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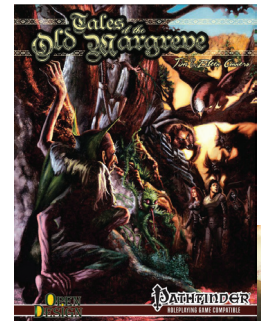
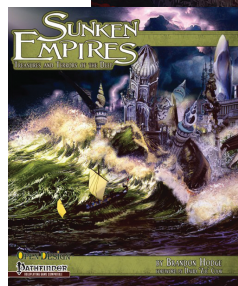
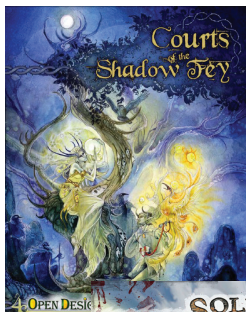
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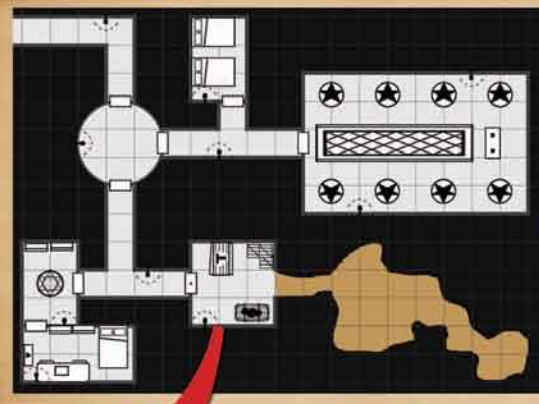
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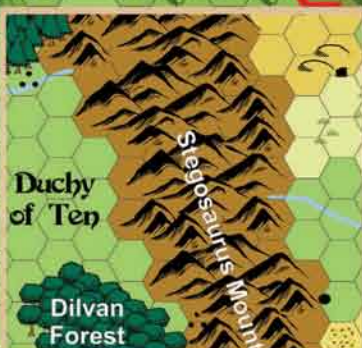


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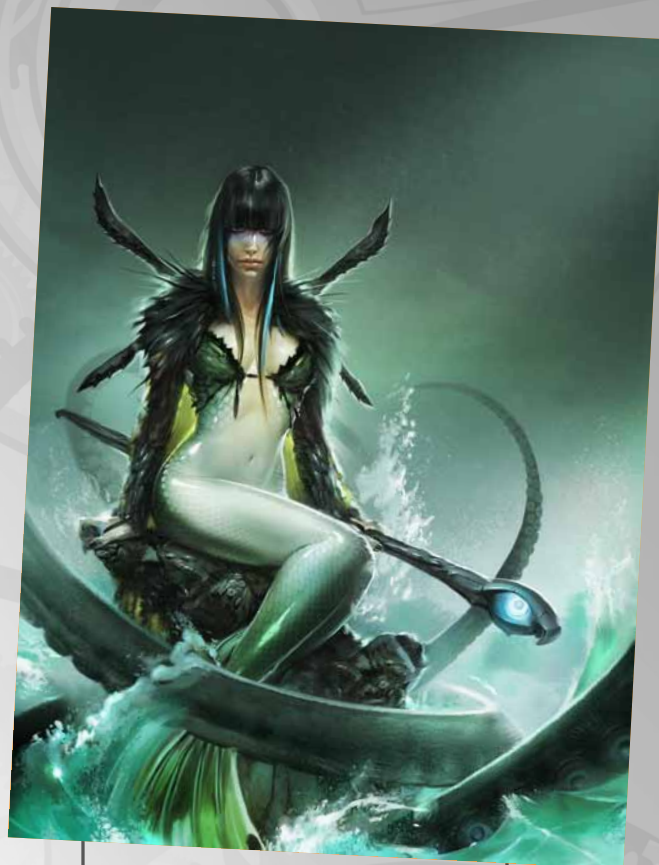
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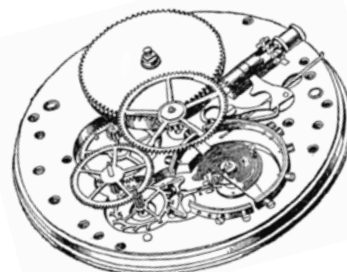
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### On the Cover

Kieran Yanner's "Siren" graces the cover this issue, sleek and frosty in her own way.



Editorial:

# A World Lit Only by Magic

For almost five years now, I've shared some pieces of my home campaign in articles and adventures. Now the time has come to do more than share a city here or a region there.

With your support, Open Design will launch the world of Midgard as a standalone campaign setting, from its northern wastes to the central city of Zobeck, and beyond to Sikkim and the haunted western wastelands—the seven regions of a world once known only to the friends at my gaming table will be yours to run with.

I'm mildly terrified at this prospect. It seems my little baby is growing up awfully fast.

As most of you surely know, anyone's home campaign is a source of joy, pride, amusement, and long hours of development and daydreaming. It's a place that's intensely private, while a creator spins campaign arcs and sets the stage for a tomb raid; and also clearly public, because without players, a setting is just an empty stage, bereft of the heroes meant to command the ramparts.

And the baby has grown, slowly but surely. I've revealed a few sections at a time, uncovering the world

adventure by adventure, in the same organic way that earlier campaign settings were designed and grown. Gygax published many Greyhawk adventures before the Gazetteer. Greenwood wrote dozens of magazine articles before the Realms showed up in a grey box. But now it's time to make a big jump.

Fortunately I have two trusted collaborators in this effort: Jeff Grubb and Brandon Hodge are designing significant portions of the setting with me. Two additional freelancers or patrons may sign on as regional designers as well. In the tradition of all our recent projects, this world's design will be guided and critiqued by patrons as we go. I'd be delighted if you joined us in choosing the first region we'll visit, funding its design, and working with us and the Open Design community to bring it to life.

Check the back cover for a glimpse of where it's starting, and visit the Kobold website for a stirring video that shows where we've been, and where we're headed. And please join me in building Open Design's first and best campaign setting.

Wolfgang Baur

Kobold in Chief



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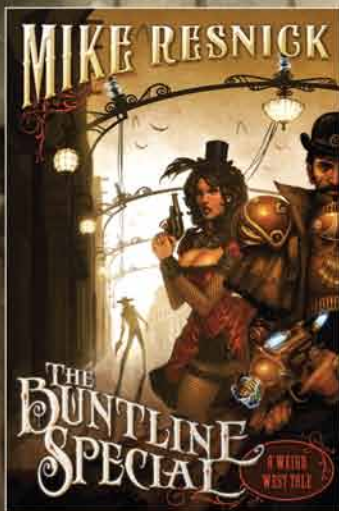
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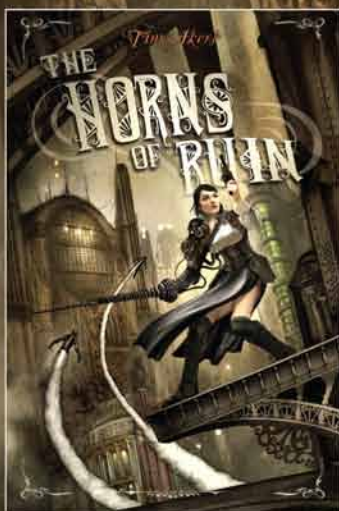
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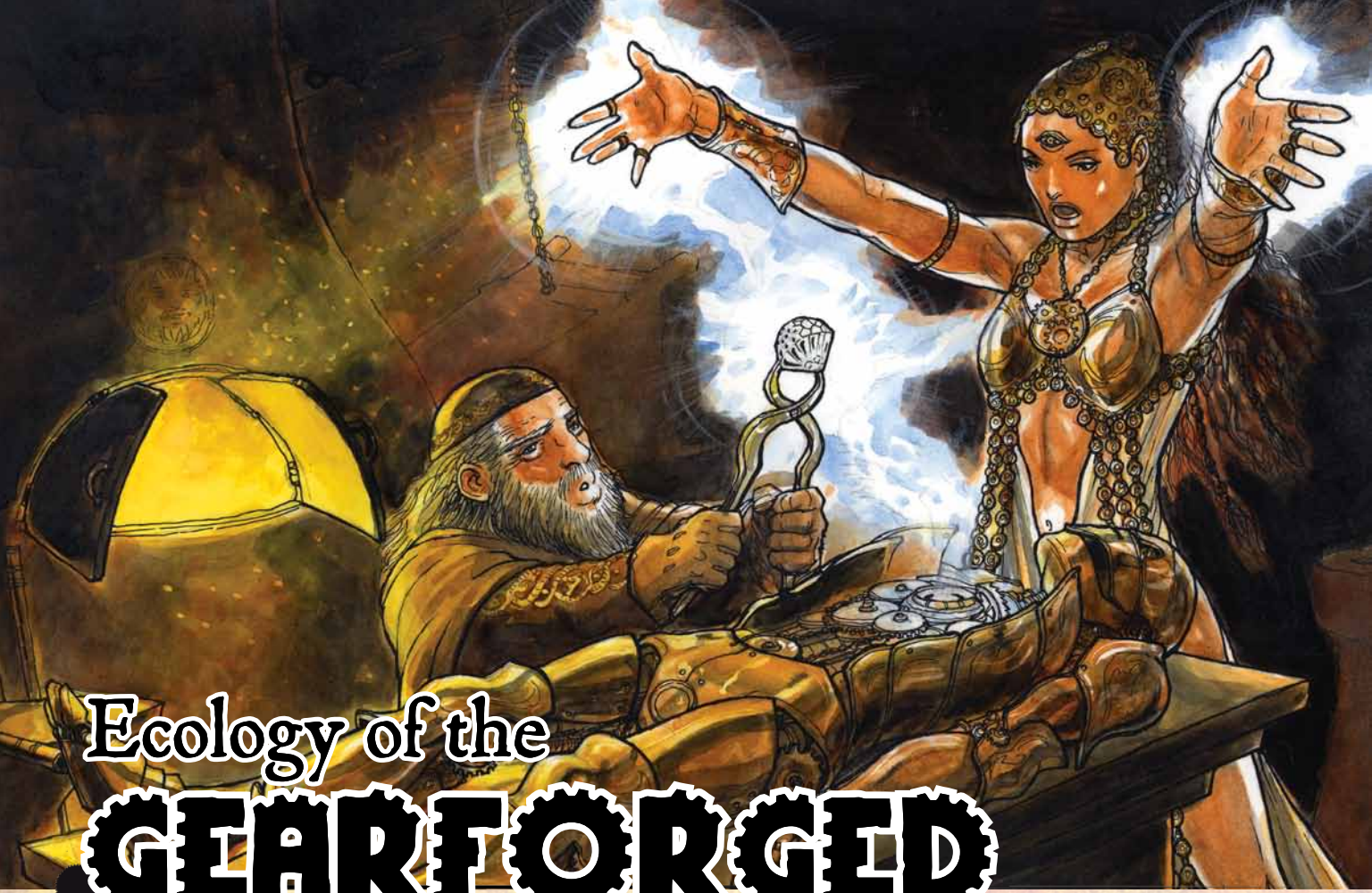
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## Ecology of the

# GEARFORGED

### *Bellows, Steam, and Tireless Iron*

By Henry Brooks

Art by Mark Smylie

The first gearforged were little more than a desperate ploy to hold off the knights and heavy cavalry of House Stross, the heavy lancers of the Order of the Undying Sun, during the Revolt that gave Zobeck freedom. Rebellious dwarves and humans worked for long hours in the Zobeck guildhalls, closely engaged with rogue wizards from the Collegium. They forged life from lifeless metal—with borrowed blood and souls.

Deep in their ticking hearts, the gearforged are much more than war machines. They have souls. Their minds grow with time. And they remember. Oh, they remember everything, and their curse is that they never forget until they strip their gears and die.

### Creation and a Brief History

The history of the gearforged is a history of desperation. During the Great Revolt of the City of Zobeck against the rulership of House Stross, the citizens seized the watch barracks with the help of many of the watch captains, and the mages of the Collegium enchanted soldiers of the citadel. It was enough to give the rebels hope.

But what they could not turn to their side was the private army of the Stross. These were hard and cruel soldiers, used to rulership and certain of victory. The heavy knights of the Order of the Undying Sun, a company of crossbow-dwarves from Melano, cruel shadow fey mercenaries, and a swath of peasant levies came to Zobeck—all were under the command of the wizard Lord Kranos Stross.

Against this were arrayed the dwarves, the wands of the Collegium, and the many citizens of Zobeck—but no heavy horse, no trained pikes, no heavy infantry to speak of. They had the help of dwarves from the Gear District, and others from the Ironcrag Cantons, but they needed tough troops. Their solution was a mad wizard's apprentice, Black Marcenzo. This renegade decided he could create bodies of iron and animate them with a little push from the Clockwork Mages: a group of dwarf smiths, a clever silversmith named Abelard, and the blessings of the priestesses of Rava.

The only trouble was finding enough animating spirits for so many constructs. The spirits required came from the people of the city: elderly volunteers, angry and idealistic young men, criminals seeking a

relieve, and a few seeking a new life in a whole body. Their bodies died, but their souls lived on—and, more importantly, fought on—seeking to change the course of the revolt.

## The New Iron Guard

Overnight, more than 100 of the bravest hearts of the citizens of Free Zobeck became ticking hearts with everwound springs and minds of brass and magic. The nobles of House Stross were caught completely off guard.

These shining heavy infantry were an unshakeable core for the people's army. The iron bodies could withstand the shock of knights in full battle dress, their new-made pikes held true, and the overwhelming numbers of the free people of Zobeck pulled down many a landed knight from the saddle into the mud, never to rise again. The Battle of Oros Bridge was won, the Stross were hung from the walls of their ancestral castle at Rosehaven, and the city declared its charter as one of a free people, governed by their own council and a mayor. The gearforged were the fist that struck off the shackles of a decadent house.

At their making, the gearforged were thought to be a special cadre, a one-time creation never to be repeated. But this was not so. As the other veterans of the war aged and died, the gearforged few were honored each year, and they remembered the past—and they lived on. Within 20 years, others came forward to undergo the Ritual of Remaking. The cost was high, for no gearforged have ever truly had children of their own: their love is purely a thing of the mind, and their senses are much simplified, pure sight and sound shorn of taste, smell, or touch.

## Making a Gearforged

The most important moment for many gearforged is the moment of their remaking when they leave their flesh body behind and enter their new, clockwork body of brass and steel. One can spend a fortune on these new bodies or simply scrape together something that will work—though only just—if they are aging or deathly

ill. The details don't matter terribly as the iron body can often be rebuilt.

### RITUAL OF SOULFORGING PF

**School** necromancy; **Effective Level** 5th  
**Skill Check** Craft (clockwork) DC 20, 4 successes; Knowledge (arcana) DC 20, 2 successes (Priests of Rava may substitute Knowledge (religion))

**Components** M, S, SC, V

[indent] **Material Components**—a complete mechanical body of actuators, springs, gears, and engraved gemstones (minimum cost 10,000 gp)

[indent] **Secondary Casters**—up to four additional casters are optional; each who makes a successful Knowledge (arcana) or Craft (clockwork) check (DC 20) adds +1 to the primary caster's check

**Casting Time** 60 min.

**Range** touch

**Target** one humanoid creature

**Duration** permanent

**Saving Throw** Will negates **Spell**

**Resistance** yes

You and the subject chant and act in unison to trigger the soul's migration into the waiting deathless, tireless body of iron and brass.

If the incantation succeeds, the subject's old body dies and the new clockwork body is animated with life. The subject is effectively reincarnated as a gearforged PC and continues adventuring in that form.

**Backlash:** Ghost or wraith. The unbound spirit attacks the primary caster three times as a ghost. A cleric turning the unbound soul can prevent the attacks during the soul transfer process.

**Failure:** After the first failed check, the subject's soul is removed from his or her body but not yet constrained in the new one. The soul attacks you as a wraith. If a second skill check fails, the incantation fails completely: you and any other casters suffer 3d8 damage (Fort DC 15 + your Int modifier) and the subject dies. If the save is successful, the subject is either imprisoned in a gem (as per *magic jar*, if a 500 gp or better gem was prepared in advance) or released to the world as a ghost or wraith.

### RITUAL OF SOULFORGING 4

**Level 15 Component Cost** Focus (10,000 gp forged body)

**Category** Creation **Market Price** 40,000 gp  
**Time** 60 min. **Key Skill** Arcana or Religion  
**Duration** Permanent

Spirit magic and arcane power move all the memories—the mind and the soul—from a body of an intelligent humanoid into a carefully prepared clockwork body of metal casings, springs, actuators, and jewels. The results depend on an Arcana check; the component cost is expended regardless.

The discarded body immediately begins to decay and must be buried. It cannot be raised from the dead or resurrected unless and until the newly made gearforged dies.

**Required Focus:** The gearforged body requires a minimum of 10,000 gp to construct, and the skill of blacksmiths, clockworkers, armorers, tanners, jewelers, and mage adepts familiar with the manufacture of golems, as well as a minimum of two priests of Rava, the gear goddess.

Arcana check <sup>1</sup>	Result
15 or lower	No transfer occurs. Character must make 10 death saves. If three fail, the character dies.
16–25	Transfer goes poorly. Character becomes a gearforged but suffers –2 Dex penalty and gains no gearforged stat bonuses. There is some memory loss (lose one trained skill).
26–35	Transfer occurs and character removes prior race stat bonuses and applies gearforged stat bonuses.
36–45	Transfer is smooth and PC applies gearforged stat bonuses without dropping prior race stat bonuses.
46 or higher	Transfer is flawless: all ability scores, memories, and elements of prior life are retained, and PC immediately gains gearforged stat bonuses and training in Endurance. Any prior Racial abilities are lost.

(1) Priests and priestesses of Rava may substitute Religion for this check.

## Anatomy and Appearance

Without exception, the citizen-gearforged of Zobeck are shaped as humanoids, and the vast majority of those are one of two styles: roughly human-sized, with articulated joints, hands, feet, and magical eyes; or a rather stouter version made by the dwarves, sometimes called *geardwarves*. These dwarflike gearforged are more common in the Cantons of the Ironcrag than in the city itself but are accepted as receptacles for dwarf souls.

A very few gearforged are built to even smaller sizes, believed to be intended for kobold souls, but these are subject to frequent failure and even the extinction of the souls they carry. And that is, of course, the core fact of all gearforged: they were once something else, and now they are somewhat standardized with cylinders, springs, and articulated joints of varying quality.

The gearforged are thinking creatures, such as any of the city's nimblewight watchmen, members of the Spyglass Guild, and a few soldiers. Each is made of iron, brass, and steel and distinctive in appearance as any other people are distinctive in their hair and eyes, but the basic framework is always humanoid. This is what separates them from the devices, which are merely servants responsive to orders and capable of little more than a limited amount of memorization. Gearforged have free will

Their mechanisms are more than mechanical, of course, because all gearforged are machines with a soul. Their arms and legs depend on actuators powered by everwound springs. Their minds depend on memory gears, transverse cognition gearing, and the marvel of a soul gem connected directly to a maze of silver and mithral steam, spark, and magical conduits. These elements are all held in a shell of iron, brass, and steel, and the bulk of the things is quite remarkable. A large and heavily armored gearforged can weigh 400 lb, as its armor is often built in.

But let us examine the range of gearforged anatomy in all its variants.

**Everwound Springs:** These magical springs provide energy over long

periods, effectively acting as the power sources for most of the gearforged limbs and fingers. A broken everwound spring results in the loss of function in that digit or limb.

**Soul Gems:** The mind of a gearforged creature is as sharp as that of any flesh-and-blood soul, but it is more portable. The animating, vital principle of a gearforged—its will, its personality, and its mind—are retained in one or (for an extra 8,000gp) two soul gems. These are the elements that retain an individual's spirit or soul, and their destruction means the death of that gearforged.

**Memory Gears:** Separate from these gems, however, are the memory gears. These are more delicate constructions: scroll-like ribbons pierced with thousands of pin-sized holes, and others wound about with tiny enchantments of great complexity. Here lives the memory of a gearforged for all the days after its creation; most older gearforged have many such gears, and the magic to create them seems to require 1 new gear/2 levels attained or every 10 years of life. Installing one requires 1 day's work and 2,000gp. Memory gears can be taken from a dead gearforged and read by others. This is a lengthy process and viewed with some alarm by most gearforged; it is akin to peering into the most private details of a life although without the associated emotion.

Installing an existing, used memory gear in a new gearforged requires a new *Ritual of Soulforging* and at least 1 week for the recipient to remember and understand the results. The process is dangerous, requiring an Endurance check (DC 10 + level of dead gearforged) for 4e or Fortitude save (DC 10 + 1/2 level of dead gearforged + Cha modifier of dead gearforged) for Pathfinder RPG is required to succeed.

## Freaks of Metal

PF

Some gearforged look quite normal but for their metallic skin. Others are considerably more freakish. Here are some of the body modifications that have been created successfully.

**The Four-Armed:** A few gearforged

opt for extra arms in their construction. Since their minds are not terribly adept at using these extra arms, they confer no advantage unless the gearforged takes the Multi-Attack feat.

**Clawed Hands and Crusher Boots:** Some gearforged opt for heavy, steel-shod feet that are cleated or sometimes even clawed. These confer no special advantage unless the gearforged takes the Natural Attack feat, increasing the damage die by one category.

**Fire Launcher:** Dragonborn who become gearforged seem able to have a breath weapon similar to their original racial ability. The character can breathe fire, lightning, or acid for 2d8 damage 1/day by forgoing the gearforged racial ability.

**Knee Spikes:** These enormous spikes make it easier to pierce a foe with a deadly knee jab. They are equivalent to off-hand attacks with a short sword and cannot be disarmed.

**Safe Canister:** These interior compartments hold up to 2 lb. of material—often coins or jewels—and can only be opened by the gearforged itself (or a difficult check).

**Wand Capacitors:** Arcane gearforged can build their wands into their arms, making them effectively impossible to disarm. No more than two wands may be integrated into a gearforged body in this way.

## Gearforged PC Race

4

*Once human, they are thinking creatures made of iron, brass, and steel.*

### GEARFORGED RACIAL TRAITS

**Average Height** 5' 6"–6' 6"

**Average Weight** 250–400 lb.

**Ability Scores** +2 Strength, +2 Wisdom

**Size** Medium

**Speed** 6 squares

**Vision** Normal

**Languages** Common, and choice of Draconic or Dwarven

**Skill Bonuses** +2 Intimidate, +2 Thievery

**Clockwork Construct** As a clockwork construct you have the following traits:

- Other characters may substitute a Thievery check in place of a Healing check when attempting first aid on you.
- Rather than sleep, you must rewind

your springs, repair your gears, and oil and clean your parts. This daily maintenance requires 4 uninterrupted hours of work, during which time you are fully aware of your surroundings. You can operate without performing this maintenance, but each day without such a repair period applies a cumulative -2 penalty on all attack and damage rolls, saving throws, and skill checks. In addition, you lose one healing surge for each repair period missed. One 4-hr. repair period eliminates all accumulated penalties.

- You don't need to eat, drink, or breathe, but you are not immune to any combat effect.

**Clockwork Resilience** You can use clockwork resilience as an encounter power.

**Construct** You have the construct keyword, so you are considered a construct for effects that relate to that keyword. You are affected by sleep, fatigue, and enchantments

**Poison Resistance** You have resist poison 5 + 1/2 your level.

**Resist Infection** You gain a +5 racial bonus to saving throws against disease.

#### CLOCKWORK RESILIENCE

*Harm normally done to a living creature is rendered ineffective against your spinning gears and whirling cogs.*

#### Encounter

#### Free Action

#### Personal

**Effect** Make a saving throw against one ongoing effect with a +2 racial bonus to the roll.

Play a gearforged if you want to...

- Oppose greed and corruption.
- Play a nonliving clockwork hero.
- Be an icon of Zobeck.

### Religion: Machine Cults and the Saints of Rava

The gearforged all worship Rava, the Gear Goddess and patron of the city of Zobeck. She is their creator: the goddess who gave the secret of transposing souls to the crazed zealots of the Revolt who were willing to try anything to avoid defeat. The praise of Rava and the faith of her gearforged have been unshakeable ever since.

They are among the chief servants of the Clockwork Oracle, as well, and consider its words

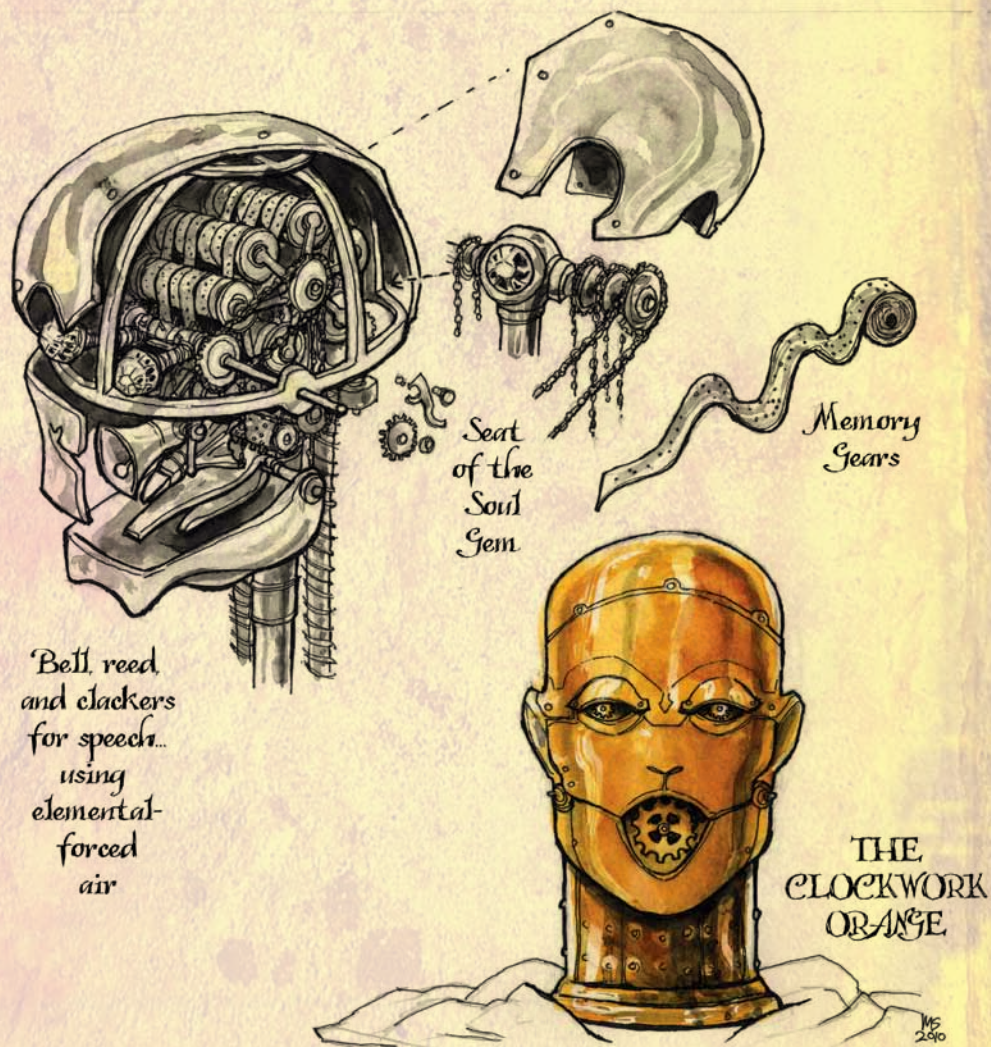
holy commands to her creations (see *KOBOLD QUARTERLY* #6). The gearforged feel close ties bind them still to their time of creation, and indeed, many yet live among them that remember the first rush of iron might, the first sense that age might never touch them and their memories never fail. The gearforged are profoundly grateful for their creation, as one might expect.

**The Saints:** The most fanatical of her gearforged followers—and some are truly mad with devotion—are called the Saints. They are generally implanted with a third hand and a third eye—said to be Rava's Hand and Rava's Eyes in the world. And indeed, sometimes the goddess does seem to see through the eye and react, writing instructions to her saints or prophesizing based on those distant eyes at the Clockwork Oracle. In some sense, the Saints are her distant and distributed minds and hands.

**The Machine Cults:** A few of the gearforged speak a whistling, clicking language among themselves that is incomprehensible to non-gearforged and certainly unpronounceable even under the effect of *tongues* or similar magic. These speakers call this "the Machine Speech" and use it to exclude flesh-and-blood humans from their company. They claim that the Clockwork Oracle speaks in this form as well and that their speech is faster and purer than any language of mortal races.

#### Other Gods of the Gearforged:

Rava is not, however, their only goddess—far from it. Many of the dwarf gearforged also honor the gods of their former lives: Wotan the Rune-Giver and Veylund the Smith. Many of the once-human gearforged are inclined toward Perun the Thunderer, in his aspects of war and bravery; as well as toward Anu-Akma, in his guardian aspect; and sometimes even



Arachne and Techne, the southern goddesses of fate and smithwork.

Despite their saints and machine language, most gearforged are not deeply devout, and in general, the gearforged are not prone to excesses of religious devotion. Indeed, their faith is often a reaction to their second bodies; most feel some unease about their soul-shifting, and several faiths believe that their very existence is an abomination similar to the creation of undead. The priests of the Sun God, in particular, and those of Lada the Healing Goddess, seem to think little good can come of creating more gearforged.

## Status and Society

Yet the gearforged live on, and their numbers grow as the living faithful of Rava increasingly see the transformation into a gearforged as a form of bodily pilgrimage and a growing nearness to the Gear Goddess herself. While gearforged do not reproduce in any normal way, their numbers grow, and

their longevity means that they have become, slowly, a larger proportion of the citizenry than anyone might have expected 80 years ago.

The gearforged for many years argued over their status and their acknowledgment as citizens. The veterans of the Revolt were naturally acknowledged as citizens at once. Other clockworkers have claimed that the gearforged are servants, more akin to familiars than people. The most strident claim that an animated body is always property and not a person at all. The topic is a delicate one among the gearforged, for their sense of ownership of their bodies is fraught with the difficulties of repair and the alien sense that what they are is neither flesh nor golem.

**Daily Life:** Despite their mechanical form, gearforged require both rest and food although their forms are rather different than simple sleep and bread. Instead, gearforged spend about 4 hours each night tending to maintenance and grooming of their more complex

mechanisms: testing memory gears and performing basic cleaning routines of the more complex parts.

Their "food" is likewise exotic: walnut oil to lubricate small gears, specialized powdered coal as fuel for smaller actuators, silken threads of copper and gold, and particular forms of brass polish, waterproofing waxes, and solder used to maintain their bodies against the damp, salt, and corrosion that are the inevitable inheritance of all mechanical systems.

## Magic and Equipment

PF

With limited vocal abilities and constrained gestures, gearforged are often poor wizards, but they respect the power of magic in any form, arcane or divine. They are also more accustomed than most to thinking in terms of tools, engineering, and equipment when solving problems. The gearforged make several items that are typical of their race.

### Locked Shields and Weapons:

Weapons and shields can be attached to a gearforged by threaded chain, by buckles and straps, and by metal clips and bolts. In all cases, these measures are equivalent to a locked weapon gauntlet (see *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook*).

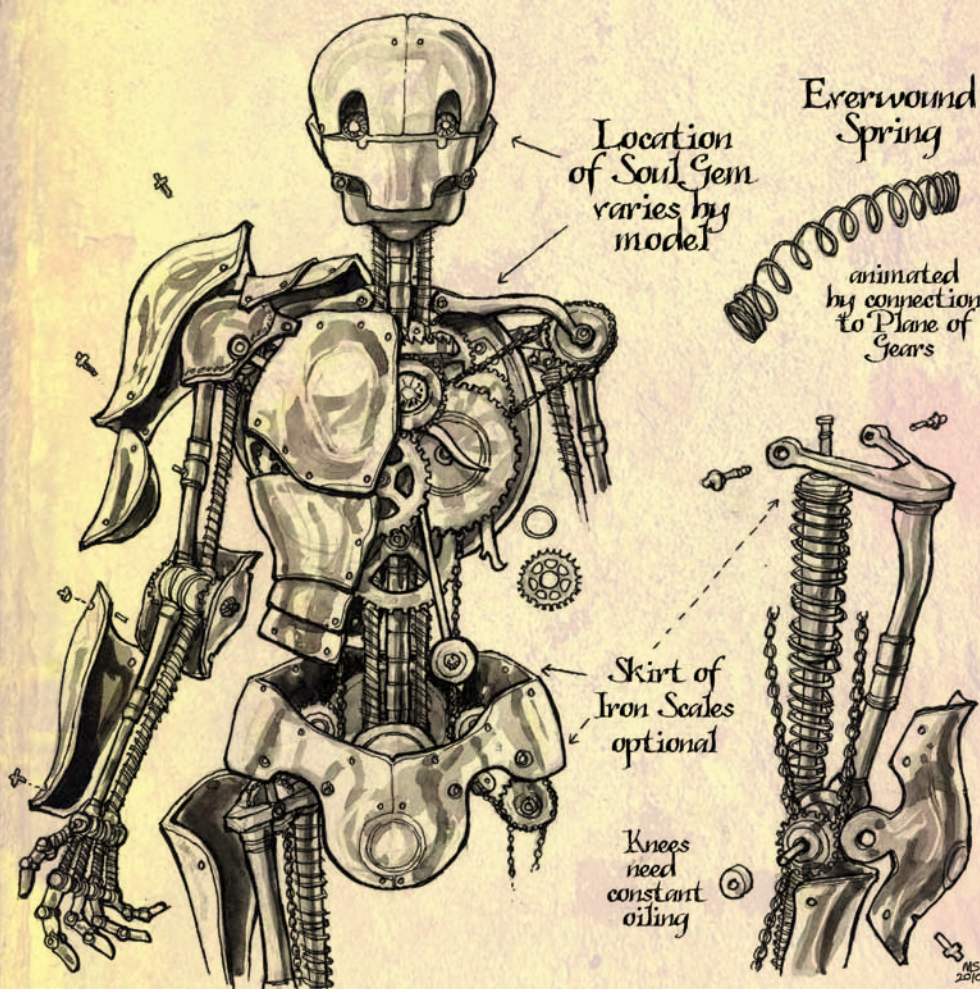
**Headlamps:** Some gearforged attach glowsticks behind a movable cover on their foreheads to create a useful lamp.

