleric/Druid Spell *
8	Major Drawback	Minor Drawback	Major Drawback	Minor Drawback

Table 7: Major Powers

1d8	Sorcerous	Sacramental	Extra-Dimensional	Site
1	5th-lvl MU/Illusionist Spell *	5th-lvl Cleric/Druid Spell *	Major Transformation	Major Transformation
2	6th-lvl MU/Illusionist Spell *	6th-lvl Cleric/Druid Spell *	(1d4+3)-lvl Cleric/Druid Spell *	Major Transformation
3	7th-lvl MU/Illusionist Spell *	7th-lvl Cleric/Druid Spell *	(1d4+4)-lvl MU/Illusionist Spell *	Major Transformation
4	8th-lvl MU Spell	Major Transformation	Major Transformation	5th-lvl Cleric/Druid Spell *
5	9th-lvl MU Spell	Major Drawback	Major Transformation	6th-lvl Cleric/Druid Spell *
6	Major Transformation	Major Drawback	Major Drawback	7th-lvl Cleric/Druid Spell *
7	Major Transformation	Possession	Major Drawback	Major Drawback
8	Major Drawback	Possession	Possession	Possession

Notes:

**Swords & Wizardry* does not have the second character class listed; use the first spellcasting class listed for this result. If using OSRIC, these results will have a further 25% chance to use the sub-class instead. To determine the actual spell, roll on the appropriate table in either the *Swords & Wizardry* or *OSRIC v2* rulebook.

Table 8: Minor Transformations

1d20	Result
1	+1 bonus to the user's Prime Requisite Ability
2	+2 bonus to the user's Armor Class
3	Cause NPC reactions to the user to be never better than neutral
4	Confers a permanent sex change on the user the first time the artifact is held
5	Confers darkvision on the user
6	Curses the user with Lycanthropy (GM should determine type according to the artifact's alignment)
7	Immunity to Charm or Hold spells
8	Immunity to disease
9	Immunity to fear
10	Immunity to gasses
11	Immunity to illusions
12	Immunity to Magic Missile spells
13	Immunity to Sleep spells
14	Inflict an incurable disease upon the user. At the start of each month a saving throw vs. death must be made to avoid losing 1 point of Constitution. When the user's Constitution reaches 0, death occurs.
15	Inflicts light sensitivity upon the user, who suffers a -1 penalty to all die rolls while in sunlight
16	Permanently afflicts the user with one form of insanity/neuroses
17	Permanently endows the user with a poison touch that requires a Save vs. Poison
18	User needs no food or water for up to one week
19	User's alignment is permanently changed to conform to that of the artifact
20	User's metabolism is altered and they must consume 6x the normal amount of food & water per day

Table 9: Major Transformations

1d20	Result
1	+2 bonus to all of the user's Ability Scores, normal racial maximums apply
2	+2 bonus to the user's weapon damage in melee
3	+4 bonus to one random Ability Score 1d4 points
4	Confers a Magical Resistance of (1d20+50)%
5	Confers an Armor Class of 0
6	Doubles the user's allowable encumbrance
7	Doubles the user's movement rate
8	Immunity to acid
9	Immunity to cold/frost
10	Immunity to electricity
11	Immunity to Energy Drain
12	Immunity to fire/heat
13	Immunity to Poison
14	Raise the user's Prime Requisite Ability to 19
15	Spell Absorption (1d6+18 total levels)
16	User can cast combination spells (if a spell caster) as follows (roll d4) 1) 1st and 2nd level spells simultaneously 2) 2nd and 3rd level spells simultaneously 3) 3rd and 4th level spells simultaneously 4) 1st, 2nd, and 3rd level spells simultaneously

1d20	Result
17	User is able to see in any conditions
18	User may become ethereal at will
19	User need never consume any food or water
20	User regenerates 2hp/turn when in contact with the artifact

Table 10: Primary Powers

2d10	Result
2	Oracle - prophesies the certain future
3	God-Slayer - can slay one or more gods from a certain pantheon
4	Portal - opens a gate to multiple extra-dimensional planes
5	Doomsday Device- focuses earth energies to create natural disasters
6	Pocket Dimensional Realm- an entire world or plane accessible only through the device
7	Instrument of Creation - can permanently enchant new magic items
8	Soul-Trap - entraps souls, +1 Major Power per 10 levels so entrapped
9	Mesmerizer - Charms mass numbers of people
10	Immortality Device - confers immortality (not immunity to death by violence or magic however)
11	Elemental Construct - total power to summon & control ONE element
12	Space/time Machine - the TARDIS
13	Hybrid Incubator - facilitates enchanted cross-breeding (Manticores, etc.)
14	Magic Shield - confers 3d10 + 70% Magic Resistance
14	Examiner - unfailingly detects & permanently dispels even the most powerful magics
16	Entropic Lens - casts superior and wide-ranging misfortune, curses, aging, etc.
17	Illusion Projector - large multiple self-acting illusions (the holodeck)
18	Summoner - allows user to summon any known creature and control or imprison them for 1d6 days
19	Slayer - can permanently kill any living or undead being lesser than a demi-god
20	Resurrection Machine - can raise any mortal being from the dead with no time restrictions

Table 11: Minor Drawbacks

5d4	Result
5	Confers a -1 penalty to the user's Charisma
6	Holy water within 10' of item becomes polluted
7	Confers a -1d4 penalty to the user's Charisma when a major power is used
8	Confers a -1 penalty to the user's Saving Throws vs. Magic
9	Confers a -2 penalty to the user's Saving Throws vs. Poison
10	User suffers a temporary loss of one of their senses for 1d8 turns when artifact is held/worn (1-2 Sight 3-4 Hearing 5-6 Smell)
11	Confers a 1d4x10lb weight gain on the user
12	Confers a 5d6lb weight loss on the user
13	User must make a Saving Throw vs. Spells to part with the item, even briefly
14	All small sources of flame (lamps, torches, etc.) within a 30' radius when a Major or Primary Power is used are extinguished

5d4	Result
15	Any wood within a 10' radius when a Major or Primary Power is used will die and/or begin to decay within 1d7 days
16	Plants within a 10' radius when a Major or Primary Power is used will wither and die within 1d8 hours
17	All normal animals within a 50' radius will be hostile toward the user
18	Casting of normal spells within a 5' radius is impossible
19	Causes the user to experience short-term memory loss, starting with minor details and progressing eventually to total amnesia
20	The user is inflicted with partial hearing loss and may only hear voices at a shout. Spellcasters must shout their spells.

Table 12: Major Drawbacks

2d12	Result
2	There is a cumulative 5% chance each time a Major or Primary Power is used that one of the user's limbs will wither and rot as if inflicted with leprosy
3	The artifact places a Geas/Quest upon the user in keeping with its alignment and agenda
4	The artifact has a deep animosity toward 1d4 races and will force the user to attack them if encountered unless a Save vs Spells at -4 is successful
5	Confers a permanent -1 to penalty to one of the user's Ability Scores
6	Permanently subtracts 1d6 points from the user's Hit Points
7	The artifact must be activated each day by an offering (1d6 x 10,000gp) or a sacrifice (1 human/demihuman 2-4 humanoid 5-6 monster)
8	Users alignment is permanently and irreversibly changed to conform to that of the artifact
9	Each time a Major or Primary Power is used, the most powerful normal magic item within a 30' radius will be irreparably drained of all magic
10	Each time a Major or Primary Power is used, the user ages 3d10 years. If the user dies, they will return as an undead guardian of the artifact
11	Each time a Major or Primary Power is used, the user suffers 2d10 hit points of damage
12	Each time a Major or Primary Power is used, roll 1d6, (1-3) the user's height increases 1d3 inches, (4-6) the user's height decreases 1d3 inches
13	Each time a Major or Primary Power is used, the user must Save vs. Spells or go berserk, randomly attacking anything within a 20' radius for 5d4 rounds
14	Each time a Primary Power is used, the user must Save vs. Spells or lose 1 lvl of experience
15	All intelligent beings within a radius of 20' must Save vs. Spells or be forced to act in order to possess the artifact for their selves.
16	Each time any of the artifact's Powers are used, roll 1d6, (1-3) the ambient temperature within a 60' radius is raised (1d4+1 x 10) degrees F for 2d4 turns, (4-6) the ambient temperature within a 60' radius is lowered (2d4 x 10) degrees F for 2d6 turns
17	If this artifact is used as a weapon, it deals double the normal damage, but the wielder takes normal damage from the resulting backlash
18	Each time a Major or Primary Power is used, everyone (including the user) within a 30' radius must Save vs. Spells or be forced to flee in terror
19	Each time a Major or Primary Power is used, all coins within a 40' radius will be consumed by the artifact

2d12	Result
20	Each time a Primary Power is used, all within a 20' radius (including the user) will receive 5d4 points of damage
21	Each time a Major or Primary Power is used, there is a 5% cumulative chance that the user will become Ethereal, and remain so for 1d8 turns
22	Each time a Major or Primary Power is used, the user must Save vs. Spells or go insane for 1d6 days
23	Each time a Major or Primary Power is used, the user ages 1d10 years. All of the affects of aging should be applied to the user, although they will not die (of old age) as long as they possess the artifact.
24	Each time a Major or Primary Power is used there is a 50% chance of geas being placed upon the user. The geas must be completed before the artifact's Major or Primary Powers may be used again.

Table 13: Artifact Destruction

1d30	Method
1	A seal on the site of the artifact's creation must be broken with a +5 weapon
2	All memory of the artifact must be erased from all memory
3	Inscriptions on the artifact itself must be erased
4	It must be bathed in a pool of pure holy water for 7 years
5	It must be crushed beneath gears of pure adamantium
6	It must be crushed under the cloven heel of a demon lord
7	It must be destroyed by 1,001 wishes
8	It must be destroyed by a Grand Ritual of Severing
9	It must be dissolved in the waters of the River Styx
10	It must be fed to the Mother of All Dragons
11	It must be frozen on the Elemental Plane of Water
12	It must be ground to dust and consumed by its user
13	It must be incinerated in the fiery breath of an ancient red dragon.
14	It must be melted at the earth's core
15	It must be melted down on the Plane of Elemental Fire
16	It must be pulverized between two meteors.
17	The creator, or their soul, must be permanently destroyed.
18	It must be sealed in a specially-constructed pocket universe
19	It must be shattered on a magical anvil, or perhaps against another similar artifact
20	It must be soaked in the blood of 666 greater demons
21	It must be sundered by a +5 weapon
22	It must be sunk into the deepest ocean trench
23	It must be thrown into a volcano, perhaps on another plane
24	It must be thrust into the heart of the sun
25	It must be used to wound or slay a deity
26	It must sit in 1,000 years of total darkness
27	Only the end of the universe can destroy the artifact
28	Ten thousand Dispel Magic spells must be cast upon the artifact
29	The artifact can be easily destroyed; but will appear again, whole and undamaged in a different place or time
30	The characters must travel back in time prior to the artifact's creation, and stop it

Subtable A: Usage Frequency

1d4>	1	2	3	4
Minor Power	At will	7/day	3/day	1/day
Major Power	3/day	1/day	3/week	1/week
Primary Power	1/day	3/week	1/week	2/month

Examples for Your Inspiration**Artifacts**

Aegis Shield (Greco-Roman)
 Andvarinaut (Norse)
 Apollo's Bow (Greco-Roman)
 Apparatus of the Mad Archmage (OSR)
 Ark of the Covenant (Judeo-Christian)
 Armor of Achilles (Greco-Roman)
 Asmodeus' Diabolic Rod (OSR)
 Axe of the Dwarven Kings (OSR)
 Baba Yaga's Hut (Slavic)
 Book of Thoth (Egyptian)
 Brisingamen (Norse)
 Canon of Changes (Chinese)
 Chariot of the Sun (Greco-Roman)
 Codices of Innumerable Dimensions (OSR)
 Crane-Skin Bag of Cumhail (Celtic)
 Cronus' Sickle (Greco-Roman)
 Cup of Jamshid (Persian)
 Cuthbert's Cudgel (OSR)
 Dancing Sword of Lightning (Chinese)
 Excalibur (Arthurian Britain)
 Flaming Shard of Ebon (OSR)
 Flying Throne of Kai Kavus (Persian)
 Fragerach (Celtic)
 Glassy Spheres of the Dragon Lords (OSR)
 Golden Automaton of Ur-nee (OSR)
 Hammer of Thor (Norse)
 Horn of Geryon (OSR)
 Jade Books in Heaven (Chinese)
 Juggernaut (Indian)
 Kantele (Finnish)
 Kaustubha Jewel (Indian)
 Magic Mould of the Yu Emperor (Chinese)
 Monkey King's Spear (Chinese)
 Morgan's Organ (OSR)
 Necronomicon (Cthulhu Mythos)
 Obsidian Chalice of Greevis Phleg (OSR)
 Orcus' Bone Wand (OSR)
 Palladium (Greco-Roman)
 Pandora's Box (Greco-Roman)
 Pearl of Pricelessness (OSR)
 Pelian Spear (Greco-Roman)
 Queen Labea's Amazing Sparrow (OSR)
 Regalia of the World Emperors (OSR)
 Ring of Xagy Gaxy (OSR)
 Sampo (Finnish)
 Seal of Solomon (Judeo-Christian)
 Shamshir-e Zomorrodnegar (Persian)
 Skíðblaðnir (Norse)

Smoking Mirror (Mesoamerican)
 Spear of Cuchulainn (Celtic)
 Staff of Moses (Islam)
 Sudarshana Chakra (Hindu)
 Sword of Kas the Bastard (OSR)
 Sword of Light (Celtic)
 Sword of Peleu (Greco-Roman)
 Tablets of Destiny (Mesopotamian)
 Talisman of El'Kadim (OSR)
 Tarnhelm (Germanic)
 The One Ring (Tolkien)
 Throne of the Elder Ones (OSR)
 Urim and Thummim (Latter Day Saints)
 Vajra of Indra (Indian)
 Wand of Eleven Sections (OSR)
 Yessinda's Flute (OSR)
 Zeus' Lightning Bolts

Relics

Bone of Ullr (Norse)
 Bones of Elisha (Judeo-Christian)
 Buddha Tooth of Kandy (Indian)
 Chair of Idris the Giant (Norse)
 Crystal Skull of Lubantuum (Meso-American)
 Eyes & Ears of Kyuss (OSR)
 Hide of Leviathan (Judeo-Christian)
 Hide of the Nemean lion (Greco-Roman)
 Holy Grail (Judeo-Christian)
 Sacred Cloak of the Prophet (Islam)
 Seamless Robe of Jesus (Judeo-Christian)
 Shroud of Turin (Judeo-Christian)
 Spear of Destiny (Judeo-Christian)
 Teeth of Nalledev (OSR)
 True Cross (Judeo-Christian)

Sites

Amarnath (Indian)
 Angkor Wat (Southeast Asian)
 Chaco Canyon (Amerindian)
 Externestein (Germanic)
 Great Pyramid of Cheops (Egyptian)
 Grotto of Lourdes (Judeo-Christian)
 Haleakala (Polynesian)
 Kabbalah Stone (Islam)
 Konarak Sun Chariot (Indian)
 Machu Picchu (South American)
 Mt. Kailash (Tibetan)
 Mt. Koya (Japanese)
 Mt. Shasta (Amerindian)
 Mt. Sinai (Judeo-Christian)
 Mud Mosque of Djenne (Islam)
 Oracle at Delphi (Greco-Roman)
 Porpherio's Garden Pool (OSR)
 Snake Mound (Amerindian)
 Stonehenge (Arthurian Britain)
 Tabernacle's Holy of Holies (Judeo-Christian)
 Tower of the Winds (Greco-Roman)
 Uluru (Australian Aboriginal)
 Yellow Mountain (Chinese)



Editor's Note: At first glance, I almost dismissed this article as "another spell failure system." At second glance, I realized that – if one is interested in using a non-Vancian spell casting system – the core method described in this short article is actually startlingly elegant. The interaction of spell levels and caster levels (represented by the caster's improving saving throw) actually hang together rather well with a spell failure table that looks superficially too harsh until it's read in context with the rest of the system. If you wanted a really, really simple way to avoid the "Vancian" feel of spellcasting, this one is an interesting candidate.

