

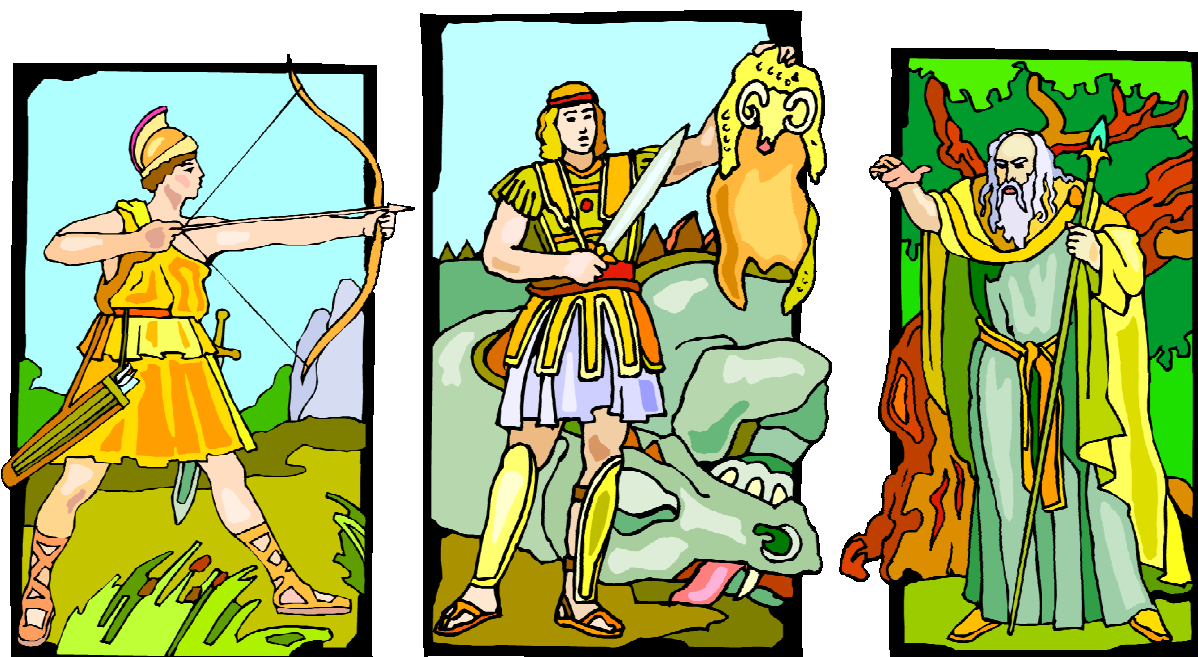
Issue 3

October 2008

# MINOTAUR

The Official, Irregular Webzine of the Mazes & Minotaurs Revival

**DOUBLE-SIZED, TRIPLE-THEMED SPECIAL !**



## AMAZONS, MYTH & MAGIC

Two Scenarios, New Creatures & Mythic Items, Official Background Material, Rule Variants, Inspiration for Maze Masters and more !



## A Word from the Editor

### Three Times the Fun !

Greetings, fellow Minotaurians... and welcome to the third issue of the **Minotaur**, the one-and-only official webzine of the **Mazes & Minotaurs** roleplaying revival !

To celebrate our first anniversary (yup, the first issue of *Minotaur Quarterly* was released roughly one year ago – which, incidentally, explains why it is no longer Quarterly) and since we couldn't agree on a single theme for this third installment, we decided to offer you a 48 page *triple-themed* issue.

The first of these three themes is **Amazons**. This issue's *Mythika Gazetteer* tells you everything you ever wanted to know (and possibly a little bit more) about the warrior-women of M&M, while *The Alternate Amazon* presents a variant, liberated version of the character class. Lastly, this issue's *Maze Master's Lore* includes the description and stats of Mythika's mightiest living Amazon heroine, Princess Titania.

The second theme is (wait for it)... **Magic** ! This issue's *Pandora's Box* offers you various arcane accessories, the impenitent Luke G. Reynard tells us what he thinks about Mystic Fortitude in his ever-popular *Twist in the Maze* column and this issue's *Griffin Archives* resurrect a long-lost M&M class from the glorious 80s : Erik Sieurin's Beastmaster - presented for the Original and Revised rules... all this, plus the detailed description of Pellias of Seriphos, Mythika's greatest Sorcerer hero, in *Maze Master's Lore*.

Last but not least, our third theme, **Myth**, is generously represented by two adventures – Andrew Trent's *Black Chains of the Earth* (part 2 of our Against Atlantis! series) and Kevin Scrivner's *The Trident of Rhana*, as well as by this issue's *Mythic Bestiary*, which offers us a Monstrous Mix from various legendary and literary sources. Not to be outdone, *Muse's Corner* tells us all about three TV movies inspired by the classic mythic tales of Jason & his Argonauts, the Trojan War and, of course, the Odyssey.

Oh, and did I mention the *Play Nymph* ?

See you in a few months for *Minotaur 4* – and no, it won't be a four-themed issue.

Long live the Minotaur !

Olivier Legrand (2008)

## MINOTAUR MIRTH



- An Amazon special ? Well, that was about time !  
Well, at least we didn't get a chainmail bikini cover...

## Game Session Credits

**Merciless Maze Master** : Olivier Legrand.

**Fearless Adventurers** : Andrew Trent, Kevin Scrivner and Erik Sieurin.

**Wandering Monster** : Luke G. Reynard.

**Visual Game Aids** : Various Artists, including Emmanuel "Croquefer" Roudier, Anonymous Clipart Creators and Unknown Elegant Classical Artists.

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## Long live The Minotaur !

Unless otherwise stated, all game material included in this webzine uses the **Revised Mazes & Minotaurs** rules (1987 edition).

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# The Alternate Amazon

A New Look at M&M Warrior Women by Danielle R. Virgo



*Declaring war on stereotypes !*

## Fighting the Clichés

In the Original M&M rules, Amazons were treated as « female Barbarians » and did not even have their own class description ; the introduction of a real, autonomous, fully-fledged Amazon class in the 1987 Revised rules was usually very well received by the M&M community... but things have changed in 20 years and modern-day female gamers may find this Amazon a bit too reminiscent of the sexist clichés often associated with warrior women in fantasy.

Having Grace as a primary attribute means that M&M Amazons *need* to be good looking to qualify as warriors, which is quite odd. Sure, this high Grace also gives them an interesting defensive bonus... but this benefit goes away if they wear a breastplate, which tends to conjure up images of scantily-clad, (chainmail bikini, anyone ?) willowy women in the minds of most male gamers.

Lastly, Amazons are the only warrior class in M&M that does not have some form of offensive bonus in melee : Barbarians deal more damage, Spearmen and Nobles have their Initiative bonus... Sure, Amazons are deadly with bows, but doesn't it sound a bit like : « *OK, chicks, leave this dangerous melee stuff to us guys !* » ? This article presents a variant, less restrictive version of the class.