**Mule Harness:** Working gearforged often have attachment points to pull a cart or wagon as a mule might.

**Tent Capes:** A gearforged does not sleep, but it does sometimes rest, and at these times, it needs a relatively dry environment to effect repairs on its more delicate mechanisms. Tent capes are large enough to house four medium-size creatures in comfort with the gearforged as a sort of tentpole at the center if needed.

## Rust vs. Gearforged

Gearforged are extremely unhappy in the presence of a rust monster or a *rusting grasp* spell and suffer the usual damage as ferrous creatures. If a gearforged is knocked to 0 hp by either of these attack forms, it is



immediately slain and cannot be raised without constructing a new body and conducting a new *Ritual of Soulforging* to meld the body and mind. *Mending* or *make whole* are not sufficient when the metal body of a gearforged has been entirely rusted away.

## Society of the Gearforged

The gearforged are quite strange in their chosen society; they gather among themselves frequently to discuss the old days (a fact that annoys the younger gearforged and that pleases elf loremasters). This is a practice they call “redundancy and distribution,” meaning simply the sharing of knowledge, rather than opinions. Many such gatherings also call for additional knowledge through three methods: adventure, experiment, and study. All three of these branches of knowledge are held to be noble endeavors by the gearforged, as is the fourth branch of their learning.

Their fourth branch is more commonly called martial prowess, but all gearforged know at least a little of the fighting arts. Though they may be scholars or experimentalists among their own kind, they were made for war, and combat is counted an honorable profession among the gearforged.

**Silent Councils of the Old Masters:** The gearforged also gather to share Machine Speech or memory gears from time to time, especially the eldest among them. These are the Council of the Anvil in Zobeck, the Secret Brotherhood (see *Halls of the Mountain King*), and similar councils in all other cities where the gearforged are numerous, such as the Free City of Melano and the sultanate’s clockwork centers of Methony and Quresh.

**Gearforged Memory:** Once human, now mechanical and undying, the gearforged tend to be radicals in their youth and more conservative with age. Certainly it takes a radical to shed his or her body for a mechanical one—and certainly over time they grow reactionary and unable to adapt to a world shifting around them. Some priests believe that the inevitable death of their mortal friends and loved ones

drives them into a certain stiffnecked conservatism over time.

At the same time, the gearforged are keenly aware of history and its dangers. They guard against the creeping return of aristocracy and against the decay and corruption of diabolic cults. They remember how things were. And they do not forgive easily what they remember of the slaughter in the streets long ago.

Since that time, more join the gearforged every year. Many are wealthy merchants at the end of life, others are soldiers seeking a new edge, and a few are criminals compelled to serve the city as the price of their crimes.

## Gearforged Racial Traits PF

- **Medium:** As Medium creatures, gearforged have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size. Gearforged stand 5-1/2 to 6-1/2 ft. tall and weigh 250 to 320 lb.
- Gearforged base land speed is 30 ft.
- **Clockwork Construct Traits:** As constructs, gearforged possess no Constitution scores and are immune to disease, poison, magical sleep effects, enchantment effects, paralysis, and effects that require a Fortitude save (unless those effects can also affect objects). They cannot become fatigued or exhausted. Gearforged do not need to eat, sleep, or breathe. As living creatures, though, they do not have any other immunities common to constructs.
- To the contrary, some gearforged are built rather more vulnerable to some attacks, and resist others. These gearforged—called “fireproofed” among their own kind—have vulnerability to either electricity, cold, or water attacks; resist 10 fire; and a +1 natural armor bonus.
- Gearforged have a –2 racial penalty to all Fly, Ride, and Swim checks since their weight and clumsiness make movement difficult.
- Gearforged gain a +2 racial bonus on all Craft (clockwork), Intimidate, and Knowledge (history) checks. Gearforged intimately understand how their own race works and can apply that knowledge elsewhere. Most living creatures find gearforged a little unsettling.

**Healing and Repair:** Gearforged cannot heal damage on their own. Cure spells heal gearforged for the minimum amount, and the psionic repair damage power works normally. The *mending*

## Limitations of Gears

Some gearforged have been corrupted by wraiths, devils, and spirits able to bend metal in ways they cannot corrupt flesh. Others have sought to create more in their likeness, to split or duplicate their memory gears, or to build even larger and stronger bodies. The experiments in duplication have failed utterly; souls cannot be so split without harm to the mind. The creation of larger bodies has been problematic; while some former trolls and giants can control larger bodies, human-sized souls have more difficulty with them, much less with larger arms, claws, and the proper motion and balance of oversized bodies.

Over time, the list of things not possible has grown; the gearforged cannot long master wheels, tentacles bring strange madness and no gearforged yet has mastered powered, winged flight. Their souls limit them.

spell heals a gearforged for 1 damage while the *make whole* spell heals 2d8 damage +1 per CL (maximum +10).

Rather than sleep, gearforged must rewind their springs, repair gears, and oil and clean their parts each day for a 4-hour period to ensure normal functioning. They are fully aware during this period, but any interruption in their routine during these 4 hours requires them to start again from the beginning.

Gearforged can function a number of days equal to their level without performing this maintenance, but each day without such a repair period applies a cumulative –2 penalty on all attack and damage rolls, saving throws, and skill checks. If a gearforged neglects this repair period a number of days equal to its character level, it becomes immobile and helpless until repaired by someone else. One 4-hour repair period eliminates all accumulated penalties.

**Automatic Language:** Common.  
**Bonus Languages:** Draconic and Dwarven.

Ω

# MIDGARD

CAMPAIGN SETTING

## Odalisques and Assassins

*Courtesans of Zobeck*

By **Stefen Styrsky**  
Art by **Aaron Miller**

*"Everything that reminds me of her goes through me like a spear."*

– John Keats

**T**hough famous, the courtesans of Zobeck are not as unique as the city's residents might believe. Patrons of the more exclusive taverns and brothels the world over—not to mention courts, kings, and their harems—insist on women a cut above the common harlot. Those who tell stories, compose poetry, and engage in witty conversation, as well as dance, sing and play instruments command great sums wherever the wealthy and powerful gather.

It takes an intelligent, resourceful woman to navigate the paths of power without being consumed by them. Courtesans, odalisques, concubines—no matter their name—develop skills that allow them to survive and prosper. These skills also help them excel in areas outside the brothel and tavern hall. Many courtesans find themselves serving as ambassadors, spys, diplomats, and even assassins.

### Harem Assassins of the Mharoti Empire

The Draconic and Elemental Sultan of the Mharoti Empire maintains a harem unmatched in size or quality outside distant Cathay. Not just a pleasure





house, the seraglio recruits and trains the empire's finest female assassins.

In a slender, golden tower adjoining the palace, the sultan's recruits undergo severe instruction and deprivation to forge them into merciless and efficient killers as well as refined companions. Each dedicates herself to the emperor and one of the four Elemental Lords, the faceless, semi-draconic deities of Mharoti: oceanic Seggotan, whirlwind Azuran, stony Khespotan, or fiery Baal. The women emerge from the training halls with a coldness that belies the beauty and inviting warmth of their bodies.

These women serve as tools of statecraft and central control, often lordlings in their own right as their words gain weight by their proximity to the imperial presence. Rival warlords, disobedient generals, enemy leaders, all attract a visit from a harem-assassin.

Never knowing if any woman, from the humble to the high-born, might have secretly come to murder them often drives men to paranoia. Most famously, General Abbuyad, convinced his wife was an assassin dispatched long ago to keep an eye on him, strangled the woman as the first move in a coup against the emperor.

While skilled at music, games and storytelling, Mharoti courtesans do not always prize intellect, though ruthlessness, memory, and cunning rank highly among all candidates and graduates. The empire considers mental pursuits the realm of men, but many clever, dead men have underestimated a lady schooled in the ways of the Mharoti court. The Sultan counts on it.

## Courtesans of Zobeck

The honored tradition of the Red Houses in Zobeck establishes this trade city as a center of courtesan activity. (See *KQ* # 7 and 9.) Zobeck's mercantile heritage makes it possible to fulfill almost every desire of a wealthy citizen. Though repugnant to many humans, an unofficial Red House staffed by kobolds and humans operates at the edge of the kobold

ghetto, where favors—both intellectual and physical—are exchanged for such exorbitant sums.

Zobeck also houses at least two strange automatic courtesans—gearforged who ply their trade chiefly among Rava's followers. Rumors abound of a Machine Mistress—a gearforged indistinguishable from a living woman—who believes her trade is the key to finding her one true love.

Most courtesans in Zobeck revere or at least pay respects to Lada, the Golden Goddess. A secret group of courtesans worship Marena, the Red Goddess, and cater to her debauched, sadistic flock or entertain visitors from the White City of the ghouls. The courtesans of Zobeck have gained a celebrity and legend much greater than their numbers might indicate.

## Scholar-Courtesans of Seven Cities

The dilettantes of the Seven Cities prefer courtesans who can rival them intellectually. For them, physical beauty is not enough (but certainly something to treasure and celebrate in its own right). Courtesans of the Seven Cities train to engage men in games of strategy and philosophical discussions. Often these women are scholars and artists in their own right, composing highly regarded poetry, drama, and prose.

The renowned itinerant philosopher Brutho of Ibar based an entire book discussing the nature of truth, beauty, and the soul on conversations with a courtesan from Remulus.

For all their artistic talents, the courtesans of the Seven Cities are no less mercantile than others and command high fees. Only the wealthiest nobles and merchants can afford a true scholar-courtesan. Unlike the Red Houses in Zobeck or the assassins of the Mharoti harem, Seven Cities courtesans do not come from an organized tradition. Most are self-made or brought up under the tutelage of an older, more experienced woman, often an aunt or in-law.

## Adventure Seeds

Word gets out a high-ranking personage from the White City will soon visit a courtesan (a follower of the Red Goddess) in Zobeck who specializes in debauched and necromantic arts. An interested party such as the church of the Sun God Khors, some drow nobles, or even an undead-fighting paladin approaches the PCs to ambush and slay the ghoulish guest.

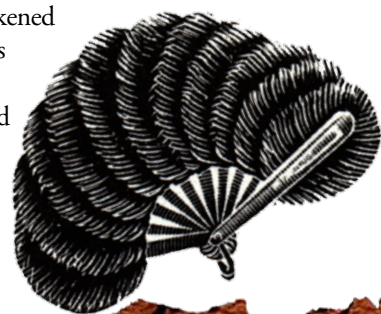
Rather than murdering her lover, a Mharoti odalisque-assassin instead eloped with him. The PCs must either return her to the court or protect the woman and her paramour until they can escape the empire.

For reasons nefarious, an Arbonesse spy intends to employ a very potent *elixir of love* on the Sikkim ambassador visiting Zobeck. The PCs must locate the Arbonesse visitor and neutralize this spy.

## Tempresses of the River King

As insular and elitist as the fey court from which they hail, the courtesans of the River King almost never dispense their charms to outsiders. Most Arbonesse courtesans encountered in the wider world come as ambassadors and spies, using their physical wiles and enchantments to serve a wider purpose.

These men and women defy common images of courtesans. They train in subtle persuasion but also usually master the rapier or dagger in case they require grosser methods. While most are elves, the magical nature of the River Court means that courtesans might be quicklings, brownies, or even an awakened animal (foxes in particular seem inclined to this line of work). Their charisma



## Famous Courtesans of Midgard

**Ou-Betta.** Despite her ever-present veil, Ou-Betta (medusa bard 5/diviner 6) is a favored courtesan of the eastern Jopolkings. Her entertaining stories are almost as famous as her harem, which never seems to grow no matter how many men she recruits to it ranks.

**Lady Melisande.** A courtesan of the Seven Cities, Lady Melisande (human bard 9) was purchased as a slave in the distant east before Reth-Saal merchants brought her through the Mevrassa Strait to the privateering city of Triolo. She has since become the owner of her own pleasure house and is said to have the affections of the city's Archbishop.

**Sarroc.** Slim and always well-dressed, Sarroc (human bard 4/rogue 2) provides companionship to Zobeck's widows of means and refinement. Although most suspect him of questing after a fortune through marriage, he remains single (and of modest means) despite receiving frequent marriage proposals.

and way with words aids them when traveling through the petty states of Dornig or discovering the latest scheme of the Ironcrag dwarves.

## New Skills and Bardic Abilities

Most courtesans take levels in bard, rogue, or sorcerer, depending on the demands of their occupation. The world's most powerful and influential courtesans make great use of the bard's performance abilities and extensive class skills. Often

a courtesan develops abilities different than a standard bard due to the expectations of her patrons and clients.



## The Art of Conversation

### PERFORM (CONVERSATION) (CHA)

This skill enables a character to engage in lengthy—but never dull—periods of talk with another person. Many courtesans study this skill, for patrons often enjoy conversation as they lounge around the harem, brothel, or tavern. Perform (conversation) acts like any other Perform skill for the bard and her class abilities.

## Variant Rule

A bard with ranks in Perform (conversation) may take the alternate class abilities described below.

*Small Talk (Ex):* At 1<sup>st</sup> level the bard can engage in what seems like idle chit-chat, discussing the weather, local events, and other matters of little consequence while searching for important information in off-hand remarks. After a minute of conversation, and with the use of 1 round of bardic performance, the bard can make a Diplomacy check to gather information or a Sense Motive check with a +4 insight bonus.

Small talk replaces inspire courage and is a mind-affecting ability that requires audible components.

*Witty Banter (Su):* At 3<sup>rd</sup> level the bard can engage in a rapid back-and-forth of jokes, clever observations, and provocative (if superficial) ideas, causing the listener becomes quite taken with her. While the bard engages in witty banter with a creature that can hear and understand her, the bard's Charisma score is considered 2 points higher, including when the creature must save against another of the bard's abilities or spells. This increases to +4 at 11<sup>th</sup> level.

Witty banter replaces inspire competence, and is a mind-affecting ability that requires audible components.

*Sophist (Su):* At 8<sup>th</sup> level the bard has mastered the art of rhetoric, and she can replace dirge of doom with sophist. She can confound, disturb, and confuse another person with real or fabricated contradictions in their

own belief systems. The target suffers a -4 penalty to all checks, attack rolls, saving throws, skill and ability checks for as long as the courtesan speaks and one round thereafter.

The courtesan may instead give every spell or spell-like ability the target attempts to use a 50% chance of failure for the same duration. To be affected, an enemy must hear the bard perform, understand her language, and be within 30 feet. Sophist is a mind-affecting ability that requires audible components.

*Convince (Sp):* At 14<sup>th</sup> level a bard can sway people to her point of view. If the target of this ability fails a Will save (DC = 10 + ½ bard level + Charisma modifier), it falls under the bard's control as per the *dominate person* spell. The target must be within 30 feet of the bard, and it must hear and understand her language. The effect lasts as long as the bard performs. If the save succeeds, the creature is immune to this ability for 24 hours.

Convince replaces frightening tune. Convince is a mind-affecting compulsion effect that requires audible components.

## Spinning a Dangerous Story

### PERFORM (STORYTELLING) (CHA)

Storytellers know how to keep an audience rapt with their narrative. They understand the importance of suspense, fantastic locations and events, and despicable villains. They may even have some skill at imitating voices and accents. Perform (storytelling) acts like any other Perform skill for the bard and her class abilities.

## Variant Class Abilities

A bard with ranks in Perform (storytelling) may take the alternate class abilities described below.

*Fabulist (Su):* At 1<sup>st</sup> level the bard can regale an audience with tales of kings and heroes, maidens and their rescuers. During the next eight hours, every member of the bard's audience gain a +2 morale bonus to their next saving throw against a charm or fear effect.

This bonus increases to +4 at 11<sup>th</sup> level.

Using this ability consumes two

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with our stackable magnetic markers



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rounds of bardic performance and requires a full-round action. A bard can grant this bonus to a number of creatures equal to her Charisma modifier who can hear and understand her. Fabulist replaces inspire courage, is a mind-affecting ability, and requires audible components.

*Storyteller (Su):* At 3<sup>rd</sup> level, the bard's listeners gain the benefit of moral instruction. Fictional examples prepare them for real life. Those listening to her tale gain a +2 insight bonus to Diplomacy and Sense Motive skill checks (except against the bard) for the next 8 hours. This bonus increases to +4 at 11<sup>th</sup> level.

Storyteller replaces inspire competence and consumes two rounds of bardic performance. A bard can grant this bonus to a number of creatures equal to her Charisma modifier who can hear and understand her. This ability is a mind-affecting ability that requires audible components.

*Poet (Su):* At 8<sup>th</sup> level a storyteller's beautiful verse and entertaining situations combine to instruct and inform. A number of listeners equal to the bard's Charisma modifier gain a +4 insight bonus to all Charisma-based skills (except against the bard) for 8 hours. Using this ability consumes two rounds of bardic performance.

Poet replaces dirge of doom and is a mind-affecting ability that requires audible components.

*Bardic Memory (Su):* At 14<sup>th</sup> level the bard's tales range through the whole of history and legend, imparting knowledge most have forgotten. The bard selects one type of creature from the ranger favored enemy list. A number of allies equal to her Charisma modifier who can hear and understand her gain a +4 insight bonus to Bluff, Stealth, and Sense Motive skill checks and attack and damage rolls against creatures of this type. This effect lasts for 8 hours. A target may not benefit from another such effect until the original has expired.

Bardic memory replaces frightening tune, consumes four rounds of bardic performance, and is a mind-affecting

ability that requires audible components. I stacks with ranger favored enemies

## New Spells

### EASY MARK

**School** enchantment (charm) [mind-affecting]; **Level** bard 1, sorcerer/wizard 2, witch 1

**Casting Time** 1 standard action

**Components** V

**Range** close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

**Target** one creature

**Duration** 1 min./level

**Saving Throw** Will negates; **Spell Resistance** yes

With a few choice words you lull your target into complacency. The creature believes you are completely harmless. On a failed Will save the target suffers a -4 penalty to Sense Motive checks it makes against you.

### GLORIOUS FAÇADE

**School** illusion (glamer) [mind-affecting]; **Level** bard 2, sorcerer/wizard 2, witch 2

**Casting Time** 1 standard action

**Components** V,S,M (a pinch of powder)

**Range** personal

**Duration** 1 hr./level

**Saving Throw** Will negates (harmless); **Spell Resistance** yes

This spell enhances your natural beauty, granting you a bonus to skills that partly rely on your looks. You gain a +2 circumstance bonus to Bluff, Diplomacy and Perform skill checks. The bonus to Perform checks works only against creatures that can see the performance.

### I'M YOURS

**School** enchantment (compulsion) [mind-affecting]; **Level** bard 3, sorcerer/wizard 4, witch 3

**Casting Time** 1 standard action

**Components** V, S

**Range** close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

**Target** one humanoid

**Duration** 1 round/level

**Saving Throw** Will negates; **Spell Resistance** yes

This spell forces another creature to desire you beyond reason. The target becomes so obsessed with you, that he attacks another creature of

your choice for 1 round/level. You need not make any overt requests or suggestions. Your beauty, body language, and personality do all the talking. The target fights as the best it can, but you cannot force it to use specific powers or abilities.

### LOVER'S VEIL

**School** illusion (glamer); **Level** bard 2, sorcerer/wizard 2

**Casting Time** 1 standard action

**Components** V, S

**Range** personal and touch (see text)

**Target** you and one other creature

**Duration** 1 min./level (D)

**Saving Throw** Will negates (harmless); **Spell Resistance** yes (harmless)

You and a creature you touch become invisible, including all gear you and the target carry. You and the target must remain adjacent or the spells ends.

Also, if either of you take a standard action, move, or are forced to move, the spell ends. In all other aspects, this spell acts as an *invisibility* spell.

### OBSESSION

**School** enchantment (compulsion) [mind-affecting]; **Level** bard 4, sorcerer/wizard 5

**Casting Time** 1 minute

**Components** V

**Range** close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

**Target** one humanoid

**Duration** 1 day/level or until discharged (D)

**Saving Throw** Will negates; **Spell Resistance** yes

The target of this spell is dazed by your beauty whenever you are within 30 ft. You may ask the creature to help you (treat it as if its demeanor is friendly), but you must win an opposed Charisma check to compel it to act against its usual behavior (as per the *charm person* spell). The target also takes a -4 penalty on saves against other spells you cast on it while *obsession* remains in effect.

When you are not in its line of sight, the target becomes depressed and suffers a -4 penalty to Strength, Dexterity, Wisdom, and Charisma. It also suffers a -2 penalty to Fortitude saves.

A *break enchantment* or *remove curse* spell ends an *obsession* spell only if its caster is at least two levels higher than

# From the Creators of the BEST-SELLING Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Paizo Publishing Presents:

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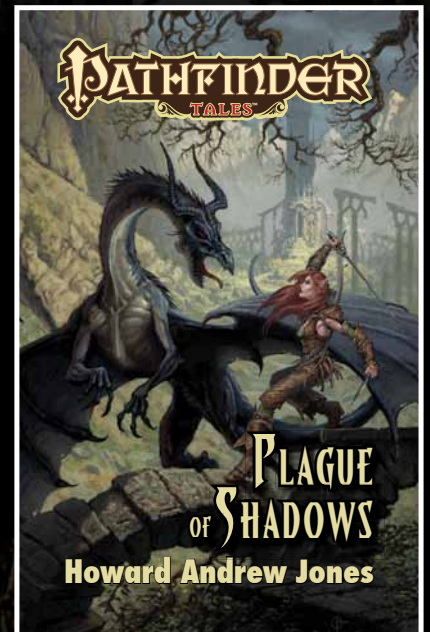


This is the story of Ellasif, a barbarian shield maiden who will stop at nothing to recover her missing sister, a child born possessed who was cast out by her tribe and taken in by the mysterious winter witches of Irrisen. Together with Declan, a young ne'er-do-well spellcaster-turned-forgery who wants only to prove himself to the woman he loves, Ellasif will face monsters, magic, and the fury of her own cold-hearted warriors in their quest to rescue the lost child. Yet when they finally reach the ice-walled city of Whitethrone, where trolls hold court and wolves roam the streets as men, will it be too late to save the girl from the forces of darkness?

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the *obsession* spell's caster. *Dispel magic* cannot end *obsession*, but *limited wish*, *miracle*, and *wish* do.

### New Magic Items

A courtesan may bestow special magic items she has created on her lovers and admirers. These gifts grant a recipient inspiration and courage by reminding him of her beauty, love, or devotion. They can also bind him in subtle (and sometimes detrimental) ways. (For other items commonly employed by courtesans see "Perfumes of Bourgund" in *KQ* #14.)

Depending on a particular courtesan's reputation, the items below may be recognized as her creation. This could be a drawback if the bearer encounters her enemies or spurned lovers.

#### KEEPSAKE

**Aura** faint enchantment; **CL** 4<sup>th</sup>  
**Slot** neck, ring or wrist; **Price** 3,200 gp;  
**Weight** –

#### DESCRIPTION

Often simply a lock of hair bound with ribbon, keepsakes can be any personal item—from rings, to handkerchiefs, to gloves—that serves as a reminder and grants courage. Once per day the wielder can automatically succeed on a save against an effect, spell, or spell-like ability that causes fear. Use of this effect must be declared before the save is rolled.

#### CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements** Craft Wondrous Item, *calm emotions*; **Cost** 1,600 gp

#### LADY'S GIFT

**Aura** faint enchantment; **CL** 4<sup>th</sup>  
**Slot** neck or wrist; **Price** 5,000 gp  
**Weight** –

#### DESCRIPTION

This embroidered scarf displays fanciful designs of armored men combating strange creatures. It is worn around the neck or wrist and grants the wearer a +1 morale bonus to Will saves. Once per day the wearer can gain the benefit of *rage*, as the spell.

#### CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements** Craft Wondrous Item, *rage*; **Cost** 2,500 gp

#### LOCKET OF LOVE

**Aura** moderate divination; **CL** 6<sup>th</sup>  
**Slot** neck; **Price** 7,500 gp; **Weight** 1/8 lb.

#### DESCRIPTION

This pendant bears the likeness of a beautiful woman, often carved in a semi-precious gemstone or engraved in gold or silver, and inspires the wearer to do his best whenever possible. Three times per day the wearer may substitute his highest ability modifier for one skill check, ability check, or save. He must decide before the roll is made.

#### CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements** Craft Wondrous Item; *true strike*; **Cost** 3,750 gp

#### PILLOW BOOK

**Aura** moderate necromancy; **CL** 9<sup>th</sup>  
**Slot** none; **Price** 18,000 gp; **Weight** 1/8 lb.

#### DESCRIPTION

This slim volume fits easily into a pocket or beneath a pillow. Its contents describe salacious and intimate details of the rich and powerful. Anyone who spends one hour reading this book may make a Knowledge (nobility) check with a +5 bonus.

Once per day an individual may write into its pages the name of a person she knows and a fact concerning that person. As long as the creature is on the same plane as the pillow book, the named entity takes a -4 penalty to its Leadership Score and all Charisma-based skills and checks for the next 24 hours.

#### CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements** Craft Wondrous Item; *bestow curse*; **Cost** 9,000 gp

#### SOUL TOKEN

**Aura** moderate divination; **CL** 8<sup>th</sup>  
**Slot** ring; **Price** 21,000 gp **Weight** –

#### DESCRIPTION

Silk thread binds this lock of hair in the shape of a ring. While the soul token provides inspiration and combat effectiveness to the bearer, it also links the user to the person who bestowed it. A bearer of a soul token gains a +2 morale bonus on Fortitude saves and once per day can, as a free action, gain 20 temporary hit points.

However, the holder of the soul token takes a -4 penalty on all checks and saves against spells and abilities used by the item's creator (even Fort saves). The soul token's creator can use the item to observe the wielder three times per day as per the *scrying* spell.

#### CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements** Craft Wondrous Item; *bear's endurance*, *scrying*; **Cost** 10,500 gp

## New Feats

### ASSASSIN'S WILES

Your sensual knowledge of anatomy allows you to inflict debilitating agony in another person.

**Prerequisite:** Heal 5 ranks, sneak attack.

**Benefit:** With a successful DC 15 Heal check, you add +1d6 to your sneak attack damage against a target caught unarmored and flatfooted with you (typically, in an intimate moment or asleep). For every five points you gain beyond the DC, add an additional +1d6 damage.

### DANCE OF LIFE

Your nimble dancing skills allow you to skirt danger.

**Prerequisite:** Perform (dance) 3 ranks.

**Benefit:** You can roll a Perform (dance) skill check in place of a Reflex saving throw a number of times per day equal to your Dexterity modifier.

### HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

Your lowly origins have made you ambitious. You are attracted to power and wealth, and wealthy and powerful clients seem usually attracted to you.

**Prerequisite:** Must be taken at 1st level

**Benefit:** When you attempt to entertain, convince, or seduce a person at least four levels higher than your character level, you gain a +5 circumstance bonus to Bluff or Diplomacy checks made when interacting with this person.

### PRODIGY

Your skill at performance far exceeds your age and experience. It is as if you were born with the ability of a master.

**Prerequisite:** Must be taken at 1st level.

**Benefit:** Your ranks in any one Perform skill can exceed your level by +3.

**Normal:** You may acquire a number of skill ranks in any one skill equal to your level.

**Special:** This feat may be applied to Knowledge (games) instead of a Perform skill.

### SECRET LANGUAGE

The intimacy you share with admirers and lovers allows you to communicate without words.

**Prerequisite:** Cha 15

**Benefit:** Choose a number of allies or admirers equal to your Charisma modifier. You may communicate with these individuals via secret messages as through the Bluff skill

**Table 1: Courtesan Weapons**

Simple Weapons	Cost	Dmg(S)	Dmg(M)	Critical	Range	Weight	Type	Special
<i>Light Melee Weapons</i>								
Hairpin	10 gp	1d2	1d3	19-20 x2	10 ft.	1/8 lb	P	--
Mharoti Scorpion Stiletto	800 gp	1d3	1d4	18-20 x2	10 ft.	1 lb.	P	--
<b>Exotic Weapon</b>								
<i>Two-Handed Melee Weapon</i>								
Necklace Garrote	50gp	Special	Special	x2	--	--	Special	



without having to make a check. The communication includes body language, facial expressions, tone of voice, sign language, and even pre-arranged signals. To include a selected individual requires one month of daily interaction with the person.

### Courtesan Weapons

**Hairpin:** Hairpins are exactly that, pins or sticks that keep a person's hair (usually a human's) in place. Some accoutrements are durable enough to double as weapons. Depending on the style, a courtesan may wear up to four pins at any one time.

**Necklace Garrote:** This deadly item is a strong wire concealed by false gems, stones, or pearls and worn as jewelry. A snap of the wire breaks off the adornments, and the clasp doubles as finger grips. If the wielder successfully controls a grapple, she inflicts an additional 1d4 damage, regardless of the action chosen, and the victim suffers 1d4 points of Constitution damage.

Additionally, the victim suffers a penalty equal to the attacker's Strength modifier to all rolls while grappled. A Constitution check (DC = 10 + hp damage dealt this round) reduces the Constitution damage by one-half, minimum of 1.

**Mharoti Scorpion Stiletto:** This masterwork weapon has an extremely sharp point but no cutting edge (as described in *KOBOLD QUARTERLY* #15). During construction a special process infuses the blade with the distilled venom of a Mharoti emerald scorpion. A successful hit with the stiletto poisons the victim. After five strikes the poison is depleted and the blade cannot be re-infused. **Mharoti emerald scorpion:** Type poison, injury; Save

Fortitude DC 21; **Frequency** 1/round for 4 rounds; **Effect** 1d4 Con damage; **Cure** 2 consecutive saves; **Price** 500 gp.

### Special Items

**Dancing Silks:** Gossamer clothing meant to reveal and cover the body at the same time, dancing silks are masterwork items that grant the wearer a +2 circumstance bonus to Perform

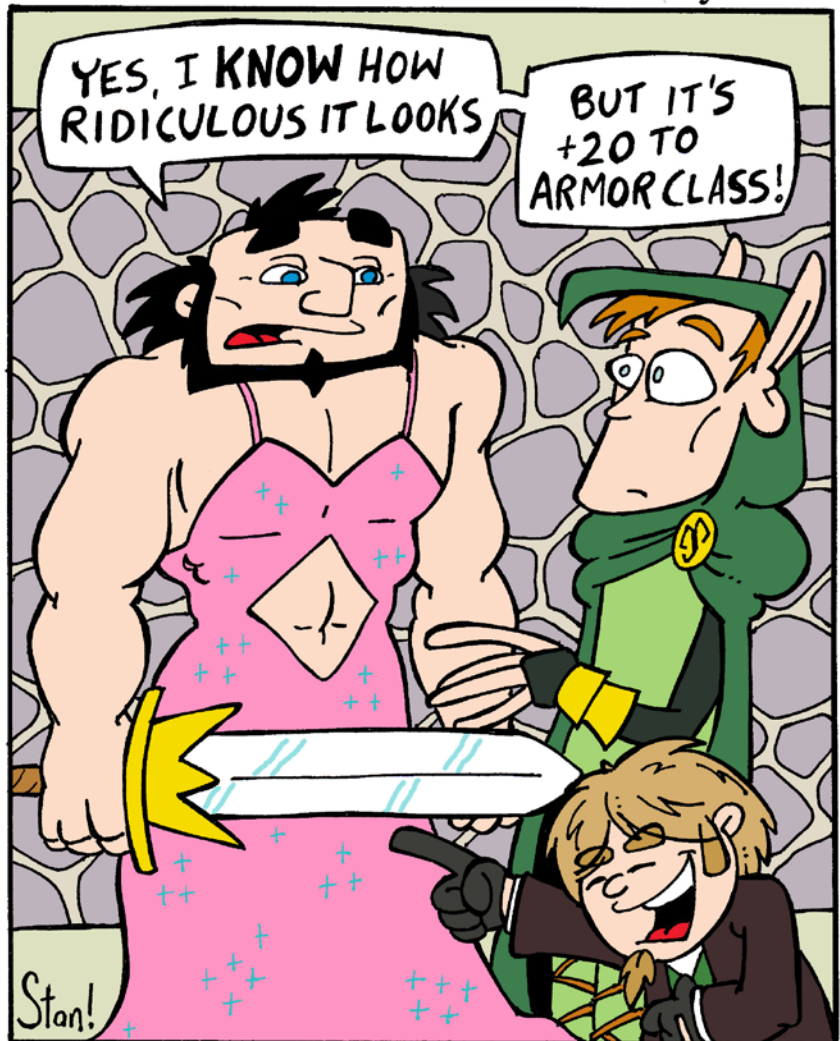
(dance) checks. Cost 100 gp.