SPELL INTERVAL SYSTEM

By John Stater

A common complaint about old school fantasy role-playing systems revolves around magic, and specifically the way that magic-users and clerics cast their spells. For some, it's a matter of spells having to be prepared or memorized in advance. Others argue that spell-casting is too scientific and that spells are cast too often. This system attempts to address both of these complaints. Under these rules, magic-users and clerics can only cast one spell of a given level within a given time interval. For example, a magic-user or cleric can cast a single level one spell each hour. The magic-user or cleric is still only able to cast spells of a level that he has access to, i.e. a 3rd level magic-user can cast level one and level two spells, but not level three spells. The magic-user or cleric need not prepare or memorize his spells ahead of time, but he must take an hour each morning to pray, study, meditate, etc.

The spell level intervals are as follows: One level one spell per hour, one level two spell per day, one level three spell per week, one level four spell per month, one level five spell per season, one level six spell per year, one seven spell per decade, one level eight spell per century and one level nine spell per millennia.

Naturally, the average adventuring magic-user or cleric will not be satisfied with these restrictions, and will seek a way around them. Spell-casters can attempt to cast spells over and beyond what is allowed, but doing so can be dangerous. When a spell-caster wishes to cast additional spells of a level, he must make a saving throw, subtracting the level of the spell he wishes to cast from his roll. If successful, he summons and masters the energies necessary and casts the desired spell. If he fails, he must face the consequences.

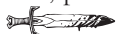
For magic-users, a failure to properly master the arcane energies required to bend reality to their will can result in mental or physical deformity. When a saving throw is failed, roll 1d6 on the table below, adding the level of the spell to the roll. Re-roll duplicate results if they do not make sense.

Roll	Effect
2	Hair turns white
3	Wart grows on nose (Charisma lowered by one)
4	Develop body odor (Charisma lowered by one, more frequent wandering monster encounters)

Roll	Effect
5	Develop a weird or unwholesome obsession
6	Leg twisted (Dexterity lowered by one, movement lowered by 3)
7	Hand twisted into claw (Cannot hold an item and a cast spell at the same time)
8	Develop a dangerous obsession
9	Become paranoid, begin to hear voices
10	Struck blind
11	Must succeed at a saving throw or go into a seizure during stressful situations
12	Confusion (as the spell, maximum duration)
13	Tormented by an imp for one year
14	Feeblemind (as the spell, lasts one day)
15	Lose one level

For clerics, constant petitioning of the gods for their help can result in angry, wrathful gods. When a saving throw is failed, roll 1d6 on the table below, adding the level of the spell to the roll.

Roll	Effect
2	Reverse of spell (if possible) is cast
3	Immediate encounter with summoned monster (level appropriate)
4	Cursed (as the spell)
5	Struck by lightning bolt (1d6 damage per spell level)
6	No spells for one day (cleric will be so informed by a booming, disembodied voice)
7	Cleric must undertake a heroic quest
8	Earthquake, centered on the cleric
9	Struck blind
10	No spells for one month (cleric will be so informed by a booming, disembodied voice)
11	A servant of the gods appears and attacks the nuisance
12	Tormented by a minor demon for one year
13	Lose one level

The Referee must be the final arbiter of these effects. In fact, the Referee may wish to add to these lists, personalizing them for his particular campaign world. 

ONLINE ROLEPLAYING: A QUICK OVERVIEW

by Marcelo Frossard Paschoalin

So you've decided to try your hand at online roleplaying. Congratulations! You are bound to have much fun, but there are a few things you need to understand before we roll our dice. Consider this part of your game session preparation... I know it'll sound a little like that in no time. First you'll need your playing area. You know, we are not talking about a large table here: you need to have your online gaming software. There are plenty to choose from. Some resemble a true tabletop game, others have a more story-oriented feel. Let's talk about our options.

Play by Post (PbP, for short) or Play by Forum (PbF)

Since the first message boards on the internet this kind of game has been played. It has a deep story-oriented feel (I've warned you about that), relying more on the descriptors of each action than on dicerolling (specially because there's no dicerolling in this case). Usually this game doesn't need a Referee, as the players agree—to an extent—to follow some (written or not) rules of conduct. The first message depicts a scene and the tone of the game (and may include an invitation to other players to join), then the story develops as each player replies and adds content to the thread. Generally speaking, each player has absolute control over his own character and may dictate the outcome of his own actions. This may become a collaborative story-writing session, but with a gaming factor—other players may present challenges to their fellows, and overcoming those challenges become the main part of the game. When there's a Referee, she usually controls the NPCs, but the result of the PC's actions is rarely under her control, unless she deems a player stretching the limits of what should be expected from his PC. For an example of PbP game, I'd recommend the STF bulleting board system, a Star Trek roleplaying game, in particular the USS Atlantis forum (<http://www.star-fleet.com/webb/node/365/notes>).

Play by Email (PbE, or Pbem)

Similarly to PbP, there's a Play by Email kind of game. In this case there's a Referee, and her work is even bigger: she needs to send all players the description of the scene, gather all individual replies, collate everything in a readable format to all the players and send the resulting outcome. Some Referees even go the extra mile and re-write the player's replies building a more cohesive story, trying to keep one 'voice and tone' for the game. In this kind of game the Referee usually handles the dicerolling, but

there are dedicated services that email random dice results to selected recipients, and it's also a way to handle the random factor of the game. However, with other faster ways to play, Pbem are becoming even more rare.

Play by Blog

With so many blogs out there, it's not hard to find some that are focused on the stories of a particular gaming group. Usually with restricted membership, those blogs act like PbP games, but have the option to include more content to the story being told, as maps, videos and other multimedia alternatives. A nifty example is the Play-by-Blog Pathfinder Game (<http://pbppathfindergame.blogspot.com>), including embed dicerollers on the page.

Play by Wiki

Wikis are also good ways to play online. Similarly to a PbP, the game has a more 'story-oriented' feel, but all the advantages of a wiki allow gamers to fill any plot holes in the story and also gives the Referee the chance to edit the story completely. The resulting wiki is able to gather off-topic discussions in one area, archive the whole game for later consideration and also change anything easily if the direction of the story derails completely or if an action need to be voided by the Referee.

Play by Wave

Google Wave is the new tool on the shiny box, and there are a few gamers who decided to try roleplaying using all the blips and waves. The technology is new, but it may gather all the good characteristics of the ways described above in one place... yet it's too early to call this the 'one' way to play.

Play by Chat

As old as the Internet Relay Chat (IRC), many Play by Chat games are still active. Some games begin by chance (a few players are all in a single chatroom and decide to roleplay their characters), others are ongoing campaigns, with the same players logging in at the same time to keep the game flowing. As a variation on the same theme there is also play by instant messaging service (from ICQ to Windows Live, for example), and some have created dedicated scripts that allow dicerolls to be made on the very chat the players are in.

Online tabletop game

Finally, there's online tabletop games. Using server-based softwares, or peer-to-peer connections, the games may be fully automated, including embedded dicerollers, character sheets, maps and other drawing options. In my opinion, this is the best way to emulate the roleplaying experience, but your mileage may vary.

In the past I've used WebRPG (inactive nowadays), but I've moved to OpenRPG (<http://www.openrpg.com/> or <http://www.rpgobjects.com/index.php?c=orpg>) when WebRPG went paid. The same reason some players dislike paying their FLGS for "renting a table" made me choose OpenRPG at the time—and I must tell you I don't regret the decision at all. Anyway, it's a matter of taste. You may like some fancy features of Fantasy Grounds (<http://www.fantasygrounds.com/>), or even other software, but I like the old school style of OpenRPG (see a trend here?).

Second, familiarize yourself with the software you are using. Know how to roll a dice (is it a string of text, a push button, a custom macro?), how to communicate with your fellow players (are you able to send private messages?), and how to use the character sheets (are they pre-made, custom, or do-it-yourself?). For those who really want to use miniatures, learn how to set up them and how to draw simple maps on the software. Nothing bogs down a session more than asking someone to teach you something important in the middle of the action.

Speaking of it, online communities are also known for helping newbies. If you don't know how to do something, go ahead and ask. If you are not in the middle of a gaming session, that's it—but usually new players have more lenience than Referees, so play a few games in order to get used with everything (or better, set up a room for yourself and play sandbox for a while... but your fantasy sandbox, but I think you know that already).


Okay, now you know how to use your program of choice, you are ready to roll your dice. And a word of caution: rolling dice for no reason is one of the behaviors most online roleplayers frown upon. It disrupts the flow of the game as the result will show on everybody's chat window (or whatever is called the place where all messages are displayed).

Each online software has its own way to display the available games. If you are like me and are using OpenRPG, you will have plenty of options, starting with the Game Servers (ctrl+B) currently online. Each Game Server may host a number of Rooms—a Room is where games take place. There are always a few Game Servers available, but you may even set up your own server, password protected or not, in order to have your game going.

If you are a player searching for a game, find a Room that matches the description of what you are looking for and join (select the room and click Join Room, but verify first if the room is not password protected—the room's name will be written in red if you need to input a password to join). The best Rooms for new players are those that are "recruiting spots"—usually Referees set up Rooms recruiting players for a future campaign, the same way you see flyers on your FLGS. If there's no recruitment at the moment, join a Room that have a few players in and quietly ask the Referee if you may watch/join the game—unless the game is underway for a while, or it's a specific session of a campaign, you'll be able to join the party... again, in the same vein of what happens on your FLGS (see a pattern here?).

Now, if you are the Referee, you need to gather players. Set up a Room describing what you'll play and when the games will take place (for example, "Recruiting: S&W Campaign Fridays at 8pm PST") and wait for them to come. If you have prepared some campaign overview, leave it available for public (see that Gametree in the upper left corner? It's there that you'll include nodes—forms and blocks of text—for your personal use or not, including character sheets and notes) in order to let the potential players to read it if they are interested. In any case, be there to answer any questions or, if you decide to set up the room and go to work, leaving it up as an "advertisement" for your campaign, state that clearly and mention ways the players may contact you.

As a Referee you'll need to know little more than a player regarding your software of choice. But a good thing to know is how many characters can be typed at once—this way you may prepare specific notes before the session and copy & paste them when the players reach that determined spot on the adventure. And copy & paste is a great boon for Referees: if you are following a module, you may drop the info as the players advance without bogging down the session—but you should review and rewrite the module beforehand if needed, in order to keep the game flowing with "your voice", and not the author's.

By the way, there's no limit of characters in the chat room input—feel free to copy & paste large entire paragraphs and even include dicerolls in the middle of your message (you may type "The bandit swings at you. [1d20+2]" and the result of that 1d20+2 roll will be included in your message in a way similar to "The bandit swings at you. [1d20+2] => [4,2] = (6)" if the die roll is equal to 4). In any case, test the features still offline in order to master your options before running a game online. 

Less stats, more story



www:ageoffable:net

RATS IN THE WALLS

**An Astonishing Swordsmen & Sorcerers
of Hyperborea adventure for 4 to 6 or
more characters of 1st – 3rd level.**

*Written by Jeffrey P. Talanian
Edited by Matthew J. Stanham
Illustrated by Ian Baggley
Cartography by Andreas Claren*

Editor's Note: the statistics given for monsters in this adventure are provided in the format used by AS&SoH, but they are completely compatible with the rules of other games we support; such as First Edition, Swords & Wizardry, etc. Interpreting the stats for these other games is pretty much obvious at first sight, so we haven't provided any highly technical guidelines.



Introduction (to be read or paraphrased to the players): Renowned is the City-State of Khromarium not only for its extensive harbour, but also for its dockside taverns. In all of Hyperborea this port is the most racially and culturally disparate; one can enter almost any tavern and expect to encounter Vikings, Kelts, Esquimaux, Picts, Amazons, and Cimmerians drinking and mingling together and with men of mixed ancestry. Rarer still is the appearance of a gaunt Hyperborean garbed in mail, or perhaps a dusky-skinned Ixian caped in tattered velvet. Such heterogeneity does not transpire in the world without, but in Khromarium diversity is the norm.

Least discriminating of all are Khromarium's local seamen, fishermen, and longshoremen whose wont it is to frequent the dockside taverns. Always will they drink before launch and straight away upon moorage at the pier. They drink bitter ale and rancid whiskey, and sometimes they indulge themselves with an expensive bottle of pomegranate wine—if the bounty of the sea has proved favourable. For these reasons and more it is quite baffling as to why the Silvery Eel is unattended. As your party drops its gear to the floor and seats itself at a battered table of pine, you at once assume the tavern is bereft of either ale, whiskey, or both.

The barkeep quickly stokes the fire and approaches your table. His furtive eyes snatch glances at the walls and ceiling as he smiles and takes your order, nodding, wiping his brow. His hands, you observe, are shaking, and in his countenance you read a most palpable fear. Quickly he returns with your order, and from a door behind the bar you catch glimpse of a scrawny young woman whose eyes are hung with dark circles. She regards you with a haunted expression before slipping back from whence she came. Finally, one of your party broaches the subject with the barkeep: "Is there something amiss here at the Silvery Eel?"

"No, of course not," replies the barkeep with a taut smile. But then, with his eyes shifting side to side, he sighs and admits, "Yes. Yes, I'm afraid something is dreadfully wrong ..."

Introduction

Rats in the Walls is a short adventure that takes place in Khromarium, the largest port in Hyperborea, but it might take place at any busy port of any campaign setting, be it published or home-brew. Hyperborea is the default setting for *Astonishing Swordsmen & Sorcerers of Hyperborea*, a role-playing game set to debut in 2010. AS&SH is a game whose roots are firmly entrenched in the traditional RPG style as conceived by Gygas and Arneson. The game derives its flavour from the fictional works of authors C.A. Smith, R.E. Howard, and H.P. Lovecraft, with a liberal dose of Vance, Burroughs, and Merritt. This adventure in particular is inspired by *The Rats in the Walls* by H.P. Lovecraft, though astute readers will no doubt note the influence of some of the other authors noted. For more information on AS&SH, please visit swordsmen-and-sorcerers.com.