## Liberating the Class

The first thing to change is the emphasis on archery. Sure, Amazons are famous for their skill with the bow and should be allowed to become deadly archers if they so wish but many fictional Amazons also seem to be formidable melee fighters. Expert archery should be an option for Amazons, but not *the* only option.

Secondly, Grace should be taken out of the picture, since it is heavily associated to the aforementioned sexist clichés. The two primary attributes of the class should be Skill and Will.

Why these changes ? Because replacing Grace by Will makes our Amazons as tough and fearless as Barbarians and Spearmen (who also have Will as one of their two primary attributes), which is a far more logical and fair vision of things than the idea of good looks as a defensive advantage. Using Will and Skill as primary attributes also means that the Amazon's Danger Evasion mod will no longer tend to be lower than that of Barbarians and Spearmen (which was neither fair nor logical), whether you use the official rules or the variant method of calculation given in last issue's *A Twist in the Maze*.

This also means that the Amazon's *Battle Grace* must be replaced with another, Will-based ability. We could simply give her the *Battle Fury* of Barbarians but unlike Barbarians, Amazons should really be allowed to wear breastplates without reducing one of their special abilities.



*Why should we leave the breastplates to men ?*



*A proud, fearless, liberated Amazon warrior*

The Skill-based defense bonus given to Spearmen reflects their crack hoplite-training and military discipline – two concepts which would not fit very well with the mythical image of the Amazon.

How about a Will-based defense bonus similar to that of Barbarians ? Well, in the case of Barbarians, this bonus can either be interpreted as a reference to the « loincloth only » attitude displayed by many muscle-bound fantasy heroes (the male equivalent of the chainmail bikini cliché) or, in a more historical vein, as a reflection of the Celtic belief that fighting « sky-clad » (yes, this means *naked*) actually gave you some sort of supernatural protection.

Amazons, on the other hand, are never credited in legend or fiction as fighting naked (or even bare-chested, yeah, sorry, forget about it, guys...) or, for that matter, as having some kind of innate special defensive advantage like Battle Grace. One thing most (if not all) sources agree on, however, is the Amazons' ferocity in battle, which, in game terms, should translate as an attack-based ability, rather than as a defensive one. Amazons should be fast and deadly warriors, not graceful "battle-dancers".

The variant special abilities granted to our liberated Amazons (see the opposite column) take all these things into account, making them deadlier, more offensive fighters – and giving them their own special combat style, somewhere between that of Barbarians (extra damage) and Spearmen (better Initiative). Given their lack of a special defensive bonus, however, our new Amazons should definitely consider wearing breastplates and helmets for extra protection (bye-bye Battle Grace !).

## Variant Class Profile

### AMAZONS

Amazons are female warriors, known for their fearlessness and deadly skill in battle.

**Primary Attributes :** Skill and Will

**Gender :** All Amazons are female.

**Basic Hits :** 12

**Deadly Skill :** An Amazon adds her Skill mod to damage rolls when using her weapon of choice.

**Quick Strike :** An Amazon adds her Will mod to her Initiative when using their weapon of choice.

**Weapon of Choice :** Amazons may favor either a melee weapon (sword or spear) or a missile weapon (bow or javelin).

**Level Benefits :** Each level beyond the first gives an Amazon +4 Hits, +1 to Luck and +2 to another attribute score, chosen by the player.

**Possessions :** Amazons start with a dagger, a sword or spear, a shield, a bow and 12 arrows, and a starting wealth of 3D6 x 5 silver pieces. One of the first things they do when they get rich enough is to buy a breastplate and helmet.

This alternate version of the class also allows a distinction between Amazon fighters and Amazon archers, depending on the weapon of choice – so it is still possible to play the deadly female marksmen all M&M players have come to love (sorry, I mean *admire*), while allowing for a greater variety of characters. (not to mention all-Amazon adventuring parties – *and what's wrong with that ?*)



*The New Amazon : a true warrior woman*

# AMAZONS !

Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About the Warrior Women of Mythika

Written by **Olivier Legrand** and **Andrew Trent**

Tastefully Illustrated by Unknown Classical Artists

*The scholars of Mythika, Artemis forgive them, have at best a poor understanding of the Amazons of the Wild North – but hey, all these scholars are males, aren't they ? Let this record do what it can to demystify my Sisters.*

*Dido of Amazonia*

## Heritage

It is understandable that a phallogocentric culture such as that of the Three Cities - and much of the rest of Mythika - would find it difficult to grasp the nature of the Amazons. Whereas so many of the nations of our world seem bound together through common heritage, we Amazons are not. A wide range of hair and eye colors, skin tones and facial features are found across the Amazonian spectrum.

This variation is so strong that any two Sisters are as often as different as night and day. In fact, the only consistent characteristic shared by the women of the north is a tendency towards possessing greater height and athletic ability than the majority of females in other portions of Mythika. While your philosophers and academics struggle to understand how this is so - to find some divine or mystic reason for the propensity towards physical dominance exhibited by the Amazons - the answer lies before your eyes. Our culture is founded on rigorous training, both martial and physical, and a dedication to the sanctity of our physical selves. While the rest of Mythika tends towards indulgence, we live by the simple rules of healthy diet and active bodies.

But enough about the source of our prowess. Instead, let me explain the nature of our wild variation in superficial appearance. No matter what strange legends you may have heard about how we procreate - that we are hatched from eggs or that we grow from stones or are birthed by sexless winter wolves - the truth is that we arrive on this earth in the same manner as the rest of human kind. However, unlike your cultures, our mothers receive seed from any of countless slaves drawn from any and all corners of Mythika. As a result, my sisters often possess traits associated with other cultures.

Among the Amazons you will find those with the flame red hair, piercing blue eyes and the pale skin of the northlanders fighting alongside those with the dark hair, brown skin and chestnut eyes of the east.



*A noble Amazon warrior of Amazonia*

Still others resemble Hyperboreans with blonde or red hair while a few Sisters could even be mistaken for the almond-eyed ladies of the Land of the Sun. Variation in form is expected and celebrated among the Amazons.

There is one last thing to understand about the nature of the Amazons. We place no value the male part of the procreative pair. Our tongue has no word equivalent to your "father." Nor do "uncle," "brother" or even "son" exist to us. A male is a male and fit for labor and little else. Because of this, lineage is tracked only along our maternal line. Hence, the only way for one to be recognized as an Amazon is to be born to an Amazon.

No doubt you have grown uncomfortable with the frankness of my discourse. Such is the nature of men. So perhaps you would fare better if I tuned my attention to the kind of stories and myths that you people of the Three Cities seem so enamored with. To put you at ease, I shall relate the founding myth of Amazonia.

## Founding Myth

According to our legends, every Amazon is descended from the same group of ancestresses known to us as the Seven Sisters. Indeed, "Amazon" means "sister" in our tongue.