**Poison Ring:** This ring appears to bear a single large jewel—but the jewel hides a hollow container large enough to hold one dose of powdered poison. With a move action the wearer may flip open the jewel and deploy the poison. Doing so without being noticed requires a successful Sleight-of-Hand check. Price 50 gp.

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# If You're Having Fun

## *A Conversation with Robin D. Laws*

By Jeremy L. C. Jones

If you're having fun, you're doing it right," says writer and game designer Robin D. Laws. That straightforward, simple, and obvious, motto lies at the heart of everything Laws does when it comes to games. His career is marked by fun, innovation, and persistence. And play; lots and lots of play.

Laws loves to design games, play games, and talk about both. His joy is apparent in each product he works on. And his list of credits is extensive.

As a designer Robin D. Laws has contributed to such games as *Feng Shui*, *The Dying Earth Roleplaying Game*, *Over the Edge*, *HeroQuest*, *Shadowfist*, and *The Esoterrorists*.

"Robin Laws is perhaps the single best RPG designer working today," said Kenneth Hite, a game designer and writer who has worked with Laws many times on a variety of projects over the years. "Robin has an engineer's feel for structure and an architect's eye for elegance. His games solve problems you haven't even diagnosed; they open up territories for play you didn't even have on your map."

Over a prolific career, Laws has written supplements for just about every major game system out there, from *Dungeons & Dragons* to GURPS to *Vampire: The Requiem*. His most exciting recent work has been the GUMSHOE system for Pelgrane Press.

"You can always spot good innovative game design; the innovations seem obvious in retrospect," said Simon Rogers, the co-owner and managing director of Pelgrane Press Ltd and ProFantasy Software Ltd. "I couldn't

believe quite how audacious Robin's approach was [to the GUMSHOE system]. It was enlightening to see how he approached the game, with absolute focus on the design brief, a willingness to adapt his system in the light of actual play reports, and clean, polished text which needs only a light editing pass.

"One other sign of good game design is that a select number of existing players find the new system intensely annoying, even threatening. To a publisher, this can be a source of irritation. To a games designer, well, I can hear him chuckling. I know of no one in the industry who has a bone to pick with Robin. This is a real testament to his character."

As Rogers suggests, Laws is known for his professionalism and for being easy to work with.

"Being paid to edit Robin's work (as I was in my old *Star Trek RPG* days) is like stealing free money," said Hite. "You ask Robin for a few thousand words of something. He gives you something vastly better than you could have imagined, yet somehow just what you asked for. You change one comma, in order to justify yourself. You are wrong to do so. That's what editing Robin is like."

Laws is the author of Robin's Laws Of Good Game Mastering and the recent *Hamlet's Hit Points*, both of which aid gamemasters and players in improving play. He worked on the 4th Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide 2* with James Wyatt and Bill Slavicsek, the *Pathfinder GameMastery Guide* by Jason Bulmahn and many other notables,

and a host of others.

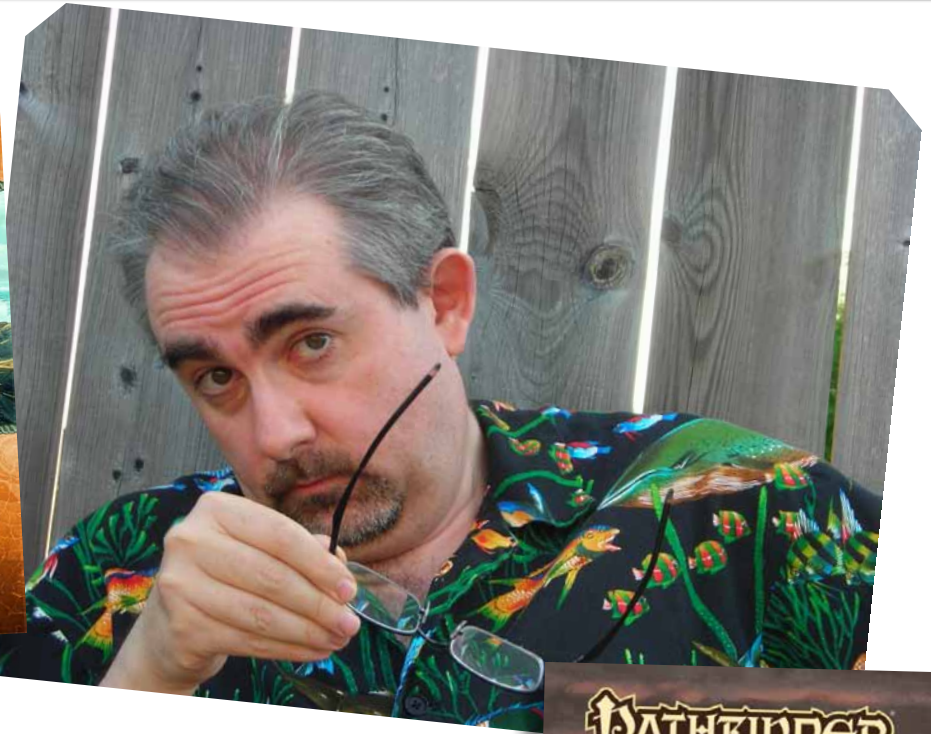
Laws has also written novels and short fiction in creator-owned settings and shared worlds such as the Warhammer and Pathfinder universes. His most recent novel, *The Worldwound Gambit* (set in the southern kingdoms of Pathfinder's Golarion) mixes sword and sorcery with the elements of a heist novel.

"After seeing Robin's work on the Pathfinder's Journal for the Serpent's Skull adventure path, I knew we needed him to write a Pathfinder Tales novel," said James Sutter the Pathfinder fiction editor. "His ability to manage a large cast of characters and make them all interesting and engaging—bringing them alive with just a few well-placed words—really grabbed my attention and made me think he'd be perfect for the sort of large-party adventure that gaming fiction can do so well."

"It was this facility with characters that made a classic Oceans Eleven-style heist novel from him so appealing. Those are all about creating fun characters and giving them each their opportunity to shine, and seeing that play out in a fantasy setting would be an excellent new twist. Robin's decision to set the book in the demon-infested sore of the Worldwound, however – that was gutsy. Who runs a con on a demon, anyway? As it turns out, the answer is a veteran con artist named Gad..."

Laws' old Dragon magazine column "The Play's the Thing" borrows its name from Act II, scene 2 of *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare. *Hamlet* was talking about something else altogether, but the





name offers a pretty fair approximation of Laws' gaming and design theory. Fun and play matter most of all.

Hamlet shows up again in *Hamlet's Hit Points*, a book that is the culmination of many years of analyzing dramatic structure. Below, Laws and I discuss *Hamlet's Hit Points*, *The Worldwound Gambit*, the GUMSHOE system, and the tabletop game industry.

**What's the coolest part of the GUMSHOE System?**

Robin D. Laws: By streamlining investigative play and showing you how to build the structures of strong mystery scenarios, GUMSHOE fosters a faster-paced game in general. It drastically reduces—and sometimes cuts out entirely—the boring scenes of frustration where the characters run around in circles trying to get through plot bottlenecks. That leaves more time for more involved storylines and mysteries. It's an editing tool that allows players to choose, more or less, when they really care about succeeding.

**Where did you start in developing the GUMSHOE System? Were there any false starts, dead ends, or surprises?**

Although it grew to something much more, it started as a request from Pelgrane Press honcho Simon Rogers to create a rules set that would

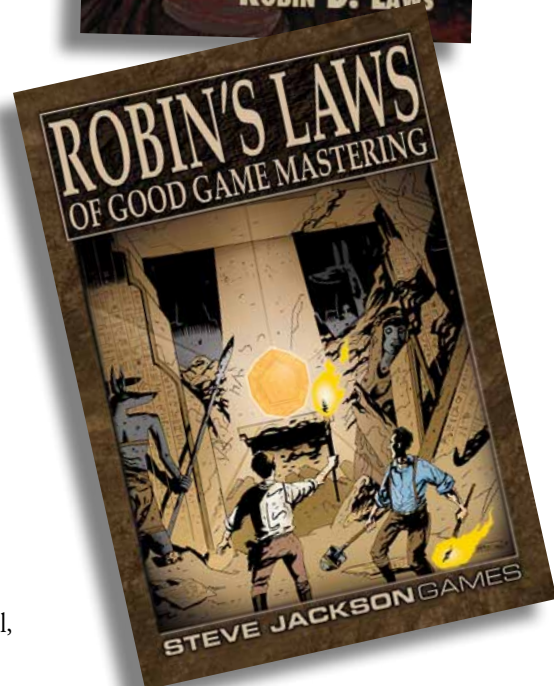
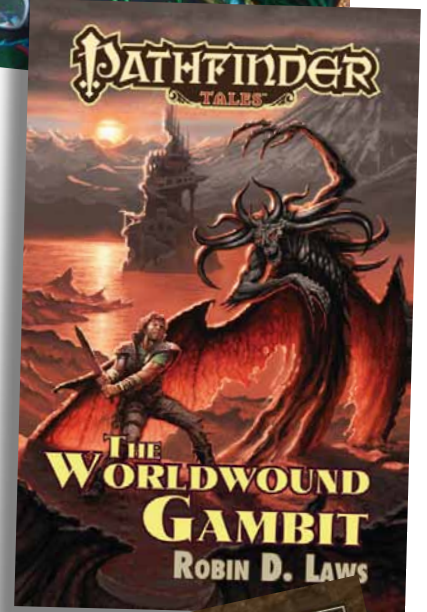
set aside the "I fail my Library Use roll" syndrome that stymies GMs of investigative games like the beloved *Call of Cthulhu*.

From there the basic structure of the rules as they appear in *The Esoterists* came very smoothly. Since that game, and our explorations of the system for such follow-ons as *Trail of Cthulhu*, *Mutant City Blues*, and the upcoming *Ashen Stars*, the surprise has been just how widely applicable the system is. One of my local players has taken it and kitbashed it into a super-simple dungeon-bashing game for his RPG-newbie group; it took another member of the group to point out how applicable it was to space opera. [It was also surprising] how much room there still is within it to tweak and vary.

The closest I've come to a dead end has been my first attempt at starship combat in *Ashen Stars*. But I wouldn't have gotten to the cool way it works now without first passing through a stage in which the central idea was too literally implemented.

**What happened with the starship combat in *Ashen Stars*?**

Simon Rogers requested a system where each person on the ship had something to do in space combat and where they'd be tempted to draw power from a central pool,



each to augment their own stations. I'm not sure that tragedy of the commons element survived the design process, but it resulted in something that's cool on its own.

More to the point though, my original design had each PC doing something in each round of combat. Now it works more like a fight. The rounds are much shorter, and each player gets to dominate a single round, just as they would when duking out with an opponent in a firefight or scuffle.

### **What unique challenges does the writing of a core rulebook present you with?**

You're always bumping up at the limits of the word count. There are so many things that can go in a core book and you have to be ruthless to strip the table of contents to its bare essentials. When you bring something out in a later supplement, someone always observes that it should have been in the main book. I'd like to live in a world where you can sell a \$200 core book with 300,000 words worth of support material, but the average gamer's wallet and back muscles probably don't.

And of course the play-testing is always a bigger bear for a new game than for a scenario or sourcebook.

### **What drew you to the Pathfinder setting?**

For Paizo I'm doing Pathfinder fiction, so the big attraction is the pulpy fun of their world of Golarion. Most fantasy worlds that spring from the Gyax rootstock lean more toward the Tolkien end of the spectrum. It's refreshing to explore a setting that tips the balance toward swords and sorcery, Robert E. Howard, and Fritz Leiber.

I had a ton of fun writing the novel. It brings the tropes of the heist genre to fantasy. Playing with those was a blast – though also very tricky, because you have to give information to the readers by hiding it from them, much like you would for a murder mystery.

### **Where does a novel start for you – setting, character, image, theme, a snatch of dialogue, something else? Where did you start with The**

### **Worldwound Gambit?**

Usually you want to start with character first. For assignments like this you're often creating a recurring character who will hopefully move through a series of adventures, as Sherlock Holmes, Superman, or James Bond do. These iconic characters each have an ethos, through which they impose order on the world. They do this repeatedly, instead of having a single dramatic arc that takes them through a journey of personal transformation. From there you need to find a plot that allows them to express their iconic ethos, a source of disorder that their defining abilities and outlook allows them to defeat.

*The Worldwound Gambit* introduced another layer of complexity, as it's a heist novel. That requires extremely tight plotting, because you have to lay in all of these setups and payoffs so that the reader feels enjoyably fooled and not simply cheated by revelations that come out of nowhere.

### **What are the pros and cons of writing fiction in a shared world?**

Cons: the temptation to provide exposition that serves the world but not the story at hand. The need to familiarize yourself with a large corpus of continuity.

Pros: first of all, the built-in audience. Most importantly, the specific cool elements built into the setting by its creators: Golarion's sword and sorcery vibe, the grim ironies of Warhammer's Old World, Paragon City's alternate comic book continuity, Al Amarja's weird realism.

### **Can you describe Hamlet's Hit Points in 250 words or less?**

Hamlet's Hit Points teaches GMs one very central quality of storytelling that is dead obvious when you think about but which we have never really incorporated into the story element of RPGs: that stories rivet audience attention by maintaining a constantly

fluctuating and unpredictable rhythm between up and down moments.

To turn this insight into concrete grist for the crunchy gamer mind, it breaks three classic narratives (*Hamlet*, *Casablanca* and the movie version of *Dr. No*) down moment by moment, into their constituent beats. It shows you the two dominant modes of storytelling, the procedural and the dramatic. A look at other beat types shows you how stories set up, tease, and reveal

*...you have to lay in all of these setups and payoffs so that the reader feels enjoyably fooled and not simply cheated by revelations...*

information for maximum impact.

Throughout its length the book shows you how to incorporate your new understanding of story technique at the gaming table, to your prep sessions, your post-game assessments, or even the writing of traditional fiction forms. In the process it looks at the history of the form and why we haven't built our understanding of story from the ground up.

### **Why do you suppose we haven't?**

Because Gary Gyax and Dave Arneson weren't trying to create a new story form when they mashed together the various games that became D&D, and thus the RPG as we know it. They were trying to create a cool new war game in which the unit size was reduced to a single person.

But when you do that, you have a protagonist. When you then add the element of persistence, where that protagonist enters multiple scenarios over time and grows and changes as a result, you have a story form, whether you meant to make one or not.

Since they weren't consciously part of the plan, it took us a long time to start examining the form's story qualities. When we did, we kept looking at them through the lens of accumulated gaming tradition without going back to fundamentals as practiced in other narrative forms.

**In what way(s) did you apply the material in *Hamlet's Hit Points* to the writing of *The Worldwound Gambit*?**

I created a map using my original *Hamlet's Hit Points* (HHP) symbols, and *Campaign Cartographer* (CC) software, which works well for diagrams whose elements you need to move around a lot, even if they're in no way maps. I plotted the major emotional up and downbeats, just as I did for *Hamlet*, *Casablanca*, and *Dr. No* in HHP. This way I could make sure that there were plenty of reversals and that the rhythm of defeats and victories never became too uniform.

*The Worldwound Gambit* features an ensemble cast, so I also created CC icons for each of the main characters. These I placed above the text tag for each beat, so I could make sure that no member of the team went for very long without having his or her subplot further developed.

At the same time I mapped my information beats: the pipe that hides information in plain sight, the questions that readers want to see resolved, and the reveals that pay them off. Whenever I saw a point that needed setup, I could go back and insert new beats that laid pipe or raised questions.

**You've been working in the gaming industry for a while now. What changes in the industry over the last few decades have caught you off guard? What've been the hardest to adapt to? How'd you handle them? What do you see looming on the horizon?**

The hobby game industry is in a near constant state of flux. Despite this there's the tendency to think of the state of the industry when you first got involved in it as its default state. You have to be careful not to lock that in as "the good old days" and think of it as dying just because it's not the way it used to be. Because there is no default state, no way things have always been done.

Boom cycles can be as disruptive on the downswing as they are invigorating on the rise. They can deform the distribution chain, temporarily cutting you off from people who still want

to buy your stuff, when you're selling something outside the boom.

The various information revolutions, from online community building to print on demand technologies, are creating a buffer that protects smaller product lines from the worst of those storms.

I've weathered changes the only way I know how: by working and thinking hard to create fresh, well-crafted games and game material that push the form forward. It's also crucial to be versatile; to be able to write fiction, develop settings for non-RPG properties, and so on.

Looming on the horizon is the integration of new information technologies into tabletop gaming. From a design perspective the potential of tablets as a gaming aid is enormous. Whether the business side will align in a way that will realize that potential is another matter.

**Do you use a tablet when gaming? Other technologies?**

The tablet has yet to make its leap from object of desire to justifiable business expense. I'm sure that will happen. I do use a laptop, especially when play-testing, as it allows me to immediately make notes in the evolving rules document. It's also useful to be able to fire up Wikipedia when playing a historical game like *Trail of Cthulhu*. Thus was avoided, for example, a lengthy period of uninformed speculation about the start date for X-ray technology.

**What's next for you?**

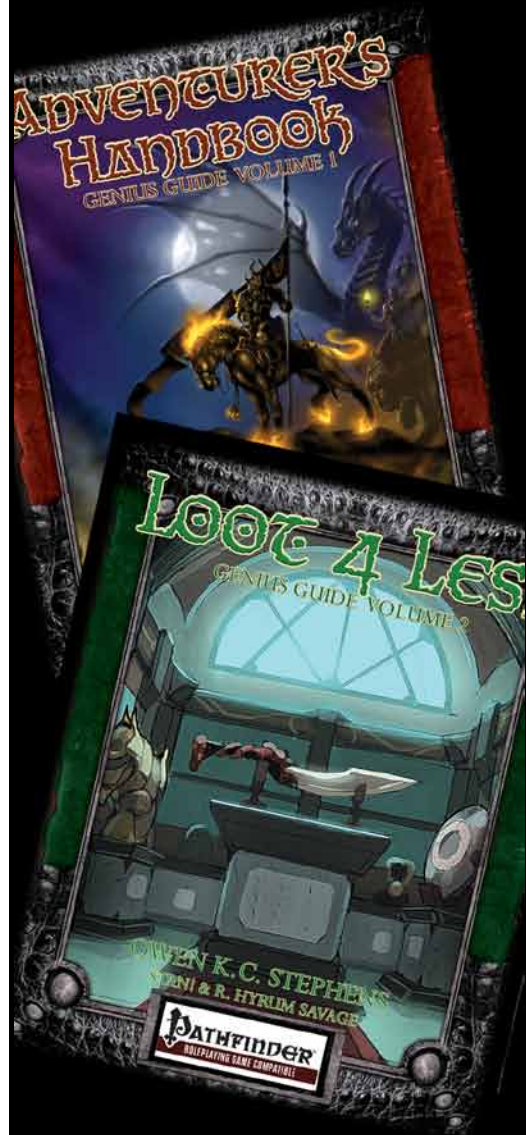
I am overseeing Pelgrane's new fiction imprint, Stone Skin Press. An inaugural anthology will explore the iconic hero concept I talked about earlier, with compelling characters and stories from a stellar roster of writers. We're still in the pre-announce phase, but watch my blog for tons of exciting news.

**Lastly, if you could tape a sign over every game table what would that sign say?**

As seen in *Robin's Laws of Good Gamemastering*: If you're having fun, you're doing it right.

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# Magic Items of Golarion

## 12 Official RPG Superstar 2010 Magic Items

By Jesse Benner, Benjamin Bruck, RC Higgins, Brian T. Hoffman, Richard A. Hunt, Matthew McGee, Sean P. McGowan, Matthew C. Morris, Chris Mortika, Nic Quimby, Andy Sun, and Seth White  
 Art by Abyssal Inc, Vincent DuTrait, and Christopher Swal

**T**hese 12 items were among the 32 winning entries in the first round of the 2010 RPG Superstar contest at Paizo. Each impressed the judges with its originality, playability, and command of the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game* mechanics. We present them here as an inspiration and enticement. Why loot regular magic items when you can loot the best?

### BATRACHIAN HELM

by Matthew McGee

**Aura** moderate transmutation; **CL** 10th  
**Slot** head; **Price** 26,000 gp; **Weight** 3 lb.

#### DESCRIPTION

This oily bronze helm is fashioned in the shape of a frog's head. As a swift action 3/day, you may fire an unerring tongue of force at a visible target within 20 ft.

If the target is an unattended object weighing up to 250 lb., it is pulled 20 ft. toward you. If the target is a creature of your size or smaller, it is pulled 20 ft. toward you with a successful combat maneuver check.

If the target is a creature larger than you or an unattended object weighing more than 250 lb. (including structures such as walls), you are pulled 20 ft. toward the target.

A pulled creature (including you) or object stops if pulled into a solid object or creature. Creatures (including you) pulled in this way do not provoke attacks of opportunity.

#### CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *telekinesis*; Cost 13,000 gp

### CACOPHONOUS MONKEY

by Sean P. McGowan

**Aura** moderate transmutation; **CL** 16th  
**Slot** none; **Price** 18,800 gp; **Weight** 1 lb.

#### DESCRIPTION

A *cacophonous monkey* is a fur-covered, grinning, clockwork monkey with brass cymbals stitched to its hands and a key welded in its back. When wound (a full round action), it animates and jerkily attempts to climb and perch on your shoulder.

It clings tenaciously and cannot be accidentally dislodged, requiring a Strength check (DC 13) to forcibly remove. If left unmolested, it does little aside from occasionally chittering, peering around, and pawing your cheek. It remains animated in this fashion for 1 day before winding down.

It changes this behavior only if you begin a bardic performance using Perform (keyboard, percussion, sing, string, or wind). After you play for 1 round, the monkey accompanies on the cymbals. You may cease your performance, and the monkey's playing sustains the effect. While the monkey maintains the effect, those rounds do not count against your daily rounds of bardic performance, and you may take any other actions you desire, including starting a second performance. The monkey's performance is treated in all other respects as originating from you.

The *cacophonous monkey* can play for up to 10 rounds/day, though these need not be consecutive, and you can command it to cease playing at any time. Once the monkey has played for 10 rounds, it winds down, becomes inanimate, and cannot be rewound until the next day. Stories claim similar devices function for other performance types such as a *sinuous serpent* that aid dancers.

#### CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *animate objects*, *sculpt sound*; Cost 9,400 gp

### GOBLIN SKULL BOMB

by Nic Quimby

**Aura** faint evocation; **CL** 6th  
**Slot** none; **Price** 1,200 gp; **Weight** 1 lb.

#### DESCRIPTION

A glow lights the beady eyes of this blackened, burned-out goblin's skull. Very brittle, the skull shatters if dropped on solid ground. When it breaks, the very last person to touch it bursts into a raging magical flame, suffering 5d6 fire damage and catching fire (Reflex DC 13).

If this damage kills the creature, its body burns away in 1 round, leaving only a pile of ash and the victim's blackened, burned out skull as a new *skull bomb*. If the target survives the effect or doesn't have a skull (or if the skull is shattered before touching a creature), the *skull bomb* is destroyed without being replicated.

A *skull bomb* can be hurled at a foe (range increment 10 ft. for a Medium or smaller creature's skull). On a successful ranged touch attack, the skull shatters against and immolates the target; on a miss, it dashes upon the ground and the thrower suffers the flames. Handling the skull with gloves or handheld tools still counts as touching it, but it can be safely moved with spells (such as *mage hand* or *telekinesis*) or struck with ranged weapons.

Goblins love and covet these weapons, but they also delight in watching other goblins drop or fumble them. A dozen goblin warriors might turn each other to ash while bickering over a single *skull bomb*.

#### CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *flaming sphere*; Cost 600 gp



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*Cacophonous Monkey*  
*Burn Immediately!*

*Goblin Skull Bomb*  
*Use extreme caution*

*Muse of the Solemn Vessel*  
*See accompanying sheet music*

**MUSE OF THE SOLEMN VESSEL**

by Andy Sun

**Aura** moderate enchantment and transmutation; **CL** 7th  
**Slot** shoulders; **Price** 10,000 gp;  
**Weight** 1 lb.

**DESCRIPTION**

Outwardly, the *muse of the solemn vessel* is a simple, though beautiful, mantle made of blue cashmere. Three silver nymphs adorn the inside of the mantle's collar, positioned as though they whisper secrets to you. One of nine *mantles of the muse*, the *muse of the solemn vessel's* providence is the musical voice. You may call on the insight of the muses 3/day to gain a +5 enhancement bonus on any Perform (sing) check, make an aid another action as a swift action, or if you are a bard, call on the full power of the mantle to perform the aria of sorrows.

The aria of sorrows is a bardic performance that affects all willing allies within 30 ft. able to hear you. All those affected receive the benefits of the *sanctuary* spell (DC 10 + 1/2 your level + your Cha modifier). If someone affected by the spell makes an attack, the effect of the performance ends for all those benefiting from it. Maintaining the aria of sorrows is the same as a regular bardic performance although the *muse of the solemn vessel* is required to start it.

**CONSTRUCTION**

**Requirements** Bardic Performance ability, *enthrall*, *haste*; **Cost** 5,000 gp

**NEEDLES OF THE EBON STRAND**

by Richard A. Hunt

**Aura** strong conjuration [evil]; **CL** 14th  
**Slot** none; **Price** 95,000 gp; **Weight** —

**DESCRIPTION**

Somewhat like a pair of thin daggers, these exquisite knitting needles of tarnished silver can knit a creature from shadow during combat. These sinister needles are sometimes found belonging to hags, succubi, and similarly malevolent beings.

The needles create a Fine gate to the Plane of Shadow from which a thin strand of shadowstuff spins into dusky wool, supplying the needles with yarn. Used actively, the needles knit a pre-selected creature (see table below) in a number of rounds indicated by a Craft (knitting) skill check. Every increment of 5 over the DC reduces the knit time by 1 round (1 round minimum). Failure by 5 or more indicates a failure to even activate the item. Knitting shadowstuff is a full-round action.

Craft DC	Creature	Max Rounds
10	Shadow	3
15	Greater shadow	5
20	Shadow demon	8

The needles can also be used passively. When released into the air they work on their own, furiously knitting for the number of rounds indicated for the creature preselected before releasing the needles. With either use, the creature forms as an inanimate blanket of shadow,

becoming fully animate on the completion round. The creature behaves exactly as described in the *summon monster* spell.

When used actively, you are also under the effects of a *sanctuary* spell (CL 14). Your hands are occupied for each full round and only minor free actions are allowed without interrupting the pattern.

**CONSTRUCTION**

**Requirements** Craft (knitting), Craft Wondrous Item, *darkness*, *summon monster VI*; **Cost** 47,500 gp

**SNAPLEAF**

by Jesse Benner

**Aura** faint transmutation and illusion; **CL** 5th  
**Slot** neck (see below); **Price** 750 gp;  
**Weight** —

**DESCRIPTION**

Found across Golarion in the hands of Red Mantis Assassins and Nimrathi forest fighters alike, *snapleaves* are a potent, single use magic item ideal for infiltration, evasion, and escape.

Carved from crystal to resemble a leaf and worn around the neck, a *snapleaf* does not fill a magical slot. Activating a *snapleaf* is an immediate action. Once activated, you benefit from the effects of both *feather fall* and *invisibility*. While the former effect ends when you touch ground, the latter persists for 5 rounds or until you terminate the effect (per the *invisibility* spell).

If activated when not falling, the *snapleaf* grants *invisibility* for 5 rounds while the *feather fall* effect is

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*Steadfast Gut-Stone*  
Wash before using

*Stone of Alliance*  
Possible choking hazard



*Sublime Phial*  
Contact local church for rebill



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wasted and cannot be triggered later.

**CONSTRUCTION**

**Requirements** Craft Wondrous Item, *feather fall*, *invisibility*; **Cost** 375 gp

**STEADFAST GUT-STONE**

by Benjamin Bruck

**Aura** faint abjuration; **CL** 3rd

**Slot** none; **Price** 800 gp; **Weight** 2 lb.

**DESCRIPTION**

This fist-sized chunk of off-white stone seems too large to fit inside your mouth but may be swallowed with ease as a standard action. Once ingested, the *steadfast gut-stone* remains active for up to 1 week, staying within your body to protect your vital organs.

Any time you might take precision-based damage (such as from a rogue's sneak attack), the *steadfast gut-stone* suffers that damage instead. All other damage from the triggering attack—as well as damage—that surpasses the stone's hp, is applied to you normally. The stone has 10 hp and 0 hardness.

When a *steadfast gut-stone* is damaged by a melee weapon attack, you may sacrifice the stone as a free action to damage the attacker's weapon. Treat this as a regular sunder attempt except it bypasses weapon hardness, does not provoke an attack of opportunity, and deals 1d4 damage.

You may ingest only one *steadfast gut-stone* at a time. Any attempt to swallow a second destroys both stones and forces you to make a Fortitude save (DC 15) or be sickened for 1 round. If a *steadfast gut-stone* is not used within 1 week

of being swallowed or is destroyed, it crumbles apart and passes harmlessly out of the body.

**CONSTRUCTION**

**Requirements** Craft Wondrous Item, *magic stone*, *shield other*; **Cost** 400 gp

**STONE OF ALLIANCE**

by Brian T. Hoffman

**Aura** faint divination; **CL** 3rd

**Slot** none; **Price** 33,500 gp; **Weight** —

**DESCRIPTION**

This tiny marble sphere strengthens an existing link between you and a creature bound to you. You must activate the stone, and then, you're your animal companion, bonded mount, or familiar swallows it. The stone magically remains inside the creature, and you know the distance, direction, and general condition of the creature as if by the spell *status*.

In addition, if you have line of sight to the creature, you may protect it from one successful attack as an immediate action by suffering the full damage and effects yourself.

Finally, you may remove one of the following conditions from the creature as a standard action (1/day): blinded, dazzled, deafened, fatigued, shaken, or sickened. You must be within 30 ft. of the creature, and you suffer the condition for its remaining duration.

Alternatively, you may choose to reduce an exhausted, frightened, or nauseated condition to a less severe state, but both you and the creature suffer the lesser condition. For example, lessening of a frightened status leaves both you and creature shaken.

The stone remains inside the creature

until the creature dies or until either the creature or you travel to another plane, at which point it crumbles into a worthless powder.

**CONSTRUCTION**

**Requirements** Craft Wondrous Item, *shield other*, *status*; **Cost** 16,750 gp

**SUBLIME PHIAL**

by Chris Mortika

**Aura** faint abjuration; **CL** 9th

**Slot** none; **Price** 960 gp; **Weight** 1/2 lb.

**DESCRIPTION**

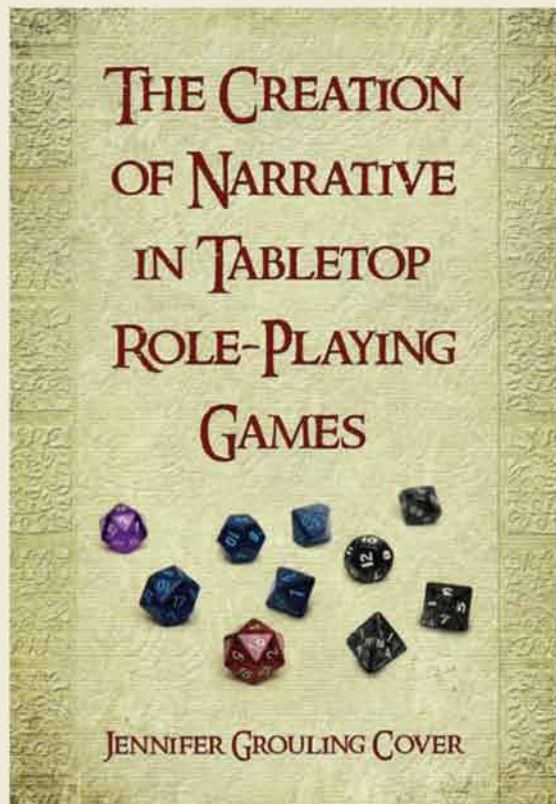
Using items such as the *sublime phial*—a smoked glass container that holds 1 pint of holy water—the church of Shelyn guards the faithful against the horrors of unlife and the caustic waves of negative energies called forth by dark priests. Some phials bear engravings of a rose or Shelyn's symbol. Others are masterworks of the glassblower's art. They are typically carried by the faithful as a pendant or in a pocket.