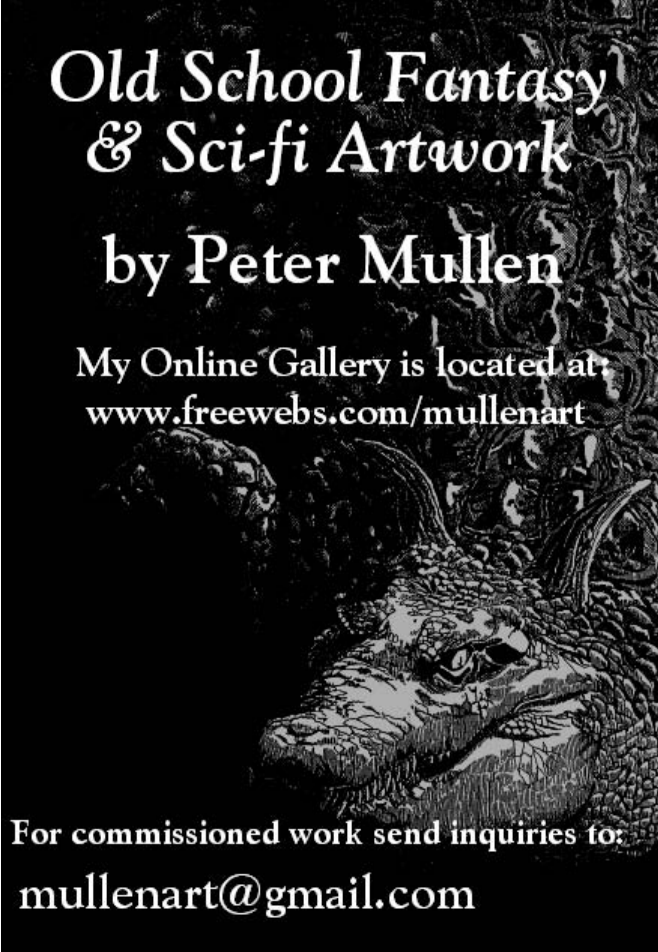
What follows is information for the eyes of the referee alone; players should cease reading now. First included is some brief information on Hyperborea and the port city of Khromarium, followed by this adventure's *dramatis personae*, and then the adventure itself. Regardless, the people and places can be substituted with one of the referee's choice.

Hyperborea: The Land of Hyperborea is centred upon a flat earth micro-campaign setting, a polar continent at the End of Time that might be accessed via polar travel, planar travel, or even

time travel. Hyperborea is a bleak realm that survives under a bloated, scarlet sun that sheds little warmth. It is also attended by two moons, one large the other small. At the rim of the world the seas spill eternal into the illimitable depths of the Black Gulf.

Khromarium: Khromarium is a major port city of Hyperborea, its harbour being the largest known. The city's history is one of tragedy and death. A thousand years ago it was ruled by the true Hyperboreans, the giant sorcerer kings of reputed immortality that have seemingly fallen to decay. Other men were their vassals in that bygone age. Then came the Green Death, which devastated all of Hyperborea, and for all their power the race of gaunt sorcerers were no exception. Centuries later the dock-sides were rebuilt by men of mixed ancestry. Today the city is ruled by an oligarchy of knights, nobles, and guild masters that select a Lord Mayor; presently, Gill Sampatose, Master of the Mariners' Guild, serves.

Khromarium's populace is largely aligned with Neutrality, though many lean towards Chaos. The city is not bereft of Law, though seldom is justice served with equality. It is a dismal, seedy place, choked by the smoke of its factories, and poverty and homelessness afflict the largest segment of its population. Many such destitute souls take refuge in the streets of Old Khromarium, where once dwelled the most affluent Hyperborean families. Here rise twisting towers of marble and stone, reputed to be haunted by the ghosts of sorcerers claimed by the Green Death a thousand years ago.



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Adventure Notes: The referee should familiarize himself with the following adventure notes before running this adventure. What follows afterwards should also be reviewed, though it is fairly straightforward and can be run by an experienced referee on the fly.

Xill Vuntos, Tavern Keeper of the Silvery Eel: Xill Vuntos is a round-faced, balding man who combs over his remaining hedge of hair. A year ago he purchased the building from the city. The previous owner, an importer of spices, allegedly hung himself in the basement. He owed a substantial debt to the city, and so the property was auctioned to the highest bidder: Xill Vuntos, who had recently inherited his family fortune. Xill renovated the building as a tavern and named it the *Silvery Eel*. Soon the tavern became a hot spot for local fishermen and dock workers; the ale was good, the boiled lobster delicious, and the fish chowder fine. Then came the rat problem. Within a year it eroded Xill's patron base, caused the deaths of his wife and youngest daughter, and now haunts both his life and that of his surviving daughter, Annesta.

The Infestation of the Silvery Eel: Every dockside tavern gets its share of rats; it is unavoidable. At the outset Xill's problem seemed no worse than that of any other tavern, so he took the usual measures – cats, traps, etc. Nothing seemed to work: the traps were found broken; the cats dead, their throats ripped asunder. The rats, many of unseemly size, would scurry across the floor, over his patrons' feet, biting ankles, and chewing holes in the walls. Xill would spend hours plugging the holes during the afterhours whilst listening to the dreadful sound of scratching in the walls – claws scabbling up and down, up and down.

Each of Xill's three serving wenches were bit, and after two of them took ill and died, the third one quit. Xill was hard-pressed, forced to work his wife and eldest daughter long hours. One night, while the three served a rowdy group of seamen, Xill's youngest daughter was left unattended for several hours in a bedroom chamber above the tavern proper. Later they discovered the child withered and listless, riddled with puncture wounds. When she died, Xill's wife went mad of it, eventually killing herself. Now there are only Xill and Annesta, and the word is out amongst the locals – the *Silvery Eel* is plagued and cursed; except for the occasional arrival, no one patronizes it.

Xill's Offer: He offers a 2,000 gp pearl necklace to eliminate his rat problem. He also offers the shield (+1 **small round shield**; 1.5-foot diameter, sheds 5 feet of light when gripped) of the thief who just last week promised to solve the rat problem. That man was found dead in the basement, his throat torn out, his skin withered and grey. He grants complete access for an exhaustive investigation of his property.

Annesta: The girl is some 17 years of age, tall and somewhat homely, with straw-like yellow hair and sunken features. She is a taciturn sort, but if compelled to speak she may admit that unbeknownst to her father she has been bit five or more times in the night – on her stomach, behind her neck, at her ankles. At each instance she is in her bedroom, and she recalls a pinch of pain, but she is not able waken from her nightmarish slumbers that involve a terrible woman with the visage of a swine. She does not wish to admit it to her father, because he has felt enough pain with the loss of his wife and Annesta's young sibling.

Clues and Notes: The following may be gleaned through investigation.

- Scratching in the walls, rats scurry up and down.
- Rat droppings, the size of what a small dog or large cat might leave, some of a strange crimson colour.
- Holes in the walls, the chiselled marks of the rats' teeth betray rodents of unusual size.
- Bite victims have suffer a greyish pallor of the skin and subsequent listlessness.
- Neighbouring warehouses show no sign of the infestation.
- Recently a Hyperborean patron made strange allusions regarding the history of the *Silvery Eel*, but Xill avoids those tall, gaunt, lotus-chewing sorcerers. The Hyperborean is seven feet tall, has yellow-white hair, wears blue mail, and carries a battle axe. He is among the crew of a small galley moored at the pier.

Kiloplo Vheez: Kiloplo Vheez is the Hyperborean. He is the first mate of *The Berg Breaker*. He can be found at the nearby pier, overseeing the conveyance of goods to and from the galley. He will entertain questions, though he proves condescending. Kiloplo admits that he indeed holds special knowledge of the *Silvery Eel* tavern. His father, a sorcerer of no little reputation,



told him that, in the days when the true Hyperboreans ruled Khromarium and the “sub-men” knew their station, there stood at that locale a sorcerer’s tower overlooking the harbour. It was burnt to its foundations in the aftermath of the Green Death, and (he presumes) the current structure built atop. Kilplo Vheez advises the seekers to search for a foundation of red sandstone blocks intended to support a much larger structure.

Kilplo Vheez is a uniquely classed AS&SH character – a *spell-sword*: a fighter that dabbles in sorcery. **Kilplo Vheez:** AL N; MV 9”; AC 4; HD 3; hp 15; FA 3(4); #A 3/2; D 2-9 (battle axe), ML 12. Spells: *sleep*, *web*. Items: battle axe (mastery: +1 “to hit” and damage), dagger +3, chain mail, backpack, 50’ rope, wineskin, **potion of healing**, spell book (also contains *burning hands*). The Hyperborean has the fighting ability of a fighter of equal level. He can gird himself in the arms and armour of a warrior, and cast

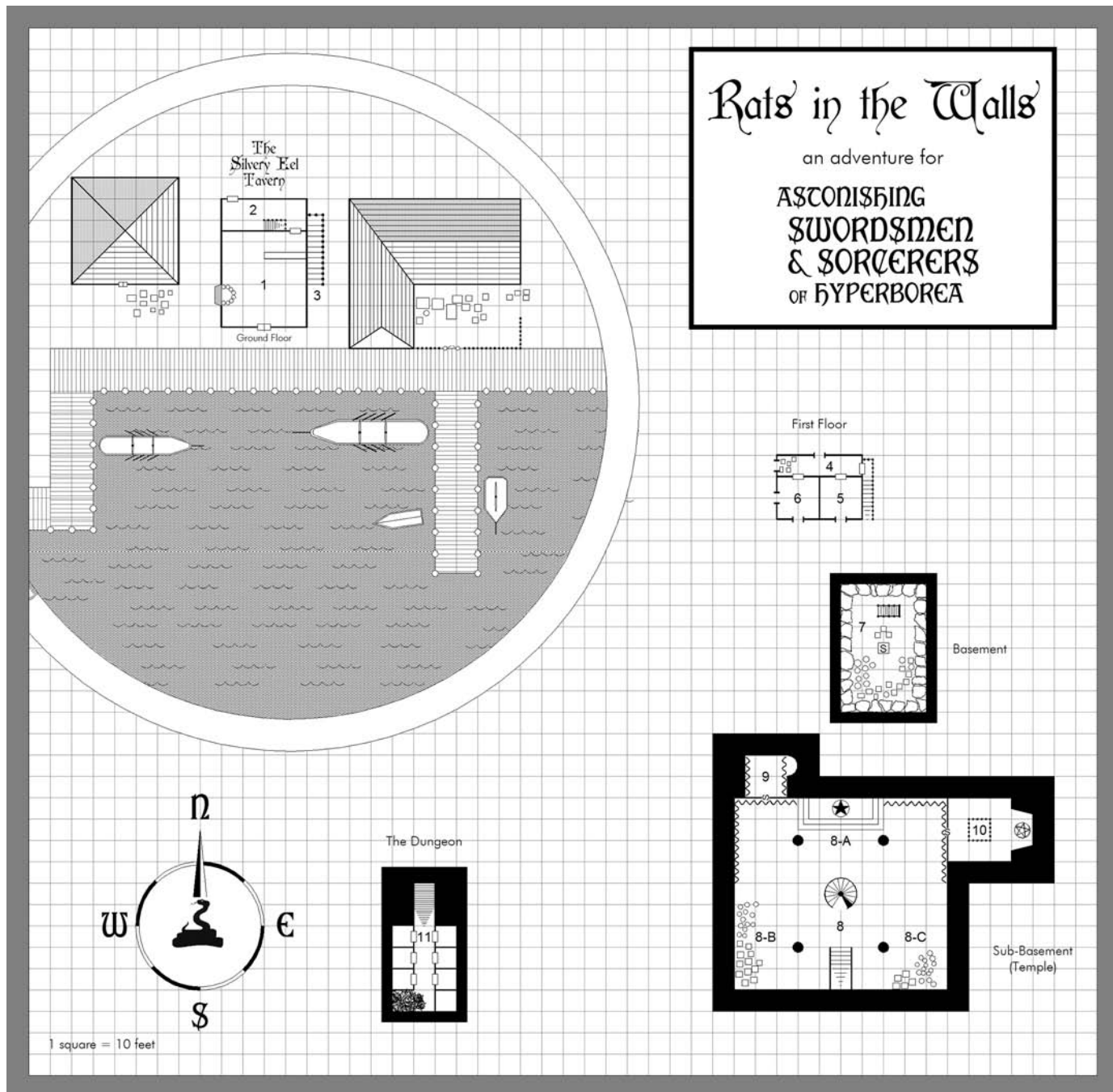
spells with impunity, though he can presently cast but one 1st level and one 2nd level per day. If the party begs his assistance, he might acquiesce (referee’s call) though only for a substantial reward: an equal share of any treasure discovered, and, upon conclusion of the quest, he selects a magic item of choice if any are won.

Giant Rats: There are several giant rats in this adventure. To avoid redundancy, please note the appendix for details and statistics.

Ground Floor

Outside the Tavern doors is a painted sign with silver zigzagging eels surrounding a foaming mug of ale.

1. Common Room: Typical tavern common room with fireplace, tables, benches, bar. Behind the bar there is a door



to the back room (#2). The otherwise fine whitewashed walls present with several boards tacked here and there. These block holes where the rats have chewed through. Xill serves the patrons. Annesta works in the back.

- Fish chowder = 3 sp per bowl (includes hot roll w/ butter + mug of ale)
- Gill of whiskey = 5 sp
- Pint of ale = 1 sp
- Dinner = 1 gp (boiled lobster, sweet potato, mug of red wine)

If the PCs investigate the common room they find the chewed holes are unusually large. When all is quiet, the rats can be heard running in the walls, quite fast and evasive.

2. Kitchen: Typical kitchen. Annesta works here. There are some casks and crates here, including this morning's lobster purchase, wine, and ale taps. A wash basin holds mugs and plates. There are more holes here (most are covered with scrap wood), more scratching to possibly be heard in the walls. Annesta might be engaged here, as indicated in the *Adventure Notes* above, but not while her father is about, and several uncomfortable glances in his direction may betray this. There is a back door in the kitchen and stairs leading down to the cellar.

3. Exterior Stair to First Floor: Rickety stairs to Xill's dwellings above.

First Floor

4. Hallway: This hallway has one window and two doors. At the east end of the hallway there is a stack of crates holding all the silverware that Xill once used. With business so poor, he intends to sell the lot, which is valued at some 100 gp (individual pieces worth 1–3 gp). There are **5 giant rats** (hp 3) resting in the largest crate. Droppings behind the crates are of a deep crimson colour.