Millennia ago, at the start of the Mythic Age, the land now known as Amazonia was called Scarmathia and was ruled by a mighty, despotic monarch called Gargaros. King Gargatos had nine sons and nine daughters; his nine sons were his pride and Scarmathia's most powerful warriors, while his nine, beautiful young daughters were, in his own words, "his most valuable treasure".

King Gargaros was accustomed to utilize his children to consolidate and expand his power : he sent his sons on epic wars and quests to conquer new lands and defeat formidable foes and offered his daughters in marriage to his mightiest or wealthiest allies.

The eldest daughter was married to the king of a neighboring land – but when two of her sisters visited her one year after her wedding, they saw that she had become little more than a slave, dominated by her brutal and mean-spirited husband.

When the two appalled princesses reported this shameful situation to their father, King Gargaros replied to them that such was the proper place of a woman. This attitude came as a shock to the two sisters, who realized that their father had a similar fate in mind for them. The older one, who was set to be married in a few months, was so torn by despair that she committed suicide, slashing her veins in her bath. When King Gargaros learned of his daughter's tragic death, he was clearly more irritated than devastated, for this suicide compromised yet another well-laid plan of alliance-by-marriage with another kingdom.



*Antianera, the First Queen of Amazonia*

The third daughter, upon learning of the death of her sister, swore an oath that she would never bow before the patriarchy. She locked herself in the temple of Artemis and prayed for seven days and seven nights for the Mistress of the Hunt to grant her the strength and skill to fight as well as any man of the earth. So moved by the grief and devotion of the princess was Artemis that - against the counsel of her brother Apollo - she granted the wish.

With her newfound prowess and the heart of a lion, the third daughter rallied her remaining sisters and began a bloody revolt against her father. The slaughter, though terrible, was cleansing. With her father and his warriors slain and the establishment of a new form of government - a gynocracy - the third daughter assumed her position as Antianera I, Queen of the Amazons. From her family flows the blood of the Amazons, blessed by Artemis to be as strong as any man.



*A Sister dressed for war*

The story of Antianera is taught to every little girl in Amazonia ; three days after her menarche, every Amazon undergoes a sacred ceremony where she receives her arms (bow, spear etc) and is acknowledged as a true warrior by the rest of the community. To complete the ceremony, she must take the Oath of Antianera – a solemn vow never to let herself become a male's slave or spouse (which are essentially the same thing as far as we are concerned). Indeed, a true Amazon will prefer death to that kind of dishonor. Those rare Amazons who do break the Oath of Antianera to surrender their freedom to a man always suffer the wrath of our goddess Artemis and die giving birth to their first child - who is always a male child, the living reflection of the mother's doom. This recently happened to that Antiope who willingly surrendered herself to Prince Theseos of Thena, a few years before he became King : Antiope gave « her » man a son (young Prince Hippolytos) and died in childbirth from what those foolish Thenan physicians called « complications » - but every Amazon knows such is the fate of all those who break the Oath of Antianera. Antiope knew it, too, and I suppose that's why she is seen by some as a truly tragic character.

## History

The Amazon folk has a long, proud history, full of glorious victories – but don't worry, I won't bore you with endless lists of queens, heroines and battles. Suffice it to say that our Queendom has earned its might and glory the hard, bloody way – it's a man's world out there and, as the story of Antianera reminds us, being a free warrior-woman in a male-dominated age always comes with a price. For an Amazon, freedom as a woman and as a warrior is more important than her own life : it is the sacred gift of Artemis to the Seven Sisters and is the true motive behind most (if not all) the glorious deeds accomplished by our heroines over the centuries.

It was this sacred freedom which made our foresisters stand against the malevolent, power-hungry (and predominantly male) Autarchs during the Age of Magic (see *Maze Masters Guide* p 13). More recently, it was the same sacred principle which caused our wise Queen to declare war on the

Centaur of Sicania (see *Maze Masters Guide* p 14), who, in a typically male, overbearing manner, sought to encroach upon our Motherland.

## Society

Are you sure you want to learn more about the way our society works ? I'm asking you because I know how you outsiders usually react to such stuff. Really ? Well, don't say you haven't been warned. I'll try to put myself in your phallogocentric Minean sandals and focus on the differences between our society and what you consider to be the norm – no, I can hardly say I enjoy this kind of perspective shift but that's probably the only way to make you grasp a few basic truths about how we really live.

First, I'd like to discount a few misconceptions born from centuries of gynophobic propaganda : we don't eat men, nor do we usually offer them in sacrifice to our goddess ; we don't cut one of our breasts to make us better archers (but most Amazon archers do wear an asymmetrical breastband that tends to flatten their bow-breast) and no, we don't kill our male offspring, simply because we do not give birth to sons, thanks to the special blessing bestowed on the Seven Sisters by the goddess Artemis – all our children are daughters and will become warrior-women, just like their mothers. Those who break the Oath of Antianera are the only exception – their first child will always be male and his birth will always kill the mother, interrupting the bloodline and ensuring that no Amazon is ever born in slavery or in ignorance of her heritage.

The society of our Queendom is based on two basic principles : gynocracy and matriarchy.

Gynocracy means that all the power is in the hand of women. We are ruled by a Queen and all our warrior-women form what you might call our « aristocracy » - in Amazonia, being a warrior and being a noble are the same thing and, as you will more fully understand in a few minutes, the concept of « breeding » as you understand it has little meaning in our Queendom.



*The same Sister in more peaceful times*





*An Amazon warrior with spear and shield*

Amazons belong to what we call Houses – or what your Philosophers might call « extended matriarchal clans », in their typically chauvinistic nomenclature. There are seven Houses in Amazonia – one for each of the original Seven Sisters, with the bloodline of Antianera herself forming the backbone of the Royal House. Every House is ruled by its council of elders, with one elected Sister acting as leader in times of war or crisis ; the head of the Royal House is, of course, the Queen herself.

Our family trees do not record « fathers », « sons » or « brothers », since these concepts do not exist for us – that's what the « matriarchy » bit is all about. An Amazon has no father, only a Mother, and will only give birth to other Amazons. It is as simple as that.

How can a child be unaware of her father's identity, you ask ? Well, wait until we get to our mating customs – yes, that's what we call them. Weddings, marriages and other male-invented contrivances simply do not exist in our society – the closest thing we have to wedlock is the life-bond that may exist between two Amazon lovers - and no, I will not pander to your basic instincts by providing further detail about this.

Let's get back to social organization, shall we ? The Seven Houses form the military, political and economic backbone of our society – each has its own army of women-warriors, its own lands and its own special traditions. Feuds between Houses are virtually nonexistent ; unlike your male-dominated aristocratic families, our Houses do not need to

increase or maintain their political powers through inter-dynastic marriages (since these do not exist, remember ?) ; as a result, Amazonia is a very stable political entity, united beneath the strong and benevolent rule of our Queen.