If you are attacked by a wave of negative energy while wearing one, the holy water immediately evaporates and damage from the negative energy is reduced by 5 (minimum damage 0). An empty phial still radiates a *dweomer* but lacks any power until refilled. Only one *sublime phial* protects a person from any wave of negative energy, but wearing multiple phials guards against successive channelings.

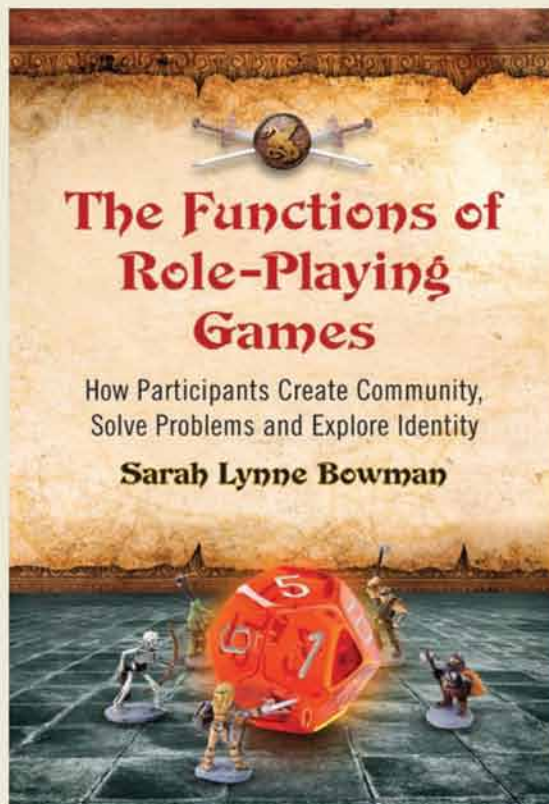
Recently, another aspect of the phial has come to light. If you attempt to harm living creatures using a burst of negative energy while carrying a full *sublime phial*, those affected

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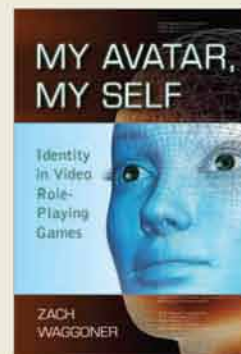
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*Tankard of the Cheerful Duelist*  
Also wash before using

*Vessel of the Deep*  
Just add water



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*Waters of Transfiguration*  
Use extreme care in handling

creatures who succeed in their Will save take no damage at all.

#### CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements** Craft Wondrous Item, *consecrate*; **Cost** 480 gp

#### TANKARD OF THE CHEERFUL DUELIST

by Matthew C. Morris

**Aura** faint evocation and conjuration; **CL** 5th

**Slot** none; **Price** 11,500 gp; **Weight** 1 lb. (empty)

#### DESCRIPTION

This worn pewter tankard often bears the symbol of Cayden Cailean, the god of drunken freedom. When carried or worn (typically hanging on a belt), the mug provides a +1 luck bonus to AC. If held in either hand, this bonus increases to +2.

In addition, as a swift action (3/day), the tankard can change a full tankard of wine into a potion of *cure light wounds*. This potion must be consumed from the tankard within 2 rounds (as a move equivalent action that draws an attack of opportunity), or the potion becomes vinegar. This effect is activated by a command word.

Finally, any alcohol in the tankard does not slosh or spill, no matter how violently the tankard moves.

#### CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements** Craft Wondrous Item, *cure light wounds*, *divine favor*, *prestidigitation*; **Cost** 5,750 gp

#### VESSEL OF THE DEEP

by Seth White

**Aura** strong transmutation; **CL** 13th

**Slot** none; **Price** 40,000 gp; **Weight** 1 lb.

#### DESCRIPTION

This vial contains a black, inky fluid.

When poured into at least 20 cubic ft. of water and the command word spoken, the fluid transforms into a black crystalline vessel resembling a giant squid. The vessel is identical to a giant squid in size, hp, and defense. If reduced to 0 hp, the *vessel of the deep* reverts to a cloud of fluid and cannot be used again for 24 hours.

The *vessel of the deep* has a 5-ft. hatch at the top and can hold up to six medium or small creatures with a capacity of 1,500 lb. The hull of the vessel appears opaque from without but is transparent to those within; however, there is no line of effect through the hull. This vessel can be commanded from within to move along the surface or underwater through liquid at a swim speed of 60 ft., traveling 2 miles/hour or 48 miles/day.

The *vessel of the deep* can be commanded to do one of the following as a standard action (1/day):

**Grab**—The *vessel of the deep* can make a single tentacle attack as a giant squid. If it hits, it can use the grab and constrict abilities exactly like a giant squid.

**Ink cloud**—The *vessel of the deep* can emit a 20-ft.-radius ink cloud in a square adjacent to the vessel. The ink cloud grants concealment and persists for 5 rounds.

**Jet**—The *vessel of the deep* can move at a speed of 260 ft. for 1 round.

#### CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements** Craft Wondrous Item, *animate object*, *summon monster VII*; **Cost** 20,000 gp

#### WATERS OF TRANSFIGURATION

by R.C. Higgins

**Aura** faint transmutation; **CL** 9th  
**Slot** none; **Price** 12,500 gp; **Weight** 1 lb.

#### DESCRIPTION

This small, lacquered box made from exotic and colorful woods contains five distinct vials and a single dropper. Each vial (marked as glass, iron, paper, stone, and wood) contains a magical distillation that has the miraculous property of transfiguration.

One application from a vial administered via the dropper as a full round action to any solid, non-living, non-magical material permanently transfigures that object into the material of the selected vial (glass, iron, paper, stone, or wood). For example, an iron lock treated with *waters of transfiguration (paper)* would become paper instead of iron, with all of the properties associated with paper (hardness, hp, flammability, and so on).

The transfiguration of any object treated by the waters with dimensions of less than 1 cubic ft. takes place instantaneously. On large, solid objects, one application can convert up to 10 cubic ft. in 1 round but requires 1 hour/cubic ft. beyond the first to transfigure. Each vial contains five applications.

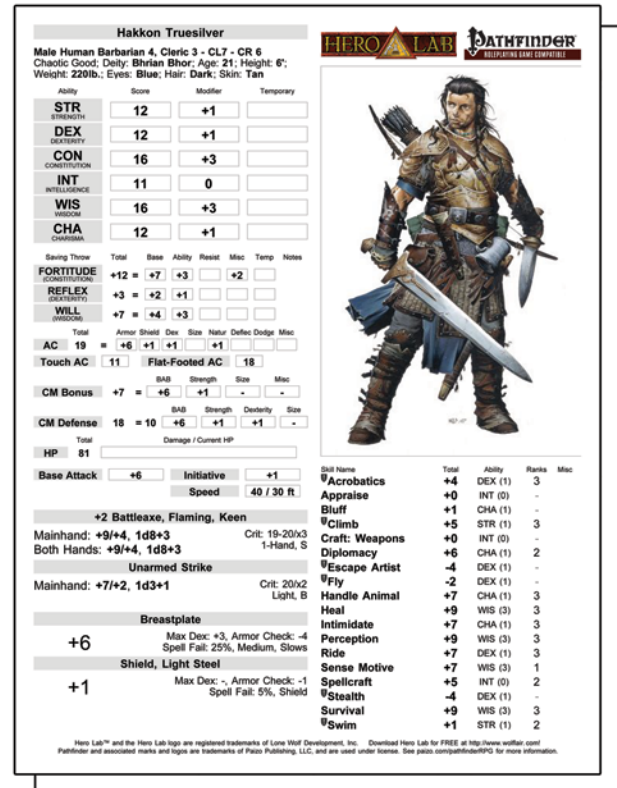
#### CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements** Craft Wondrous Item, *fabricate*, Creator must have 5 ranks in the Craft (alchemy) skill; **Cost** 6,250 gp





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# The Clockwork Adept

## *A Prestige Class of Mechanical Precision*

By Jason Sonia

Art by Darren M. Calvert



**M**asters of invention, clockwork adepts blend precision craftsmanship, arcane knowledge, and clockwork understanding into a seamless art. Whether uncovering ancient technologies or designing new forms, these individuals rely on their highly specialized skills to repair, refine and—in rare cases—animate clockwork devices across Midgard.

Very few classes excel at becoming clockwork adepts like the wizard. The wizard's ability to cast a wide range of spells benefits him greatly. By comparison, a sorcerer's more restricted access to spells and a witch's mysterious focus on her familiar make this choice of career a more difficult path.

### Role

A clockwork adept's role in society is as varied as his creations. Some choose utilitarian paths, incorporating their devices into their villages, cities, and countries. Others work solely for coin and sell their skills to the highest bidder. Still others spend their days adventuring, using their inventiveness and arcane talent to uncover clockwork mysteries.

### Alignment

Clockwork adepts may be of any alignment, but most lean toward philosophies honoring order, precision, and greater understanding, with lawful neutral being most common. They display great variety, however, and some of the most inventive individuals are the most chaotic.

**Hit Dice:** d6

### Requirements

To become a clockwork adept, a character must satisfy all of the following criteria.

**Skills:** Craft (Clockworks) 10 ranks, Knowledge (Arcana) 10 ranks, Knowledge (Clockworks) 5 ranks

**Feats:** Craft Construct, Skill Focus (Craft [Clockworks])

**Spellcasting:** Ability to cast 5th level arcane spells

### Class Skills

The clockwork adept's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Craft (Int), Disable Device (Dex), Knowledge (Arcana) (Int), Knowledge (Clockworks) (Int), and Spellcraft (Int).

**Skill Ranks at Each Level:** 2 + Intelligence modifier.

### Class Features

All of the following are class features of the clockwork adept prestige class.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Clockwork adepts are proficient with simple weapons. They are not proficient with any armor or shields.

**Spells per Day:** At the indicated levels, a clockwork adept gains new spells per day as if he had also gained a level in one arcane spellcasting class he belonged to before adding the clockwork adept prestige class. He does not, however, gain other benefits a character of that class would have gained, except for additional spells per day, spells known (if he is a spontaneous spellcaster), and an increased effective

**Table 1: Clockwork Adept**

Level	Attack Bonus	Base Fort Save	Reflex Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day
1	+0	+0	+0	+2	Command Clockworks	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
2	+1	+0	+0	+3	Artificer, Lesser	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
3	+1	+1	+1	+3	Clockwork Insight	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
4	+2	+1	+1	+4	Command Clockworks, Greater	—
5	+2	+2	+2	+4	Clockwork Insight	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
6	+3	+2	+2	+5	Clockwork Insight	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
7	+3	+3	+3	+5	Artificer, Greater	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
8	+4	+3	+3	+6	Clockwork Insight	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
9	+4	+4	+4	+6	Clockwork Insight	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
10	+5	+4	+4	+7	Ghost in the Machine	—

caster level. If a character had more than one arcane spellcasting class before becoming a clockwork adept, he must select one class. He adds the new clockwork adept level to those class levels for purposes of determining spells per day.

**Command Clockworks (Su):** As a standard action, the adept can enslave animated objects, clockworks, and constructs within 30 feet. Constructs and intelligent clockworks receive a Will save to negate the effect. The DC for this Will save is equal to 10 + 1/2 clockwork adept level + Charisma modifier.

Constructs and clockworks that fail their saves fall under the adept's control for 1 hour per point of Charisma modifier, and they obey commands to the best of their ability. When commanded to perform actions that would endanger them or would run contrary to their normal routines, they receive a new saving throw to end this effect.

The clockwork adept can control any number of clockworks so long as their total Hit Dice do not exceed his character level. If a construct or clockwork is under the control of another creature, the adept must make an opposed Charisma check whenever the orders conflict. He may use this ability 3/day plus once per point of Charisma modifier.

**Lesser Artificer (Sp):** At 2nd level, the adept gains the ability to imbue a construct with a single

spell 1/day. This resembles the 4th level cleric spell *imbue with spell ability*, except the construct need not meet the Intelligence and Wisdom prerequisites and can cast spells from the schools of abjuration, divination, or evocation.

**Clockwork Insight (Ex):** At 3rd, 5th, 6th, 8th, and 9th levels, the adept gains special insight into the function of automatons, clockworks, and constructs. Whenever the adept gains this ability, choose one of the following insights.

**Commanding Presence** – The clockwork adept may increase the number objects or constructs enslaved with his command construct ability so long as their total Hit Dice do not exceed twice his character level.

**Efficient Construction** – Building a construct consumes raw materials equal to only one-third of its base price.

**Intelligent Design** – Use the Craft (Clockworks) skill to modify a construct's armor. Construct gains 1/2 of the clockwork adept's class level as a bonus to its natural armor.

**Knowledge of the Machine** – Add both the adept's Intelligence modifier and Charisma modifier to the Will save DC when using the command clockworks ability.

**Rapid Response** – Using Craft (Clockworks), the adept may modify a construct to add its Intelligence modifier to its initiative.

**Receptive Machine** – Command a

construct as a swift action instead of a move action.

**Resourceful Repair 1** – Gain a +2 insight bonus to Craft (Clockworks) checks to repair a construct and restore 2d4 hp instead of the usual amount.

**Resourceful Repair 2** – Gain a +5 competence bonus Craft (Clockworks) checks to *Treat Critical Damage*.

The adept may repair a construct in this fashion one additional time per 24-hour period. This insight requires *resourceful repair 1*.

**Greater Command Clockworks (Su):** At 4th level, the adept can enslave animated objects, clockworks, and constructs within 60 ft as a standard action. Constructs and intelligent clockworks receive a Will save to negate the effect. The Will save DC equals 14 + 1/2 clockwork adept level + Charisma modifier.

Constructs and clockworks that fail their saves fall under the adept's control for 2 hours per point of Charisma modifier and obey his commands to the best of their ability. When commanded to perform actions that would endanger them, or would run contrary to their normal routines, they receive a new saving throw to end this effect at a -2.

The adept can control any number of clockworks, so long as their total Hit Dice do not exceed double his character level. If a construct or clockwork is under the control of another creature, make an opposed

Charisma check whenever the orders conflict. The adept can use this ability 3/day plus once for each point of Charisma modifier.

**Greater Artificer (Sp):** At 7th level, the adept can imbue a construct with additional spells 1/day. This ability functions exactly as the 4th level cleric spell *imbue with spell ability*, except the construct need not meet the Intelligence and Wisdom prerequisites and can cast spells from the schools of abjuration, divination, or evocation.

Until the construct discharges the spell, it gains spell resistance equal to 12 + caster level. Once the construct discharges the held spell, the adept regains that 4th level spell (or slot)

**Ghost in the Machine (Su):** At 10th level, the adept prepares a special construct to receive his life force when he dies (including death from natural causes such as old age). The clockwork adept must permanently sacrifice a prepared 7th level spell (or slot for a spontaneous caster). When this is complete, and the construct is prepared, the creator instantly awakens in the construct upon death, provided he is on the same plane of existence as the construct.

Preparing the construct is expensive and time-consuming. The construct's body must be built from masterwork materials, gems, and exotic oils costing no less than 300,000 gp. Preparing this construct takes 30 days of uninterrupted work (stopping only to eat and sleep) and requires a Craft (Clockworks) check (DC 30) one per week. If the adept fails this check, he loses that week's work and must spend an additional 30,000 gp to replace lost materials.

### Craft (Clockworks) (Int)

Craft (Clockworks) is like any other craft skill found in chapter 4 of the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook*. Use these rules to create any clockwork items. Craft (Clockworks) allows characters to perform additional tasks, including:

**Build:** You can construct a wide range of clockwork devices, both simple and complex. Suggested DCs (ultimately

set by the GM) for various items are:

Simple items (toys or simple mechanical motors)	DC 15
Advanced items (music boxes, watches or orreries)	DC 20
Complex items (analytical engines, automata or weapons)	DC 25
Highly complex items (automata capable of intelligence)	DC 30

**Customize:** You can customize existing constructs, clockwork items, and weapons. The DC for individual customizations is listed by and is specific to type (use the Build DCs). Only a limited number of customizations can be made to most items. Constructs—including those that are intelligent—can accept more customizations. Customizations occupy body slots like magic items do. Unlike modification, customizations are generally permanent.

**Modify:** Use the Craft (Clockworks) skill to temporarily modify existing clockworks, clockwork items and constructs. The DCs for these individual modifications are specific to the type of modification and are listed accordingly (use the Build DCs). These modifications are generally temporary, lasting a number of hours or days.

**Program:** You can program an intelligent clockwork or construct to obey specific commands. These commands require an hour of programming and a successful Craft (Clockworks) check against the DC indicated below to successfully install them. Clockworks may be programmed to obey a number of commands equal to one-third of their Hit Dice (minimum 1) or their Intelligence modifier (whichever is greater).

Constructs obey these commands until programmed to do otherwise. Unless noted in the command's description, commanding a construct is a move action. Clockworks and constructs may be programmed to obey the following commands:

- **Aid** (DC 25): On command, the clockwork or construct distracts an enemy. The construct declares a target enemy and makes an attack

against AC 10. If successful, the construct grants one ally a +2 attack bonus against that opponent on the ally's next turn. The clockwork or construct must also be programmed with the Attack task.

- **Attack** (DC 20): On command, the clockwork or construct attacks an enemy. The character may direct it to attack particular enemies as a move action. Otherwise, the construct attacks the nearest enemy.

- **Defend** (DC 20): The clockwork or construct stands ready defend any specified individual or item without requiring a command. The clockwork or construct attacks any creature that attacks the individual or item. It also attacks any creature the protected individual commands it to attack.

- **Flank** (DC 25): On command, the clockwork or construct moves to flank an opponent. It will avoid drawing attacks of opportunity. The clockwork or construct must also be programmed with the Attack task.

- **Gather** (DC 15): On command, the clockwork or construct retrieves something. If you do not point out a specific item, it gathers random objects.

- **Guard** (DC 20): On command, the clockwork or construct stays in place and prevents others from approaching a designated individual, item, or area. The clockwork or construct must also be programmed with the Attack task.

- **Hold Fast** (DC 15): On command, the clockwork or construct stays in place. It does not challenge others but will defend itself. The clockwork or construct must also be programmed with the Defend task

- **Return** (DC 15): On command, the clockwork or construct moves to you, taking the most direct route. It provokes attacks of opportunity as normal.

- **Search** (DC 15): On command, the clockwork or construct moves into an area and looks for anything that is obviously alive or animate. Treat the Search skill check as taking 20.

• **Stop** (DC 10): On command, the clockwork or construct immediately stops its current action. This command is a free action.

• **Stand Down** (DC 15): On command, the clockwork or construct breaks off from combat or otherwise backs down. A clockwork or construct lacking this program fights until disabled, destroyed or until it defeats an opponent.

• **Tactical Return** (DC 25): On command, the clockwork or construct returns to you, taking the most direct route that avoids attacks of opportunity whenever possible. The clockwork or construct must also be programmed with the Return task.

• **Work** (DC 15): The clockwork or construct pulls or pushes a medium or heavy load. Some clockworks or constructs may be programmed to perform specific types of work, such as repairing armor or weaving cloth. They are restricted to work of DC 10 difficulty or less.

*Quick Fix:* You may use a full round action to remove the Broken condition from a clockwork item for short time. Make a Craft (Clockworks) check (DC 10 + hp damage to be repaired). Success means you may use that item normally for a number of rounds equal to your ranks in Craft (Clockworks).

*Repair Construct:* Repair a construct or sentient clockwork. Repairing a construct takes four hours. Make a Craft (Clockworks) skill check (DC 15 + construct's HD). If successful, restore 1d4 hp to the construct. If you exceed the DC by 5 or more, add your Intelligence modifier (if positive) to this amount.

*Treat Critical Damage:* To treat critical damage, make a Craft (Clockworks) skill check (DC 20) as a full round action. Success restores 2 hit points per level or HD of the creature. Successes of 5 or more over the DC add your Intelligence modifier (if positive) to this amount.

A creature can only benefit from this ability once every 24 hours. This check consumes two uses from an Engineer's kit. You suffer -2 on your Craft (Clockworks) check for each use from the Engineer's kit that you lack.

## Knowledge (Clockworks) (Int; Trained only)

You possess special knowledge about clockworks. Not only can you answer simple and complex questions about them, you can also identify special characteristics they might possess. Weaknesses, strengths, and their uses—whether they are free-willed constructs or highly complex devices—can also be identified with specific checks.

Answering simple questions about clockworks using this skill is a free action. Identifying specific information about a clockwork device is generally a standard action, but may be a full round action if much study or deep thought is required. Ω

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# The Royal Order of the Golden Fox

By Russell Jones  
Art by Joseph Jacobs

MIDGARD  
CAMPAIGN SETTING

Tracking and killing exotic and dangerous beasts has long been a tradition among the nobility of the Grand Duchies of Dornig and the Electoral Kingdom of Krakova. It also provides the lower classes a way to achieve renown, or simply better pay than hard labor. Those who hunt these monsters recognize their peers through their scars, stories, and trophies. But one brotherhood of hunters stands

above the rest, even while they hide their influence on the world.

Long ago in the fallen kingdom of Gorenth, hunting for sport became such an obsession among the nobility that some pooled their resources and influence to charter the Royal Order of the Golden Fox, a society dedicated to organizing, informing and rewarding hunters from all levels of society. They took their name from their favorite inn, which also became their first Lodge, and they posted rewards for the most dangerous and rare game around. The greatest hunters were revered by

all, and their trophies hung proudly in the order's halls inspiring others to take up the mantle of the Golden Fox.

But things took a grisly turn as the hunter's bounties began to inspire greed instead of heroism. Bandits used the hunting craze to turn a profit, and when dried children's hands began turning up as "goblin paws" the Royal Order stopped offering bounties. The killing had gone too far, though; the kingdom was wiped out by a combined horde of hobgoblins, goblins, and ogres during the wars that created the western wastes.

Persistent rumors claim the Royal Order survived.

## The Golden Foxes Today

The Royal Order exists today as a loose society of independent Lodges scattered across the world. Members are taught words and signs that are recognized at all Lodges, but each has its own unique history and customs. Members can sponsor bounties posted in each Lodge, which are regulated by veteran Hunt Masters. Hunters also trade skills and services, giving characters access to more specialized gear and a place to sell other items they may bring back from their hunts.

Urban Lodges are more secretive than their pastoral counterparts and are very strict about who joins their ranks. These Lodges are found



in places with high corruption and often “hunt” particularly heinous and violent criminals, whether they be lords or peasants. Their Hunt Masters are vigilantes, working quietly with local watch to identify and eliminate gang leaders, murderers, necromancers, and other criminals. Because of their vigilante methods and dangerous targets, the members of these Lodges conceal their affiliation and rarely recruit new members. They fear infiltration by criminal organizations.

## The Royal Order in Your Game

The Golden Foxes make a good organization to provide side quests for most adventuring groups, both in the form of wilderness hunts and bounties for local criminals, bandits, and minor villains. They can serve as patrons for rangers, druids, bounty hunters, or big-game monster hunter characters. The Order makes a deadly foil for parties that cause great death and destruction through their normal adventuring. In these cases, the Foxes work behind the scenes to discredit them or even hunt them down as a threat to nature or civilization.

If a PC is identified as a potential candidate for the Royal Order they are asked to undertake a hunt with special conditions, such as one using primitive weapons or in dangerous terrain. Because these hunters must first prove themselves to the Order by deeds and reputation, characters are usually approached towards the end of the Heroic tier. Those who join the Royal Order are given a fox fur stole dyed gold, meant to be worn at Lodge gatherings. Most members (especially in urban Lodges) keep these stoles hidden, and instead carry an innocuous symbol such as a cloak pin or ring with a fox emblazoned on it.

PCs can learn about the Royal Order through a History, Nature or Streetwise check as shown in the sidebar. History informs PCs about the Royal Order’s past and ideals, while Nature and Streetwise help PCs find and contact a local Lodge.

## Treasures of the Royal Order

These items are given as rewards for completing hunts or completing other quests for the Order. They are usually trophies taken by other hunters, items crafted from dragonhide or other valuable materials, relics dating back to the founding days of the Golden Foxes, or simply gear used by the order to achieve its goals, such as *predator’s hide* and *dragonslayer* weapons. All full members of a Lodge are given the signature item, the *mantle of the golden fox*.

### MANTLE OF THE GOLDEN FOX

*This enchanted fox stole shimmers with a golden glow in the torchlight of a hall, but blurs to a muted brown as you run through the wilds.*

Level 9	+2	4,200gp
Level 14	+3	21,000gp
Level 19	+4	105,000gp
Level 24	+5	525,000gp
Level 29	+6	2,625,000gp

**Item Slot:** Neck

**Enhancement:** Fortitude, Reflex, and Will

**Power (Daily):** (Minor action) Until the start of your next turn, you take only a -2 to Stealth checks to remain hidden after moving more than 2 squares.

## Weapons

### DRAGONSTOOTH BLADE

*This razor-sharp blade, little more than leather straps around the base of a large tooth, still carries the power of the beast it came from.*

Level 3	+1	680gp
Level 8	+2	3,400gp
Level 13	+3	17,000gp
Level 18	+4	85,000gp
Level 23	+5	425,000gp
Level 28	+6	2,125,000gp

**Weapon:** Light blade

**Enhancement:** Attack rolls and damage rolls

**Critical:** +1d6 acid, cold, fire, lightning or poison damage per plus (see Special).

**Special:** The DM chooses acid, cold, fire, lightning or poison when this weapon is first found. Any extra damage such as from a critical hit or a class feature like a rogue’s Sneak Attack deals damage of that type.

**Power (Daily):** Minor Action. Gain Resist 10 to the chosen damage type until the end of your next turn. *Level 16:* Resist 20 damage of the chosen type. *Level 26:* Resist 30 damage.

### FALCONSTRIKE WEAPON

*Like a diving peregrine, this weapon slams into opponents and sends them painfully to the ground.*

Level 3	+1	680gp
Level 8	+2	3,400gp
Level 13	+3	17,000gp
Level 18	+4	85,000gp
Level 23	+5	425,000gp
Level 28	+6	2,125,000gp

**Weapon:** Any ranged.

**Enhancement:** Attack rolls and damage rolls.

**Critical:** +1d6 damage per plus, +1d8 against flying targets.

**Power (Daily):** Free action. Use this power when you hit with the weapon. The target is knocked prone. If the target was flying, it takes 1d8 damage in addition to any falling damage.

*Level 13 or 18:* 2d8 damage to flying creatures.

*Level 23 or 28:* 3d8 damage to flying creatures.

### OBSIDIAN FIST

*This crude hammer, made from a single piece of obsidian, was taken from a berserk salamander and is said to hum when fed blood.*

Level 10	+2	5,000gp
Level 15	+3	25,000gp
Level 20	+4	125,000gp
Level 25	+5	625,000gp
Level 30	+6	3,125,000gp

**Weapon:** Warhammer

**Enhancement:** Attack rolls and damage rolls

**Critical:** +1d6 damage per plus

**Property:** This weapon can be used as a heavy thrown weapon with a range of 6/12.

**Power (Encounter):** Minor Action. Gain a +2 power bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls with this weapon and a -5 to all defenses until the end of your next turn.

### BLACKHEART’S JUDGMENT

*A wicked, crescent-shaped greataxe used by a hobgoblin raider to execute dozens of innocents.*

Level 10	+2	5,000gp
Level 15	+3	25,000gp
Level 20	+4	125,000gp
Level 25	+5	625,000gp
Level 30	+6	3,125,000gp

**Weapon:** Greataxe

**Enhancement:** Attack rolls and damage rolls.

**Critical:** +1d12 damage per plus.

## Learning about the Golden Foxes

### HISTORY

DC 15 – A royal fraternity of nobles in a distant kingdom once banded together under the sign of the Golden Fox to reward hunters of great skill.

DC 20 – The Royal Order of the Golden Fox exists in secret; its hunts encouraged violence and killings through the fallen kingdom. Today, the Golden Foxes hunt monsters and criminals instead of peasants and boar.

DC 25 – PC knows the traditional signs and watchwords used by members of the Royal Order of the Golden Foxes.

### NATURE

DC 15 – Monsters and dangerous animals are kept in check by a secret society of hunters. The order uses a yellow or gold fox as its symbol.

DC 20 – Lodges of the Royal Order of the Golden Fox can be found where hunters gather. They offer unique skills and information about dangerous game in the region.

DC 25 – PC finds where the nearest wilderness Lodge is located, and the requirements of membership.

### STREETWISE

DC 15 – Most major thieves' guilds have heard rumors about vigilantes who target the more ruthless criminal organizations. These vigilantes sometimes paint a yellow fox as a warning.

DC 20 – The Golden Foxes are bounty hunters who offer rewards to people who hunt down the criminals, thugs, and killers. They work with local authorities in some cases.

DC 25 – PC learns how to contact the nearest urban Lodge, and the name of a sympathizer among local law enforcement.

**Power (Daily):** Free action. Use this power when an attack made with this weapon reduces a minion's hit points below zero. Make a free basic melee attack against another target within range.

### BANE, THE HOUNDING SPEAR

*Bound with the spirit of a famous hunter's prized hound, this growling spear has a pack of mastiffs running after a stag carved onto its shaft, and makes sure its master's prey cannot hide or escape.*

Level 10	+2	5,000gp
Level 15	+3	25,000gp
Level 20	+4	125,000gp
Level 25	+5	625,000gp
Level 30	+6	3,125,000gp

**Weapon:** Spear

**Enhancement:** Attack rolls and damage rolls.

**Critical:** +1d6 damage per plus.

**Property:** Attacks made with this weapon ignore partial cover.

**Power (Encounter):** Free action. Use this power when a target granting combat advantage to you is damaged by this weapon. The target is slowed until the end of its next turn.

**Communication:** Empathy, Speech

**Persona:** Bane, the favorite hound of Herne the Hunter, was bound to the spear after it was mortally wounded pursuing a dire boar. It is very protective and loyal to its wielder, growling when it senses danger and howling as it plunges into battle.

**Alignment:** Good **Languages:** -

**Skills:** Bane grants a +2 to skill checks made to avoid being surprised, and any checks involving wild animals.

### SONSBLADE

*This elegant and practical sword was made to protect the sons of noble houses while they were hunting. It has an adamantite basket hilt as well as a jeweled sigil on its pommel from the house that commissioned it.*

Level 9	+2	4,200gp
Level 14	+3	21,000gp
Level 19	+4	105,000gp
Level 24	+5	525,000gp
Level 29	+6	2,625,000gp

**Weapon:** Longsword

**Enhancement:** Attack rolls and damage rolls

**Critical:** +1d6 per plus.

**Property:** You may add this weapon's enhancement bonus to all your defenses when targeted by an opportunity attack.

**Power (Daily):** Free action. You may only use this power while you are

bloodied. You gain a resistance to all damage equal to the enhancement bonus of the weapon until the end of the encounter.

## Armors

### BASILISK SCALE

*Glimmering with reflective emerald scales, this armor helps turn aside the petrifying gaze of creatures such as the basilisk or medusa.*

Level 4	+1	840gp
Level 9	+2	4,200gp
Level 14	+3	21,000gp
Level 19	+4	105,000gp
Level 24	+5	525,000gp
Level 29	+6	2,625,000gp

**Armor:** Scale

**Enhancement:** AC

**Property:** You may add this armor's enhancement bonus to defenses targeted by an attack with the gaze keyword.

### WORG HIDE

*This leather armor is covered in coarse, black fur and is heavy enough that its wearers instinctively hunch and run in a feral, loping manner.*

Level 3	+1	680gp
Level 8	+2	3,400gp
Level 1	+3	17,000gp
Level 18	+4	85,000gp
Level 23	+5	425,000gp
Level 28	+6	2,125,000gp

**Armor:** Leather

**Enhancement:** AC

**Power (Daily):** Free action. Your speed increases by 2 and you gain concealment until the beginning of your next turn.

### OGRE HIDE

*This thick, gray armor can take even the most punishing blows.*

Level 3	+1	680gp
Level 8	+2	3,400gp
Level 13	+3	17,000gp
Level 18	+4	85,000gp
Level 23	+5	425,000gp
Level 28	+6	2,125,000gp

**Armor:** Hide

**Enhancement:** AC

**Power (Daily):** Free action. You may use this power when you are critically hit with an attack that has the Weapon keyword. You gain Resist 10 to the damage from the triggering attack.