5. Xill's Bedroom: The tavern keeper's chamber has a window, a door, a bed, and a dresser. When the sun sets the rats begin scratching at the walls and continue throughout the night, slowly driving him mad. Sometimes he cannot waken when they scratch. He is caught in some deep slumber, from which he awakens only by his own screams. Xill keeps a small idol of Xathoquua in his chamber, and he prays for the curse to end every night, to no avail.

6. Annesta's Bedroom: The tavern keeper's daughter's chamber has a window, a door, a bed, a dresser, and a mirror of polished steel. The crib for Annesta's deceased little sister remains in here. There are holes chewed through the wall behind to Annesta's dresser. Under the dresser there are large rat droppings of a curious crimson coloration. If the room is searched there is a **secret compartment** under a loose floorboard.

Secret Compartment: Here lies the diary of the previous owner of this location, before Xill renovated it to a tavern. Early pages are dedicated to his mundane thoughts regarding his work and his admiration for a young woman who works at a local seamstress. Further entries complain of the rats. Then his nightmares concerning

a swine-faced daemon woman. His rat problem worsened, so he brought in cats; they howled and ran about baffled before all were eventually killed by the rats. His writings eventually give way to mad ravings, and the conviction that he has fallen victim to some inescapable curse, no doubt bestowed by the swine-faced one.

Basement

7. Basement: The basement is one large chamber cluttered with crates, boxes, and casks of various sizes. The walls are comprised of massive sandstone blocks fitted together, though somewhat separated from age. It is easy to see how the rats might enter the walls of the tavern proper above. With patient observation, the party might hear a rat or two deep inside the blocks scabbling up or down. The ones that scabble down continue scratching downward until no longer heard.

The casks hold ale, wine, pickled eels, and pickled fish. The crates and boxes hold various tools and supplies, including aprons, blankets, candles, canvass, cloth, herbs (cooking), knives, lamps, mugs, nails, rope, salt, sacks of lentils and rice (ripped open; nearly emptied), spoons, twine, etc. Several crates are empty and smashed, Xill having used the wood to plug rat holes in the common room above. There are several large droppings here. Amongst the debris of the southwest corner there are **5 giant rats** (hp 3). They emerge to attack once the crates are disturbed. These rats have a penchant for collecting shiny coins: 57 gp, 102 sp in the SW corner.

Secret Door: In the centre of the room a flagstone conceals a **secret door**. It may be discerned (upon a successful check) by its slight discoloration as compared to the other flags. The flag must be lifted with a pry bar or like device, thus revealing an iron trap door below. The trap door is rusted shut. It can only be pulled open by an *extraordinary feat of strength*; however, three characters can work together pulling the large ring and thus combining their percentile roll one big pull. If they fail, a second chance might be allowed. A spiral stair with old, dusty cobwebs is revealed below, quite dark.

Sub Basement

The spiral stair descends 50 feet.

8. Temple of Aurorus "The Shining One": This massive temple area was where the ancient Hyperboreans worshiped one of their favoured deities, Aurorus, "The Shining One". The old sandstone flags of this temple area are scratched and littered with rat dropping small and large. There are four large stone pillars supporting an arched ceiling of some 40-foot height at its apex. Stone stairs descend to the south. A nauseating stench wafts from below; the stairs are littered with droppings and appear sticky with urine.

Note that there are two **secret doors** in this room. The one at #10 is easily discovered, as noted below.

8-A. The Altar of Aurorus: Here upon the dais stands a 12-foot statue of Aurorus. It is carved of green soapstone, an indistinct lower body swathed in robes that rises to a three-faced woman, albeit of one head. One face stares south, whilst the other two face east and west. The dais holds not one

rat dropping. On the floor before the dais and between the two north pillars there are iron shackles bolted into the floor. If a man or woman is chained here and the correct incantations are spoken, the eyes of all the faces sparkle. Then a sparkling light manifests above the statue to descend on the victim and take him or her, body and soul.

To the left and right of the dais, depending from bent iron rods hang old velvet curtains, rotted and mouldy with age. There are **2 secret doors** concealed behind them.

8-B. Boxes and Casks: The boxes and casks here do not seem to fit the temple environment. Indeed, these are the spoils of pirates that once hid out here in the years following the Green Death. Centuries have passed and the once valuable scented woods they stored have not only rotted, but have become a nest for **6 giant rats** (hp 3). They attack if the crates are disturbed, followed by more rats from #8-C within 1–4 rounds.

In one box there is a golden *Statuette of Kthulhu* worth 500 gp. If destroyed, the perpetrator is plagued by nightmares until at length he either submits his soul to Kthulhu or goes mad (within a year); only a *remove curse* spell can help. In another crate there is a pile of 78 gp, 54 ep, 80 sp.

8-C. More Boxes and Casks: There is nothing salvageable here, but several of the casks show that they once held wine from a place called Port Greely. There are **4 giant rats** (hp 3) here. If this pile is disturbed, they attack, soon joined by the rats of #8-B within 1–4 rounds. In a crate where they nest there is a pile of 34 gp, 15 ep, 29 sp.

9. Old Vestry: This room is accessed by a **secret door** that swivels on a central pivot. The room has a bed, a dresser and a small book shelf. It appears undisturbed, yet in fine shape despite the passage of centuries. Velvet curtains dyed maroon hang on the east and west walls.

There are **6 skeleton halberdiers** (hp 4) within, standing behind the curtains. They stand three on each side behind the curtains on the east and west side. They emerge within a minute or so if the room is disturbed. They wear black homespun cloaks in curiously fine condition and wear great helms with plumes red-dyed horse-hair. Each skeleton wields a halberd; these are mottled with rust, all save one, which appears extremely fine. This is a **+1 halberd**.

The book shelf contains leather-bound volume of prayers and rituals devoted to Aurorus, “The Shining One”. The sacrificial rites are included as described at #8-A. Beside the prayer book, contained in a cedar box lined with velvet there is a **potion of healing** (*light blue liquid*), **potion of cure disease** (*pulpy green liquid*), and a **potion of invisibility** (*oily clear liquid*). Each is a clear glass bottle with cork stopper.

In a cubby space behind the east curtain a suspended wooden pole is racked with long, cowled gowns of purple velvet embroidered with gold thread and studded upon the breast with tiny, imperfect diamonds, sapphires, emeralds, and rubies, and amethyst, the entirety of which form what appears to be a constellation. There are 5 such gowns, each in immaculate condition and worth 250 gp each. They are ankle length for men of 7-foot height (Hyperboreans).

10. Summoning Chamber: This room is accessed by a **secret door** that swivels on a central pivot and is slightly ajar (referee should increase probability of discovery; or simply make it an automatic discovery if the party searches behind the east curtain). There is a rusted 10' × 10' iron cage that extends from the flagstone floor to the 12-foot ceiling. The cage has no door. Inside the cage is the skeleton of what can only be described as a daemon. It has a vaguely humanoid, female shape, must have stood 9 feet tall. Its skull is swine-shaped with ram-like horns, and pointed teeth. Its shoulder blades extend to suggest great, membranous wings. The skeleton appears to have died whilst gripping the bars of the cage.

At the east end of the room there is an engraved magic circle that encloses a pentagram, the points of which present globs of melted wax. Any magician will note this as a sorcerer's protection whilst summoning daemon kind. In the centre of the circle there is a **+1 silver dagger**. If the magic circle is entered or if disturbed in any way, the skeleton's eyes glow.

- If the party has yet to go enter the dungeon (#11), a voice speaks, the sultry voice of a woman: “*You have failed, sorcerer. In your absence I have taken a new host, and soon I will have another.*” Mocking laughter follows these words.
- If the dungeon has already been visited and the daemon rat has been destroyed, the skeleton cries out, “*Feed me! How dare you destroy my host! Feed me!*”



11. The Dungeon: The stone stairs are worn and littered with rat droppings and urine. They must be carefully negotiated or one might fall. Forty feet down, and the stairs are littered with skulls and skeletons of human and semi-human. The skulls suggest some semblance of man and apedom as seen in the wilds of Hyperborea, the dreaded ape-men, creatures of primitive intelligence. They appear to have perished whilst in an attitude of fear and panic. The bones have been chewed and gnawed by rats.

There are eight stone cells in the dungeon, each once secured by a barred iron door, but all are corroded, warped and broken open. The cells are choked with the skeletal remains of men and ape-men. From the north end of the chamber, from under the piles of bones there emerge **6 giant rats** (hp 3) that attack rabidly. From the south end of the dungeon there comes spine-chilling laughter, that of a woman.

Hiding in the southwest corner, amongst a tangle of bones and debris, there is a huge, fat **daemon rat** (hp 28, see appendix), some 8 feet long. She is feeding a litter of eight ruddy-pink pups, each of 1-foot length. The enormous rat laughs and then speaks in a mocking female voice (the same as that of the skeleton demon of #10) through a maw that is covered with dried blood: *“Oh, how divine. Never do my children bring enough blood to keep me sated. Anon will I drink of your sanguine riches, oh mortal pigs.”* Derisively again she laughs.

The scene is horrific. Dried blood covers the belly of this bloated monstrosity, and the blind faces of the pink pups that attend it. At night, the daemon enters the nightmares

of her victims, sending them into a deep slumber during which her children proceed to feed. Mature giant rats drink the blood of these victims and then feed it to their mother with a bloody, siphoning kiss for the mother to later feed the pups. Once a “normal” female rat, the daemon (entrapped at #10 by a Hyperborean sorcerer) has possessed this creature, which now controls all the rats that plague the *Silvery Eel*.

Referee’s Note: The battle should not be easy. If the party is comprised of all 3rd level characters, or if the party is rather large, have more **giant rats** (hp 3) emerge to join their mother in the fight. This is a judgement call by the referee, creating an appropriate challenge for the player group.


In the southwest corner, behind the nest there is more treasure that the rats have brought their “mother”: 185 gp, 78 ep, 92 sp. There is also a gold chain worth 50 gp, a pearl ring worth 100 gp, and a **periapt of health** (aquamarine opal set in silver and depending from a thin silver chain).

CONCLUSION: Once the rat daemon is destroyed the curse is ended. But there can be a last “bite” for the players, should the referee choose to add further ramifications. Annesta has suffered enough bites to suffer a curse, and this might develop into **lycanthropy**; i.e. she might become a **wererat** in the future, one with a taste for blood. She can haunt the players at some future point, reaching a point of madness in which she believes the rat daemon was her “mother” and that the party killed her mother. But for the time being it is best to present appreciation from the Xill and his daughter that the curse is finally ended. Once word gets out and the place is properly repaired, perhaps business returns to what it once was, but the pain and grief of losing his wife and youngest daughter will never subside.

Appendix

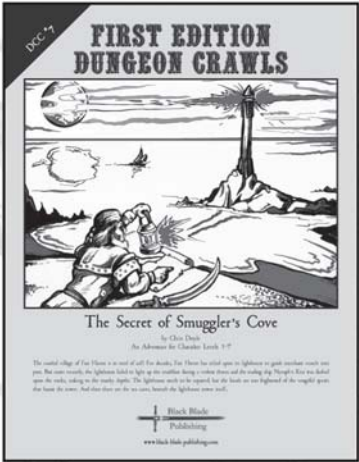
Giant Rat: AL CE; MV 12”; AC 7; HD 1/2; #A 1 (bite); D 1–3; ML 10. These rodents are tainted with evil. Their eyes betray a lambent ruddy glow. There is a 1-in-6 chance that their bite confers a deadly disease. It begins with a fever within 2–24 (2d12) hours. Then, in 2–12 (2d6) days a saving throw versus death (poison) must be rolled. Failure indicates death; otherwise the fever breaks after 2 weeks of suffering (any associated penalties should be decided by the referee). These rats drink blood and sometimes leave crimson droppings.

Daemon Rat: AL CE; MV 6”; AC 7; HD 5; hp 28; #A 1 (bite); D 2–8; ML 12. Her bite is like that of the giant rats (see above) as regards the transmission of disease. The blood is substantial, if she is killed, a viscous red-black fluid that smells of bile. Optionally, her death might effect the deaths of any remaining rats within 1–6 turns.

Special thanks to following Knights of Next Tuesday for playtesting: Dan Berube, Jonas Carlson, and Donald Manning. I still can’t believe Dan had his character drip fresh blood on the bones of the caged daemon skeleton. Actions have consequences, gentlemen ... 

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STEALING THE HISTORIES

by Michael Curtis

After months of work you've finally completed your fantasy campaign sandbox. The hexes have been filled and keyed, the dungeon has been dug and stocked, and the various settlements and their inhabitants await the coming of the characters. Something's missing though – the colorful bits of world background and history that turns a static environment into a vibrant and exciting world.

Such little bits of color are not always easy to create and too often we succumb to the use of clichés to fill the void. Our innkeepers are all retired soldiers with large, bullying wives; wizards are all either absentminded or power-mad recluses; the city's shops are open from nine to five, and the land is ruled by a western European-style monarchy. Such shorthand design is fine from time to time, but if you really wish to create a vivid campaign world that impresses your players, you might think about drawing inspiration from sources other than the usual sword & sorcery novel or work of game fiction.

For the game master looking to create a truly memorable campaign world, a copy of Herodotus' *The Histories* is invaluable as a reference source. Within its 2,500 year-old pages you will find more interesting and unusual nuggets of detail and potential game color than in an entire stack of \$30 splat books. Herodotus wrote of the ancient world in which he lived, combining real history, legend, and folklore to create an intricately detailed guidebook and historical text. By itself, *The Histories* could serve as a campaign "world book" for any role-playing game set in the ancient Mediterranean region, but when cherry-picked for ideas and creative starting points, Herodotus' work will serve as inspiration for any fantasy world.

This article pulls a few choice passages from *The Histories* with an eye on using them in your own campaign world, and covers the topics of laws and government, magic and religion, warfare, life and death, and women's roles. While the quoted passages are some of the author's favorites, they are but a small



portion of the interesting and often downright weird accounts contained in the text. Quoted passages are followed by book and chapter numbers in parentheses to allow the reader to consult the full text for themselves. Thus, a quoted passage from Book Two, Chapter 37 is annotated as (2.37). While many editions of *The Histories* are available, the author recommends *The Landmark Herodotus* (Anchor Books, 2007). This version contains not only a more contemporary translation, but also numerous maps, illustrations, appendixes, and annotations to help the layperson achieve a detail understanding of Herodotus' work.

Laws and Government

While not having a great impact on the daily lives of the player characters, local laws and government systems offer wonderful possibilities to add distinct color to your campaign world. Both legal and political systems can be bewildering to the layman, and, as a fantasy world, they should be even more bizarre in your game. With luck, the players will experience your world's interesting laws and leaders as observers and not as victims of their decrees.