In Amazonian society, everyone who is not an Amazon is a slave. We have no room for intricate concepts such as citizens or free commoners – as have told before, freedom, nobility and 'warrioriness' are all parts of being an Amazon.

All males in Amazonia are slaves - and no, we don't deprive them of their manhood (that's another myth) but not all slaves are males. Most male slaves are used for agriculture and other heavy labor (but NEVER as an auxiliary fighting force, even in desperate circumstances), while female slaves are generally used for personal or domestic service. All our craftsmen, scholars and artisans are slaves – and as everywhere else, skilled or well-educated slaves can have a very pleasant life as long as they remember what they are.

By now, we're probably wondering how we have children. Well, just like all other women – by mating with a man. The only difference in our case is that these men are neither our « husbands » (another word that do not exist in our language) nor our « lovers » ; twice a year, once at the Spring Equinox and once at the Summer Solstice, we perform our fertility rituals under the sacred tutelage of Artemis – we go into the woods, wearing masks (and very little else), where we meet the stronger, healthier male slaves and...

I'll stop there since nobody is allowed to discuss the Sacred Mysteries of Artemis with outsiders. I'm sure you can rely on your own imagination. That's right, no *Sex Secrets of Ancient Amazons* stuff for you.

In ancient times, the male slaves who served in the fertility rites were systematically put to death after having fulfilled their sacred task but this practice was abandoned several centuries ago, since good male slaves became increasingly hard to find. Today, the only ones we do kill after mating with them are the crazy ones who think that their role in the fertility rites give them special rights – including the one to talk about such things. Ah, I see you get my point, now.

Each of the Seven Houses of Amazonia is named after one of the original Seven Sisters. The seven House names are : Antianera (the Royal House), Diona, Attala, Tamara, Velleda, Hippolyta and Marada. Thus, my full name is Dido, daughter of Viria, from the House of Diona.

One last thing about names – our Queen is always called Antianera. She forsakes her birth name when she receives the crown of Amazonia, thereby becoming a living incarnation of the first Antianera. Thus, there has *always* been an Antianera on the throne of Amazonia – and no, we don't bother to give them a dynastic number, since there is only one Antianera.



*Artemis the Archer, Goddess of the Amazons*

## Religion

This brings us to the topic of religion – another common source of misconceptions and misunderstandings between Amazons and male-dominated folks.

Many Mineans believe we Amazons do not have any proper religion, simply because we do not have priestesses, temples or other trappings of « civilized » worship. Mind you, we do have a religion – but the forests are our temples and each Amazon is responsible for her own faith. So no, we don't have any form of organized priesthood – our Elder Sisters act as keepers of sacred lore and the heads of the various Houses also lead the fertility rites and other religious ceremonies, with our Queen acting as what you would call a « high priestess ».

As you might have guessed, we only worship goddesses in Amazonia – and certainly not all of them. Our main goddess is of course Artemis, whom we worship under three different aspects: the Maiden, the Huntress and the Moon Goddess – her most mysterious, mystical incarnation, which is tied to our vision of royalty and matriarchy as well as to our fertility rites... but we do have room for other goddesses as well – Athena is especially popular with some of our young warriors. Some of her devotees think Amazonian society should « advance » and embrace « civilization », which has recently caused some friction with the more traditionalist Sisters, who still regard Athena as an « outsider goddess ». Demeter is also worshipped in Amazonia, but only by our slaves, since she is not a warrior goddess; indeed, her cult is the only one allowed among our slaves, giving her a very special niche in our society.

## What, no Divine Prodigies ?

The fact that Priestesses do not exist in Amazonia does not mean that Divine Prodigies never happen here. How is it possible, you ask ? In Amazonia, spiritual power and temporal power are the same thing, as Dido herself implies in her exposé.

In game terms, an Amazon who becomes the head of her House is granted the full repertoire of Divine Prodigies of a Priestess by Artemis herself, with a number of Power points based on her level as an Amazon (which is usually quite high in the first place). This is an exception to the general M&M philosophy, which do not normally allow characters to be dual-classed but it should be noted that Amazon House leaders are no longer allowed to leave Amazonia on quests, adventures and other expeditions, because of their sacred duty to their House and Queendom; in other words, any Amazon PC reaching this exalted status should be retired from active play, becoming a NPC, unless of course the Maze Master is willing to run an Amazonia-based campaign focusing on the various political affairs of the Queendom (and why not ?).

The position of House leader should not be available to Amazons with a level below 5 and should require Will and Luck scores of at least 19, representing an extraordinary strength of character as well as outstanding divine favor. Even if these requirements are met, promotion will not be automatic – there is only one leader per House and she may only be appointed by the council of Elder Sisters after the death of the former ruler. To avoid political rivalries and internecine power struggles, most House leaders select an heiress apparent (usually their eldest or most promising daughter) while they are alive but the real decision belongs to the council of Elder Sisters and surprises have been known to happen.

The priestly powers granted to the leader of each House are a direct reflection of their sacred sovereignty; they are bestowed on the newly-chosen leader during a special ceremony where the power of Artemis manifests itself... and will immediately disappear if the leader ever offends the goddess or forsakes her duties as a ruler.

Amazons who worship Athena cannot count on any form of local priesthood to lead them in their worship, which is one of the reasons these « Athenians » often leave Amazonia to become adventuring warriors; most of them also strive to become Divine Agents of Athena and thereby establish a special, unique connection with their patron goddess.

Despite what some misinformed scholars would have you believed, we have little regard for Hera, who has surrendered her freedom and womanhood to her « husband » Zeus – your typical self-indulgent, self-centered male god. And don't talk to us about Hestia... goddess of hearthfire and domestic peace, really? Goddess of submission and passivity seems more fitting !



*A Graceful Amazon Princess*

And then there is Aphrodite. Her worship is supposed to be banned in Amazonia, because we have little interest for a goddess who uses seduction and sexuality to get what she wants and who will not touch a bow or spear. The whore goddess, some of our Elder Sisters call her. We also know that she is the unseen influence behind every oathbreaker's infatuation with a man – but Artemis never allows the so-called goddess of love to save her pawns from the oathbreaker's curse. Perhaps Aphrodite had something to do with the fate of Antianera's elder sisters – we will probably never know because she is never mentioned in our mythology.

## Culture

Most scholars will tell you that our native tongue is Borean, the language of the Hyperborean Barbarians – put this is only partly true. As I've implied before, we have liberated our Mother Tongue from the influence of many masculine words and concepts, just like our ancestresses liberated themselves from the tyranny of men. Most of us also know Minean, which we prefer to use when dealing with outsiders. We do not have books, scrolls or any other form of written records: in Amazonia, knowledge is transmitted from mother to daughter, through tales, poems, songs and other forms of oral literature. Indeed, the preservation and transmission of this knowledge is one of the main tasks of our Elder Sisters, Amazons who have become too old to fight and act as the living memory of our folk.