Put out the fire.

Shoulder your pack.

And enter the darkness of  
the deep woods...

# Tales of the Old Margreve

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# The Curse of the Blue Titchyboo

By Willie Walsh  
Art by C.L. Dahlstrom

**T**he Curse of the Blue Titchyboo” is an urban-based *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game* mini-adventure suitable for four or five good-aligned characters of 2nd-3rd level. It involves investigating an insular community of tengu—avian humanoids described in the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary* and in “The Ecology of the Tengu” article in *KOBOLD QUARTERLY* #14.

## Adventure Background

Tengu can be unpredictable. Even so, many found it surprising that a flock has begun sending youngsters to the newly-created Three Pond

Model School where, just like settled humanoids, chicks learn civilized behavior indoors in stuffy, gloomy classrooms from tengu instructors.

## Adventure Summary

The tengu school is secretly a front for nefarious activities. Some students are training as rogues with four of the seven staff as their tutors. The authorities currently tolerate the apparently innocent tengu school, but concerns continue to grow about the number of petty thefts in the city. So far, no one has connected the model school and the thieves.

The chief villain is a tengu named

Glaark: a small adult who uses his stature and skills to hide among the children, bullying many of the brighter chicks who might penetrate his disguise. To ensure the silence of the gullible ones, he has told them that he is the Blue Titchyboo, a tengu bogeyman. Glaark has grown restless and started picking pockets on the city streets, a habit that will bring unwanted attention to the school.

Few adult tengu know that the school harbors thieves. The majority, including some teachers, think it exists to integrate tengu into society or at least offer honest advantages these avian-folk can exploit. Fickle as tengu are, many may welcome the secret academy’s exposure; others may be irritated by the “meddling” PCs.

Drawn to the school because of stolen goods, the PCs must find clues by speaking with staff and children.

The adventure concludes with the identification of one or more of the rogues and the recovery of the valuables.



## Adventure Hooks

The PCs can be victims of the Blue Titchyboo with a valuable item stolen from them while in town. Hot pursuit or asking the right questions (and greasing palms) leads them to the gates of the school.

Alternatively, city officials or some other party employs the PCs to seek the recovery of stolen goods—a vital spell component, gemstone, rare coin, an incriminating document, etc.

## The Adventure

When the PCs first visit, they discover a contingent of 12 armed tengu parents attending the school's open day. The parents become very hostile toward anyone placing children in danger, so the PCs must behave moderately or suffer serious consequences.

Headmaster Cho's ambition is to train a coterie of young tengu rogues that he can rely on as spies among his fellow avians. He must appear reasonable so parents don't withdraw their children. Annoyed as he is by Scholar Glaark's bad timing

and indiscipline, Cho must rely on the school's cover story. PCs may explore the school, and Cho hopes that nothing incriminating turns up, especially while influential parents are about.

## Introduction

It's assumed that the PCs arrive on school open day. Read or paraphrase the following:

The trail leads to a large building in a cobbled yard with an institutional look about it. To one side stands a single water tower attached to a long, squat, lean-to. The sound of children chanting times tables echoes from within the main building opposite.

Several knots of relaxed humanoid bird folk stand in the yard, engaged in small talk. The males wear comfortable robes, their taloned hands resting casually on the hilts of their swords. The females, some eating still-wriggling invertebrates on delicate skewers, likewise seem

at ease. Several are obviously armed. Smaller, uniformed versions of the adults run here and there.

As you take in the scene, an adult in a dark blue cape notices you and bustles over saying:

"Visitors! Visitors! Welcome to our open day! We're always glad to show off our Three Pond Model School. I am Headmaster Cho. I run this humble establishment. May I offer you some refreshments?"

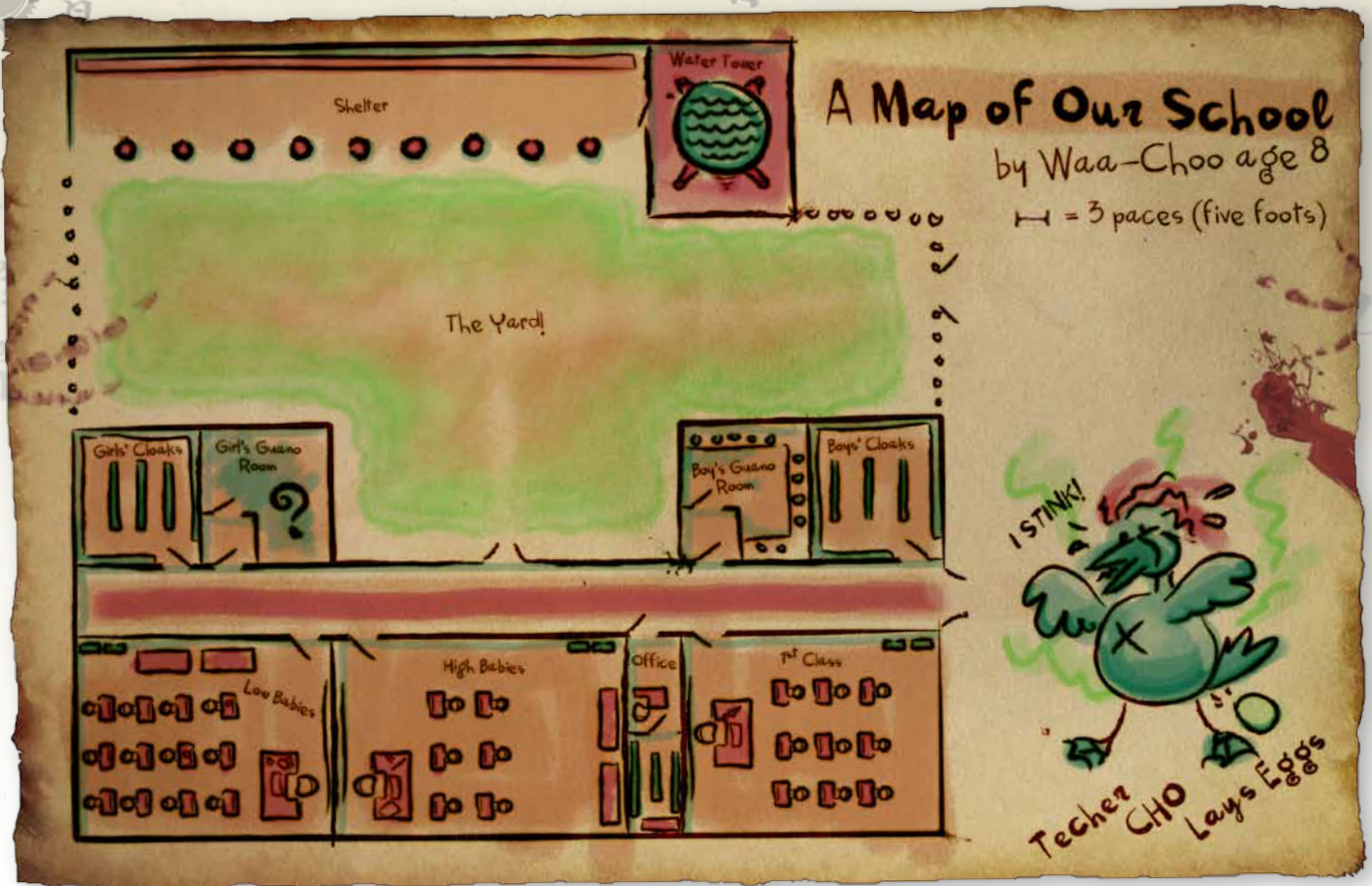
He waves to a youngster who immediately runs over carrying a tray of live "treats."

If the PCs chased Glaark here, Cho claims a boy ran past him into the school, but he didn't see who. No one else seems to have noticed. Cho can attempt an opposed Bluff check to fool the PCs. If he fails, the characters suspect he is lying and trying to distract them.

If challenged, Cho proclaims: "We can settle this easily! I'll assemble

## Staff at the Model School

Rank	Name	Attitude	Class	Notes
Headmaster	Headmaster Cho ♂	Bumbling, nervous, "Ha! Ha!"	Rogue	If found out, denies any involvement with rogues.
School Secretary	Secretary Peng ♀	Suspicious, wary, tense.	Non-Rogue	Loyal to Cho but unaware of rogues. Her ledger records frequent "sendings to Headmaster" of Tenimi, Glaark, and Sam-Pei.
Low Babies	Teacher Mim ♀	Well-meaning, disorganized, kindly.	Non-Rogue	Believer in foot painting, crayons, and modeling clay as method of teaching personal responsibility.
Low Babies	Assistant Teacher Mawk ♀	Strict, business-like, cool	Rogue	Disliked by the children who claim she pinches them.
High Babies	Teacher Loo ♀	Progressive, friendly, relaxed.	Rogue	Cho's deputy among rogues, Loo will run the school if Cho is dismissed. Not above remarking on Cho's lack of teaching skills.
High Babies	Assistant Teacher Pin ♂	Lazy, ungentle, disinterested.	Rogue	Doesn't appear to do much work with students some of whom have difficulty recalling his name.
1st Class	Teacher Feng ♂	Quiet, respectful, serene.	Non-Rogue	Physical Education and Swordplay teacher. Has noticed in the Cloakroom that Glaark has "breeding plumage" in certain places beyond his years...



the students, and you can pick the boy out!" He then rings a hand bell, summoning the faculty to assembly and, simultaneously, sounding a warning to discretely hide any thieffy accoutrements while the tengu line up in the yard.

If the PCs arrive peaceably, they are welcome to explore the school like any other visitor on open day. To show them and the tengu parents the school's benefits, Cho summons the students, who converge chaotically on the yard and finally assemble in three ordered lines. Only Low Babies betray a sense of nervousness, except for one or two gigglers quickly scowled down by Headmaster Cho.

Without preamble, Pupil Waa-Choo steps forward clutching a piece of paper. He chants:

"Welcome to our model school  
We hope you like your stay.  
Please enjoy the demon station  
That we run today."

Waa-Choo then thrusts the paper into a random PC's hand. The paper is his map of the school. He adds:

"I know where eggs come from!"

"Demonstration, Waa-Choo! No demons here! Ha! Ha!" says Teacher Cho, waving the youngster back into line. The watching parents clap politely.

PCs trying to detect Glaark are hampered by the fact that the avian children all look rather similar. Adventurers take a -5 penalty on Perception checks against Glaark's Disguise skill to see if they can pick him out.

Even if they find him, Glaark does not have the filched item on him or anything to identify him as a rogue. He wears a concealed short sword, but this is not unusual among tengu sub-adults. The PCs must gather further evidence before the teachers and parents agree to hand him over to the authorities. Accusations without such evidence

quickly lead to the tengu closing ranks against the "outsiders" and may lose the PCs this chance altogether.

If the PCs don't find Glaark or withhold their accusations, a ragged display of morning exercises and almost synchronized marching follows.

When the dust settles, Headmaster Cho rings his bell, and the children disperse, some flocking inside and others wandering among the visitors.

Use statistics from the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary* to represent the tengu parents, plus the apprentice rogues Tenimi, and Sam-Pei.

## Investigating

If the PCs explain their purpose, Cho agrees to almost any suggestion for the investigation, especially if it keeps things discrete. PCs can interview children by group or individually with a teacher present. Teachers can be interviewed alone or with Headmaster Cho present. Cho draws the line at bullying or physically threatening

## Children at the Model School

Rank	Name	Notes	Development	
Low Babies	Chok-Chok ♂	If stressed, throws his beak wide, pathetically flapping and begging food.	Says he has seen the glowing blue eyes of the Titchyboo at classroom window.	
	Uatasi ♂	Mischievously mimics Teacher Cho.	Has secret orders from Glaark to mimic Cho to provide a distraction.	
	Tok-Tok ♀	Likes to sing even when forbidden.		
	Chok-Kang ♀	Wears a hawk-eyes medallion under a neckerchief as proof against the Blue Titchyboo.	Believes that school haunted by bogeyman living in the (nonexistent) attic.	
	Hameni ♂	Champion at Spitballs.		
	Wan-Ping ♂	Has an unhealthy fascination with the Guano room.		
High Babies	Waa-Choo ♂	Nosy, self-important. Knows where eggs come from and wants to tell.		
	Fu-Weng ♀	Loves to rewrite bloodthirsty versions of common nursery rhymes.		
	Wu-lo ♂	Tries to always face people as his tail hasn't yet grown feathers.	Saw Tenimi go into Cho's office one day but Tenimi wasn't there when Wu-lo entered with a wormy apple for the teacher moments later.	
	Nam-Hong ♀	Blubs a lot. Loudly.	Cries very loudly if questioned. Glaark planted a "missing" ruler in her desk.	
	Pi-Pi ♂	Cow entrails in his lacquered wooden lunchbox.	Has been told Glaark is the Titchyboo.	
	Twa-too ♂	A budding ventriloquist.	Can be persuaded by PCs to use his skill to their benefit.	
	Pa-Kri ♂	In charge of the Nature Table. Has a penchant for seashells.	Has been told Glaark is the Titchyboo.	
	Hu-Kroo ♂	Imagines he is the Blue Titchyboo giving strenuous displays of made-up martial arts as proof.	Liable to "hop-chop" a PC unexpectedly.	
	1st Class	Glaark ♂	Rogue level 3, the Blue Titchyboo	Says Nam-Hong took his ruler.
		Caw-Caw ♀	Secret snacks pilfered from the wormery.	Speaks with her mouth full saying Glaark is a bully and doesn't do his homework.
Mai-Chet ♂		Perfecting blueprint of innovative Tengu-sized nestbox.	Has been told Glaark is the Titchyboo.	
Su-Lei ♀		Likes Mai-Chet but scorns his nestbox plan.	Has been told Glaark is the Titchyboo.	
Ten-Foo ♀		Likes Su-Lei and jealous of Mai-Chet whom she'll blame for anything.	Has been told Glaark is the Titchyboo.	
Tenimi ♂		Apprentice Rogue Level 1.	With Sam-Pei, Tenimi is a true apprentice rogue. He is shifty when questioned and tries to deflect attention to Caw-Caw.	
	Sam-Pei ♀	Apprentice Rogue Level 1.	Sam-Pei is crafty and unperturbed, trying to implicate Teacher Mim.	

anyone, and the parents ensure this doesn't happen.

PCs can also opt to mingle without explaining their motives. The GM should encourage them to interact with the tengu to obtain clues.

Although Cho believes the school will survive close scrutiny, some of the tengu have noticed unusual goings on. Taken as a whole, their information may lead the PCs to the conclusion that more than just one light-fingered student studies here.

Use the sidebars to introduce individual teachers and children to the PCs.

## The School

The school has the capacity for 54 students but, presently, only 21 are enrolled. There are six children in Low Babies (ages 6–7), eight in High Babies (ages 8–9), and seven in 1st Class (ages 10–11), presided over by Headmaster Cho with six other faculty staff.

Four of the staff are rogues, including Headmaster Cho. Three of the children

in 1st Class are student thieves, including Scholar Glaark.

The school appears as mapped by Waa-Choo. Each classroom contains double-desks, a blackboard, and a project table or nature table. Random students proudly show the PCs their various drawings and exhibits on the tables.

Headmaster Cho's office contains books on arithmetic, grammars in several languages, social customs, and economics. A trapdoor beneath his desk leads to the rogue training facility in a cellar. Detecting the cunningly hidden opening requires a Perception check (DC 20). The trapdoor has 30 hp and requires a Strength check (DC 16) to break in.

In the cellar, the PCs find target dummies, masks, robes, feather wigs, a small case containing glowing blue contact lenses, 50 sp, 150 gp, and three pieces of jewelry worth 100 gp each. Glaark's 10 daggers are hidden here along with anything stolen from the PCs or an employer.

## Concluding the Adventure

If PCs fail to question anybody or if they stake the place out over a prolonged time, they eventually notice Glaark on one of his forays or see rogues practicing climbing skills on the water tower. What they do with the information may influence further adventures.

Confronting one or more rogues may lead to a violent conclusion in which the PCs must take care not to place the children in peril. If the rogues can maneuver, some may try to hold off the PCs from the top of the water tower while others evacuate the academy. Worried parents may mistake the PCs for marauders and defend their young or accuse them in front of the city watch.

If the PCs discover enough clues to illustrate the nature of the school, the authorities or concerned tengu may close the place down without a combat on the premises. The rogues or their allies will certainly seek to avenge the loss of their school on the PCs when they can least afford it.



## Glaark, Tengu Rogue

*A non-descript avian schoolboy, this figure calmly watches the world through pale-green bird eyes.*

Cunning and impulsive in equal measure, Glaark absconds periodically into the outside world to amuse himself with petty thefts. Even if he survives the scrutiny he has brought to the rogue academy, his days hiding as a student may be numbered. The PCs might well encounter him again after he is cut adrift by his tutors—perhaps seeking revenge on the adventurers he blames for his exclusion.

### GLAARK

CR 2

#### XP 600

Male tengu rogue 3  
N Medium humanoid tengu  
**Init** +3; **Senses** low light vision;  
Perception +4

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 13, touch 13, flat-footed 10 (+3 Dex)  
**hp** 18 (3d8+3)  
**Fort** +2, **Ref** +6, **Will** +2  
**Defensive Abilities** evasion, trap

sense +1

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft  
**Melee** +1 *spell storing short sword* +6  
(1d6+1/19–20), bite –2 (1d3)  
**Ranged** daggers +5 (1d4+1/19–20)  
**Special Attacks** sneak attack +2d6

#### TACTICS

**Before Combat** Mindful of his lack of armor while disguised at the school, Glaark prefers to fight only if Stealth can give him an advantage to bring sneak attack into play.

**During Combat** Glaark has no compunction against placing innocents in the way while throwing daggers at persistent foes. If forced into swordplay, he uses his +1 *spell storing short sword* with a special *bestow curse* spell in it. Anyone hit by the weapon is magically cursed, taking a –4 penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks involving tengu thereafter.

**Morale** If damaged, the rogue flees. If escape is impossible, he surrenders and hopes to secure leniency through the influence of his tengu connections.

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 13, **Dex** 17, **Con** 11, **Int** 13, **Wis** 15,  
**Cha** 8  
**Base Atk** +2; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 16

**Feats** Run, Weapon Finesse

**Skills** Acrobatics +9, Appraise +6, Bluff +6, Climb +6, Disable Device +8, Disguise +6, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (local) +6, Sense Motive +6, Stealth +11, Use Magic Device +6; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Linguistics, +2 Perception, +2 Stealth,

**Languages** Common, Goblin, Halfling, Tengu

**SQ** gifted linguist, rogue talent (fast stealth), swordtrained, trapfinding +1

**Combat Gear** 10 daggers, lunchbox, school bag, school books, school uniform, +1 *spell storing short sword*

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Gifted Linguist (Ex)** Tengu gain a +4 bonus on Linguistics checks and learn 2 languages each time they gain a rank in Linguistics rather than 1 language.

**Swordtrained (Ex)** Tengu are trained from birth in swordplay and as a result are automatically proficient with sword-like weapons. Ω



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# The Ring of Rule-Breaking

by Monte Cook

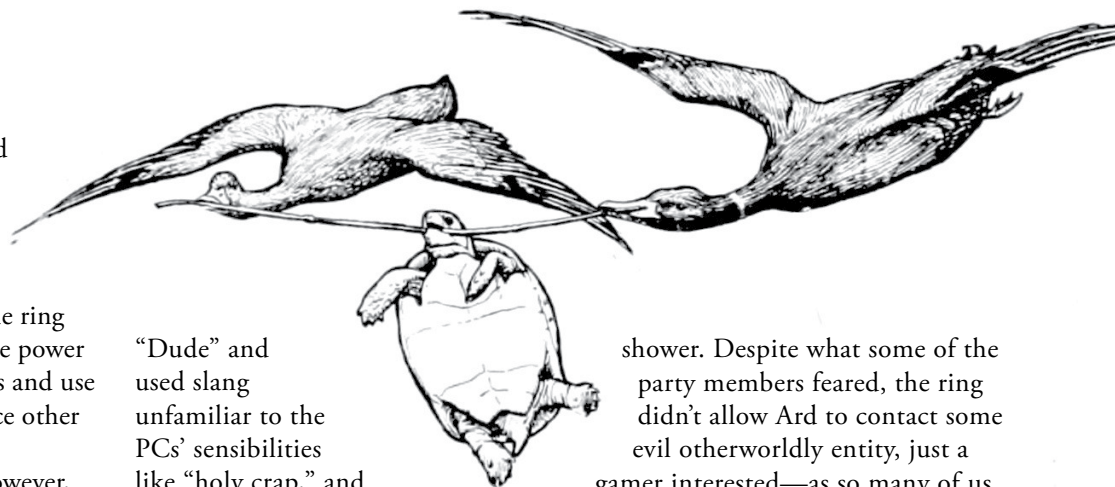
Art By John Dickson Batten

Sometimes you don't need more rules, you need less. In a recent campaign I ran, a player character obtained a magical ring very early on. The ring seemed intelligent and had the power to consume other magic items and use the absorbed power to produce other effects.

The ring had two secrets, however, one of which the player would eventually discover, and the other (I hoped) he never would. The first was that the ring wasn't intelligent but a conduit to an entity that governed the use of the item and could even provide advice. The second was that there were no rules governing the power of the ring. Let me write that again, just to be clear. I included an item in my game that had no rules.

The entity that the PC communicated with when he mentally "spoke" to the ring proved very entertaining: smart, inquisitive, flippant, and perhaps not entirely trustworthy. He encouraged the PC to investigate interesting sources of magical power, and the campaign was full of such things. To some of the other PCs, in fact, he seemed a little *too* interested in sources of great power. The PC—a cleric named Ard—proved all too willing to oblige and indulge the ring; the perfect set up.

It got even more intriguing. The language the ring—or rather, the entity beyond the ring—used was a strange language. He called Ard,



“Dude” and used slang unfamiliar to the PCs’ sensibilities like “holy crap,” and “chill out.” When Ard called on the ring, the voice always seemed as though Ard had interrupted, as if the voice wasn’t paying attention to Ard and his friends. Once when Ard called, he seemed to contact someone else, who said, “Hang on, I’ll get him,” before he finally reached the usual voice. Strangest of all, however, when the ring would take stock of Ard’s current situation, he would say things like, “You guys aren’t high enough level to be here, are you?” The ring referred to Ard’s “hit points” and “Armor Class.” These strange words and concepts, of course, had no meaning for a cleric and his companions exploring the underdark.

The idea, of course, was that Ard’s ring allowed him to contact a gamer; specifically, a gamer’s cell phone. The gamer (who never gave Ard his name, preferring to be called “the ring”) viewed Ard and his companions like computer game characters and saw what they saw through his computer. The other voice Ard heard was the gamer’s girlfriend, who had answered the phone while “the ring” was in the

shower. Despite what some of the party members feared, the ring didn’t allow Ard to contact some evil otherworldly entity, just a gamer interested—as so many of us are—in a little power gaming of his own. In my own mind, I always felt that the ring never believed that Ard and his friends were real but simply part of a game.

The important thing, however, was that the ring talked in game mechanics. He referred to Ard’s level and stats and whatnot (always accurately, as though the computer showed him that information). This proved a nice distraction from the fact that the ring was the one item in the game for which no game mechanics existed. Ard could ask the ring to absorb a magic item (almost always out of combat, and almost always being relatively low-value treasure or items that no one in the party could use) and it would. Ard’s player kept track of what the ring had absorbed. When needed, he could then ask the ring for help.

Usually, this help would come in the form of some powerful offensive assist, like a big blast of energy that inflicted a lot of damage on Ard’s enemies, or something defensive, like a temporary AC-boosting energy shield around Ard and his friends. A few times, the ring could produce some miscellaneous



effect, like a *restoration* effect, but this rarely came up.

The actual effect was always up to the ring (meaning, up to the DM). This allowed me to creatively insert myself into the action and provide an effect that made encounters or situations more interesting. The players never knew what would happen when they called upon the ring, and I think they found that entertaining.

I tried to conceal the fact that there were no rules by pretending to carefully consider what the ring had absorbed before calculating the power of the needed effect. “A *+1 dragonbane dagger*, hmm? Well, suddenly Ard’s arm goes rigid, and his hand clenches into a fist. A bolt of raw energy launches from the ring at the hydra. Uh, roll 6d6 for damage, and add another 3d6 since the hydra is fairly draconic in nature.” It sounded like I had some kind of mechanics, but I didn’t. I made it up on the fly.

Of course, I could have come up with some sort of conversion rules involving the gp value of the items absorbed or something, but that would have been precisely counter to the point of the item. I wanted the item to remain open-ended and enigmatic. The players would never know what to expect from it. More than just magical, it was mysterious, and in a game with lots of hard and fast statistics, true mystery is hard to come by.

I always had the freedom to tailor the effect to the situation. For example, a powerful NPC was imprisoned in a magical cell in a remote prison. Another NPC went to extraordinary lengths to free her—it was no simple *knock* spell; even a *wish* wouldn’t have done it. In the course of events, the PCs needed to open that unbreachable cell. The ring had, just prior, absorbed an item of artifact-level power. So when Ard called on the ring to bust down the door, it did. This broke all kinds of rules, but it made everything work in that particular adventure all the better. (In fact,

what it really did was fix a DM mistake; without getting through that door, the scenario would have inadvertently come to a premature and unsatisfying halt.)

This means, in addition to adding mystery and open-endedness to the game, the ring was an all-purpose out for me, a ready-made safety net.

All of this extended example illustrates that sometimes it’s a good thing to play outside the rules. The trick, of course, is to not abuse this nor allow anyone else to abuse it. For example, Ard’s player handled the situation perfectly. Rather than attempt to use the ring over and over, he only called on it when necessary (the mystery and slightly untrustworthy nature of the ring helped reinforce this, I think). Likewise, I kept notes on what I allowed the ring to accomplish and not accomplish based on what it had absorbed so that, all other things being equal, each use would be similar or at least in the same ballpark. This not only made it feel like rules actually governed the ring, but it allowed the players enough consistency to manage their own expectations.

I think it important that the players believed that some kind of rules governed the ring. I know this is likely controversial, but I never wanted them to feel like the ring could always get them out of any tough scrape. Not only would that have alleviated any tension and feeling of risk, it simply wasn’t true. The ring wasn’t there to save their bacon. It was there to save mine. I doubt they would have seen it that way.

Rules are important, but they are a tool not a straightjacket. Putting one rule-less element into the game—whether an item, an NPC, a location, a god, or what have you—can serve many good purposes. Used carefully, the absence of game mechanics can be as useful as the mechanics themselves.

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# Ask the Kobold

## *Illusions and Reality*

By Skip Williams  
Art by Darren Calvert

**Can the *major image* spell emulate the effects of other spells? Most of us know the three different types of illusions and that things like *major image* can't deal physical damage (since that's the realm of shadow spells), but just what kinds of effects can be done with *major image*? Would an illusion of a hail of arrows from an unseen source cause those who failed their saves to believe themselves pierced by a multitude of arrows and have them collapse in unconsciousness? What if you created an illusory swarm of fireballs (as with the *meteor swarm* spell)?**

You cannot use a figment spell such as *major image* to produce any real effects. Damage—even nonlethal damage—is a real effect. You can use *major image* to create an illusory hail of arrows, but those arrows cannot harm anything. They cannot even stick into anything; though you can make them look like they're sticking into something.

Assuming that the spellcaster knows what a hail of real arrows is like (and I expect that most adventurers do), the hail of illusory arrows from *major image* will look, sound, and even smell like the real thing. Creatures who can perceive the arrows can hear them zipping through the air and hear them striking home. Anyone caught in the volley likely will notice the arrows aren't dealing any damage. In most cases, that provides incontrovertible proof that the illusion isn't real.

You can adjust that for the circumstances, however. For example,

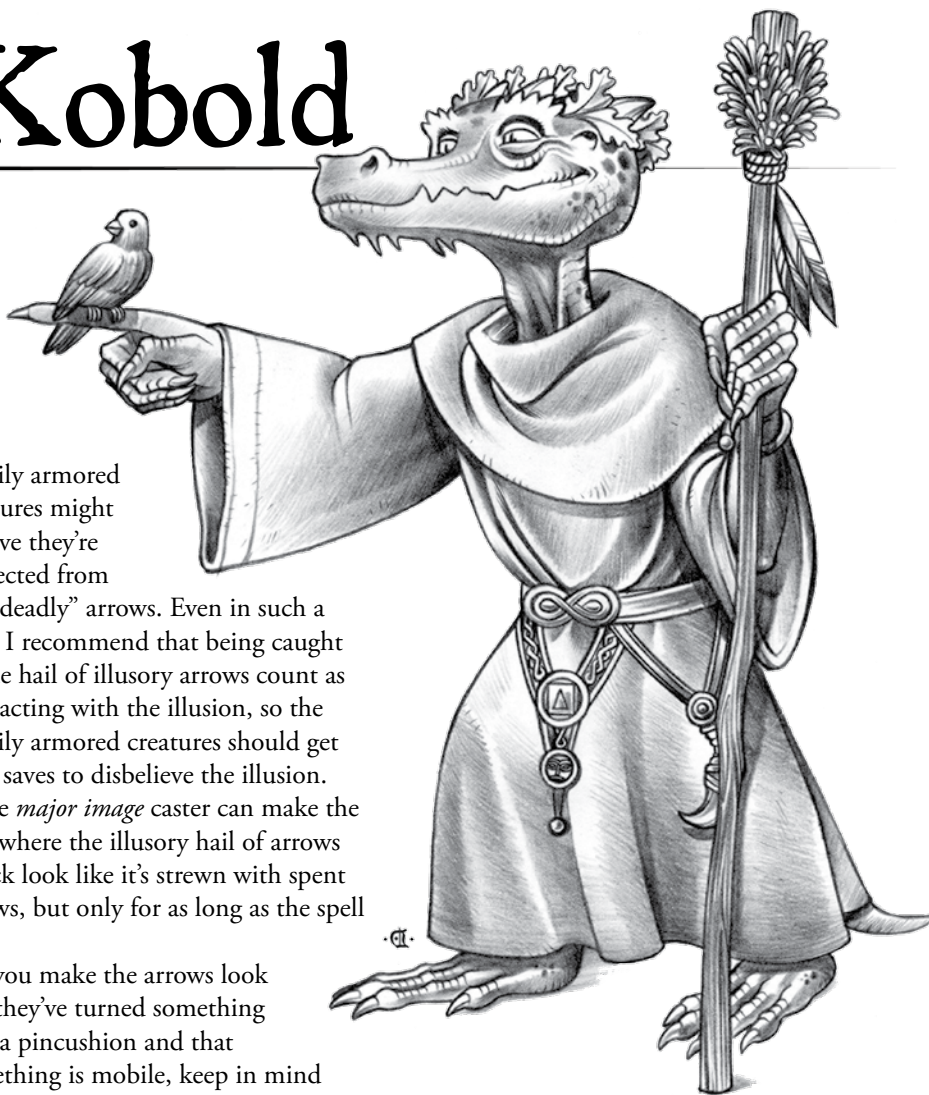
heavily armored creatures might believe they're protected from the “deadly” arrows. Even in such a case, I recommend that being caught in the hail of illusory arrows count as interacting with the illusion, so the heavily armored creatures should get Will saves to disbelieve the illusion.

The *major image* caster can make the area where the illusory hail of arrows struck look like it's strewn with spent arrows, but only for as long as the spell lasts.

If you make the arrows look like they've turned something into a pincushion and that something is mobile, keep in mind that the illusory arrows remain only so long as they remain with the *major image* spell's area, which the caster must choose at the time of casting. The spell's area is not mobile.

Figments are better at fooling creatures. You could use *major image* to create a hail of arrows that neatly bracket a creature or group, landing just a hair's breadth away and thrumming with (apparently) deadly potential. In such a situation, creatures should not get a saving throw against the illusion unless they take a moment to examine the arrows (at least a move action). Since *major image* doesn't have a tactile element, touching the arrows reveals the illusion. Just looking them over merits a saving throw for disbelief.

An illusory *meteor swarm* created with *major image* would work much like a hail of illusory arrows. The swarm



looks, sounds, and smells like the real thing—assuming the caster knows what a meteor swarm looks, sounds, and smells like, which might not be the case. You might want the caster to attempt a Spellcraft or Knowledge (arcana) check to duplicate the actual spell. Skip the check if the *major image* caster actually knows how to cast the spell she's mimicking. If the *major image* caster does not know how to cast the mimicked spell but has witnessed someone cast the spell, I recommend a skill DC of 15 plus the spell level of the mimicked spell. If the *major image* caster has never witnessed the spell being cast make the DC 20 plus the spell level.