From god-kings, satraps, despots, and oligarchs, your world's rulers should rarely be prosaic. They are not democratically elected commoners (usually), but prestigious entities with military power and noble heritage behind them. An adept ruler, such as one who's been bred for the position, is likely to cloak himself in a commanding or mysterious aura: "No one was allowed to enter into the presence of the king inside his palace. They must use messengers instead. And when the king came out, no one was to look directly at him, and anyone who laughed or spit in his presence would incur disgrace" (1.99). A ruler could also take symbolic steps to distance himself from his subjects by wearing gilded masks or ostentatious robes of office. A truly outré despot might employ ceremonial stilts, *levitation*, or magical flight to literary raise him above the unwashed.

Sometimes it is not the ruler, but the legal process that brings color to the campaign world. Laws, treaties, and compacts might be decided based on astrology or messages from previous rulers sent from beyond the grave. Spirits of another nature may even be invoked: "They are accustomed to deliberating on the most serious business while they are drunk, and whatever decision they reach in those sessions, it is proposed to them again the next day by the [previous night's host]. Then, if the decision still pleases them when they are sober, they act on it; if not, they give it up. Conversely, whatever provisional decisions they consider when sober, they reconsider when they are drunk" (1.133). Although "hangover parliament" may be too whimsical for hard-drinking, yet sensible darvares, it seems fitting for halfling moots and town meeting.

Politics and law is not all bleary-eyed mornings after, however. For some it can be fatal. When one judge was discovered accepting bribes to influence his rulings, King Cambyses rendered his own fitting judgment: "The King had ordered that his throat be cut and his entire body flayed...his skin was removed...and stretched on the throne on which he had sat while rendering judgments. [That judge's replacement was instructed] to remember what throne he was sitting on whenever he was acting as judge" (5.25). While certainly gruesome and fitting for your campaign's token evil kingdom, other versions of this might take the form of the skulls of tribal wise men watching over barbaric *Althings*, or humanoid tribes ritually eating their dead rulers to gain their knowledge.

Life and Death


The way that a culture chooses to mark the beginning and the end of a life is perhaps the easiest way to make that society unique. The regularity of these events (especially death in the case of adventurers) ensures that the PCs encounter them often enough to reinforce any deviation from the real world's treatment of such occurrences and make the culture a colorful part of the campaign's backdrop.

The simplest way to make a culture stand out in a fantasy campaign is to completely reverse the way life and death is handled when compared to our modern attitudes. This example from *The Histories* gives us an excellent justification for doing so: "When a child is born to them, his relatives...grieve over all the evils he will have to endure later, recounting all the things that humans must suffer. But when someone dies, they have fun and take pleasure in burying him in the ground, reciting over him all the evils he has escaped and how he is now in a state of complete bliss" (5.4). Turning funerals into raucous, orgiastic rites and births into somber occasions will make your campaign stand out...and give the PCs a reason to party on a regular basis if their explorations don't fare well.

But not every culture need turn a funeral into a festival. Mourning traditions provide another colorful way to make the campaign world unique and memorable. Great men and women should require expansive declarations of grief to mark their deaths, perhaps in a manner like so: "the whole army...went into mourning for Masistios, and in boundless grief they shaved their heads and also their horses and pack animals" (9.24). If the death of a ruler is mourned by depilation in one of your world's major cities or towns, the PCs are sure to remember the place, even if only as the "crazy, bald people town."

While they're in town, they might find that a major death proves to be an inconvenience in ways other than just for the

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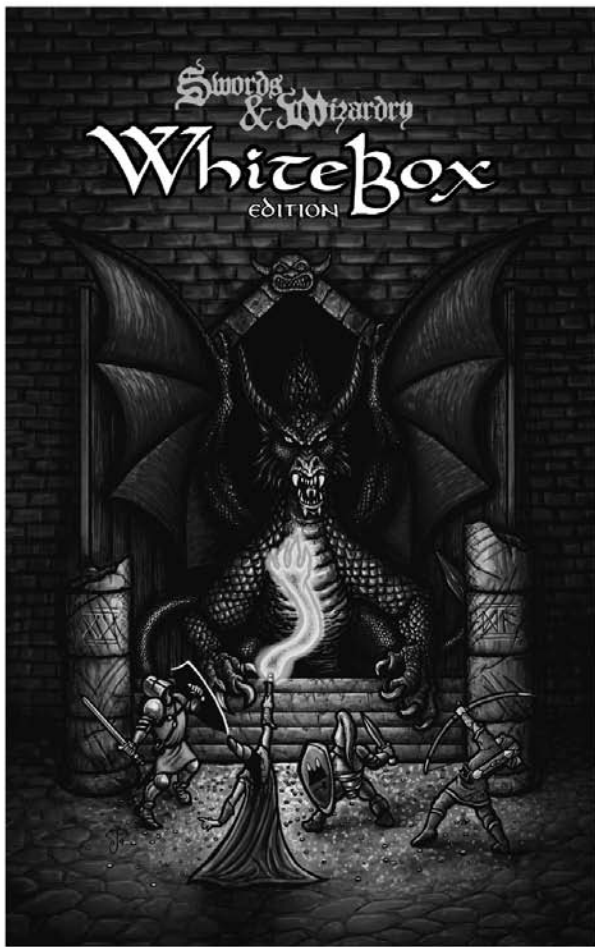
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departed and those mourning him: "After the king is buried, all business in the agora...[is] suspended for ten days, during which they mourn" (6.58). Closed shops mean no resupplying for the next dungeon expedition and an enforced downtime where the PCs will probably bleed off money in the taverns, inns, and gambling houses of the settlement.

Even after the dead are safely entombed, they may still affect the living in diverse ways. In fantasy literature and gaming, the lines between the living and the dead often blur in the form of the undead, but this is not the only way for the two to interact. The quick sometimes seek out the dead for protection and other assistance: "They swear oaths by men of their country who... have been the best and most just... [placing] their hands upon the tombs of these men. They obtain prophecies by going to their own ancestors' tombs, saying a prayer, and then falling asleep upon the tombs. Whatever vision they receive in their sleep is regarded by them as the oracle's response" (4.172). Clandestine meetings and black market dealings are hazardous enough to conduct in a moonlit cemetery without the threat of some omen-seeking citizen witnessing a criminal deal from atop his ancestor's tomb or by two businessmen closing a contract with oaths sworn before a legendary hero's mausoleum.

Being dead doesn't necessarily rob one of a sense of humor either. Nor does it prevent you from teaching an object lesson from beyond the grave. In my most favorite account from Herodotus, Queen Nitokris of Babylon left the following message inscribed on her elaborate resting place: "If any king of Babylon who comes after me needs money, let him open this tomb and take as much money as he wants. Let him not, however, open it unless he is truly in need. If he opens it for any other reason it will not go well with him" (1.187). Her tomb remained undisturbed until Darius took the throne, who thought that it was a shame to leave such treasure lying unused in a crypt. "When he opened the tomb, however, he found no money inside, just the corpse and an inscription which read: 'You would not open up the graves of the dead if you were not so insatiable and shamefully greedy'" (1.187). Try that trick the next time the PCs decide to play tomb raider!

Tomb robbery isn't the sole way to make a few coins of the dead in some cultures. In fact, depending on one's relationship with their deceased relatives, a corpse may be more valuable to a family than a living family member: "[According to law] an Egyptian could get a loan by declaring his father's corpse as security [with the stipulation] that the creditor could assume possession of the whole grave site of the debtor as well. [If the debtor failed



Less Rules, More Imagination!

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to repay his debt] when he died, he would have no grave in the burial place of his ancestors nor any other grave; and his descendants could not be buried either” (2.136). A party hired to recover a corpse from an unscrupulous moneylender is a new twist on the classic rescue scenario, and the dead returning from the grave to extract revenge on a spendthrift heir who lost the family burial plot to a pawn broker makes for unique walking dead adventure.

The one facet of death that crosses cultures, however, is the desire to avoid it. Even with priests capable of performing miraculous magic, life for the average citizen can be extremely short, especially when illness is concerned. While adventurers may have access to *remove disease*, the common folk are not so blessed. In fact, they might not even have doctors: “They do not use physicians; instead they carry their sick people out into the public square and allow people to approach the sick person and advise him about his illness. Some may themselves have suffered from the same illness that the sick person has, or have seen someone else who did” (1.197). Having the PCs encounter a pustule-covered wretch lying atop of cot in the town forum makes an interesting encounter. It reminds the players of how lucky their characters are compared to the common folk and also provides an opportunity for goodly-hearted characters like clerics or paladins to perform a good deed.

Magic and Religion

In the ancient world, the gods took a much more active interest in daily life and the methods used to appease them were mysterious and sometimes unsettling. Magic was a part of daily life and its practitioners produce amazing effects. *The Histories* is rife with historical accounts of these magical and religious practices, and any game master using it as a reference source will find untapped riches within its pages.

Some longtime players know the powers of the various spells by heart, making them difficult to surprise with magic. The best way to muddle the game waters for such players is to introduce color to the game world that could have more than one explanation: “...according to the Scythians and the Hellenes who inhabit Scythia, once each year every one of the Neurians turns into a wolf and, after a few days, changes back into himself again” (4.105). Jaded players encountering rumors of a similar people in your campaign world are faced with several possibilities to explain such a phenomenon. Are they a nation of lycanthropes, *polymorphing* sorcerers, or devout worshippers of a nature deity that rewards them with animal form? Or maybe a more mundane explanation, such as the donning of animal pelts for an annual ceremony, is the truth behind these rumors? With so many possibilities to choose from, seemingly magical powers again become a mystery.

Ecclesiastical law can be just as obtuse and Byzantine as secular regulations, and, in a fantasy world, the divine can easily supersede the mundane. Powerful rulers might find themselves bowing to the decrees of high priests, and even the lives of the lowliest slave can change dramatically once religion steps in: “On the shore there was...a sanctuary of Herakles to which anyone’s servant may flee for asylum, have himself branded with sacred marks, and devote himself to the service of the god. If he does this, no one is permitted to lay hands on him” (2.113). Including a holy site in the campaign world where servants and slaves can seek sanctuary from cruel masters provides both the game master

and players with fodder for backgrounds and adventure ideas. A PC cleric might be a former slave who is now devoted to the god of the sanctuary who freed him. The game master might wish to reintroduce a former slave or servant of the party – a mistreated torch-bearer perhaps – as a spell-wielding priest or divine warrior with a grudge against his former employers.

Temples also make great storehouses for treasure. Relics, religious tools, and holy texts can each bear adornments of jewels and precious metals, and where would Conan or Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser be without a temple or two to plunder? Unfortunately, many of these same holy sites also maintain guardian beasts and monsters. But in some fanes, both treasure and guardian are combined: “...they choose one crocodile to raise and feed, taming it completely, inserting pendants of glasslike jewels and gold in its ears and adorning it front feet with bangles...And when these animals die, they embalm them and bury them in sacred tombs” (2.69). While a serpent might be a more traditional swords & sorcery temple guardian, a bejeweled giant crocodile is a foe worthy of the Cimmerian, himself, and embalmed crocodiles in sacred tombs lead to thoughts of crocodilian mummies to challenge the party.

Warfare

Any campaign that runs long enough will eventually have to tackle the subject of warfare. Sometimes these massive battles will be in response to the PCs’ actions; other times they will be background events against which the play sessions are enacted. Regardless of the reasons for battle, they should be something more than just the clashing of armies. Herodotus provides us with many interesting accounts of warfare, and from land battles to sea skirmishes to prolonged sieges, there is much to be pilfered from them for the fantasy campaign.

Most readers are no doubt aware of the events that occurred at the battle of Thermopylae; indeed it is Herodotus himself who is responsible for much of what we know of that conflict. What might not be commonly known, however, is the reason why so few Spartans were available to hold the pass. Like many other aspects of life in the ancient world, warfare was affected by religion and obligations to the deities: “the Spartans resolved to help the Athenians, but it was impossible for them to do so at the moment, since they did not wish to break their law. For that was the ninth of the month, and on the ninth, they said, they could not march out to war, but must instead wait until the moon was full (6.106).”

Religious holidays and observances in your own campaign world could have similar repercussions on when conflicts could begin or who could participate in a battle. These restrictions will in turn provide the seeds for many exciting adventures and conundrums. Imagine a lonely watchtower guarding a minor pass leading to the PCs’ home kingdom. When an enemy launches an attack on the kingdom via that pass, the king’s standing army is under religious prohibition from fighting until a specific day. In dire straits, the king hires a band of less than pious adventurers to hold the pass until his army is free to take the field.

Druids or other nature priests are not the first class one thinks of when warfare is considered. According to *The Histories*, however, a valuable asset is being overlooked. On the night before the Egyptians and the Assyrians met in battle, the gods intervened on behalf of the Egyptians: “But after the enemy had arrived and night had fallen, an army of field mice swarmed through their

camp and chewed up their quivers, bowstrings, and even the handles of their shields, so that on the next day, the enemy found themselves deprived of their weapons and defenseless” (2.141). With their command of animals and vermin, such a miracle could easily be reproduced by nature priests of any ilk.

Utilizing unexpected resources is not the only way to win a battle. As the story of the Trojan Horse teaches us, thinking outside of the normal paradigm of war is another way to achieve victory. If you can prey upon the superstitions of your enemy in the process, so much the better: “He made 600 of the best Phocian men completely white with chalk...and had them attack the Thesalians at night...The Thessalian sentries were the first to see them, and they immediately panicked, supposing that they were seeing some strange portent. After the sentries, the troops themselves saw them and panicked as well” (8.27). This account can also be adopted as a cultural one. The blue woad-covered Picts of history are well-known, but your campaign world might have a race of chalk-covered barbarians who give a dark forest the reputation of being haunted.

In both fantasy literature and gaming, it is often assumed that the heroes are the “good guys,” fighting against the forces of evil without having to worry about sticky moral quandaries. While there’s nothing wrong with a simple black and white morality in role-playing games, sometimes muddling moral decisions makes for more interesting play. Imagine the trouble this response to being laid siege to might give a group of goodly-aligned PCs: “When they did revolt openly, each man set aside his mother

and one woman he selected from his household to prepare his food. These women were saved; all other women were brought together and strangled in order to prevent them from consuming the supply of food” (3.150). Will the PCs still proceed with a siege, knowing their action condemns hundreds or thousands of innocent women and girls to strangulation or will they be forced to rethink their strategy?

Women’s Roles

As the above account explicitly demonstrates, the attitude towards women in the ancient world was hardly an enlightened one. Women were second class citizens at best and chattel at worst. A few managed to rise above the prejudices of men to carve out their own places in the ancient world, either by assuming traditionally male roles as warriors or by cloaking themselves in feminine mysticism.

The role of the women warrior is a fantasy cliché, but it is possible to embrace this cliché without resorting to the old “chainmail bikini”-clad warrior princess trope. Some women assume a martial role without the need to bloody their own hands in battle, even if the men in their life do their best to stop them: “Pheretime came to Euelthon and asked for an army that would restore her [to power]. Euelthon offered her everything but an army, and while...she accepted his gifts...she would add that it would be even better if he would grant her the army she had requested. Euelthon finally sent her a golden spindle and distaff... [saying] that these were the sorts of gifts women should receive, not armies” (4.162).