Over the ages, outright lies have been spread across Mythika about how we supposedly kill or enslave any man foolish enough to venture into our territory. This is simply not true. Male adventurers are welcome in Amazonia and will be treated as free men (a real privilege, since this status does not exist in our society) as long as they respect our customs and forget about trying to turn us into « real women » (whatever that means) – and consider this a warning: although this kind of attitude has become rarer in recent times, we still know how to deal swift justice to those who would abuse our hospitality or try to take away our freedom. We have a popular saying in Amazonia: *Men who act like Minotaurs will die like Minotaurs.*

## Amazonia

Amazonia is a magnificent, fertile land of deep forests and rolling mountains; some western Lyrist once described our Queendom as « a living metaphor of the female body » but he may just have had an overactive imagination (or perhaps it was just some lousy way of trying to charm us with his typically-male poetry). Outsiders usually find our climate surprisingly mild for such a northern country, especially when compared to nearby Hyberborea. That being said, Amazonia holds many perils, which often prove fatal to unguided outsiders – including savage Beasts, a few Monsters here and there and, of course, the Sisters themselves. Artemis has blessed us with a homeland made in her own image - wild, beautiful and merciless to her enemies.

All human activity is concentrated in the Seven Citadels which are scattered around the wildland at strategical points, making Amazonia an impregnable Queendom. Each of these fortified bastions is ruled by a different House; the largest of them is the Royal Capital of Antianera (our only real city), which is roughly located in the Heart of Amazonia, surrounded by the wild, sacred Forest of Artemis. Like the royal citadel, the six other fortresses are named after their ruling Houses (eg Diona, Tamara etc). Thus, to an Amazon, her House and its bastion are essentially the same thing – the fortified citadel is the body and the House itself is the soul (or the blood, but soul and blood are the same things to an Amazon).

You want to know more? Well, you'll have to come to our Queendom and discover by yourself... I'll be leaving Thena in two days to return to my homeland and spend a few weeks here, among my people. You could come with me, provided you behave properly and forget about all your sexist, misogynistic prejudices – remember what I told you earlier about Men and Minotaurs? Fancy a trip to the land of truly free women?

### Black Amazons of Charybdis

According to some persistent rumors, deep in the southern jungles of Charybdis lies the fabled Lost City of Negara (which, according to some obscure scholars, mean something like *Vale of the Lost Women* in ancient Charybdian), inhabited by ebony-skinned Amazons ruled by an undying Queen named Zenobia. While completely unrelated to the Amazons of Amazonia, those Black Amazons share many cultural traits with their northern cousins, including gynocracy, matriarchy and devotion to a mysterious Moon Goddess, who may well be Artemis in one of her guises. The only logical explanation behind this mystery is that events similar to the tale of King Gargaros' daughters also happened in Charybdis, resulting in pretty much the same consequences – warrior women of the world unite!

# BLACK CHAINS OF THE EARTH

## *Against Atlantis ! (Part Two)*

A perilous adventure for a group of valiant adventurers (level 2-3) by **Andrew Trent**



*A truly M&M-esque depiction of Prometheus*

### **Maze Master's Introduction**

This adventure is the second in a series known as *Against Atlantis!* Within this series noble heroes will partake in several adventures culminating in a direct standoff against the advance guard of an Atlantean invasion force. The adventures in this series will be presented serially in the pages of *Minotaur*.

This adventure is suitable for a party of heroes of level 2-3 and presumes that your players are already united in their quest for adventure. Though not strictly necessary, it will be helpful if at least some of the heroes completed AA1, which was presented in *Minotaur n2*, released in April of 2008.

If your players are veterans of the adventure *The Lost Lair of Laodice* from *Minotaur Quarterly 1* you might want to use Barros "One Eye" (the ship's captain from that adventure) for the various sailing portions associated with one or more of the adventures in the *Against Atlantis!* series. Otherwise, any approach you wish to take to providing your players with a method of sea travel will work just fine.

The information given below is for your eyes only. Players do not necessarily know the following, though they may be aware of some of it if they completed AA1: *The Wisdom of Stones*. Maze Masters should feel free to have as much or as little time as desired pass between the events of AA1 and the beginning of this adventure. The priests of Athena, wise though they may be, are only as fast at divination as you need them to be.

In all cases Maze Masters should complicate or handwave situations as fits their group's needs and play times. Wherever you see an opportunity to extend or compress the action, take advantage of the flexibility of the adventure's design to maximize the fun for you and your players.

### **The Cult of Prometheus**

Aeons ago, before even the Age of Magic, a heresy of unimaginable proportions blighted the face of Mythika. A small group of priests, most dedicated to Zeus himself, set sail for Arcadia in search of Prometheus, with the goal of freeing him from his bonds and benefitting from his wisdom. At first, Zeus and the other gods were mildly amused by the hubris exhibited by the errant humans. But the various priests slowly grew in power, gaining knowledge and artifacts that were not intended for mortals, and the gods began to become wary.

Though they failed to find Prometheus himself, these heretics still held the bringer of fire as their source of inspiration and eventually established the Cult of Prometheus. Atop a high peak in the range of mountains that separates Arcadia from Amazonia they constructed a grand temple, from which they exalted Prometheus above even Zeus.

What began as the ultimate attempt to exert the will of man over the will of the gods ended in divine wrath, as the father of the gods rained death and destruction upon the heretics. Their temple was wiped from the face of the earth and their bodies

were warped and bound with chains like those of he who they sought to venerate. Their women and children were driven from the mountain and perished, plummeting to their doom as the bridge that spanned a great chasm collapsed under the fury of the gods.

In time, all knowledge of the Cult of Prometheus was wiped from Mthika. Yet something remains there in the mountains. A faint flickering of wisdom that even the gods could not unmake.

## A Consultation Before Dawn

The priests of Athena have gazed into the future and foreseen great danger to Mythika. Thanks to the efforts of brave heroes - perhaps some of them among your party's number - the lost Sextant of Eryximachos was delivered to the House of Athena in Argos. With this artifact in hand, the priests have seen more clearly the threat and have sent out the call for bold adventurers to take the next step in confronting the shadowy foe.

***Trouble rises in the West***

***Ancient words must be unbound***

***Find the mountain dispossessed***

***With flames and chains will victory sound***

With these words the high priestess of Athena informs the gathered heroes of their quest.

*"You must seek the ruined Temple of Prometheus, and from within rescue the chains that punished the bringer and the infamous fire brought by him. Those unbreakable bonds will provide defense and that sacred light will burn within our breast as we defend our land. Ghosts and spirits await you in this dead place, noble heroes. But only you can perform this task. Athena will protect and guide you so long as your hearts are true to Mythika."*

The priests of Athena are aware of the general nature of the various nemeses that the heroes will confront on this adventure, particularly the malevolent spirits that guard the chasm and the chains. To this end, the House of Athena provides the heroes with the Oil of Icelus. This mythic item, a viscous green oil, allows weapons coated with it to wound insubstantial creatures for up to 5 combat rounds. The priests provide 10 complete doses of the magical agent.