If the check succeeds, the *major image* caster creates a convincing

image. If the check fails, the *major image* caster creates a flawed image and saving throws to disbelieve the image gain a bonus equal to the failed check result subtracted from the DC. For example, a spellcaster who has never seen a *meteor swarm* cast tries to create an image of one. The skill DC is 29. If the caster's check result is 21, Will saves to disbelieve the image gain a +8 bonus. You can use a similar procedure whenever someone tries to make an image of an unfamiliar force or object. Use the appropriate Knowledge skill.

No matter how accurate a figment of a meteor swarm is, it cannot damage or burn anything. The major image caster can make the area where the illusory swarm struck look and smell burned, though only for the duration of the spell.

### **My group has divided into two camps regarding the *nondetection* spell and its usefulness against various divination spells:**

**Camp One: *Nondetection* works against all divination spells, period. If you're protected by *nondetection* no divination spell reveals anything about you unless the divination user makes a successful caster level check.**

**Camp Two: *Nondetection* protects only against scrying spells (*clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *arcane eye*, *scrying*, and others), locate spells (*locate object* and *locate creature*), detect spells (*detect undead*, *detect magic*, *detect evil*, and others), and magical items that duplicate these effects, such as a *crystal ball*. Other divination spells, such as *see invisibility*, *true seeing*, *tongues*, *moment of prescience* fall outside the protected spell groups, and *nondetection* does not thwart them. Which camp is right?**

The *nondetection* spell description could say that it defeats all divination spells (regardless of their descriptors or modes of operation), but it does not. Instead, it specifies a broad subset of divination spells against which it is effective. Camp 2 has it right.

So, what divination spells are thwarted by *nondetection*? The spell description gives a few clues; *nondetection* provides some protection against divination spells directed against the warded subject or the area the subject is in. In particular:

#### **• Divination spells with the scrying descriptor.**

*Clairaudience/clairvoyance* is the best example. If you see the scrying descriptor right after the spell's name and school, the divination caster must make a caster level check for the spell to work.

#### **• Divination spells with any range entry other than personal or touch.**

When a divination spell has a range of personal or touch it grants the spell recipient some extra ability to perceive things and *nondetection* cannot ward its subject against the spell. When a divination spell has a range other than personal or touch, the spell must be directed at an area or at a specific subject, and *nondetection* is effective against it. It's worth noting here that scrying spells generally have ranges other than personal or touch.

*Nondetection* can affect some divination spells with a range of touch. If the touched subject receives some ability to perceive things, *nondetection* does not apply. If the spell reveals something about the touched subject, *nondetection* applies. *Identify* is an example of the latter kind of spell.

Here's a quick (and incomplete) list of divination spells that *nondetection* does **not** affect:

*arcane sight*, *greater arcane sight*, *augury*, *commune*, *commune with nature*, *comprehend languages*, *contact other plane*, *divination*, *find the path*, *find traps*, *foresight*, *guidance*, *know direction*, *legend lore*, *moment of prescience*, *read magic*, *see invisibility*, *speak with animals*, *speak with plants*, *stone tell*, *telepathic bond*, *tongues*, *true seeing*, *true strike*, *vision*

In some cases, you may want to allow a *nondetection* recipient to waive the

## **Tweaking *nondetection***

One might look at this installment's discussion of the *nondetection* spell and ask: "If the key factors in the *nondetection* spell are the scrying descriptor and the spell's range, why doesn't the spell description just say that?" And you'd be asking a good question. The answer is pretty simple; when my colleagues and I rewrote the spell, we just plain didn't realize we could do that. The full potential built into the game's terminology simply hadn't sunk in yet.

Long-time students of the game might find my answer to the *nondetection* spell unsatisfactory. After all, the classic illusionist's gambit is *nondetection* combined with *greater invisibility* (the AD&D Open tournament made use of this trick one year, much to many players' dismay).

It's simple enough to restore that combination to your campaign (if you think it's worthwhile). Just change the *see invisibility* spell from **Range:** Personal to **Area:** emanation with a radius 100 feet plus 10 feet/level centered the caster. You would still need a clear line of sight to whatever the spell reveals to actually see it. That is, despite the distance the emanation reaches, anything that obscures your vision also defeats the spell.

The rewritten *see invisibility* spell now falls into the group of divination spells *nondetection* can affect. You could make the altered *see invisibility* spell's area larger or smaller, but the value I've suggested here should leave the spell working pretty much as it always did for most campaigns.

effects of the ward against a specific spell. Waiving protection in this way should apply only to a specific casting of *nondetection* and a specific casting of a divination spell. Ω

# Dancing Brooms, Skittering Sconces

*Animated Mayhem*

By Michael Kortez

Art by Joseph Jacobs

*And at the mystic's command, the trappings of the chamber rose up: the statuary, the tapestries, the silvered carts bearing food and drink, the braziers of coal, the perse rug, the vases of orchids, the hung banners, and the candelabras. Then the king, the queen, and all the court knew the avarice plague was upon them.*

As a spell of flash and potency, *animate objects* pales in comparison to its contemporaries. But the spell ranks near the top for sheer versatility: Every abandoned mine, sunken temple, ruin, and dungeon has objects waiting for animation.

Animated objects provide an immediate form of battlefield control. Given that most objects found in a standard adventure scene won't be any greater than Large, when the spell first becomes available a single caster can quickly populate a room with allies. When every stool, shelf, and scone in a room jumps to life, retreat becomes that much more appealing.

Animated objects gain construct points according to the table in the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*. Construct points are spent during spellcasting to purchase abilities and defenses, called construct traits. These additional construct traits can help you make each item your bard or cleric animates distinctive and surprising.

## New Construct Traits

For an animated object to have any of these traits, it must have some innate quality linked to the listed trait. For instance, a standard wooden chair probably couldn't be considered barbed, but a chair found in a torture chamber might. Suggestions are listed below.

**Aggrandized** (*Ex, 1 CP*) The object's attacks deal damage as though it was one size category larger. Animated objects are naturally treated as one size category larger when determining slam attack damage. Ideal for already biggish objects such as wardrobes, carts, large dining tables, or any object with unusual weight or leverage when animated.

**Agile** (*Ex, 1 CP*) The object gains Weapon Finesse as a bonus feat. Only Small or Tiny objects can have this trait. Ideal for cutlery, needles, or small sculptures and jewelry.

**Bladed** (*Ex, 0 CP*) Instead of a slam attack, the object has a claw attack appropriate for the object's size. The additional attack trait adds an additional claw attack instead of a slam attack. Ideal for kitchen tools, garden implements, shovels, statues holding weapons, and (of course) animated weapons.

**Barbed** (*Ex, 2 CP*) A successful claw attack deals 1d3 points of bleed damage each round. Ideal for fences, ornate chairs, perhaps even sconces and barbed nets.

**Dense** (*Ex, 1 CP*) The object gains an additional +2 natural armor bonus. Perfect for stone, metal, and heavy

wooden objects such as chests, statues, and doors.

**Gemworked** (*Ex, 3 CP*) The object is jewel-encrusted, such as an ornate goblet, candelabra, or throne. Such objects harness the ambient magical energies used to animate them and gain spell resistance equal to 11 + the object's CR. Ideal for candlesticks, chandeliers, braziers, and treasures and artworks of all kinds.

**Reach** (*Ex, 1 CP*) The object's reach with one of its natural attacks increases by 5 feet. Perfect for tapestries, carpets, ropes, nets, and other extensible objects.

**Reinforced** (*Ex, 1 CP*) The object gains bonus hit points as though one size category larger. A colossal animated object with this trait gains +100 hit points (instead of +80). Ideal for reinforced or heavy wood, solid metal objects, or tapestries woven with wire.

**Rend** (*Ex, 1 CP*) Whenever the object makes two successful claw attacks against the same target in 1 round, its blades latch onto the flesh and deal extra damage equal to the damage dealt by one claw attack plus 1½ times the object's Strength modifier. Good match for clawed chairs, monstrous statues, torture racks, and clawed manacles.

**Volatile** (*Ex, 2 CP*) The object holds some volatile substance. When reduced to 0 hp, the object explodes, dealing 1d6 hp damage per Hit Dice to all creatures within a 10-foot radius. A successful Reflex save (DC 10 +

1/2 the object's Hit Dice) halves the damage. The damage is of an energy type appropriate to the substance the object contained. Common objects that qualify for the volatile trait include alembics, stoves, cauldrons, and globes.

## Animated Object Drawbacks

The following drawback traits can be applied to an animated object during spellcasting to gain additional construction points without increasing the object's CR. As with construct traits, some common sense should show that the object being animated could display the drawback. For example, a chair composed entirely of wood probably can't be fragile. An object can have only one drawback.

**Abated** (*Ex*, +4 CP) The base magic animating this object is focused elsewhere. The object automatically fails all saving throws and has only 3 hit points per Hit Die. Any traits purchased with points from this drawback are supernatural rather than extraordinary. This drawback can provide traits that the object would not normally qualify for. For example, an abated chair could have the volatile trait.

**Broken** (*Ex*, +2 CP) The item was broken before being animated and retains that condition. It suffers a -2 penalty on attack and damage rolls, a -2 penalty to Armor Class, and a -2 penalty on skill checks.

**Fragile** (*Ex*, +2 CP) The object is made of glass or similarly fragile material. It has hardness 0 and gains vulnerability to sonic energy.

**Miniaturized** (*Ex*, +1 CP) The object's attacks deal damage as though it were one size category smaller. An object cannot be reduced below Tiny size. Animated objects are treated as one size category larger when determining slam attack damage.

**Rigid** (*Ex*, +3 CP) The object has the staggered condition.

### ANIMATED HOODED LANTERN CR 1/2

XP 200

N Tiny construct

**Init** +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception -5

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 18, touch 14, flat-footed 16 (+2 Dex, 4 natural, +2 size)

**hp** 5 (1d10)

**Fort** +0, **Ref** +0, **Will** -5; **Immune** construct traits

**Defensive Abilities** hardness 0; **Vulnerable** sonic

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft.

**Space** 2½ ft.; **Reach** 0

**Melee** slam +5 (1d2-2)

**Special Attacks** volatile (1d6 fire, DC 10)

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 6, **Dex** 14, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 1, **Cha** 1

**Base Atk** +1; **CMB** -3; **CMD** 9

**Feats** Weapon Finesse<sup>B</sup>

**SQ** construction points; **Traits** agile, fragile, volatile

### ANIMATED HEARTH TOOLS CR 2

XP 600

N Small construct

**Init** +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception -5

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 16, touch 12, flat-footed 15 (+1 Dex, 4 natural, +1 size)

**hp** 16 (2d10+10)

**Fort** +0, **Ref** +0, **Will** -5; automatically fails all saves

**Immune** construct traits; **Defensive Abilities** hardness 5

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft.

**Space** 2½ ft.; **Reach** 0

**Melee** 2 claws +3 (1d3 plus bleed)

**Special Attacks** bleed (1d3), rend (2 claws, 1d3)

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 10, **Dex** 12, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 1, **Cha** 1

**Base Atk** +2; **CMB** +1; **CMD** 13

**SQ** construction points; **Traits** abated, additional attack, barbed, bladed, rend

### ANIMATED OAK APOTHECARY HUTCH CR 5

XP 1,600

N Large construct

**Init** -2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception -5

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 14, touch 8, flat-footed 14 (+6 natural, -1 Dex, -1 size)

**hp** 52 (4d10+30)

**Fort** +1, **Ref** +0, **Will** -4; **Immune** construct traits

**Defensive Abilities** hardness 5

#### OFFENSE

## The Sweet Spot

Except for exceptionally large objects, animated objects are most effective on the battlefield at low to mid levels. As a 6<sup>th</sup>-level spell, though, *animate objects* often doesn't come into play until high levels. Here's a spell to generate animated objects in a lower-level game.

### LESSER ANIMATE OBJECTS

**School** transmutation; **Level** bard 3, cleric 3

**Casting Time** 1 standard action

**Components** V, S

**Range** medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

**Target** one Medium object or several lesser objects

**Duration** 1 round/level

**Saving Throw** none; **Spell Resistance** no

This spell functions as *animate objects*, but you can target only one Medium, two Small, or four Tiny objects, and you cannot change the designated target(s) of this spell.

**Speed** 40 ft.

**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

**Melee** slam +9 (1d10+9 plus grab)

**Special Attacks** constrict (1d10+9), trample (1d10+9, DC 18)

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 22, **Dex** 8, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 1, **Cha** 1

**Base Atk** +4; **CMB** +11; **CMD** 20

**SQ** construction points, staggered;

**Traits** aggrandized, constrict, dense, grab, rigid, trample Ω



# Places of Sanctuary

By Jonathan McAnulty

*His heart pounding in his chest, Tarfell stumbled into the temple's sanctum. A light shone above the altar, and the air smelled heavily of incense. His fear melted away almost instantly. He was safe. Hirnfal burst through the doors only seconds after, but the warrior did not draw his sword. He could not in this holy place; it was sanctuary.*

The word *sanctuary* denotes a sanctified or holy place. Many ancient cultures considered it imprudent to shed blood in a temple, and harried men would seek refuge in such places. The Law of Moses codified the idea that those accused of murder could plead their case if they reached the altar, the tabernacle, the temple, or the proper city. In medieval times, English law stated that any individuals within the sanctuary of a church could not be arrested. Thus, today, the term *sanctuary* also denotes a place of safety.

In game terms, the 1st-level cleric spell *sanctuary* refers only to the idea of safety, for its range is an individual. It certainly does not affect an entire site and lasts only a short time. And yet, in a fantastical world where the gods act through magic in the lives of men, such an aura could protect all who seek refuge in the house of their god or even be placed on more portable devices. This area of effect is called a *sanctuarial aura*.

While quite common in temples promoting peace, safety, or security, not every religious body favors *sanctuarial auras*. Evil deities in particular find them an obnoxious concept. Some gods of Law approve of them in certain, well-defined instances, and deities with

a healing aspect often use them while providing succor, withdrawing the protection when the healing is done.

## Sanctuarial Auras

Any divine spellcaster with sufficient power and access to the Healing, Law, or Protection domains may imbue a place with a *sanctuarial aura* through prayer, sacrifices, and divine spells. There are different levels of *sanctuarial auras*, but each lasts for a year and a day and then must be renewed. Renewing an aura is easier and cheaper than creating a new aura.

To create a *sanctuarial aura*, you must offer sacrifices each day, cast the appropriate spells, and spend the rest of the day in prayer. The more powerful the aura desired, the greater the sacrifices required, and the lengthier the process involved. The nature of the sacrifices varies by deity, but the costs remains the same. The process lasts for 1 day/1,000-gp worth of sacrifices. The costs listed below assume 1,000 cubic ft. of affected space (10 ft. by 10 ft. by 10 ft.). For larger volumes, the cost increases accordingly: 2,000 cubic ft. costs twice as much and 10,000 cubic ft. costs 10 times as much.

Renewing *sanctuarial auras* requires the same process as creating them and uses the costs listed in the descriptions below. Use those costs to calculate the time required for renewal.

Any cleric of the faith associated with the space protected by a particular *sanctuarial aura* automatically succeeds with any Will saves required by that aura. A *permanency* spell may affect any single aura, and such



auras do not need to be renewed. Auras that are not renewed become dormant but may be renewed at any time.

A *dispel magic* can nullify a sanctuarial aura temporarily, as if it were a magic item.

Note that spells and ranged attacks made by creatures outside the aura function normally so long as there is a clear line of sight into the area.

### SANCTUARIAL AURA, LESSER

**Aura** faint abjuration [good]; **CL** 3rd

#### DESCRIPTION

Those within a *lesser sanctuarial aura* feel calmer. All fear affects are removed, and any character attempting acts of violence within the aura must succeed at a Will Save (DC 14) each round or combat ends. Characters defending themselves need not save unless they make any attacks.

#### CREATION

**Requirements** Divine Caster (Healing, Law, or Protection domain), *calm emotions*, *protection from evil*, *sanctuary*; **Creation Cost** 10,000 gp; **Renewal Cost** 1,000 gp

### SANCTUARIAL AURA

**Aura** moderate abjuration [good]; **CL** 5th

#### DESCRIPTION

Those within a *sanctuarial aura* feel

calmer and more at peace with the world. All good-aligned creatures gain a +2 sacred bonus to Will saves inside the aura. Evil-aligned creatures cannot voluntarily enter the aura unless they make a Will save (DC 18).

Within the *aura*, all fear affects are removed, and any character attempting acts of violence must succeed at a Will save (DC 18) each round or combat ends. Characters defending themselves need not save unless they make any attacks.

#### CREATION

**Requirements** Divine Caster (Healing, Law, or Protection domain), *calm emotions*, *magic circle against evil*, *sanctuary*; **Creation Cost** 20,000 gp; **Renewal Cost** 2,000 gp

#### SANCTUARIAL AURA, GREATER

**Aura** strong abjuration [good]; **CL** 9th

#### DESCRIPTION

Those within a *greater sanctuarial aura* feel incredibly calm and completely at peace with the world. All good-aligned creatures gain a +2 sacred bonus to Will saves within the aura. Evil-aligned creatures cannot voluntarily enter the aura unless they make a Will save (DC 22).

All fear affects are removed within the aura, and all curses and detrimental enchantments are suppressed. Suppressed effects resume once affected characters leave the aura, but the duration of the suppressed effect continues while within the aura.

Anyone attempting deception or violence within the aura must make a Will save (DC 22) each round or combat ends. Characters defending themselves need not save unless they make any attacks.

#### CREATION

**Requirements** Divine Caster (Healing, Law, or Protection domain), *break enchantment*, *calm emotions*, *magic circle against evil*, *sanctuary*, *zone of truth*; **Creation Cost** 45,000 gp; **Renewal Cost** 4,500 gp

## Sanctuarial Items

#### MEDIC'S TENT

**Aura** faint abjuration [good]; **CL** 3rd  
**Slot** none; **Price** 50,000 gp; **Weight** 40 lb.

#### DESCRIPTION

The interior of this spacious tent (10 ft. by 20 ft.) enjoys the benefits of a *lesser sanctuarial aura* and can accommodate six cots. All Healing checks within the tent receive a +4 sacred bonus.

#### CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements** Craft Wondrous Item, Divine Caster (Healing Domain), *calm emotions*, *protection from evil*, *sanctuary*; **Cost** 25,000 gp

#### POST OF SAFETY

**Aura** moderate abjuration [good]; **CL** 5th  
**Slot** none; **Price** 320,000 gp; **Weight** 15 lb.

#### DESCRIPTION

These posts can be made from any material, but most are steel rods 12–14 ft. high. A typical *sanctuarial aura* with a 20-ft. radius surrounds the post when it is firmly placed in the ground. Once embedded, the post cannot be removed without first dispelling the enchantments.

#### CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements** Craft Wondrous Item, Divine Caster (Law or Protection Domain), *calm emotions*, *magic circle against evil*, *sanctuary*; **Cost** 160,000 gp

#### THE ROAD OF PEACE [ARTIFACT]

**Aura** strong abjuration [good]; **CL** 9th  
**Slot** none; **Weight** —

#### DESCRIPTION

In dim antiquity, a powerful and wealthy nation constructed an entire thoroughfare upon which violence was virtually impossible. Only remnants of that road remain today, scattered here and there, but the divine aura still radiates from each brick. Each 5-ft. section of contiguous bricks benefits from a *greater sanctuarial aura*.

#### DESTRUCTION

Removing a brick from the road permanently destroys the enchantment on that brick and makes the aura that much smaller.

## Adventure Seeds

- **The Bandit's Refuge:** A well-known bandit has taken refuge in a church protected by a *sanctuarial aura*. The priests there refuse to drive him away. The PCs must figure out how to draw the bandit from the temple without attacking him.
- **The Post of Memory:** Years ago, brigands slew the daughter of Meldas Thrinemauk, a wealthy merchant, on a desolate road. Meldas has purchased a *post of safety* and wants the PCs to escort him to the spot where his daughter perished so he can embed the steel post in the soil there.

- **The Pilgrim's Shrine:** A church dedicated to peace has decided to build a temple above a section of the ancient *Road of Peace*, neatly negating the need to purchase an expensive *sanctuarial aura*—and making passage much safer for pilgrims visiting their shrine. A church dedicated to discord has learned of these plans and is resolved to steal the road brick by brick before the project can be completed. Can the PCs protect the road while the construction is underway? Furthermore, a lone hermit, cursed with lycanthropy, inhabits the section in question. The aura suppresses his curse while he abides on the road; removing him could have disastrous consequences.
- **The Perfect Wedding:** A powerful noble is to marry in a local temple protected with a *sanctuarial aura*, and the PCs are invited. Weapons are forbidden within the temple. The joyous occasion has attracted attention, and a trio of assassins has acquired medallions of non-detection. These shield them from the aura and plan on using the event to kill the noble. The PCs must figure out quickly how to save the noble, likely without resorting to violence.
- **The Watering Hole:** In a remote wilderness, an ancient *post of safety* still stands near a serene pool of water. Here predators and prey alike drink without fear, but the lack of violence has made this a great breeding ground for vermin. Swarms of rats keep moving through the forests, upsetting the other wildlife, and local druids ask the PCs for assistance that does not disrupt the post.
- **The Needs of the Village:** A small village has an old temple with a dormant *sanctuarial aura* but lacks the funds to renew it. If only some brave villagers could find a large treasure cache with which to buy the necessary sacrifices, providing a place of refuge for the villagers against future attacks by goblins, orcs, and worse. Ω

# Potion Miscibility

By Scott A. Murray

Art by Rick Hershey

**M**ixing potions and elixirs has a long history, stretching back to the earliest editions of the game. Mixing potions adds a layer of excitement, unpredictability, and humorous risk-taking to your adventures. A DM might also hand out mixed potions as treasure.

The rules for miscibility are presented first, followed by a table detailing the possible results of combining two substances. Finally, we provide two examples of potion mixing—one external, one internal—to help crystallize the concept.

## Miscibility Rules

Potion mixing is subject to six new rules:

- **Potions and Elixirs Only.** A potion may mix only with another potion or an elixir and vice versa. Potions or elixirs mixed with alchemical items destroy both. For the sake of brevity, this article refers to both potions and elixirs as simply 'potions' unless otherwise specified.
- **External or Internal Mixing.** Roll on the potion miscibility table whenever a creature mixes two potions by hand or a creature drinks one potion while benefiting from the effect of another. Mixing in a third potion does nothing, and the third potion is neutralized or destroyed. Imbibing a third potion while benefiting from the effect of two potions likewise neutralizes the third potion.
- **Standard Action.** Mixing two potions externally is a standard action. Despite its increased volume and effects, drinking a mixed potion remains a minor action.
- **Combined Cost.** Drinking an externally mixed potion costs 2 healing surges.

Drinking a potion mixed with an elixir costs a healing surge and the use of a daily magic item power. Drinking an elixir mixed with another elixir requires the use of two daily magic item powers.

## Potion Miscibility and the Master Mixer Feat

Characters with the Master Mixer feat roll twice and take the better result when mixing potions externally.

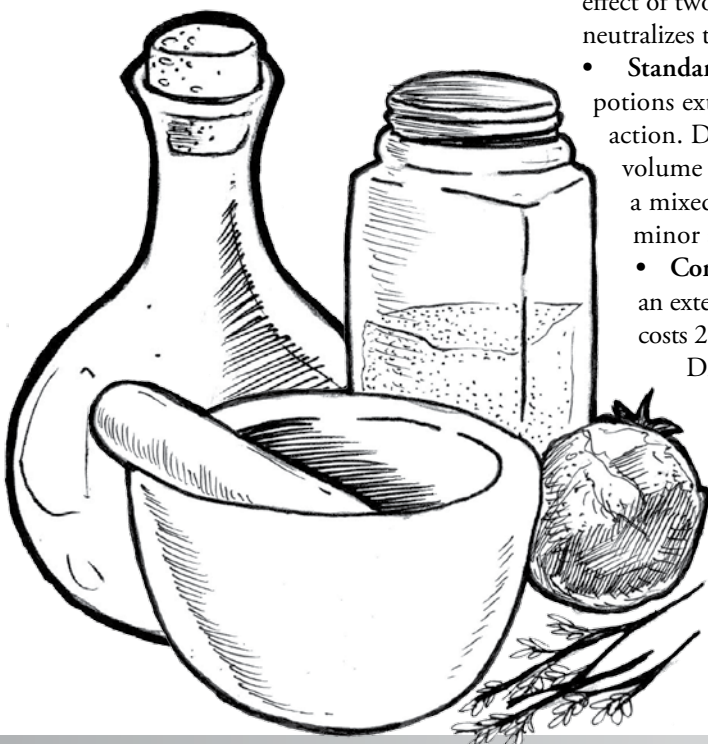
The costs for imbibing two different potions or elixirs at different times are paid normally.

- **Always Different.** Magical substances are unpredictable, and no two brewers use the same recipe for a given potion. Thus, the result of mixing two potions is always different and requires a roll on the potion miscibility table.
- **Mixing is Permanent.** Once mixed, two potions cannot be separated. A mixed potion is a single consumable item.

When two potions are mixed, either the DM or the PC doing the mixing rolls a d20 and consults the Potion Miscibility table.

## Sample Mixtures

**External Mixing:** Monty, an artificer, decides he would like to externally mix a level 5 potion of spirit into a potion of healing. He rolls on the chart and gets a 5: the potions are immiscible and are destroyed. However, Monty has the Master Mixer feat, so he rolls again and gets a 17 – a much better result! Rolling again to determine which potion is heightened by the





## Potion Miscibility Table

d20	Effect
1	<b>Combustion!</b> If mixed internally, the imbiber takes damage equal to their bloodied value and is dazed (save ends). If mixed externally, creatures in a close burst 2 are attacked (higher potion level + 3 vs. Reflex). On a hit, the target takes limited fire and acid damage by level. Both potions are destroyed.
2-4	<b>Poisonous.</b> If mixed internally, the imbiber takes poison damage equal to their healing surge value and takes ongoing 5 poison damage/higher potion tier (save ends). If mixed externally, a 3-by-3 square zone of poison gas forms. Living creatures entering or starting their turn in the zone take 5 poison damage/higher potion tier. The zone lasts until the end of the encounter or for 5 minutes. Both potions are neutralized or destroyed.
5-6	<b>Immiscible.</b> Both potions are neutralized or destroyed.
7-9	<b>Diluted.</b> One of the two potions (decide randomly) is neutralized or destroyed. The other functions normally.
10-14	<b>Miscible.</b> Both potions function normally.
15-17	<b>Compatible.</b> Power bonuses and attack rolls for powers granted by one of the potions (decide randomly) increase by 1/higher potion tier. Damage rolls and fixed numeric effects, including hit points restored, resistances granted, or new defenses increase by 3/higher potion tier. The other potion functions normally. One-time effects the imbiber has already benefited from, such as gaining temporary hit points, are not affected.
18-19	<b>Highly Compatible.</b> As 'Compatible,' but the effects are heightened for both potions.
20	<b>Discovery!</b> Any effect granted by either potion that has a duration greater than one round instead lasts until the imbiber takes an extended rest. If neither potion qualifies for this effect, treat this result as 'Highly Compatible.'

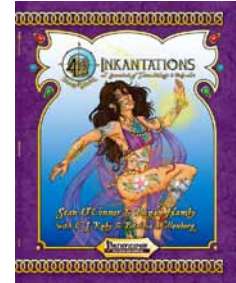
'Compatible' result, he determines the potion of spirit is boosted.

His combined potion costs 2 healing surges to drink, restores 10 hit points and grants a +2 bonus to saving throws until the end of the encounter.

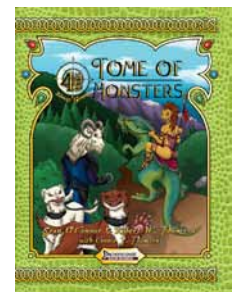
Internal Mixing: On her last turn, Eres the halfling bard consumed a level 8 elixir of will, spending the use of a daily magic item power in the process. This turn, she drinks a fire

beetle potion. After spending a healing surge, she rolls a 3 on the chart. The mixture is poisonous: both the elixir and the potion are neutralized, and Eres feels very sick. If she'd rolled a 19 instead, she would have gained 8 temporary hit points, resist 8 fire from the fire beetle potion, and the once-per-encounter effect of the elixir would increase her Will defense from 25 to 28. Ω

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# The Minion Academy

## *Making the Most of Your Minions*

By Raymond G. Falgui

**O**ne bright morning, Baron Boarstooth the Disemboweler found a scroll nailed to the gate of his mighty castle stronghold (actually a crude wooden palisade, but the baron planned an upgrade as soon as the profits from the latest slave raids came in).

Reading the scroll, Baron Boarstooth found himself in complete agreement with its contents:

*“Tired of being a Big Bad Evil Warlord with useless minions?”*

*“Disgusted at minions that fall like flies before your enemies – only making those enemies more confident when they go up against you?”*

*“Filled with despair at the thought that, with minions like these, you are only one adventuring party away from having your head stuck on an iron spike before your own front door?”*

*“If you have answered yes to any of the questions above, then you need help from the Minion Academy!”*

Every proper DM needs options to improve the effectiveness of minions in play, for making them worth putting down on a battlemat. The best way to do this is to improve the minion’s ability to act in symbiosis with allied monsters.

Fourth Edition introduced the concept of monster roles, and the minion is perhaps the most interesting yet underutilized roles. Potentially dangerous if ignored but relatively easy to kill, minions provide PCs with the thrill of cleaving or blasting their way through hordes of weak opponents.

Given their lowly condition, the chance for a minion to make an impact on the battlefield seems as negligible as its 1 hp. But minions are meant to serve as shock troops and cannon fodder for other monsters. Presumably, those cunning and scheming other monsters should derive some benefit from sending their underlings out to die.

To reflect this, and to emphasize the pathetic position held by minions in the game, you can deploy a new set of minion powers. Unlike regular monster powers, they don’t improve the combat effectiveness of minions. For one thing, minions themselves cannot benefit from these powers. For another, almost all of the powers require that the minion die to trigger its effect. The beneficiaries of all this useful sacrifice are the minion’s allies, who will find their opponents hampered even as their combat effectiveness improves.

These additional rules make player characters pay a price for the hordes of minions they slaughter, as well as reinforcing the storytelling aspect of the game. After all, the classic villain of fantasy fiction and film ruthlessly sacrifices hordes of underlings for some minor goal or advantage. With these rules, the DM has an incentive to continue this villainous tradition.

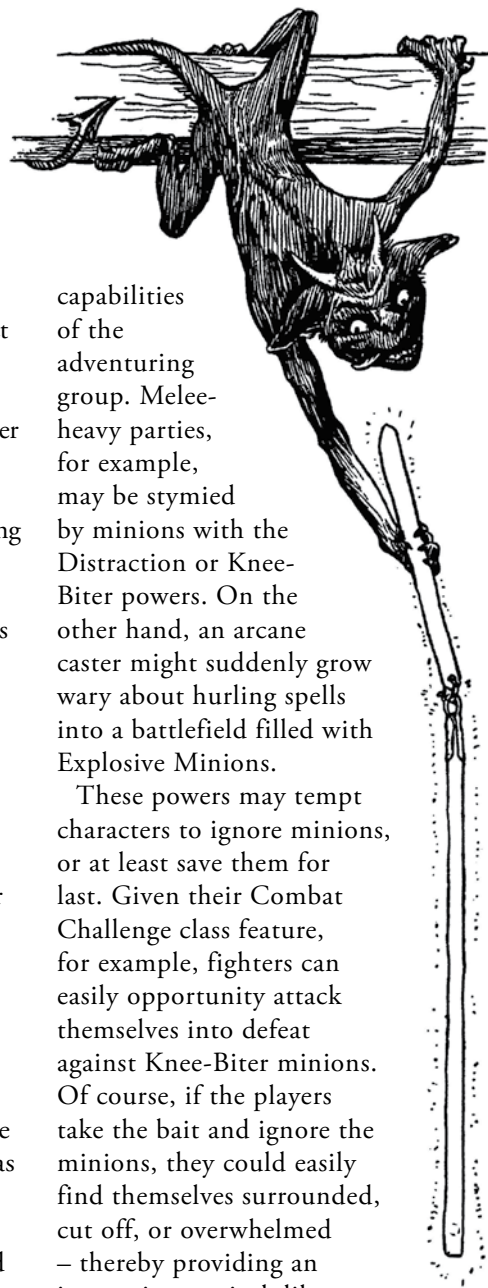
### Tactics

A quick glance at the powers reveals possible combinations. You can modify minions based on the

capabilities of the adventuring group. Melee-heavy parties, for example, may be stymied by minions with the Distraction or Knee-Biter powers. On the other hand, an arcane caster might suddenly grow wary about hurling spells into a battlefield filled with Explosive Minions.

These powers may tempt characters to ignore minions, or at least save them for last. Given their Combat Challenge class feature, for example, fighters can easily opportunity attack themselves into defeat against Knee-Biter minions. Of course, if the players take the bait and ignore the minions, they could easily find themselves surrounded, cut off, or overwhelmed – thereby providing an interesting tactical dilemma.