Taking inspiration from this account, place a similar event in your own campaign world. A noblewoman, stripped of his lands and title, tries to assemble an army to take them back. When rebuffed in a similar manner as Pheretime, our noblewoman builds her own forces comprised of female warriors, Amazon fighters, and forward-thinking women from throughout the land. In response to their commander’s rebuff at the hands of a man, these forces take up the sign of the spindle and distaff (or similar domestic tools) as their standard. After proving themselves in battle after battle, male soldiers now quake in their boots at the sight of the spindle and distaff fluttering on the army’s banners.


One of the reasons that the Amazon remains a potent cliché in fantasy is that she represents a masculine fantasy: strong and competent, perhaps even dominant, while retaining a potent sexual allure. Artists such as Frazetta and Vallejo have based careers on this image, but what if not every fantasy Amazon is young and buxom? Consider this account from Herodotus: “Their marriage customs demand that no virgin ever gets married until she has slain a male enemy, and some actually grow old and die before they can marry because they are unable to fulfill this requirement” (4.117).


This passage provides the game master looking to turn the Amazon cliché on its ear an interesting way to do so. The next time the PCs wander in the lands held by the legendary women warriors, let them not encounter pinup-style warrior-maidens looking to capture men for breeding stock, but rather a band of elderly women determined to slay a man in battle so that they may at long last marry. After frustrating decades of ill fortune robbing them of the opportunity to kill a man in battle, they fight with a ferocity and tenacity that should have your masculine PCs running for their lives and looking at Amazons in a different light.



The assumption of masculine roles is not the only way women can gain and maintain temporal power in the campaign world. The feminine role in magic and mysticism is one that goes back to prehistory. Legends, myths, and historical accounts from around the world contain numerous sorceress, priestesses, witches, and wise women, all of whom maintain power by possessing powers not understood by men. It would be a loss not to include similar women in your own campaign world.

Herodotus, however, provides us with an example that mixes both the mystery of woman with the attributes of man: “Whenever they or their neighbors have been threatened by some calamity or other, their priestesses of Athena would grow a long beard, and this omen had occurred three times in the past” (1.175). The sudden appearance of a beard on the face of one of your campaign’s high priestesses is a unique way of conveying that tragedy and calamity will soon be visiting the mortal sphere, and is bound to be memorable to the players. Taken in another light, this event might provide an answer to the old debate over bearded or beardless dwarven women as well.

Hopefully this article has served to inspire the reader to read (or reread) *The Histories* with the intent to steal a few choice bits of color for his own use. As the screenwriter Aaron Sorkin once observed, “Good writers borrow from other writers. Great writers steal from them outright.” The same can be said for game masters, too. And with a pedigree going back two and a half millennia, Herodotus has proven he has ample wealth to be plundered by the criminally-minded referee. 




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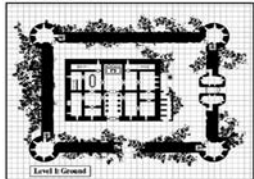
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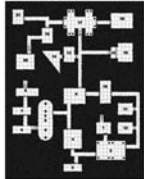
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FREE-FORM RULES AS A REFEREE'S TOOLBOX:

Simple Methods to make your campaign truly unique

by Al Krombach

One of the greatest strengths of a simple, free form fantasy game is its unending potential for use as a “Referee’s Toolbox”. I use *Swords & Wizardry* as the example, but the guidelines in this article are generally applicable. When you start to think of the rules presented (the classes, races, spells, equipment, monsters, magic items, etc) as simple tools awaiting your customization, you’ll quickly realize how feeble the limitations on the types of game experiences you can provide for your players really are. This article will take you through a few simple steps to customize your campaign setting; simple steps with great effect!

As it is presented in such a streamlined format, *Swords & Wizardry* allows the time-constrained referee to skip the often arduous process of creating new things “whole cloth”, and still

be able to provide players with an exciting, compelling, and unique game experience by simply “re-skinning” the contents of his toolbox! A few changes of name, description, and effect can go a surprisingly long way. Think of a box of unpainted miniatures. Imagine the differences you can create by using colors that defy expectations, thwart traditions, and demand new interpretations. What new paradigms would arise from simply swapping the knight’s zweihander with the wizard’s wand or the sahuagin’s trident?

Many fantasy role-playing campaigns are based on a pseudo-historical, pseudo-medieval, Western-European world influenced by magical and supernatural elements drawn from mythology or the works of fantasy and pulp authors. It is surprisingly simple to make just a few cosmetic changes to this traditional standard

to make your campaign stand out from the rest. For some campaigns you can take things even further, with games occurring in tumultuous elemental worlds of fire and ice, shadowy realms of undeath and restless gods, or primeval worlds populated by savages and dinosaurs. For the examples in this article, I'll use two sample "campaign worlds": "Emerald Skies": a world of airships and floating islands, and "Thundarria": a far-future post-apocalyptic world of lost science and bloodthirsty mutants.

Races and Classes

The first step in customizing your campaign is to consider the races and classes of your campaign setting. The *Swords & Wizardry* rules present the fairly common races of Elf, Dwarf, and Halfling. Even in campaigns where these traditional races are desired, one can use a couple of quick tweaks to ensure that there is always an element of mystery. For pseudo-medieval campaigns you can make very unobtrusive cosmetic changes that will keep the traditional values intact, but still give the campaign a more unique feel.


For instance, Elves could be blue-skinned and cold-blooded, with reptilian dispositions, needing to eat only once every other week or so. Dwarves could be elemental in nature, creatures made more of stone and earth than of flesh and blood, who crumble into the earth from which they sprang when they are killed. Halflings could be capricious and fey creatures of the Twilight Realms, alternating cruelty and kindness according to a pattern only they understand. Just a sentence or two of description can significantly alter the players' perceptions of a "standard" campaign setting, which can instantly wipe any preconceived notions or assumptions they may have of "how things are going to be" in your world, giving it a sense of mystery and wonder before character generation is even finished.

For settings deviating still further from the norm, the monster section is a great place to look for alternate races. Perhaps your setting features Humans, Hobgoblins, Lizardmen, Gnomes, and Doppelgangers, rather than the traditional range of races. You can quickly assign the class options of the "normal" races to these new ones: Doppelgangers could have the class options of Elves, Gnomes have the class options of Halflings, Hobgoblins have the class options of Dwarves, and so on.

Just as easily, classes can be tweaked just a bit to make them more unique. You could change the weapon restrictions of clerics: perhaps they can only use holy, rune-carved daggers and staves in your campaign. Perhaps holy symbols are tattooed on the face and palms, rather than worn like jewelry. Perhaps Turning affects elemental creatures, or even the human worshippers of rival deities, rather than undead. Magic-users may need to draw power from crystals for their spells, or may carry their spells carved into narwhal tusks rather than spell books. Tweaking the spell lists for these classes is another way to make them different. As with the races, one or two changes of this nature are often enough to give the campaign enough of a difference to make it unique. Let's look at the class and race options for our two sample campaign settings:

"Emerald Skies": Humans are uncommon in the setting – the primary races are Elves, Halflings, and Bugbears (known in the Emerald Skies setting as "Bairs"). As they are the default races,


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they can choose to be Fighting Men, Clerics, or Magic Users as desired. Clerics typically worship deities of elemental Air, and therefore favor ranged weapons such as bows and javelins. Magic Users selfishly guard the secrets of the creation and use of the great airships that ply the green skies between the massive floating islands of the setting. The few Humans that do make their way to the setting are special indeed, and can develop abilities in both fighting and magic use as do the Elves in more traditional settings.

“Thundarra”: Humans are the default race of Thundarra, and are pure-blooded. Mutant humans are represented by races such as orcs, goblins, and ogres. They, and even pure-bred humans, roll on a chart to randomly determine what color they are: yellow, purple, green, blue, red, white, etc. Fighting Men are the most common class, and Clerics are not a class option, the gods having long since deserted this world. Magic Users are known as “Psychic Warriors”: they use the hit dice, experience, and spell progression of standard Magic Users, but do not memorize spells or use components, and can wear armor and use weapons as do Fighting Men. They “know” one spell for each slot they can cast per day, gaining new ones as they gain levels, and can draw from a limited list of “psychic” type spells like charm person, levitate, suggestion, etc.

Spells

Spells are often overlooked as a way to give campaigns more individuality. Often, simply renaming the spells can completely

change the flavor of a campaign. For instance, let’s take a standard low level spellbook with *read magic*, *charm person*, *magic missile*, *levitation*, and *web*, and rename it two different ways. First, one for a Vancian, Dying Earth-style campaign: *Roderic’s Runic Reveal*, *Effulgent Compulsion of Yeu*, *the Searing Rays of Ferlizire*, *Gorgand’s Upwards Fall*, and the *Sticking Strands of the Hairless Prince*. Now the same book again for a dark, Lovecraft-inspired campaign: *Libramus Vocii*, *Dictum Maleferius*, *Pyrocleian Surge*, *The Pact of Aerothraxus*, and *Balii Arachneus Infernus*.

Alternately, you could keep the basic names and effects of the spells consistent, but modify exactly how they work or even look. To use our example spell book again, *Read Magic* could cause magic runes to speak aloud the words they represent, *charm person* could cause the recipient of the spell to take on the visage of the caster for the duration they are under the caster’s control, *magic missile* could be blasts of black and purple negative energy that leaves festering wounds, *levitation* could summon a weak air elemental that bodily lifts the caster into the air, and *web* could summon up humming strands of magnetic wire that entrap any armed or armored creature that passes within twenty feet.

“Emerald Skies”: All cleric spell titles are run through Google translate for Finnish, and all Magic User spells are loosely translated into Latin. At first, only the referee and the cleric, or the referee and the magic user, will know what is going on when a player declares what spell he or she is casting; the other players will only learn through experience the mysteries of these secretive classes.

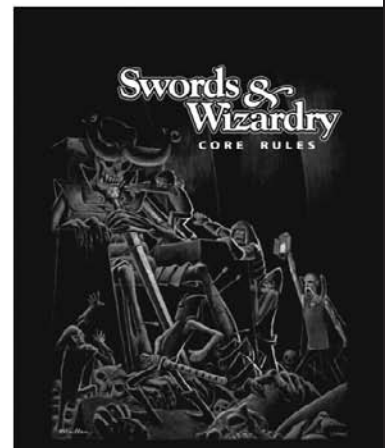
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“Thundarria”: The “psychic” abilities are not known by their spell names, but rather by the effects as described by the Psychic Warrior’s player. For instance, the player will not cast *charm person*, but declare, “you will obey my commands!” The player will not cast *levitate*, but rather declare that his target “Arise!” *Suggestion* could be “look into my eyes, and remember every thing I say!” When using their psychic abilities, their eyes glow with green fire and sometimes spiraling, mystical designs of energy flare from their hands.

Equipment

The arms and armor presented in *Swords & Wizardry* is fairly evocative of the default setting of the pseudo-medieval, western-European analogue. Making some simple changes to this equipment list is another quick way to change the tone of a campaign setting. While doing this, it’s important to keep in mind what purpose the equipment is serving in the default setting, and that your new equipment should fill the same roles despite the new “flavor”. Doing this helps you avoid complicated rules adjustments and focus on the fun stuff instead. For instance, there are low-damage light weapons accessible to most classes, and high-damage heavy weapons that only the Fighting Man class can use. This is an important part of the class-to-class balance, so try and make sure that your new or re-skinned weapons follow the same paradigm, or you may find yourself the victim of a trickle down affect that has you making rule change after rule change to accommodate your seemingly simple changes.

For instance, one common thing a lot of pulp-influenced referees try to change in their campaigns is the reliance on heavy armor. The obvious thing to do would be to ban heavy armor in your Pulp Sword & Sorcery or Pirates of the Main campaign, but then you’re stuck with low AC characters, and you sink into a quagmire of rules, adjustments, bonuses, and other counterintuitive means of giving characters the AC they need to survive. An alternate means of adjusting the standard armor tropes of your campaign setting (while maintaining the AC status-quo the whole game system is built around) is to simply take a standard list of armor like this:


- None – AC9
- Leather – AC7
- Chain Mail- AC5
- Plate Mail – AC3

And simply rename it to suit your campaign. Don’t worry about what medieval armor the Bone-and-Feather Shirt of your Savage Jungle adventurer would be analogous to; just put it where you want it in the AC range relative to what’s available in the setting. If the Bone-and-Feather Shirt is the toughest armor in the Savage Jungle, then it is AC3, the Snake-Skin Vest is AC 5, etc. If the Iron Skull-Face Belt is the toughest armor in your Thieves of Hyboria campaign, then the Iron Skull-Face Belt is AC3, the Chainmail Bikini is AC5, the elephant-hide loincloth is AC7, and so on. This method allows the referee to offer the full range of armor classes to the players without having to invent a single rule to compensate for low ACs!

Similarly, you can take a list of weapons common in *Swords & Wizardry* like this:

- Two-handed Sword – 1d10
- Broadsword – 2d4
- Battle-axe – 1d8
- Spear – 1d6
- Warhammer – 1d4+1
- Dagger – 1d4
- And fill those same “weapon roles” with weapons more appropriate to your setting. So your Savage Jungle campaign might include something like:
- Choaclak – 1d10 (a staff studded with sharp flakes of obsidian)
- Benoklikoa – 2d4 (a club with sharp flint edges)
- Hakeesh – 1d8 (a spear with a two-foot bone blade at each end)
- Mekklor – 1d6 (a club with a spiky kobold skull on one end)
- Bakeesh – 1d4+1 (a light, bone-tipped javelin)
- Pakh – 1d4 (a sharpened antelope horn used for ritual combat)

Sham's Grog 'n Blog



a rambling blog about D&D and other stuff

shamsgrog.blogspot.com

Simpler cosmetic changes can also be made, such as stating that magically-tempered glass is used instead of iron for weapons, bows are fashioned from the petrified ribs of long-dead sky-whales, morning stars are fashioned from the prickly burrs of Faerie vines, etc. Here are some arms and armor for the sample campaign settings:

“Emerald Skies”: Characters in this campaign can choose from different armors like the light, warm “flight leathers” (AC7), the thick, woolen coats of the Sky Marines (AC5), and the spiky, chitinous body-suits (AC3) made from the shells of the extinct, insectoid race of Keldine, the bodies of which may still be found on distant sky-isles. Common weaponry aboard the skyships includes the saber (1d8), hatchet (1d6), poniard (1d4+1), and fearsome blunderbuss (2d6). Cool items like personal hang-giders and helium-inflated lifeboats may be found at large markets.

“Thundarria”: Thundarrian armors range from the Furry Loincloth with Brass Belt (AC6), to the Leather Vest with Shoulder Guards (AC4), on up to the rare and priceless Combat Armor (AC2) of the lost Ancients. Weapons run the gamut from scrap metal knives (1d4), to crossbow-like weapons that hurl razor-sharp metal disks (1d6+1), to revolvers (2d4), to dazzling energy-swords (1d10). Special gear like canned foods and medi-kits are also available.