The heroes are given plenty of time to prepare for their trek to Arcadia. The priests even provide more than enough funds to provision their ship for the lengthy journey to (and return from) the East.

Heroes may also need to recruit additional sailors to replace any lost crew from *AA1 - The Wisdom of Stones*, or simply to fill out their crew if they are embarking on this adventure without having completed that quest.



*The treacherous Aeson*

Regardless of whether your heroes are continuing or are starting anew, the Maze Master should ensure that an able-bodied sailor named Aeson is part of the crew. In game terms, Aeson is a Fighter (see *Maze Masters Guide*, p. 25) who loyally serves with the heroes. Unfortunately, Aeson is actually a spy working for Atlantis and travels with the heroes in an information-gathering role. Until otherwise noted, Aeson will not attempt to hinder the heroes in any way. Instead, he fights nobly beside them and is quick to action when needed.

## Act I: Mysterious Arcadia

Arcadia (see *Maze Masters Guide*, p. 8) is a valley located between the lands of the Amazons and the Thanatari Mountains. Few are the heroes who have ever set foot in Arcadia returned to Mythika. As such, understanding of this mystical place is limited to rumors and legends. This adventure will not attempt to solve the nature of Arcadia, as the author considers that mystery best left to each individual Maze Master. The time your heroes spend in Arcadia can be a source of more than one epic adventure in-and-of itself, if you should so desire.

For this adventure's purposes, only the immediate northern portion of Arcadia's coast is involved. This area is dominated by the foothills that lead north to the Amazonia mountains and should be considered devoid of any sign of civilization. A single encounter within Arcadia itself awaits, and it is with a group of Arimaspians who have wandered far from their normal range. Consider the remainder of Arcadia a blank page to do with as you see fit.

### Landing At Arcadia

The voyage to the Arcadian shore can pass as perilously or uneventfully as the Maze Master desires. When at last the heroes do reach Arcadia the gods themselves make clear the landing site, as two **Sea Horses** (see *Creature Compendium*, p. 100) linger at the shore, seeming to speak with a single pure white **Oracle Owls** (see *Creature Compendium*, p. 87).

Upon being sighted, this conference of divinely favored beasts separate, the Sea Horses diving beneath the waves not to be seen again. The Oracle Owl takes flight northward into the hills, calling to the heroes as it flies.



A surly Arimaspien

## Trouble On The Trail

After landing, the heroes must head north towards the mountains to reach the ruins of the Temple of Prometheus. Throughout their journey, the Oracle Owl leads them onward. The Owl never directly approaches the heroes and will actively flee if approached. Its mission is to lead the heroes through the hills and mountains of Arcadia to the site of the temple, nothing more.

A multiple day trek through the hills is required to get to the ruins. On the third day the heroes are beset by a band of bloodthirsty **Arimaspian**s (see the *Creature Compendium*, p. 8). These ruthless foes descend upon the heroes from the east, riding horses and firing their fearsome bows with all of the ferocity they are known for.

The number of Arimaspian involved in this encounter should be equal to the number of heroes plus one. Once three quarters of the Arimaspian have fallen, the rest will begin to retreat to the east. Let your heroes follow them at their peril, for these creatures are unlikely the only dangers that await those who fail to follow the guidance of Athena.

After the skirmish, allow each hero in your party to make a detection roll (see *Players Manual*, p. 45) realize just how far afield these Arimaspian are from their normal range.

## Act II: The Haunted Ruins

Two days after the battle with the Arimaspian - the fullness of which include many dangerous mountain passes and difficult climbs - the heroes reach the edge of the great, bottomless chasm that separates the ruins from the rest of the mountain.

A poorly-fashioned, rotting rope bridge spans the 80-foot gap, running alongside the unusable remains of what once must have been a glorious ivory bridge. "Oil your swords! Oil your swords!" cries the Oracle Owl as it races overhead, away from the ruins and back toward the hills whence came the heroes.

## The Chasm & The Bridge

The chasm is haunted by the ghosts of the women and children who perished here when Zeus rained his wrath down upon the heretics of Prometheus.

Once a living soul has made it halfway across the bridge the ghosts will begin to rise from the depth of the chasm and swirl about the bridge, attacking any and all who disrupt their restless slumber.

In game terms, these "ghosts" are not classic Ghosts as described in the *Creature Compendium* (p. 44) but gestalt-like, collective Spirits known as **Egregors**. For all purposes, the seemingly endless number of ghosts is really only two entities - one Egregor combining all the ghosts of the women and another one combining all the ghosts of the children. Despite this, the Maze Master is encouraged to describe the situation as hundreds or even thousands of ghosts rising, swarming and lashing out at the heroes on the bridge.

### Egregor

**Taxonomy** : Spirit

**Size** : Large

**Ferocity** : Aggressive

**Cunning** : Alert

**Mystique** : Eldritch

**Movement** : 90'

**Initiative** : 14

**Melee Attack** : n/a

**Damage** : see below

**Defense Class** : 16

**Hits Total** : 18

**Detection / Evasion** : +2

**Mystic Fortitude** : +8

**Special Abilities** : Fearsome, Insubstantial, Life-Energy Drain (touch, 1d6, one attack per round), Magic Resistance, Stealthy (16).

**Awards** : Glory 140, Wisdom 70.

*The Large Size of the Egregor reflects the collective nature of the entity and the impression that each Egregor is an entire cohort of distinct beings. This Size gives the Egregor a Hits Total of 18 but does not allow it to make more than one Life-Energy Drain attack per round, which is its only form of attack.*

*Like all Intangible creatures, Egregors cannot be harmed by mundane weapons, unless these have been coated with the Oil of Icelus.*

Once the heroes have all crossed the bridge, the Egregors - if not already destroyed - will retreat into the chasm. If any portion of them remain, the ghostly entities will return to attack the adventurers when they attempt to cross the bridge on their way back after they have recovered the chains and fire of Prometheus from the ruins.

## The Blasted Caves Of The Heretics

Just past the point where the rope bridge reaches the far side of the chasm, a wide ledge (Area 1 on the map) spreads to the north and south. All that remains of Prometheus' Temple are a series of caverns dug into the rubble and raw stone of the mountainside. A single opening yawns in the rock face, an unexpectedly warm breeze issues forth from it.

### Area 1: The Chained Skeletons

Scattered about Area 1 are countless twisted and misshapen human skeletons, each draped in heavy chains. As the heroes approach the entrance to the caverns, these skeletons rise, and unnatural fire in their hollow eye sockets and their chains clanking and clattering. The skeletons immediately engage the heroes in combat.