Consider battlefield positioning and monster roles to maximize these powers’ effectiveness. Enemy spellcasters surrounded by Meat-Shield minions can soak up a lot of damage. Meanwhile, enemy soldiers or brutes might benefit from having Because I Ruined Breakfast minions fighting at their wings.



## Mechanics

These powers can be added to monsters with the minion role. An individual minion should be limited to only one of the powers provided below. Of course, dungeon masters are free to add more powers to an individual minion, particularly if they wish to experiment with certain power combinations.

For each power added to the minion, increase its level by one for experience points (e.g. a level 8 Hobgoblin Warrior with the Distraction power is worth 100 XP, not 88 XP). The minion does not receive any other benefit from this increase in level.

## Powers

### IMPALE ON ENEMY'S SWORD

(when reduced to 0 hit points by an enemy's melee attack with the Weapon keyword)

Until the start of its turn, the enemy cannot use the weapon to make opportunity attacks.

The enemy can drop the weapon to end this effect, but must spend a standard action to recover the weapon.

*Screaming mindlessly, the goblin impales itself on your sword. Pulling the weapon from the stinking body costs you a few crucial seconds in combat.*

### DISTRACTION

(when reduced to 0 hit points by an enemy's melee attack)

The enemy grants combat advantage against the next melee attack made against it.

*Caught up in slaughtering the ogre who obligingly marched right up to her, Torra failed to notice the ogre magi slip in for a killing blow.*

### KNEE-BITER

(when reduced to 0 hit points by an adjacent enemy's melee attack)

The enemy falls prone.

If the enemy is already prone, the enemy is grabbed until the end of its turn.

If the enemy is already prone and grabbed, it is also restrained.

*First developed by goblins, this tactic requires diving for the enemy's legs without avoiding the incoming deathblow.*

### MEAT-SHIELD

(when reduced to 0 hit points by an area or close attack) • **Healing**

One adjacent ally that is not a minion regains 3 hit points.

*The Black Baron ducked behind a wall of bodyguards just before the fireball exploded. When the smoke cleared, there were nine dead bodyguards and one chuckling, unscathed Black Baron.*

### CONFIDENCE BOOSTER

(when reduced to 0 hit points by an ally's ranged attack)

As a free action, the ally can make a ranged basic attack with a +4 bonus to the attack roll.

*Irritated at having missed, the drow sniper took a potshot at a hapless goblin slave. The goblin's screams cheered up the drow, and inspired her to another shot at the pesky halfling.*

### BECAUSE I RUINED BREAKFAST

(when reduced to 0 hit points by an ally's melee attack)

The ally gains 10 temporary hp.

*The assassin drew his rapier and skewered his lackey from behind. Turning to the surprised adventurers, he said: "One just cannot forgive a palate that serves a rare Chateau Millen vintage with baked beans and alfalfa sprouts. Shall we begin?"*

### EXPLOSIVE MINION

(when reduced to 0 hit points by an attack with the fire keyword) • **Fire**

The minion explodes. Close burst 1; deal 1 damage to all adjacent creatures.

*Though surrounded by zombies, the ranger smelled alchemist's fire, not rotting flesh--and noticed the barrage of flaming arrows headed his way.*

### LOOK AT ME, NOT AT THE BOSS

(when reduced to 0 hit points)

As an immediate reaction, one ally within 10 squares can make a Stealth check.

*With its death wail, the grimlock provided enough of a distraction for its medusa mistress to slip away.*

### SLIP ON MY BLOODY CARCASS

(when reduced to 0 hit points)

Until the end of the encounter, the square occupied by the minion is considered difficult terrain.

*The evil wizard smiled at the fighter clumsily trying to push through the*



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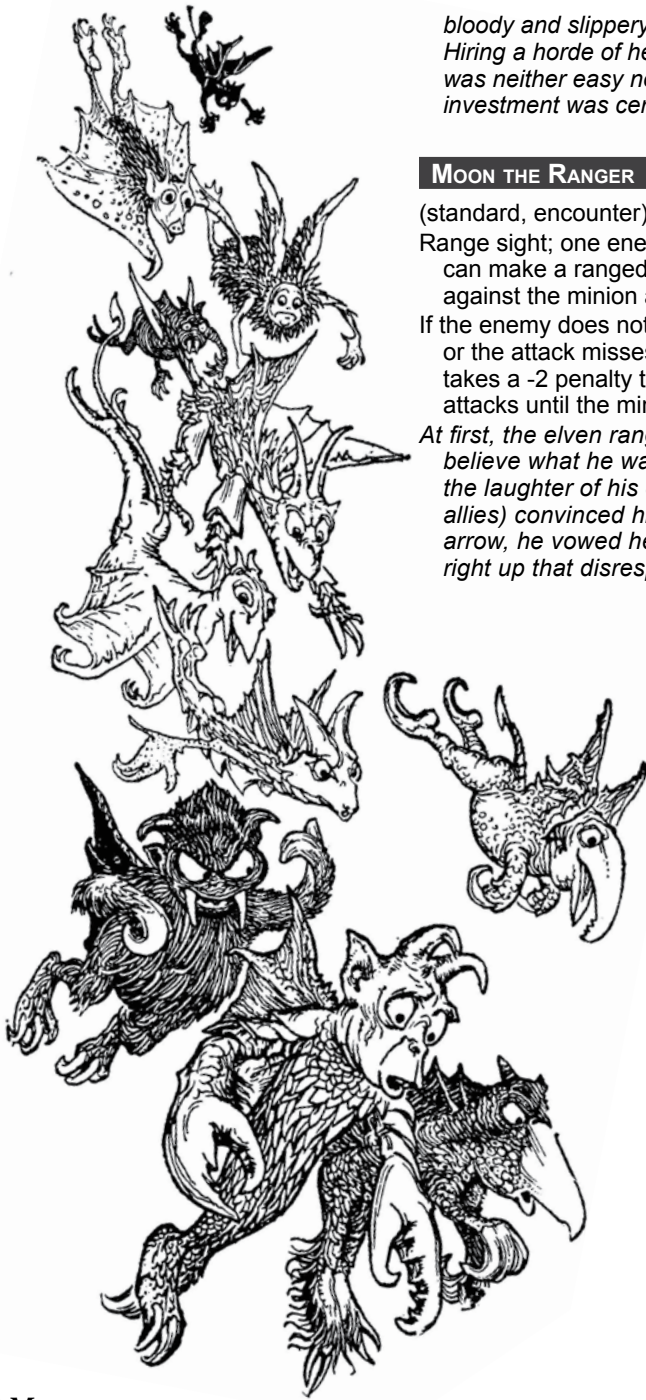
bloody and slippery carcasses. Hiring a horde of hemophiliac orcs was neither easy nor cheap, but the investment was certainly worth it.

### MOON THE RANGER

(standard, encounter)

Range sight; one enemy within range can make a ranged basic attack against the minion as a free action. If the enemy does not make the attack or the attack misses, the enemy takes a -2 penalty to all ranged attacks until the minion is killed.

*At first, the elven ranger did not believe what he was seeing – then the laughter of his enemies (and allies) convinced him. Drawing an arrow, he vowed he would shoot it right up that disrespectful goblin’s—*



### Template: Toady

Even the lowest of the low judge themselves in a hierarchy, and this is reflected in the Toady template. Toadies are the classic sniveling, whining henchman that no good villain is ever without; they enjoy an exalted status (in relative terms) among their fellow minions.

The reason for this is that Toady powers do *not* trigger on their deaths. This provides evil leaders or warlords with an incentive not to casually sacrifice the Toady (after all, good Toadies are hard to find).

For XP purposes, the Toady counts as a minion four levels higher than its original level.

**Prerequisite:** Minion, Humanoid  
**Defenses:** +2 AC, +2 Fortitude, +2 Reflex

**Blame the Henchman** (immediate interrupt, encounter)

**Trigger:** An adjacent ally misses an attack.  
**Effect:** The ally re-rolls the attack. The ally uses the second attack roll, even if it's lower.

*"Toadwaaaarrttt!" – Duke Sigmund Igthorn*

### BOOT-LICKING

(standard, encounter) • **Healing**

Minion falls prone.

An adjacent ally regains 20 hit points or can spend a healing surge.

### FOOTSTOOL

**At-Will**

**Move**

Minion falls prone.

Any ally occupying the square with the prone minion adds a +2 power bonus to all attack rolls.

*The wizard stood atop the crouched ogre. Ah, he thought, the view is always better from the top.*

Ω

### D20 MONKEY



# True Hit Locations

## *Monsters With Weak Spots and Tactical Combat*

By Matthew J. Hanson

Illustration by Louis-Léopold Boilly

**H**ercules had to sever each of the hydra's heads. Bard of Laketown had to find the chink in Smaug's armor. Myth and fantasy are full of stories where heroes strike the monster in a weak spot to defeat it, not just whack it repeatedly.

Hit locations recreate these battles in your game and represent a way for characters to target specific parts of the monster. Hit locations add an extra tactical wrinkle to combat, keeping battles interesting. Not every fight should feature monsters with hit locations, but they can make climactic battles more memorable.

### Rules for Hit Locations

You can target a hit location with any melee or ranged attack that targets a creature and attacks a defense the hit location possesses (in most cases, AC, Reflex, and Fortitude). If you attack a hit location targeting a defense that the hit location lacks (normally Will), the attack instead targets the main monster. Close or area attacks generally cannot target hit locations.

Any bonuses that you have to attack the main monster also apply to the hit location. Hit locations are considered bloodied if either the monster or the hit location is bloodied. Properties of the base monsters such as regeneration and resistance do not automatically apply to hit locations, and some hit locations might have resistances that the monster lacks.

On a successful hit, you damage the hit location, but this does not immediately damage the monster's total

hp. Any other effects of the attack—such as stunning or sliding the target—apply to the creature as normal. Some hit locations have additional effects listed that apply whenever they are hit.

When you reduce a hit location to 0 hp, the location is destroyed. The monster takes damage (typically equal to the location's hp total) and suffers additional effects listed in its description. Some hit locations may be restored. This undoes the effects of destroying the hit locations except that it does not restore lost hp.

### Creating Monsters with Hit Locations

Because hit locations add complexity to the monster, in most cases only elite and solo monsters should have hit locations.

#### DETERMINE HIT LOCATIONS

When you create a monster with hit locations, the first step is to decide how many hit locations the monster should have and what those locations are. You rarely want more than four hit locations, and the more locations a monster has, the more similar to each other they should be.

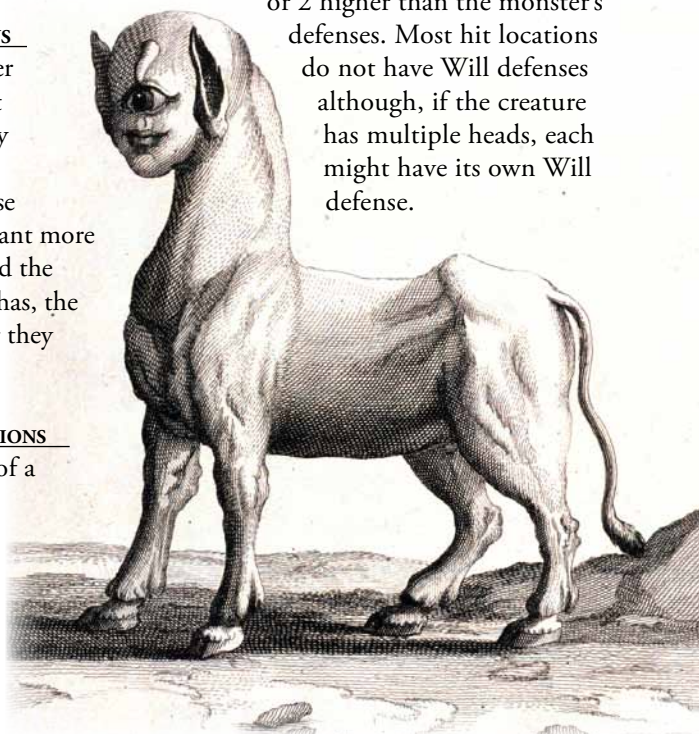
#### STATISTICS FOR HIT LOCATIONS

**Hit Points:** The total hp of a hit location depends on a number of factors, such as the strength of the monster, the number of hit locations, the effect from losing the

hit location, and whether the monster can restore the hit location. A good starting place is to give the location hp equal to 10 + the monster's level for elite monsters or 20 + twice the monster's level for solo monsters. This hp total means a striker can destroy an elite's hit location or bloody a solo's with an average at-will attack, and most other classes can do so with an encounter power.

Hit locations with more powerful effects generally have more hp while the fewer hit locations the monster has, the more hp each should have. Hit locations with restorable hp should have fewer hp than locations that cannot be restored.

**Defenses:** Most hit locations should have an AC, Reflex, and Fortitude 1 or 2 higher than the monster's defenses. Most hit locations do not have Will defenses although, if the creature has multiple heads, each might have its own Will defense.



## Resistances and Vulnerabilities:

As with monsters, hit locations may be resistant or vulnerable to certain attacks. These need not be the same as the base monster although they could be.

**Damaged:** Some hit locations affect the monsters any time the locations are damaged. These effects are weaker than destroying the hit locations and typically last until the end of the monster's next turn.

**Destroy:** Destroying a hit location damages the base monster and always has an additional effect. Possible effects include eliminating an attack used by the monster, lowering its defenses, or in rare instances, slaying the monsters.

**Restoration:** Some hit locations can be restored if certain conditions are met. In most cases, when hit locations are restored they return with their full hp.

## ALTERING THE MONSTER

Monsters with hit locations generally follow the guidelines for creating monsters, but there are a few exceptions.

**More and Better Attacks:** Monsters with hit locations often have more attacks. Attacks that can be eliminated or weakened by destroying a hit location should be better than those of standard monsters. They might do more damage, have higher attack bonuses, target more enemies, or all of these.

**More and Better Protection:** Monsters with hit locations that provide protection similarly have these in addition to typical defenses. These protections normally do not include the numerical defenses (AC, Fortitude, Reflex, and Will) but, rather, give the monster abilities such as resistances, regeneration, or the insubstantial quality.

## Final Thoughts

Creating hit locations is both an art and a science. You need to make sure that there is enough incentive for characters to attack the hit locations, but at the same time, you do not want one lucky shot to end the battle. Also keep an eye on complexity, remember that in the heat of battle you will have a lot to track.

## Sample Monsters

### FOURFOLD GUARDIAN

Guardians of four are ancient constructs created by a fallen empire to protect their arcane secrets. They look like featureless humanoids with four crystals on their chest in a starburst pattern. Each time a fourfold guardian uses a power tied to a crystal, that crystal flashes brightly.

### FOURFOLD GUARDIAN LEVEL 10 SOLO SKIRMISHER

Large natural animate (construct) XP 2,500

Initiative +11; Perception +12; darkvision

HP 424; **Bloodied** 212

AC 24, **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 20

**Hit Locations** *black crystal, blue crystal, violet crystal, white crystal*  
**Resist** 10 thunder, lightning, and force, see also *black crystal, blue crystal, white crystal* hit locations

**Saving Throws** +5; **Action Points** 2

**Speed** 7; see also *dimension step*

#### TRAITS

#### Solo Stun Resilience

Attacks that normally stun the guardian daze it instead. Attacks that normally daze the guardian instead mean the guardian grants combat advantage to all attacks and it loses its minor action.

#### Bloodied Alacrity

While bloodied, the guardian acts twice in each round. It takes a second round of actions on its initiative count -10. Each time the guardian acts, it is considered another turn for all purposes (such as recharging powers, making saves, or taking ongoing damage).

#### STANDARD ACTIONS

#### ✕ **Fist of Lightning** (lightning) • **At-Will**

**Attack**—Melee 2 (one creature); +15 vs. AC.

**Hit**—2d8+9 damage plus 1d6 lightning damage. (See also *blue crystal* hit location.)

#### ✕ **Fist of Thunder** (thunder) • **At-Will**

**Attack**—Melee 2 (one creature); +15 vs. AC.

**Hit**—2d8+9 damage plus 1d6 thunder damage. (See also *black crystal* hit location.)

#### ❖ **Two Fists** • **At-Will**

**Effect**—The fourfold guardian makes a *fist of lightning* attack and a *fist of thunder* attack, each against a different target.

#### ☀ **Lightning Bolt** (lightning) • **Recharge 5, 6**

**Attack**—Ranged 10 (up to three enemies); +13 vs. Reflex.

**Hit**—3d8+12 lightning damage, and target is dazed until the end of guardian's next turn. (See also *blue crystal* hit location.)

#### ⚡ **Thunder Blast** (thunder) • **Recharge 5, 6**

**Attack**—Close blast 3 (enemies in blast); +23 vs. Fortitude.

**Hit**—3d8+12 damage, and the target is knocked prone. (See also *black crystal* hit location.)

#### MINOR

#### **Dimension step** (teleportation) • **At-Will**

**Effect**—The guardian teleports 10 squares. (See also *violet crystal* hit location.)

#### TRIGGERED ACTIONS

#### ❖ **Force Counter** (force) • **At-Will**

**Trigger**—An enemy hits or misses the guardian with a melee attack.

**Attack (Immediate Reaction)**—Melee 2 (one creature); +13 vs. Fortitude.

**Hit**—1d10+6 force damage, and the target is pushed 3 squares. (See also *white crystal* hit location.)

**Str** 21 (+10) **Dex** 18 (+9) **Wis** 15 (+7)  
**Con** 18 (+9) **Int** 9 (+4) **Cha** 6 (+3)

**Alignment** unaligned

**Languages** Draconic

#### Hit Locations

#### **Black Crystal**

HP 48; **Bloodied** 24

AC 26, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 24

**Resist** 10 thunder

#### **Destruction**

The guardian suffers 48 damage. It loses *thunder blast* attack and resist 10 thunder. *Fist of thunder* no longer deals extra thunder damage.

#### **Blue Crystal**

HP 48; **Bloodied** 24

AC 26, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 24

**Resist** 10 lightning

#### **Destruction**

The guardian suffers 48 damage. It loses *lightning bolt* attack and resist 10 lightning. *Fist of lightning* no longer deals lightning damage.

#### **Violet Crystal**

HP 48; **Bloodied** 24

AC 26, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 24

#### **Destruction**

The guardian suffers 48 damage. It loses *dimension step*.

#### **White Crystal**

HP 48; **Bloodied** 24

**AC 26, Fortitude 25, Reflex 24**  
**Resist 10 force**

### Destruction

The guardian suffers 48 damage. It loses *force counter* attack and resist 10 force.

### Fourfold Guardian Tactics

Guardians use their *thunder blast* or *lightning bolt* whenever possible; they use an action point to attack with both on their first turn. If these powers are not available, they rely on their *two fists* and use their *dimensional step* to ensure that they are always within reach of two targets.

### OLYMPIAN CYCLOPS

Olympian cyclopes are among the most powerful of their kind, and a few even challenge the fomorian's rule. Some are the traditional two-legged giants, others have four legs.

### OLYMPIAN CYCLOPS LEVEL 18 ELITE SOLDIER

Medium fey humanoid, XP 4,000

**Initiative +24; Perception +17;**  
truesight 6

**HP 348; Bloodied 174**

**AC 35, Fortitude 32, Reflex 31, Will 29**

**Hit Locations eye**

**Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1**

**Speed 8**

### STANDARD ACTIONS

#### ✖ **Great Club** (weapon) • **At-Will**

**Attack**—Melee 2 (one creature); +26 vs. AC.

**Hit**—3d8+13 damage.

#### ❖ **Double Club** (weapon) • **At-Will**

**Effect**—The cyclops makes two *great club* attacks, each against a different target.

#### ⚡ **Earth Smash** (weapon) • **At-Will**

**Attack**—Close blast 3 (creatures in blast); +23 vs. Reflex.

**Effect**—The target is knocked prone.

#### ⚡ **Whirlwind Smash** (weapon) • **Recharge 5, 6**

**Attack**—Close burst 2 (enemies in burst that can be seen); +26 vs. AC.

**Hit**—3d6+9 damage, and the target is knocked prone and pushed 1 square.

### MINOR

#### ☀ **Evil Eye** • **At-Will**

**Attack**—Ranged 20 (one creature).

**Effect**—The target suffers a -2 penalty to attack until the end of the encounter, until the olympian cyclops uses *evil eye* against a different target, or until the eye is destroyed.

(See also eye hit location.)

**Str 25 (+16) Dex 22 (+15) Wis 12 (+10)**

**Con 22(+15) Int 15 (+11) Cha 19 (+13)**

**Alignment** unaligned

**Languages** Elven

**Equipment** greatclub, scale armor

### HIT LOCATIONS

#### Eye

**HP 22; Bloodied 11**

**AC 36, Fortitude 33, Reflex 33**

#### Damaged

The cyclops suffers a -2 penalty to attacks until the end of its next turn.

#### Destruction

The cyclops suffers 22 damage. It is blind and cannot use its *evil eye* power. The target currently affected by *evil eye* is no longer affected.

#### Restoration

At the end of each turn, roll 1d6. On a 5 or 6, the eye regains all of its hp. Thus, the cyclops regains its sight and *evil eye* and is no longer blind.

### Olympian Cyclops Tactics

Olympian cyclopes are powerful melee combatants, and engage other melee fighters. They fight more than one foe at a time to maximize the use of their *double club* and *whirlwind smash* attacks. If blinded, they either swing at their foe's last known location or pound the ground with their *earth smash*.

### LERNAEAN HYDRA

The Lernaean hydra is a legendary hydra that is rumored to be the progenitor of all others. It is nearly immortal, and when one head is severed, two more spring up in its place.

### LERNAEAN HYDRA LEVEL 28 SOLO BRUTE

Gargantuan natural beast (reptile); XP 65,000

**Initiative +22; Perception +25;** all-around vision; darkvision

**HP 728; Bloodied 364;** see also *heads*

**Regeneration 15** (as long as at least one head remains, the hydra regenerates, even if reduced to 0 hp); see also *heads*

**AC 40, Fortitude 42, Reflex 40, Will 38**

**Hit Locations 9 heads**

**Resist 20 poison; Vulnerable fire 10**

**Saving Throws +5; Action Points 2**

**Speed 8, swim 16;** see also *Lernaean shift*

### TRAIT

#### Many-Headed

Each time the hydra becomes dazed or

stunned, it loses one attack while using *hydra fury* on its next turn. The hydra can be dazed or stunned multiple times. Additionally, if the stun or daze attack targeted a *head* hit location, that head grants combat advantage until the end of the hydra's next turn.

### Threatening Reach

The hydra can make opportunity attacks against all enemies within its reach (4 squares).

### STANDARD ACTIONS

#### ✖ **Poisonous Bite** (poison) • **At-Will**

**Attack**—Melee 4 (one creature); +31 vs. AC.

**Hit**—3d8+10 damage and ongoing 15 poison damage (save ends).

#### ❖ **Hydra Fury** (poison) • **At-Will**

**Effect**—The hydra makes a bite attack for each head it currently possesses (initially 9), but it cannot make more than 2 attacks against each target.

### MOVE ACTIONS

#### Lernaean Shift • **At-Will**

**Effect**—The hydra shifts 4 squares. It may move through enemy squares but must end its movement in an unoccupied space.

**Str 30 (+24) Dex 27 (+22) Wis 22 (+20)**

**Con 28 (+23) Int 6 (+12) Cha 15 (+16)**

**Alignment** unaligned **Languages** —

### Hit Locations

**Heads (9)**

**HP 80; Bloodied 40**

**AC 40, Fortitude 42, Reflex 40, Will 38**

**Resist 20 poison; Vulnerable fire 10**

#### Destruction

The Lernaean hydra suffers 80 damage and reduces its maximum hp by 80. It loses one attack from its *hydra fury*.

If all the heads are destroyed and cannot be restored, the hydra dies.

#### Restoration

If a head is reduced to 0 hp by an attack that deals fire damage or if the hydra suffers any fire damage before its next turn, the head is truly destroyed. If the head does not take fire damage, at the end of the hydra's next turn, it sprouts two new heads and its maximum hp value is restored by 80. The new heads begin with their hp at their bloodied value.

### Lernaean Hydra Tactics

The Lernaean hydra is so seldom challenged that it has few tactics to draw upon other than attacking as many foes as possible with as many heads as possible. It uses its *Lernaean shift* to reach the greatest number of foes.. Ω

# Beer Run!

## *An Adventure of the Northlands*

By Christina Stiles

Art by Pearson Scott Foresman and Joseph Jacobs

**B**eer Run! is an adventure for 5th-level **PATHFINDER ROLEPLAYING GAME** characters using material from the upcoming **FROZEN EMPIRES** sourcebook. In this great saga, the stalwart PCs brave ice and snow to complete a seriously important quest for...**BEER!** They must retrieve two kegs of lavuur ale from Hurthyr's Meadhall. Of course, Hurthyr is a ruthless thursir giant. What could be simpler? Success brings the PCs great honor, bragging rights, treasure, and...beer!

The map for this adventure may be found on the inside back cover.

### Adventure Hooks

The PCs may start the adventure in several ways, such as by:

- Recovering a stolen beer shipment for the Ninkash Vaer (priests)
- Seeking bragging rights by killing thursir giants and taking their beer
- Questing for Boreas to garner a watcher's freedom.

### Hurthyr's Meadhall

Hurthyr's Meadhall, a giant-sized structure built from an ancient white dragon's bones, rests in a border area of Thule just across a fast-flowing river. Polar bear hides and snow cover the structure, and one could almost miss the meadhall—perhaps mistaking it for a large hill in the vast whiteness of the frozen lands—except for the everburning torches ringing its entrance and the presence of a giant-guarded bridge over the river.

**Terrain:** The snow surrounding the meadhall is 3 ½ feet deep, reducing

movement to 1/4. The 2-inch sheet of ice covering the bridge reduces movement on it by 2 squares.

#### **1. GULVER'S BRIDGE (CR 5; 1600 XP)**

A broad thursir giant named Gulver in chain mail stands with crossed arms in the center of the ice-covered bridge leading to Hurthyr's Meadhall. Unless the PCs have another way to cross the river, they must deal with Gulver. If he spots the PCs, he readies himself for battle. "None may pass," he booms to them, "lest ye can throw me over this bridge or bleed my hide."

**Tactics:** Gulver enjoys grappling opponents and tossing them into the fast-flowing, icy river. Characters thrown into the water must make a DC 15 Swim or Strength check to keep their heads above water; those falling in suffer 1d6 nonlethal damage from hypothermia per minute of exposure (see "Water Dangers" and "Cold Dangers" in the *Pathfinder RPG*). A DC 20 Strength check is required to fight the current to reach shore; the current sends failing characters down river 20 ft per round.

If conflict ensues on the bridge, a DC 12 Perception check alerts Brandr, the thursir giant just inside the entrance. Brandr watches the spectacle and alerts the others if Gulver fails to protect the bridge. He doesn't leave the meadhall.

**Creature:** Gulver, thursir giant, hp 75, see page 64.

**Treasure:** Gulver carries a pouch with 150 gp in coin and gems.

#### **2. ENTRANCE (CR 5; 1,600 XP)**

If the giants were not alerted to the

PCs' presence, the six giants inside the meadhall are:

- Brandr stands to the right of the open entrance;
- Randulfr and Sindri stand above area 6, watching the pit fight;
- Kolr and Ásvldr stand beside the cook pits in area 4, tending their food; and
- the largest, Hurthyr, sits upon his skull throne (area 8).

See the specific areas for their tactics. Brandr – thursir beside the door – attacks immediately if not surprised.

**Creature:** thursir giant, hp 66, see page 64.

#### **3. FIRE BRAZIER (CR 3; XP 800)**

A 9-ft flame rises from a bronze brazier, providing heat for the front of the meadhall.

**Creature:** A medium fire elemental is hiding in the wide brazier's flames (+15 to Hide), hp 30.

**Tactics:** The fire elemental attacks when the characters have moved past it, leaving their backs to it. It attacks an embattled PC first, using its slam attack.

#### **4. COOK PITS & KEGS**

##### **(CR 5; 1600 XP EACH AREA)**

Kolr and Ásvldr each stand over their own 6-ft deep, grate-covered cook pit, roasting two dwarves (former priests of Ninkash). Seven giant-sized beer kegs rest near their cook pits.

**Creature:** two thursir, hp 66 each.

**Beer Bombs (Tactics):** The giants throw the beer kegs at opponents, dealing 2d6+9 hp damage. They do not



suffer a -4 improvised weapons penalty.

Additionally, one keg in each area is inscribed with a rune of Thur glyph. The giants may throw these or they leave them as a trap. When any non-giant comes within 10 ft. of these kegs (marked with an X on the map), the keg explodes, dealing 4d6 electrical damage to all within 15 ft. (see thursir for rune's full effects).

### 5. MIGHTY WOTAN DEFILED

A statue of mighty Wotan stands in the center of the meadhall, his nose-less, stone face staring northward toward a raised skull throne. His left arm is missing, and a real horned helmet rests upon his head; one horn droops downward. The statue smells strongly of urine—with dried yellow streaks running the length of its body—and of feces. Feces is piled around its feet and smeared across the round base, marred here and there by footprints.

With a DC 15 Perception check, a PC notice the statue can be turned, but it requires the missing spear arm. When the arm, which lies in the bear pen (area 10), is attached, the statue can be turned to soundlessly unlock (but not open) the secret doors (area 9).

Any character casting a bless or consecrate spell on the statue—or attempting to clean it—receives a blessing in return. That PC may re-roll one dice roll at any time during the next 24 hours, keeping the higher roll.

### 6. FIGHTING PIT (CR 2; XP 600)

This pit is 20 ft. deep and 50 wide, and the sounds of fighting and growling echo out before the PCs can see into it. Inside the pit, two bloody, stumbling dwarves with daggers battle a snow leopard; another leopard lies dead beside them.

Without aid, the dwarves Olaff and Vermundr fall to the creature in 4 rounds after the PCs enter the hall, falling to -2 hp each. The leopard has taken scratches from the daggers (2 hp). The kidnapped caravan dwarves are 1st-level warriors and the last of the prisoners. The thursir cooked and ate the others.

**Creature:** snow leopard, hp 17 (slightly injured); use leopard stats, p. 40 *Bestiary*.

### 7. FIRE PITS (CR 5; 1,600 XP)

The pits rest to either side of the steps leading to Hurthyr's throne. They are 10 ft. deep and 10 ft. wide. A medium fire elemental resides in each and prevents non-giants from climbing the stairs or flying toward the thursir leader.

**Creatures:** 2 medium fire elementals, hp 30 each, page 124 *Bestiary*.

### 8. SKULL THRONE

A dragon's skull rests on a raised area at the back of the meadhall, and Hurthyr sits on a bone throne in front of it. This menacing thursir with a braided, black beard holds a thur-rune-inscribed warhammer in one hand and a tankard of lavuur ale in the other.

**Tactics:** Hurthyr taunts the PCs during the battle, and he rises to protect the stairs only if they defeat his giants. He whistles for the bears (area 10) to aid him. They join the battle in one round unless the PCs can close their cage's door.

Hurthyr fights with the tankard in hand, trying not to spill it. He drinks the liquid, healing 4d4 damage as soon he takes 10 hp damage.

### 9. SECRET DOOR

The secret trapdoor rests behind the throne, under the skull's eyes, which the PCs can notice with a DC 25 Perception check and open with a DC 25 Disable Device check. The statue, with the arm restored, can unlock the secret door.

**Treasure:** Inside are two giant-sized kegs of lavuur ale, two Ninkash-marked bags of gold (1,000 gp each), and a large sack of mixed coins and gems (5,560 gp).

### 10. BEAR PEN (CR 6; 2,400 XP)

Two polar bears rest in the open pen. They join Hurthyr in battle when he whistles for them. Inside their strong-smelling, messy pen are dwarven bones, Wotan's arm, and piles of feces.

**Creatures:** two polar bears (use grizzly bear stats), hp 42 each.

## Lavuur Ale

A holy ale of the Vaer of the beer goddess Ninkash (see *KOBOLD QUARTERLY* magazine #10, p. 13), lavuur heals 4d4 hp per tankard (max. 4 tankards in 24 hours). Poisonous to elves, it works for the giants—a fact the dwarves don't broadcast.

The thursir intercepted a trade shipment bound for a band of peaceful stone giants with whom the dwarves of Ninkash trade for rare ore. The thursir took some of the caravan's priests and guards for their fighting pit, preferring to play with their food before eating it.

## Watcher of Boreas

An ice-covered individual used by the Avatar of Boreas as a scrying focus throughout his lands. Certain spells may free a watcher, but freeing one without Boreas' permission garners ill fate (see *FROZEN EMPIRES*) and guarantees a future visit from him. Negotiating with Boreas to procure this freedom avoids the ill fate, but his quests are often quirky...like requiring the PCs to steal two kegs of lavuur ale from Hurthyr's Meadhall.