Monsters

Few elements of an RPG can set the tone of a game as thoroughly as the monsters used. Hordes of zombies and werewolves invoke the feel of late-night horror flicks, orc warbands led by foul wraiths evoke the heroic fantasy of Tolkien, black puddings, kuo-toa and ochre jellies call to mind the insanity-inducing underworlds of Lovecraft’s nightmarish set-pieces. A simple way to set the desired tone of your campaign is to give the monster section of your game-book a quick once-over, and select a group of fifteen or twenty “iconic” monsters. For instance, giant bats may haunt the night skies over the cities of your campaign world, while displacer beasts lurk in the misty moors, and hordes of drow ravage the wilderness just beyond civilized lands, ever searching for a weakness to exploit. These “night-themed” creatures work together thematically as a whole to give the setting a particular flavor that could otherwise take a long time to emerge in an “anything goes” setting.

Similar to the treatment given spells above, it is also quite easy to make a few simple changes to the traditional monsters to make them into something new and unknown. Changing the names of several monsters can be a fun way to change expectations. Perhaps the orcs, hobgoblins, and trolls of your campaign are called jyres, crawgins, and cragools, for instance. Telling the players a fearsome cragool rears up out of the swamp can be a bit more intimidating to experienced players than simply calling it a troll, since they’ll have little or no experience to draw from when confronting the creature. How long has it been since a party you ran neglected to set a troll carcass on fire, thereby robbing you of the fun of sending the regenerating arms of the creature against them? It’s unlikely they’ll take the same precautions with a dead cragool.

Appearance is another fast way to alter the monsters of your setting. Orcs can be wiry, eerily beautiful humanoids with wine-red skin and hypnotic black eyes (though still irredeemably

evil of course!). Hobgoblins may appear as normal humans in the daylight, but moonlight reveals their natural form – skeletal, rotting creatures of nightmare! Trolls could appear as tall beings with glinting, obsidian skin, ancient, knowing eyes, wide maws filled with gleaming boar-like tusks, and long blue hair that writhes as if alive. Simple changes like these require no mechanical aptitude with RPG rules, and can completely change the players’ perceptions of exactly what is trying to kill them.

A third simple means to defy expectations is to add (or take away) the iconic abilities of iconic creatures. Give trolls the poisonous scorpion tail of the wyvern. Turn Gelatinous Cubes into Acidic Clouds. Give giant frogs a mouthful of paralytic tongues like the tentacles of a carrion crawler. Again, this requires little time and effort, and the grunt work of designing the rules is already done; all you have to do is mix and match to your heart’s content (and your players’ dismay). If you have the time and the interest, combine all three tweaks to make entirely new creations: Cragools are regenerating trolls with glinting obsidian skin, etc, and the poisonous tails of wyverns. Simple and effective.

“Emerald Skies”: A common pest in this setting are the “Peshwyr”, a sort of reptilian version of the flying monkeys of Oz. They travel in locust-like swarms between the floating islands and pillage whatever they may. I adapt this monster from the Kobold, and all I have to change is the movement and the description:

Peshwyr

AC: 6/13

Hit Dice: 1d4hp

Attacks: 1 weapon (1d6)

Saving Throw: 18

Special: None

Move: 12 (fly)

Challenge Level / XP: A / 5XP

“Thundarria”: A terrible threat out in the radioactive swamps of Thundarria is the “Brain Terror”, a disgusting, pink, brain-like monstrosity with tentacles that dissolve the flesh of its victims. For this monster I simply renamed the Black Pudding, and divided its one attack for 3d8 damage into 3 attacks for 1d8 each, and replaced its dividing ability with immunity to mental attacks.

Brain Terror

AC: 6/13

Hit Dice: 10

Attacks: 3 tentacles (1d8)

Saving Throw: 5

Special: Acidic surface, immune to cold, immune to mental attacks

Move: 6

Challenge Level / XP: 11 / 1700XP

Enjoy changing it up!



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ROLLING ALONG: WHEELED MAGIC ITEMS

by Jim Bobb and Kimberly Nicholson

Square Wheel

When affixed to any vehicle (wagons, chariots, carts, etc) these 'wheels' will size to fit properly. Utterly useless on flat land or roads, square wheels allow the craft and pulling creatures to traverse uneven, broken terrain and sandy deserts as if they were on a flat, even road. Usable by: Wheeled craft only.

Wheel of Buoyancy

These rare wheels can be affixed to any wheeled vehicle — wagons, chariots, carts, etc. and will size to the craft. When faced with water over a depth of 3 ft, the craft and any creature pulling it will tread across the water as if it were solid ground. Usable by: Wheeled craft only.

Wheel of Fortunes

This wheel rests on a heavy bronze pedestal and has 20 colored wedges - 10 of white ivory and 10 of blackened iron. A character can spin the wheel but once in their lifetime, with the following permanent results (roll 1d20):

1. (Ivory) Gain 1d4 points to Prime Requisite.
2. (Iron) Lose 1d4 points to Prime Requisite (minimum score of 3).
3. (Ivory) Gain 5,000 gp.
4. (Iron) Lose all coin-based wealth.
5. (Ivory) Gain a Medium Wonderous Item.
6. (Iron) Lose least valuable magic item.
7. (Ivory) Gain 1d2 points to random ability score.
8. (Iron) Lose 1d2 points to random ability score.
9. (Ivory) Gain 1 Hit Dice of permanent hit points.
10. (Iron) Lose 1 Hit Dice of permanent hit points.
11. (Ivory) Healed of all damage.
12. (Iron) Struck blind and deaf (no saving throw).
13. (Ivory) Coins on person double in number.
14. (Iron) All carried wealth vanishes.
15. (Ivory) Gain 1d10 x 1,000 xp.
16. (Iron) Lose 1d10 x 1,000 xp.
17. (Ivory) Gains Giant Strength for 24 hours.
18. (Iron) Weakened (1/2 weight carried possible and damage halved) for 24 hours.

19. (Ivory) Gains 1 wish.

20. (Iron) Saving throw at -2 or die.

Usable by: All Classes.

Wheel of Teleportation

When affixed to any vehicle (wagons, chariots, carts, etc) this wheel will size to fit properly. Once per week, the wheel can be used to teleport to a destination it has been to before. Usable by: Wheeled craft only.

Wheel of Disguise

When mounted onto a wheeled vehicle (wagons, chariots, carts, etc), this wheel will size to fit properly and makes it appear to look like any other type of wheeled vehicle of the same general size, including changing the appearance of the pulling creature(s). Usable by: Wheeled craft only.


Spinning Wheel

When commanded to do so, this spinning wheel can make nearly any plant-based clothing material from common straw - twill, silk, cotton, denim and the like in quantities enough to produce 5 man-sized outfits 1 day out of every seven. If the user is 9th level or greater, the spinning wheel will spin up to 1,000 gold pieces from straw, but only 1 out of every 30 days. Usable by: Any Class.

Wheel of the North

Vehicles (wagons, chariots, carts, etc) mounted with one of these cold-feeling wheels will gain no extraordinary benefits from them in warm climates. When moving through snow and across ice, the vehicle and pulling creature(s) suffers no movement penalties or ill-effects for cold temperatures. Usable by: Wheeled craft only.

Pinwheel of Luck

This seemingly-looking, colorful child's toy can be of great benefit, or cause great woe, to the user. Each day 1d3 is rolled, this is the number of times per day it can be activated. If grasped and made to spin by waving it around childishly, the player rolls 1d6-3. The result (which can be negative or zero) is applied to all of the character's die rolls for the next turn. Usable by: Any Class. 

WEIRD WEATHER AND OTHER UNEXPLAINABLE PHENOMENA

Contributing authors: Joe Hartleb, John Larrey, and Jason Sholtis

Every once in a while, the referee needs to use an event that's truly out of the ordinary. It isn't always easy to come up with bizarre events on the fly, so this article offers a set of idea-seeds to help out. The weirdness is presented without the clutter of "ordinary" events - when you need one of these events, you'll know it. These happenings (as you'll quickly see when you read them) will *freak out players*. Which is sometimes exactly what you need.

Ill Omens(roll 1d6)

When the players need a serious warning...

- 1. Clouds of Accusation:** Storm clouds gather themselves into a colossal hand that points accusingly at the adventures before quickly dissipating into nothingness.
- 2. The Moon Cracks:** A low rumble of indeterminate origin precedes the appearance of a large, slowly widening fissure on the visible surface of the full moon. Magically enhanced observation reveals the surface of the moon teeming with monsters who pour from the crack.
- 3. The Fog of Pursuit:** A strange bank of fog moves inexorably towards the player characters until it envelopes them in its unpleasantly moist embrace (obscuring vision somewhat, but no ill effects otherwise) until successfully evaded or somehow destroyed.



- 4. Cirrus the Watchdog:** Clouds form the shape of giant watch dog, warning against grave dangers ahead with echoing barks. When impetuous players forge onward despite this display, Cirrus whimpers mournfully before becoming dissolute.
- 5. Celestial Cyclopes:** Rising up from a thunderhead, the shapes of two gigantic Cyclopes descend from the heavens and make straight for the adventurers, slamming their immaterial war hammers onto them before disappearing into the ether. Characters are stunned, but unharmed.
- 6. Black Hole of Smoke:** From the heavens a dark ring descends upon the adventurers, enveloping them in a lightless bank of smoke, hampering visibility as a *darkness* spell and requiring them to make a saving throw or suffer uncontrollable coughing fits for 1d6 turns at which time the cloud dissipates, echoing with sinister laughter.

Tidings of Good fortune (roll 1d6)

When things are going splendidly, and the players deserve kudos of a spectacular nature. Or when you want to create false confidence...

- 1. Gale of Prophetic Mutterings:** The howls of powerful winds seem to contain murmuring voices speaking many languages, some recognizable, others eerily incomprehensible. Attentive listening yields a message that bolsters players' aims.
- 2. Morning of 1000 Rainbows:** When the sun rises it reveals a spectacular vista: countless rainbows arc across the sky, crossing over one another in many-hued splendor.
- 3. Golden Sun:** For a moment it appears the sun itself drips golden coins into the sky below.
- 4. Warm Front:** Beautiful weather suddenly rolls in and the adventurers begin to hear plants and animals conversing. There is a 50% chance of an adorable woodland creature (squirrel, rabbit, titmouse, mole, etc.) permanently befriending one of the player characters.
- 5. Chorus of the Four Winds:** Howling winds coalesce into a rousing fanfare of trumpet blasts, announcing the adventuring party's arrival at their destination.
- 6. Approbation of the Sky Gods:** Leaving behind a trail of tumultuous flame, a titanic figure, resplendent in glistening golden mail, careens across the sky in a mighty

dragon-drawn chariot. The being nods his colossal head in respect before disappearing over the horizon.

Vengeance from Beyond (roll 1d12)

Gods don't like it when their temples are sacked.

- 1. Razor Hail:** A punishing volley of small knife-like hailstones assails the party, who accumulate 1hp of damage per turn until they affect a shelter of some kind.
- 2. Malevolent Fog:** A hideous green fog rolls in, plants wilt and animals flee as it blankets the area. Due to the fog's toxic nature those who fail their saving throw suffer a temporary (1d4-1 days) loss of 1 point of constitution.
- 3. Tornado of Unbidden Transportation:** Players find their characters sucked skyward and roughly deposited in a random location 1d4-1 miles away (or they could wake up in Oz, if the referee has taken leave of his senses).
- 4. Morphine Drip:** A light rain or drizzle acts as a contact poison, drugging characters who fail their saving throw. Effected characters pass out for 1d4+2 turns (or hours or days, dependent upon referee disposition).
- 5. Earth Creep:** Rock and soil (and everything attached) shift position abruptly, changing the direction of roads and trails, transplanting familiar landmarks, and creating conditions that drastically increase the chances of becoming lost in the wild.
- 6. Abysmal Zone:** Characters descending into a trench, ravine, or chasm of some kind find that the area magically blocks out light (including *light* spells) and rapidly increases in air pressure and gravity, as if it were deep underwater. Weight load increases if characters attempt to move through the zone. Adventurers must make a Strength check (-1 every twenty feet) each turn to avoid collapsing and being trapped under their own weight until rescued or they suffocate.
- 7. Ultra Violent Light:** For a terrible instant the sun turns violet! It's altered rays temporarily excite the latent homicidal instincts of those exposed. Henchmen and hirelings attack their employers and adventurers must make saving throws to avoid engaging one another in mortal combat. After 1d6 rounds the sun pulses momentarily with azure radiation, restoring the effected to normal.
- 8. Muddy Waters:** Adventurers will surely sing the blues when an unexpected sinkhole of reeking mire opens up before them. Continuing through the muck pit will allow the unnatural slough to seep into the characters' systems with to horrifying effect: after an hour any non-living object touched will turn to mud, requiring a *remove curse* spell to negate.
- 9. Slick Sleet:** As the adventurers surmount a challenging peak (or some other precarious situation) coal black clouds send down sheets of befouled half-frozen rain. The melting liquid is twice as slippery as oil, requiring characters to save or lose their footing and making normal travel impossible until some means of escape is effected.
- 10. Crashing Downpour of Penalty:** A horrendous storm impedes travel (movement decreased by 75%). Characters caught in

the tempest discover to their horror that the strange rain causes their hoarded precious metals to dissolve through their sacks, irretrievably disappearing into the ground.

- 11. Hurricane of Death:** A black cloud shaped like a skull manifests in the sky and emits crackling bolts of lightning from its eyes (as a *wand of lightning bolts*) down upon the adventurers.
- 12. Sandstorm of Annihilation:** It is visible from miles away, a dark wall of wind-borne sand moving toward the adventurers at unbelievable speed and howling with preternatural curses of vengeance in an unmistakable language. Unless some extremely sturdy form of shelter can be accessed, all men, creatures, and property will be utterly destroyed by the maelstrom.

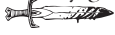
Favor of the Gods (roll 1d8)

Blessings from the cosmos for those who take up arms and spellbooks in the name of justice.