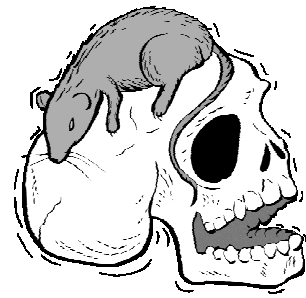
The number of skeletons involved in this battle can be varied as needed by the Maze Master, but should number no fewer than 2 per hero. There are more than enough bones and chains in this area to provide well over 10 actual skeletons per hero - so feel free to keep the dead rising if the heroes are too full of hubris.

The only weapons of these **Skeletons** are their heavy chains, which they use to ensnare, strangle and constrict their opponents : in game terms, they have the same characteristics as standard Skeletons (see the *Creature Compendium* p 105), plus the *Grapple* and *Crushing Damage* special abilities, which are their only form of attack. Their chains also prevent them from *Charging into Battle*. See below for their detailed characteristics.

### Area 2: Lair of the Fallen

This cavern reeks of excrement and animal odor. It is occupied by a dozen or so descendants of the few Prometheans who survived the wrath of Zeus. These pathetic creatures have long since lost their humanity and are little more than feral cannibals. Use the statistics for **Degenerate Men** (see *Creature Compendium*, p. 34). These creatures fight to the death, gleefully biting and ripping at the flesh of any fallen heroes with wild abandon and no concern for the others in their number.

The largest of these Fallen Prometheans wears a **Ring of Good Fortune** (see *Maze Masters Guide*, p. 43) as a sign of his status as leader of this tribe of foul flesh-eaters.



*The latest in Skeleton fashion*

### Chained Skeleton

**Taxonomy** : Animate

**Size** : Medium

**Ferocity** : Aggressive

**Cunning** : Average

**Mystique** : Weird

**Movement** : 60'

**Initiative** : 13

**Melee Attack** : +2

**Damage** : 1d6 (crushing)

**Defense Class** : 15

**Hits Total** : 8

**Detection / Evasion** : 0

**Mystic Fortitude** : +2

**Special Abilities** : Crushing Damage (chains, 1d6), Fearsome, Grapple (chains, Might 16), Mindless.

**Awards** : Glory 50, Wisdom 20.

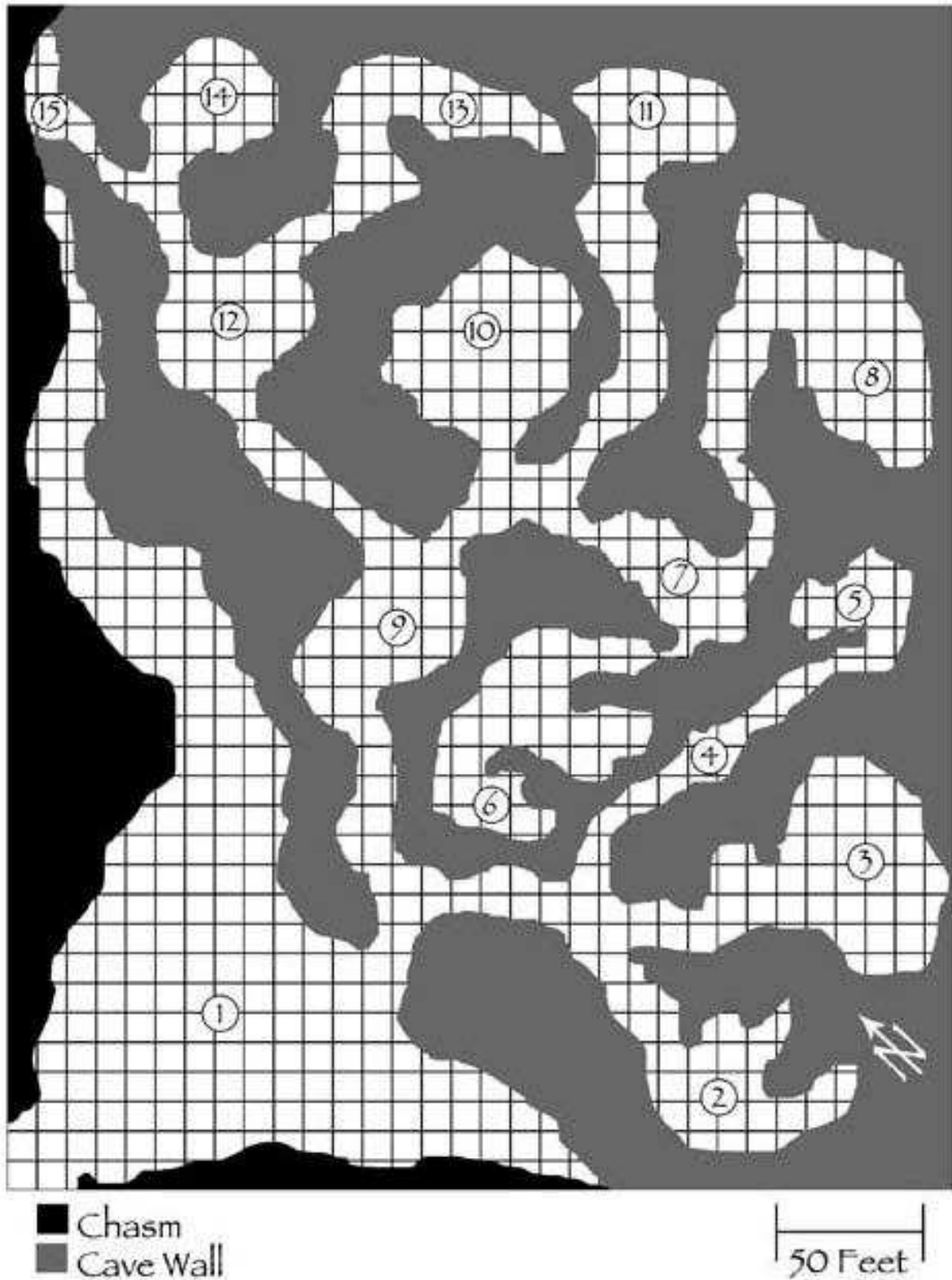
### Area 3: Too Many Bones

This room is filled with numerous piles of bones and chains, which promptly animate into skeletons like those encountered in Area 1. There isn't much to be said for the victims of Zeus' wrath other than that they are largely consistent in their hatred of all who serve any other than Prometheus.

### Area 4: A Pit!

This area contains a pit trap (see *M&M Companion*, p. 29), constructed to capture anyone or anything that approaches Area 5. This is a Falling / Entrapment trap (1d6 damage) to anyone unlucky enough to fall into it. This trap can be avoided, detected and disarmed as described in the Traps rules. Its Concealment Rating is 15 and its Danger Rating is 20. Nasty Maze Masters may consider adding stakes to the bottom of the pit, for a Direct Damage effect of +1d6 (total 2d6 damage).