## New Monster

**GIANT, THURSIR** **CR 5**

XP 1,600

NE or LE Large humanoid (giant)

**Init** +0; **Senses** dark vision; Perception +2

**DEFENSE**

**AC** 17, touch 9, flat-footed 17 (+6 armor, +2 natural)

**hp** 66 (7d8+35)

**Fort** +10, **Ref** +2, **Will** +4

**Defensive Abilities** cast iron stomach, rock catching; Immune Disease; Resist acid 10, cold 10

**OFFENSE**

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** masterwork great-hammer +15 (1d12+13)

**Ranged** rock +5 (1d8+9)

**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

**Special Attacks** rune of thur

**STATISTICS**

**Str** 28, **Dex** 10, **Con** 21, **Int** 13, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 11

**Base Atk** +5; **CMB** +15; **CMD** 25

**Feats** Cleave, Improved GrappleB, Skill Focus (craft), Power Attack, Weapon Focus (Great Warhammer)

**Skills** Climb +19, Craft (any one metalsmithing) +14, Survival +12; Racial +4 craft (any metalsmithing).

**Languages** Common, Giant

**SQ** mastersmith, strength of stone

**ECOLOGY**

**Environment** Cold Mountains

**Organization** solitary, gang (2-5), band (6-12 plus 35% noncombatants, 1 cleric of 1st-2nd level and 1-4 wargs), raiding party (6-12 plus 1 cleric of 3rd-4th level and 2-7 wargs), or clan (21-40 plus 1 cleric of 5th-7th level, 5-16 wargs, and 1 fighter of 7th-8th level)

**Treasure** standard (chain mail, masterwork great hammer; one of which may bear a Rune of Thur)

**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

**Cast Iron Stomach (Ex)** With a prodigious ability to eat and drink, a thursir giant can eat up to half its weight in food without ill effects. Thursir giants receive a +10 racial bonus to saving throws against ingested poison.

**Mastersmith (Su)** Thursir giants have a natural affinity to metals. They produce masterwork quality metalworks in half the time. Moreover, they can enchant any metalwork they forge, though it takes them twice as long as normal to do so. The giant's Hit Dice substitute for caster level and the cost of enchantment remains the same.

**Special:** If a thursir giant takes the appropriate item creation feats, they

can create magical metalworks in half the time it would take others.

- Rune of Thur (Su)** As a standard action, the thursir giant can inscribe the Rune of Thur on an object. The rune lasts until the thursir giant inscribes it somewhere else. The rune has three possible effects.
- **Weapon:** If inscribed on a weapon wielded by a giant, the rune gives the weapon the shock quality. The runes explodes if any non-giant grasps the weapon.
  - **Armor:** If inscribed on armor worn by a giant, the rune gives the wearer a +2 sacred Strength bonus and electric resistance 10. If a non-giant dons the armor, the rune explodes.
  - **Glyph:** If inscribed on any other surface, the rune acts as a glyph, exploding when a non-giant comes within 10 ft. An exploding rune deals 4d6 hp electrical damage to all non-giants within 15 ft. (DC 15 Fortitude save halves). Any female characters take an additional 2d6 hp damage (DC 15 Will negates).

**Strength of Stone (Ex)** The thursir giant's 30 ft. movement rate is never modified by either armor or encumbrance.

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# Clockwork Monsters

By David Adams

Art by Alvim Corr ea

Clockwork monsters are the creations of the mad, the desperate, and the deviously brilliant. Gears and springs replace muscles and sinew; metal, stone, or wood usurp bone and flesh. Whether wholly composed of these base materials or incorporating living creatures maimed by deranged clockwork monsters are marvels of dark genius and sinister mechanisms.

The optional powers presented below allow DMs to make any monster into a clockwork construction. These creations might be full automatons deserving of the construct keyword (see the *Monster Manual* for more on keywords) or a macabre hybrid engineering that uses the living construct keyword. Whatever these creatures' abilities, remember that vivid description is the most powerful tool for conveying the imagery associated with this theme. (See the sidebar of descriptive keywords.)

**Skill Modifications:** +2 to Endurance checks.

## Attack Powers

Clockwork monsters are often powerful. A series of complex gears or convoluted motorized components amplify the physical strength of these creatures.

### HYDRAULIC FIST

Tubes and pistons surrounding the forearm compress liquid to generate incredible pressures and fire the mechanized with

stunning strength. This hydraulic force allows a clockwork creature to make powerful attacks at a distance, but once extended the fist loses some of its dexterity until retracted. Only the most expertly-crafted constructs display this level of sophistication.

This power is suitable for brutes and soldiers. Brutes in particular can use the *hydraulic fist* to potent effect, increasing their capacity to deal damage and reinforcing their staggering ferocity. Melee strikers might also have use for this power, as they can strike targets far enough away to escape reprisal.

### HYDRAULIC FIST

(standard action; recharge 5,6)  
The creature makes a melee basic attack with reach 2. If the attack hits, the target takes an additional 5 damage/tier and is pushed 3 squares. Until this power recharges, the creature suffers a -2 penalty to climb and grab checks.

### LASER

A concentrated beam of light and energy, the laser commonly appears on advanced clockwork creatures. The high energy demanded by this device means it must recharge, but it fires quickly once primed.

The *laser* is a useful power for artillery monsters, giving them an ability to make multiple attacks from a distance in a single round. Controllers and ranged skirmishers or lurkers can also make good use of a *laser*.

### LASER

(minor; recharge 4, 5, 6)  
Ranged 10; level + 4 vs. Reflex; 5/tier + 1/2 level radiant and fire damage.

### MOTORIZED RUSH

Servo motors provide a burst of enhanced speed to a clockwork creature. Stronger motors allow a monster to gain enough momentum to barrel over opponents. The springs powering these motors take time to wind, so clockwork monsters can't rely on this tactic alone.

Brutes are the most likely candidates for motorized power, since they try to overwhelm opponents. Skirmishers and lurkers who rely on melee attacks can also benefit from this power, and it reinforces the sense of sheer physical force for mechanized monsters.

### MOTORIZED RUSH

(standard action; recharge 6)  
The creature makes a charge attack, moving up to its speed + 2 squares. If the attack hits, the target is pushed 3 squares and knocked prone.

## Utility Powers

Most clockwork monsters require some means of animation. Chemical fuels and batteries abound, but some automatons might rely on steam-belching boilers. They also are easy to repair when damaged and often have imbedded weapons or other visible components that can be damaged and disabled.

### **BATTERY POWERED**

Though time-consuming to produce, chemical batteries power advanced clockworks with incredible efficiency. Many of these batteries recharge with lightning powers, giving the monster a sudden surge of energy. Creators often shield these batteries or install them internally, but some might be visible and thus vulnerable.

The *battery powered* trait works best with traps, terrain, or hazards that deal lightning damage. The temporary hit points extend the longevity of a creature only so long as it has reliable sources of damage around to charge its battery but work well for monsters of any role.

### **BATTERY POWERED**

The creature gains immunity lightning.

When the creature is hit by an attack that deals lightning damage, it gains temporary hp equal to 5/tier.

### **Faulty Construction**

Many clockwork monsters are assembled hastily or crafted by a madman with inexpert skill. Poor construction, shoddy materials, and exposed components plague such creatures and render them vulnerable to irregularities in combat. An accidental miss might cause gears to slip, and a lucky blow might jostle parts out of alignment.

Adding this trait to a creature gives it the appearance of vulnerability and clumsiness. It is particularly suited for use with large numbers of minions or other hordes of creatures, as the creation of such mechanized beasts is often rushed.

### **FAULTY CONSTRUCTION**

If this creature rolls a natural 1 on an attack roll, it is immobilized until the start of its next turn. When an enemy scores a critical hit against it, it is dazed (save ends).

### **GALVANIC FIELD GENERATOR**

Raised hair and a constant thrumming betray the presence of a galvanic field generator. Clockwork parts spin magnetized stones through copper

loops, or rub rubber or cloth strips against glass rods to generate a field of static electricity. As the static builds, it pulls nearby creatures closer, discharging suddenly when they draw too close. These devices often sit inside clockwork monsters or are mounted on their chest or back. They tend to attract small, loose metal objects, pieces of fabric, and fine dust or dirt.

The *galvanic field generator* gives a creature a great degree of control over its opponents. Soldiers see the most benefit from the generator as it helps to keep their targets close to them. Controllers with melee abilities find the aura can neatly govern the movement of their enemies.

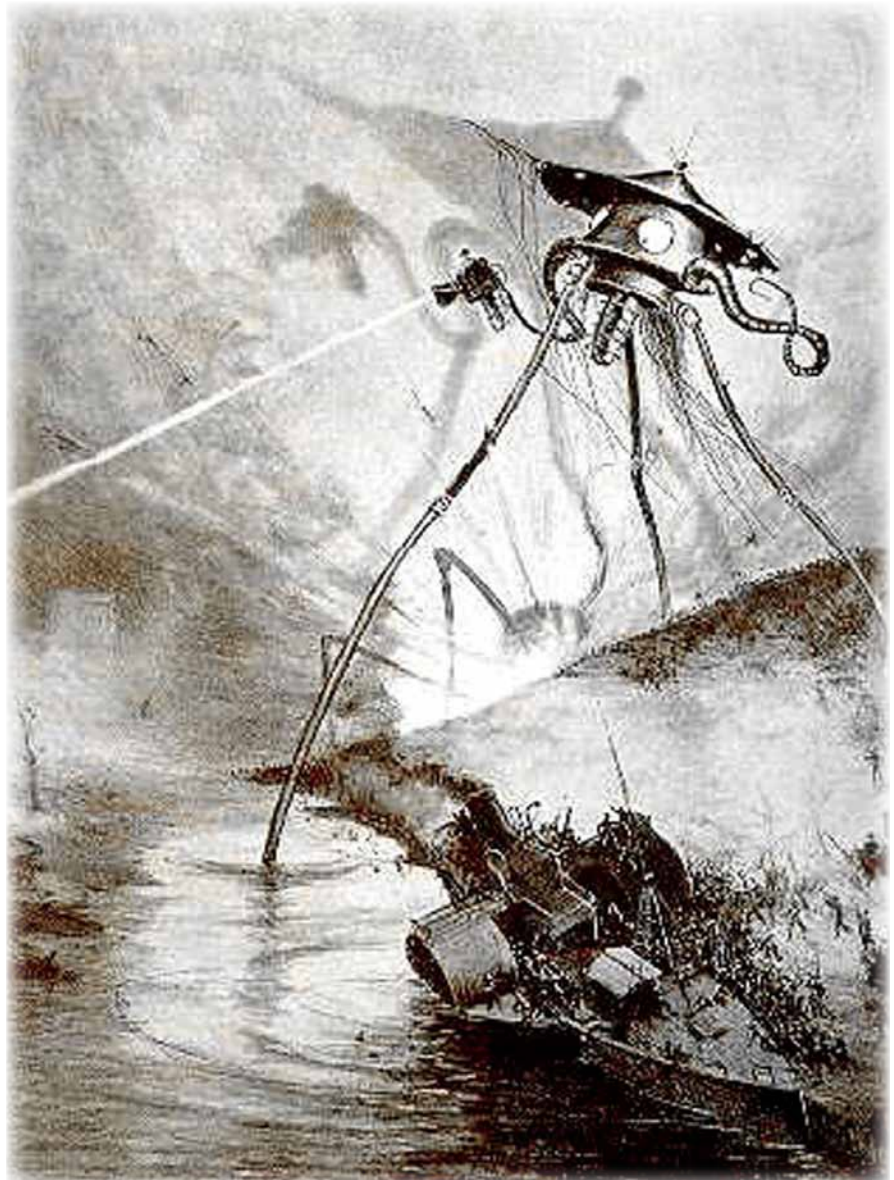
### **GALVANIC FIELD GENERATOR (**

Lightning) aura 5; each creature that starts its turn in the aura is pulled 1 square. Creatures pulled to a square adjacent to the creature with this aura take 5/tier lightning damage.

### **SELF REPAIR AND**

### **CANNIBALIZED FOR PARTS**

Because they are creatures more of metal and magic than flesh and blood, clockwork monsters are often easily repaired from damage during fights. Broken gears and damaged parts can be removed and replaced quickly, refreshing the vitality of a deranged automaton. Many clockwork monsters will also scavenge their weaker allies for parts in order to continue fighting.



## 42 Descriptive Terms for Clockwork Monsters

These creatures require description worthy of their clanking, ponderous, mechanisms. Here's a few bits that may impress your players. Combine 1 from column A with one from column N for instant technobabble.

	Adjectives	Nouns
1	Anodized	Actuator
2	Arcano-Chemical	Balance Gear
3	Belt-Driven	Boiler
4	Chain-Driven	Claw
5	Charging	Compressor
6	Compounding	Condensor
7	Condensing	Crank
8	Distilling	Crucible
9	Double-Acting	Cylinder
10	Drilling	Driving Gear
11	Galvanic	Expansion Chamber
12	Hemispheric	Frame
13	Hydraulic	Gearshaft
14	Load-bearing	Piston
15	Overspeed	Pressure Valve
16	Reciprocating	Regulator
17	Regulating	Reservoir
18	Rotary	Spring
19	Structural	Stator
20	Twin-Valve	Turbine
21	Volt	Vacuum Chamber

The *self repair* power allows a creature heal itself and is most useful to artillery monsters or ranged controllers. Brutes can also make good use of the ability, but their emphasis on melee makes the use of a standard action for healing somewhat costly. Minions will see the most benefit from the *cannibalized for parts* trait, and it can make for some interesting strategic decisions on the part of both players and monsters when there are numerous creatures in an encounter that utilize these powers. Creatures with the *galvanic field generator* aura might draw in reluctant allies and harvest their parts, while minions with *unstable alchemical fuel* might be hazardous to disassemble.

### SELF REPAIR

(Standard; Encounter) \* **Healing**  
The creature gains a +2 bonus to defenses and regains hit points equal to 5/ tier + ½ level.

### CANNIBALIZED FOR PARTS

As a move action, this creature can be immediately reduced to 0 hit points by an adjacent ally with the Self Repair power. When an ally does this it destroys the creature with this trait and recharges the ally's use of Self Repair.

### STEAM-DRIVEN

An internal boiler generates pressurized steam to spin gears and power servos, bringing clockwork mechanisms to life. While this power source is relatively easy to build, cold conditions can impair its functioning. At the same time, the fires of the stream-driven construct's boiler are easy to stoke, allowing the creature to be temporarily quickened.

Skirmishers and lurkers can make the most use of the *steam-driven* trait since an additional move action facilitates their common ambush tactics. Many other roles can also benefit from the ability to gain an additional move action on their turn. For enhanced effect, consider including a steam-powered monster in a combat with another monster that has close or area burst attacks with the fire keyword.

### STEAM-DRIVEN

The creature gains Resist 5/tier fire and Vulnerable 5/tier cold. When it is the target of an attack that deals fire damage, the steam-driven creature gains a second move action on its next turn. When targeted with an attack that deals cold damage, the creature is slowed (save ends).

### UNSTABLE ALCHEMICAL FUEL

Unstable fuels are the hallmark of hasty artificers, those more concerned with producing mechanized servitors en masse than with ensuring their survival. The volatility of these reagents makes them efficient fuels, but when a construct is damaged and the fuel is exposed to the air, it reacts explosively.

They are the easiest fuels to produce, so some see their drawbacks as being of little consequence. Others find the explosive nature of their creations a desirable trait all of its own.

Like all powers that trigger at a creature's death, minions are ideal for *unstable alchemical fuel* (see page 56 for other minion death powers). The fuel also showcases the demented nature of the construct's creator.

### UNSTABLE ALCHEMICAL FUEL

(immediate reaction, when this creature is reduced to 0 hit points; encounter) Close burst 1; creatures in the burst take 5/tier acid and fire damage and are pushed 1 square.

### VULNERABLE WEAPON ASSEMBLAGE

Imbedded swords, shoulder-mounted crossbows, mechanized limbs: these are all hallmarks of a clockwork monster. They are also all vulnerable appendages that intrepid adventurers can cunningly attack to foil the creature's attacks. A solid blow against such a device renders it inoperable and damages the monstrosity wielding it.

This trait can be applied to a monster multiple times, each time selecting a different creature capability. Adding this trait to a creature gives it a more obviously mechanized appearance, which heightens players' perception about their opponents and actively rewards their creativity. It also helps balance out the challenge a monster poses if it has several clockwork abilities.

### VULNERABLE WEAPON ASSEMBLAGE

Select one power other than an at-will basic attack. An enemy can make an attack against the manufactured part of the creature that powers the attack. The assemblage has defenses equal to the creature's +2, cannot be hit by attacks that target Will, and cannot be targeted by burst or blast attacks.

If the assemblage takes at least 10 + ½ level damage from a single attack, the creature takes 5 damage/tier and cannot use the power linked to this trait. The assemblage dangles and shows obvious leaking, sparking, or escaping steam. Ω

# Coming Next Issue

The kobolds are preparing for hibernation (well, a long winter's nap), so we really have no idea what is coming for sure in the wild blossoms of spring. Here's a few things we might publish next issue... Also, we're hoping for at least one of the following to happen:

## The Right Way to Do Wrong

Like heist and caper flicks? You'll love this in-depth look at roguish scams, schemes, and complex payoffs. It's everything a Thief Lord might want.

## The God Slavers

A god in chains. A priesthood bent on destruction. What exactly is going on with this mad priesthood?

## So We Meet Again

How do you build a great villain and keep him ticking for much of a campaign? There's many schools of thought and much devious DM knowledge on this topic. Kortes lays it out with both story elements and rules you can apply immediately to improve the quality of villainy in your campaign.

Plus we might have other tricks and tips from Monte Cook, an interview with a gaming industry founder, a set of explosive new spells and items, poisons and possibly curses, a preview of the Lost City adventure, a set of drakes and dragons, some friends of Dagon's, and a special sneak peek at the Midgard setting. All coming next time so long as the Slush Gods are with us!



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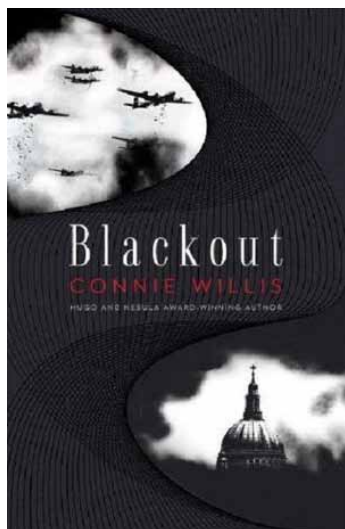
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# Book Reviews

By Ben McFarland and Pierce Watters



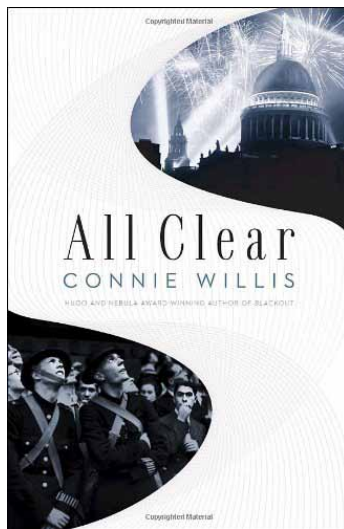
## **BLACKOUT** Connie Willis

Ballantine Books  
Hard Cover  
491 Pages  
\$26.00

At the middle of the 21st century, Oxford, England, has set up a time travel facility to let trained historians delve into history's great events. This presents few causality concerns, since current theory holds that travelers cannot change the past.

This is not to say there are not problems, but the past—through God or the Cosmos or some other celestial mechanism—seems to protect itself through “slippage.” It is beastly difficult to travel to moments of the greatest importance, because a traveler might find that he or she has slipped and missed the desired place and point in time. A few minutes or hours are quite common, but some slippages might cover days, weeks, or even more.

Connie Willis, one of the most honored writers in the history of fantasy and science fiction, gives us the story of a handful of historians studying England in World War II. Originally written as one long and incredibly well-researched novel,



## **ALL CLEAR** Connie Willis

Ballantine Books  
Hard Cover  
641 Pages  
\$26.00

the publisher divided the novel almost exactly in two and released *Blackout* and *All Clear* several months apart.

In the novel, our historians most carefully observe and note daily life in England during the war while doing their utmost not to take any action which might change the course of history. Back in Oxford in 2060, their boss does his best to see that his historians remain out of harm's way.

However, problems develop as slippage increases, and the individual historians discover the “drops” that should return them to their own time will not open. These trapped historians must face World War II, mostly in London, with the uncertainty, fear, and hopelessness that comes from not knowing when the bomb with your name on it will hit.

Connie Willis has written one of the most brilliant novels executed in this or the last century. A master of plot, Ms. Willis expertly handles multiple

characters and plot lines, keeping the reader on tenterhooks, and never once fails her audience. She brings everything together in a rousing conclusion.

Ms. Willis does more than just convey the emotions of a nation under siege. She gives the reader an insight into what it might have been like to live in London during those times, the terror and anger and courage. In the end, she presents a greater understanding of the best things that human beings can be. This book deserves the highest of recommendations.



## **WINTER WITCH** Elaine Cunningham

Paizo Publishing  
Trade Paperback  
December 2010  
300 Pages  
\$9.99

Elaine Cunningham's *Winter Witch* follows Declan Avari and Ellasif of White Rook as they journey to the frozen lands of Irrisen on a rescue. Declan is an apprentice mapmaker who has sworn off wizardry, and Ellasif is a ruthless spitfire of a barbarian. It's an excellent trip alongside believable characters who nurse regrets,



laugh and flirt, and both marvel at and fear the magic in the world. Cunningham does an especially effective job with enjoyable dialogue that complements an authentic supporting cast. It's easy to feel regret and sympathy when one of the characters suffers at the hands of antagonists.

All of this well-tailored handiwork dresses what is essentially a stock fantasy novel – which makes sense, given its basis in Paizo's world of Golarion. We're shown barbarians suspicious of anything magical, conniving necromancers with devilish familiars, and crafty merchants leading gypsy-like caravans. However, that's the ticket everyone purchased; when readers pick up *Pathfinder Tales*, they expect to walk through a world first experienced around the game table. Anything else would be dishonest.

*Winter Witch* isn't the novelization of someone's campaign notes. It examines Declan's metamorphosis from reluctant mage to self-proclaimed wizard and the evolution of his feelings for the woman he set out to save. It follows Ellasif's personal revelations on tradition, duty and freedom. Overall, readers will find this a very entertaining book, with equal parts quiet introspection, gut-spilling action, and a fantastic setting that promises adventure and doesn't disappoint.



### **THE BUNTLINE SPECIAL**

**Mike Resnick**

Pyr Science Fiction & Fantasy

Trade Paperback

December 2010

\$16.00

322 pages

One of the most famous incidents in the history of the Old West is the gunfight at the OK corral. Award-winning writer Mike Resnick takes us back to those days...sort of.

In *The Buntline Special*, the federal government has relocated Thomas Edison to the town of Tombstone to lead the scientific fight against magic-wielding Native Americans, specifically Woo-Ka-Nay (aka Hook Nose), of the western Cheyenne, and Goyathlay of the Apaches—better known as Geronimo. The western expansion of the US has come to a dead stop at the Mississippi river. The government is depending on the inventive genius of Thomas Edison, with the assistance of Ned Buntline, to find a way to defeat the powerful Indian tribes.

But there is a problem. Someone is trying to kill Edison and has already come very close. Wyatt Earp is hired to protect Edison and Buntline. Earp's brother Vigil is marshal of the Arizona Territory and Morgan Earp is a deputy. Wyatt faces formidable foes in Ike Clanton, his brothers, and an assortment of horse-stealing n'er-do-wells known as the Cowboys. In need of help, Wyatt Earp sends for friends Doc Holliday and Bat Masterson. Then things get interesting.

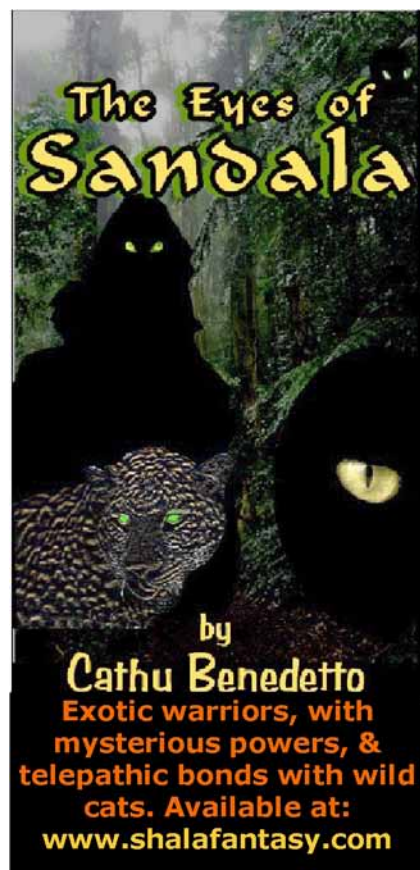
Geronimo magically transforms Masterson into a real bat, and Hook Nose resurrects Holliday's arch enemy Johnny Ringo. Edison has lighted Tombstone with electricity, he and Buntline run electric stagecoaches armored with a super-brass, and Big Nose Kate Elder's brothel is populated with human females, cyborgs, and mechanical hookers. As tensions build, a new gunfight at the OK corral becomes inevitable.

Identified variously as "A Weird West Tale" and a "steampunk western," the book perhaps best fits in a genre Joe R. Lansdale and Pat Lobrutto, with tongues firmly planted in cheeks, many years ago dubbed "Cowpunk." Master writer Mike Resnick turns the historical gunfight at the OK corral into a glorious cowpunk-ish romp through Old West history. The book is delightfully illustrated by J. Seamus Gallagher. Highly recommended. Ω

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# Banners of Zobeck

By Wolfgang Baur

Art by Olaus Magnus

The bright red banner with a golden gear of the Free City's army flies high from the Citadel walls, and rarely does it march against a foe in anger. But Zobeck is surrounded by those who might demand tribute, bluster with outrageous threats, or even compel the city's submission and fealty. The Free City retains a standing army, though a small one, and cultivates good relationships with some neighbors and some prominent mercenary companies.

## Bad Neighbors

Zobeck shares borders with five states: the dwarven cantons of the Ironcrags to the west, the undead princes of Morgau and Doresh to the north, the human kingdom of the Magdar to the south, and the difficult legions of the Duchy of Perun's Daughter to the east, at the mouth of the River Argent. Raiding bands of militant ghouls from the underdark sometimes harry the city's trade, though the ghouls present no ambassador to the city.

Almost as dangerous as those nations are the less organized groups. Bands of centaurs occasionally make their way through the Margreve Forest to raid the city's fields and outlying villages. Bands of the shadow fey sometimes harass travelers on the Great Northern Road, though this is rare.

Close but not quite bordering lie seven or a dozen more states, depending on how the counting is done: the nomadic elves of the Rothenian plains, the human principalities of the Grand Duchy of Dornig, the Free City of Salzbach, the small mountain state of Burgoyne, the powerful but sharply-pressed Electoral Kingdom of Krakova, and two of the Seven Cities, Melano and Triolo. All have trade relationships and not infrequently alliances with Zobeck.

These then, are the foes and friends most common to Zobeck that its generals see. They know that today's friend might be tomorrow's bitter enemy, and each nation seeks to expand itself at the expense of others. The Free City's strategy has been to sell weapons to all parties, to offer its services as a trusted broker between larger powers, and to pay tribute when it must – and to use assassination only when others force its hand. Over time, it has gained land in the Smolten Hills, and used its control of trade as a hammer against foes it cannot defeat in direct battle.

## Elite Forces

The city rarely commands more than 1,000 troops in the city itself, and half of those come from a levy of the citizens to man the walls when its professional soldiers go raiding. For all its wealth—and the bounteous patronage of the Gear Goddess Rava—the Free City of Zobeck is smaller than the great metropolis of the Seven Cities or the Mharoti Empire. The gearforged company is still its preferred body of heavy infantry, and its mages from the Arcane Collegium are second to none—but both groups are relatively small and scattered, no matter their individual size.

The city's true elites are the Order of Griffon Knights (primarily scouts, despite their name) and the Green Hussars, a set of ridiculously brave—some say foolhardy—cavalry. The Griffon Knights ride their mounts to scout the forests and open plains; the hussars patrol roads, hills, and woods in their green jackets and gold braid. The hussar's colorful plumage hides hard steel; they burn border villages when needed. The hussars are also inordinately fond of dueling.

## Zobeck Order of Battle

- Griffon Knights, 20 flying cavalry
- Zobeck Wands, 25 human wizards of the Collegium
- Green Hussars, 50 human light cavalry
- Rava's Legion, 75 gearforged heavy infantry
- 1st to 5th Companies, 250 human medium infantry
- Volund's Hammer, 50 dwarven crossbowmen
- Raven Feeders, 100 kobold archers/light infantry
- The Exiles, cantonal mercenaries, 75 dwarven heavy infantry/pikes
- City levy, up to 500 human, dwarven, and kobold citizen-soldiers

## Footmen and Mercenaries

Infantry is the queen of the battlefield, and Zobeck has been blessed in this regard. Its citizens willingly volunteer when needed, and its kobold and dwarven folk make excellent skirmishers and crossbow troops, respectively. The city is also notorious for its skill in conducting night raids.

Finally, Zobeck depends on companies of mercenaries to fill out its ranks. Most of these are Ironcrag dwarves or the pikeman of Dornig, though Rothenian centaurs serve as light cavalry, scouts, and skirmishers.

The city of Zobeck's main strength has always come from the willingness of her people to fight. Their wealth and skill make them formidable, and her neighbors approach battles with the city warily. Most find it easier by far to strike a deal with Zobeck than to overcome her army.

Ω

# Hurthyr's Meadhouse

1 square = 5 ft.



# MIDGARD

— CAMPAIGN SETTING —

## The Fires of a Singular Task Burn Strong

Until now, you've known the world of MIDGARD in part. You've seen the lost civilizations. You've heard the ticking of the clockwork. Your nostrils burned at the stench of Imperial ghouls on your trail, and you've felt the cold, hard riches of the gold of the Ironcrag Mountains.

### Now We Forge a Shared World

The world of MIDGARD – Wolfgang Baur's own homebrew campaign setting for the last five years – is opening wide the gates. The world of Zobeck and the Margreve Forest, the world of vampire principalities and the Dragon Empire, the cities small and large: All of it, revealed in the most ambitious project ever done at Open Design.

But we're not introducing you to our world. You will be introducing all of us to yours.

### Secrets Revealed at Last

The MIDGARD project continues the shared world tradition of all OPEN DESIGN adventures, starting start with an existing map and Baur's campaign notes. Patrons can follow those foundations, or take the world in new directions to add cities, kingdoms, even villains or pantheons from their own home campaigns.

You'll choose new magic and monsters, and new characters from cossack centaurs to the gearforged, the depraved wizards of Bemmea and the dragonkin, the reaver dwarves, the river elves and their shadow cousins.

Midgard offers you rich possibilities for adventure, for bold new characters and hideous dangers!



### Deep Design Talent

The project will have multiple guides: **Jeff Grubb** will develop a region, as will **Baur, Brandon Hodge**, and others. Seven regions will be explored in all—and you choose which one we do first!

- 1) *The Crossroads* of Zobeck, the Cantons, and Margreve Forest, and the Magdar Kingdom. Shadow elves and clockwork magic!
- 2) *The Dragon Empire* of the Mhaloti Sultan and his harem assassins, the Flying Cities of Sikkim, plus the tombs of the River Lands to plunder.
- 3) *The Grand Duchies* of the Princes, the ruins of Thorn, the Elven Court of Arbonesse, the Free City of Salzburg and its ten thousand riches.
- 4) *The Northlands and Elflands*, snowy realms of reaver dwarves and thursir giants, home to Thule and the Lands Beyond Knowing
- 5) *The Seven Cities*, city states in perpetual war of poison, guile, and steel, home of a fallen empire, land of oracles and great wealth
- 6) *The Wasted West*, haunted lands of the wizards' magocracy, towering horrors on blasted heaths, the wasteland of ruined kingdoms fallen into goblin realms.
- 7) *the Tsars and Steppes* with their cold gnomish hells, nomadic Rothenian elves, infernal princes, bloodthirsty centaurs, and crazed slaver despots!

### Results

When the project is complete, Midgard will be a seamless whole loaded with dungeon sites, characters, and plots. The resulting worldbook will be released as a high-quality hardcover with professional editing, art, layout, and printing.

Patrons who join at the Sponsor level are invited to join a private Midgard game run by the designers at Gen Con 2012.



CHOOSE YOUR REGION  
BY FEBRUARY 1!

DESIGN AND  
BRAINSTORMING  
WILL BEGIN PROMPTLY.

OPEN DESIGN

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