- 1. Cleansing Rain:** A well-timed downpour on a cloudless day acts as a *cure disease* spell on all exposed.
- 2. Dew of Healing:** Leaves and grasses glisten with exceptionally heavy dew the morning after some pitched melee. Curious characters notice a faint glow emanating from the sweet smelling fluid. An hour spent licking the underbrush (or otherwise collecting the dew) yields 1d6+1 hit points in magical healing. The dew evaporates as soon as the sun has fully risen.
- 3. Magnetic Zone:** A large dome shaped area, shimmering with multi-colored radiance like a polar aurora, bestows a +1 magic bonus lasting 1d6+3 days to any weapon brought within. After one such use (per adventurer) the dome crackles then vanishes, never to be seen again.
- 4. Rainbow Connection:** A rainbow acts as a beacon for lost characters, allowing them to return to familiar territory if they guide themselves by its path. The rainbow terminates in an enchanted cauldron that restores, mends, and recharges (1d10+4 charges) magic items, weapons, or armor placed within.
- 5. Fog Transfusion:** A pleasant smelling fog descends from above that cures diseases, neutralizes poisons, and lifts curses on any who breathe in its fumes.
- 6. Bracing Blizzard:** The mountain gods reward the faithful (or those who otherwise serve their aims) with an invigorating snow squall that imbues fortitude as a *strength* spell when melted on characters' skin.
- 7. Liquid Crystal Display:** Caught in a sparkling mist, a shining accumulation slowly develops on the adventures' clothing and armor. Exposure for 10 minutes creates a crystallized layer of magic on the garments that enhances armor class by a factor of 1d4. After 25 total points of damage to the character, this protection is lost.
- 8. Lunar Lucre:** Enchanted rays from a lunar eclipse cause all the gold in the area to brightly glow until the moon is once again fully visible. Fiscally-minded players who perform an audit of their purses find whatever personal wealth they carry to have mysteriously increased by 10%.

Miscellaneous Wonders and Perils (roll 1d8)

Reminders of the fundamentally baffling nature of magic in fantasy worlds.

- 1. Razzle Dazzle:** Hundreds of harmless glowing phosphorus jellyfish-like creatures dance in the air nearby, putting on a hypnotic lightshow. Save or be enthralled for 1d4 hours, unless roused by unaffected cohorts.
- 2. A New River:** The sound of huge volumes of gushing water foreshadows the sudden advent of a river in the throes of its creation, carving a path through previously arid terrain. The gods must be crazy.
- 3. Time Sharing:** Vague images in the clouds transform into vivid visions from the characters' past, present, and future. Only a saving throw can prevent observers from becoming enraptured for 1d6 hours. The spurious nature of the visions temporarily impede the thought processes, reducing the observers' Intelligence score by 1d2 points for the rest of the day.
- 4. Strobe Weather:** In a bewildering cascade, characters experience the following in rapid succession: momentary snow squalls, driving rain, blast-furnace heat from a raging sun, stultifying humidity, instantly freezing sleet, choking fog, impenetrable haze, deafening thunder, punishing winds, and lightning of every variety, repeating over and again until the referee has satisfied his mean streak and/or the players are suitably impressed with their own fragility. There are no game effects save for a sharp up-tick in PC paranoia.
- 5. Freaky Lightning:** A nearby lightning strike charges the ground and the characters with eldritch electricity, causing a "Freaky Friday" effect. Players pass their character sheets clockwise and play their original character (and class) in the body of the character they've received. The effect wears off after 24 confusion-fraught hours.
- 6. Somniferous Snowfall:** A light snow begins to fall, gradually increasing in intensity. The characters become more and more fatigued as time goes by until they fall into a state of hibernation (1d6 months) if they fail to find or make shelter within an hour. Hibernating characters lose 10% of their body weight and 2 points of Strength. With sufficient food, these effects can be reversed in 1d3 days. To the characters' surprise, upon recovery they do not require sleep for the next four weeks.
- 7. Frost Hollow:** A secluded frost-covered area in an otherwise temperate zone hinders travel by 50%. Metal Items are too cold to hold in bare hands, fire-based spells work only 50% of the time, doing 50% normal damage.
- 8. Sudden Glacial Intrusion:** Presaged by days of increasingly loud sounds of tearing earth and wrenching stone and accompanied by a precipitous drop in temperature, a vast wall of ice appears on the horizon. With a speed that could only be supernatural, the mile-high glacier tears a great swath in the wilderness, bisecting the route planned by the adventurers. Characters with exceptional vision can barely make out the uncanny shapes of giant beings atop the ice floe, and can only guess as to their connection to the phenomena. 

REVIEW: THE DUNGEON ALPHABET

An A-to-Z Reference for Classic Dungeon Design

Written by Michael Curtis

Introduction by David "Zeb" Cook

Cover art by Erol Otus

Interior art by Jeff Easley, Jim Holloway, Doug Kovacs, William McAusland, Brad McDevitt, Jesse Mohn, Peter Mullen, Erol Otus, Stefan Poag, Jim Roslof, Chad Sergesketter, Chuck Whelon, Mike Wilson

Published by Goodman Games

48 page hardcover, color cover, black and white interior, \$19.99

Reviewed by Allan T. Grohe Jr. (grodog)

The *Dungeon Alphabet* is Michael Curtis' compendium of dungeon design inspirations and advice. Michael originally wrote the content during the first week of November in 2008, for his excellent blog, "The Society of Torch, Pole and Rope" at <http://poleandrope.blogspot.com/>, and

an expanded version of the original blog posts was published in *Knockspell* #1 (Spring 2009).

The content in *The Dungeon Alphabet* is presented as an A-to-Z listing of dungeon "ingredients" that the game master can use for inspiration: A is for Altars, D is for Doors, L is for Levers, T is for traps, etc. Michael has expanded the content for each entry in this edition of *The Dungeon Alphabet* by adding tables, with each offering a series of random exemplars, such as #4 for Inscriptions:

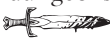
Helpful directions written in a common tongue. These directions could warn of an upcoming trap, point the way to the nearest exit, or provide clues to a hidden treasure. There is a 20% chance that these directions are actually intended to lure adventurers into danger, rather than help.

The tables are a nice touch, and push *The Dungeon Alphabet* book out of the category of a game master's advice product, and move it more-solidly into the game master's *aid* category: I can easily imagine using the tables while improvising during a game


session, for example, as well as while sitting down and keying the level. The tables are not as exhaustive as those in Scot Hoover's *Classic Dungeon Designer's Notebook #4: Old School Encounters Reference* or as in AEG's *Toolbox* books, but the A-to-Z entries are broader in scope and more useful as inspirational references (vs. for just lifting a specific entry for use in a game).

The artwork in *The Dungeon Alphabet* ranges in quality from average to excellent pieces. While art from many TSR artists grace its pages, the contemporary old school artists also hold their own nicely. My favorite pieces of art include Doug Kovacs' two-scene pieces across pages 25-26 and 40-41 (they also appear to have been drawn in 1982 and 1983!), Peter Mullen's various dungeon cut-away views, and Erol Otus' A is for Altar piece, and his front cover as well. Several of the pieces feature recurring characters in vignettes similar in spirit to Dave Sutherland's "Appendix A" illustrations from the *Dungeon Masters Guide* (most notably Jim Roslof's pieces, which feature the same extended party of PCs throughout the book). Peter Bradley laid out *The Dungeon Alphabet*, and other than a few minor errors (some table rows lost their alternate row shadings, and at least one piece of artwork was published with resizing comments on the page),

the layout works nicely. Several pieces of artwork were reused in the book, generally in facing pages (mirror image borders, or a section excerpted from a larger picture, for example), but their use as accents was generally well-done. I would have liked to read a short bio on Michael (which could have plugged his blog as well, which oddly wasn't mentioned in the book at all), as well as from each of the artists. A credits listing by page for each artist would also have been appreciated — I didn't recognize all of the artists' styles. I found a few minor editing mistakes as well, but none of these minor nits detract from the fact that *The Dungeon Alphabet* is a very-well put together book.

The Dungeon Alphabet is also one of the first old school blogosphere products to appear in retail hobby shops, and at the \$9.99 price it's a steal — the original price was going to be \$20, but through some unknown dark arts, Goodman was able to cut the price in half and to pass that savings along to the readers! I was already willing to pay \$20 for the book (which would put it in the same ballpark as a hardcover children's book), but reducing the price makes *The Dungeon Alphabet* a "must buy" if you're at all interested in mega-dungeons and their sometime surreal and esoteric contents. 

Weapon Generator

Use the die results to create a map with each result providing a landmark, obstacle, or destination on the map. The Treasure is always located in Hex 1 ("X" marks the spot.) Distances between results can be determined any way you choose. If the d10 roll is 1-5, fill Hex 6, if the result is 6-10 fill Hex 7. One of them will be blank or you can use the same result for both. Determine which direction is north using the d6 result and the numbered blue dots. 

J.R. Cone 2009

Die	d4	d6	d8	d10	d12	d20
	Nature	Type	Stats	To Hit Bonus	Damage Bonus	Effect
1	Cursed (d6, d8, d10-6)	Missile	d10, d12	-3	Extra Attack	Vorpal
2	Normal (d6 only)	Polearm	d12	-2	Auto Win Initiative	Vampiric
3	Blessed (d6, d8, d10)	Edged	d10	-1	Reroll 1s & 2s	Casts Spell X3 day
4	Enchanted (All)	Crushing	d20	+1	Reroll 1s	Casts Spell X2 day
5		Spear	d10	+1	+1 damage	Casts Spell X1 day
6		Sword	d12, d20	+1	+2 damage	Teleports Wielder
7			d10, d12	+2	+3 damage	Fire
8			d10, d12, d20	+2	+4 damage	Ice
9				+2	+5 damage	Emits Light
10				+3	+1 die size	Emits Warning
11					2 dice, keep high	Vs. Species
12					Double Dice	Vs. Element
13						Vs. Undead
14						Vs. Dragons
15						
16						No Fumbles
17						Returns to Hand
18						Communicates
19						Empathic
20						Intelligent

New Magic Items

by James Bobb

Useful Items

Dwarven Plate Armor: Well-built plate armor only sized for a dwarf (even if magical). Weighs 50% greater than Plate Armor, but negates 1 point of damage from each hit in combat. Roll 1d8-4 for armor's magical bonus (minimum of 0).

Elemental Armor: These armors are all tied to a type of element and grant an ability to their wearer and protect from certain types of damage. 1 in 6 chance of each type:

- **Fiery Armor:** +1 armor that is surrounded by flames. These flames deal 1d6 fire damage to melee attackers that successfully strike the wearer. In addition to this, the armor grants its wearer the same protection as a **Resist Cold** spell.
- **Frost Armor:** +1 armor that is covered with icy spikes. These spikes deal 1d6 cold damage to melee attackers that successfully strike the wearer. In addition to this, the armor grants its wearer the same protection as a **Resist Fire** spell.
- **Stone Armor:** +1 armor that has a rock-like texture. This armor reduces damage from melee and missile attacks by 1 point per die of damage. In addition to this, the armor grants its wearer the ability to form a **Passwall** spell-like effect once per day.
- **Storm Armor:** +1 armor that is electrically charged. This charge deals 1d6 lightning damage to melee attackers that successfully strike the wearer. In addition to this, the armor grants its wearer the same protection as a **Protection from Lightning** spell.
- **Watery Armor:** +1 armor that always appears wet. This armor allows the wearer to function underwater as easily as on land. In addition to this, the armor grants its wearer the ability to breathe underwater.



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- **Wind Armor:** +1 armor that is surrounded by constant breezes. These winds penalize missile attacks against the wearer by -2. In addition to this, the armor grants its wearer the ability to form a whirlwind as a Djinn once each day.

Amulet of Recovery: The wearer of this amulet heals damage at twice the normal rate while resting. In addition, once per week, the wearer of this amulet will automatically stabilize if brought to below 0 hit points. Usable by: All Classes.

Armbands of Healing: The wearer gains a +2 bonus to the result of any healing spells he casts. The wearer can cast **cure light wounds** thrice per day as well. Usable by: All Classes

Cursed Items

Boots of Stomping: These boots seem to be elven boots, until the wearer tries to move quietly. At that point, every step he takes thereafter sounds as loud as an ogre's tromp.


Bracers of Defenselessness: These bracers appear to be Bracers of Defense AC 2[17]. When the wearer is struck in combat, they reveal their curse - AC drops to 9[10] regardless of protections worn.



Dancing Boots: These boots function as boots of speed, until the wearer is in combat. Suddenly at that point he will begin to dance a mad jig for 1d4+1 rounds, unable to fight.

Gauntlets of Gracefulness: These gauntlets seem to be Gauntlets of Dexterity. When placed on the hands, the wearer's Dexterity drops to 3 and he has a 50% chance of dropping whatever he is holding each round while in combat.

Gem of Flaws: This gem appears to be a highly valuable gemstone of a random type. When placed with other gems and jewelry, after 1 hour it turns all of them to worthless dust.

Jewelry of Attacks: While worn, this necklace or ring doubles the chance for random encounters. 

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<http://ancientvaults.wordpress.com/>

SWORD+1 Blog

<http://www.swordplusone.blogspot.com>
Home to "Ruins & Ronin" (White Box S&W Japanese-style) and "Boarding Action" (supplemental material for X-Plorers RPG).

Beyond the Black Gate

<http://beyondtheblackgate.blogspot.com/>

Geoffrey McKinney's Carcosa

<http://carcosa-geoffrey.blogspot.com/>
For OD&D: Supplement V: CARCOSA and the low-level module *Fungoid Gardens of the Bone Sorcerer* both available at the URL above.

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About the Authors

"On the Long Island, followers of the madman and prophet, **Michael Curtis**, gather on moonlit nights to read from the holy text. This codex is composed of the many articles he has written for Knockspell and Fight On!, passages from his blog, "The Society of Torch, Pole and Rope", and excerpts from his books, *Stonehell Dungeon: Down Night-Haunted Halls* and *The Dungeon Alphabet*. In times of danger, his temples become infested with guinea pigs that portend calamity." (13.11)

Allan Grohe is known online as grodog, where he publishes a website featuring Greyhawk D&D content, as well as his non-gaming writing (poetry, personal essays, and literary scholarship), and the usual fan ephemera. Allan co-founded Black Blade Publishing in 2009 with Jon Hershberger. He lives in Wichita, Kansas, with his wonderful wife Heather, their games-playing boys Ethan and Henry, and their cats Percy and Jasper.

Jon Hershberger began playing D&D in the late 1970's and received a shiny new set of AD&D hardbacks for his birthday in 1980. He began DMing in earnest about a year later, launching his first campaign with twelve of his closest high school friends sitting around his parent's dining room table. In 2006, Jon worked with Goodman Games to convert one of their Dungeon Crawl Classics (DCC) from D&D 3.5 to AD&D and a special Gen Con release of The Iron Crypt of the Heretics was produced for fans of the early editions. The following year, Jon teamed up with

Goodman author Harley Stroh as they converted two other DCCs to AD&D, wrote a bridging adventure, and released Goodman's 2007 Gen Con Special Release Saga of the Witch Queen. In early 2009, Jon and long-time Greyhawk fan Allan "Grodog" Grohe teamed up to form a new publishing company, Black Blade Publishing, to release adventures and other gaming products for First Edition AD&D and the other early editions of D&D as well as their modern simulacra such as OSRIC, Labyrinth Lord, and Swords & Wizardry.

Scot Hoover is best known on the Internet as "Kellri." He has published several free netbooks for OSRIC/1E, which are absolutely state-of-the-art. Knockspell Magazine highly recommends that every referee take a look at them!

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