# BLACK CHAINS OF THE EARTH ADVENTURE MAP







*Orlos the Mad Immortal*

## Area 5: Lair of the Eternal Priest

This area serves as the resting place of the high priest of the Prometheans, Orlos Tegyrius.

Like all great offenders of Zeus, Orlos received a special punishment. Rather than simply be destroyed Orlos was cursed to eternal life and bound to the ruins of his cult's temple, forced to live forever in the knowledge of his defeat. The "immortal" Orlos is completely, irremediably mad and will immediately attack any and all who enter his demesne, using his terrible *Soul Rending Shriek* (see below).

Orlos clearly used to be a man of noble bearing, but countless years and the torment of having his life's work utterly destroyed by the gods have left him twisted into something altogether different.

When Zeus decided to punish Orlos for his hubris, the king of the gods didn't hold back at all, damning Orlos with the curse of eternal life without the benefit of eternal youth. Orlos now appears as what a mummy without bandages might look - his dry, desiccated skin is stretched tightly across dry, enduring bones. His features are sunken and his eyes burn with a madness and rage that fills onlookers with a terror that chills their very souls. He wears the tattered and faded remnants of the opulent priestly robes that he affected in centuries past. He cackles madly in an ancient dialect and his words seldom make sense to the sane listener. Wherever he travels within the caverns the aroma of cloves and lamp oil lingers in the air.

Unlike other creatures found in these ruins, Orlos is intelligent and canny. He is unable to leave the caverns, but has free mobility within them, thanks to his unique special ability of *Phase Shifting* (see his description below).

## Orlos

**Taxonomy** : Spirit

**Description** : See main text.

**Size** : Medium

**Ferocity** : Dangerous

**Cunning** : Clever

**Mystique** : Eldritch

**Movement** : 60'

**Initiative** : 16

**Melee Attack** : +4

**Damage** : see below

**Defense Class** : 16

**Hits Total** : 16

**Detection / Evasion** : +8 / +6

**Mystic Fortitude** : +8

**Special Abilities** : Fearsome, Magic Resistance, Phase Shifting, Sixth Sense, Soul Rending Shriek, Stealthy (16), Supernatural Vigor.

**Awards** : Glory 120, Wisdom 200.

***Phase Shifting** is a limited form of Insubstantiality that allows Orlos to vanish at will into the walls of the caverns and travel to other areas of the ruins in this manner. It costs him 1 Hit to activate (with no extra cost for reverting back to his fully material form). This special ability adds +10 to his Glory and Wisdom awards.*

***Soul Rending Shriek** allows Orlos to inflict damage on others by emitting a terrible, supernatural piercing scream : this attack occurs during the Missile phase, according to Orlos' Initiative, but requires no attack roll and affects all beings within earshot. Targets must make a Mystic Fortitude saving roll (target number of 15) or suffer 1d6 Hits of damage and be unable to move, attack or use magic for the rest of the round.*

*During the next round, characters with a higher Initiative than Orlos (16) will be able to attempt a missile attack against him (provided their weapon is prepared) before he utters a new shriek.*

*Those who cover their ears after the first shriek will suffer no damage (no saving roll needed) from subsequent shrieks but will obviously be unable to attempt any action requiring the use of their hands - which includes all melee or missile attacks, but not magical ones like *Psychic Attack* or *Divine Wrath* (except for *Lyrists*, who must play their lyre to use their magic). This unique ability adds +20 to Orlos' Glory and Wisdom awards.*

## Area 6: A Light Beneath The Rubble

This cavern has caved in and is completely impassible. A perception roll against a target number of 20 should be made for each hero entering this area. A successful roll allows the hero(es) to spot a glint of metal just poking out from beneath an area of the cave in . This metal is the blade of a Sword of the Underworld. This mythic weapon can be recovered if noticed and might well prove useful a little further into the caves.

## Area 7: A Web Of Troubles

This area is thick with spider webs, and seems much cooler than any of the surrounding caves. Heroes may be allowed a detection roll (see *Players Manual*, p. 45) to notice the two deadly **Cave Spiders** (*Creature Compendium*, p. 49) who occupy this room. Maze Masters should be sure to take the spiders' Stealthy (14) into account when making this check. Their poison causes death in 1d6 rounds.

Should the heroes survive this encounter and want to push deeper into this cave, they will find that the passages to the East (towards Area 8) and West (towards Area 6) have been webbed-over by the spiders to such a degree that a Feat of Strength (see *Players Manual*, p. 44) is required to pass through to those areas.

## Area 8: The Sleeping Flame

The floor of this cavern crunches underfoot, as loose gravel slips and pottery shards crack and crumble. As the heroes enter more deeply into this area they begin to see clay statues human bodies lining the edges of the cave. Each of these is incomplete, though, missing an arm here, a head there, and so on. The damage to the forms lessens the further onward the heroes press.

At the far end of the cave stands one perfect statue. Its form is exquisite and its features bring to mind even fairest Apollo. A small flame can be seen to flicker through a grated door into its chest, where its heart would beat were it alive.

This statue is the last remaining **Promethean Golem**. The fire within its chest is the last remnant of the fire that Prometheus stole from the gods and brought to man. If the heroes attempt to open the door into the statue's chest, it animates and will attack the party ferociously. It will not willingly allow the fire to be removed under any circumstances. If the heroes attempt to move the statue without tampering with the fire, it remains inanimate and can be hauled from this place back to Argos.

If the Promethean Golem is reduced to zero Hits, it is incapacitated but the Flame will continue to burn in its chest... unless it is extinguished by the characters, in which case the Flame will be lost to the world forever and the Promethean Golem will dissolve into dust.



*The Last of the Promethean Golems*

### Promethean Golem

**Taxonomy** : Animate

**Size** : Medium

**Ferocity** : Dangerous

**Cunning** : Average

**Mystique** : Eldritch

**Movement** : 60'

**Initiative** : 12

**Melee Attack** : +4

**Damage** : 1d6 (fists)

**Defense Class** : 22

**Hits Total** : 16

**Detection / Evasion** : 0

**Mystic Fortitude** : +8

**Special Abilities** : Grapple ( Might 16), Crushing Damage (after successful grapple), Mindless, Invulnerability, Magic Resistance, Regeneration, Supernatural Vigor.

**Awards** : Glory 105, Wisdom 70.

*The Flame burning in its chest is the source of the Golem's Regeneration powers.*



- Wings in the Dark - that's us !

### Area 9: Wings In The Dark

This large chamber has high ceilings that extend far beyond any light source the heroes might have. The floor here is covered in guano and is slick to the point of imposing a -2 to EDC for all grounded parties engaging in combat.

A swarm of **Giant Bats** (see *Creature Compendium*, p. 47) makes its home in this area, hence the guano. The bats attack promptly, but flee to their perches if seriously wounded. There are up to two bats per hero in this encounter.

### Area 10: Black Chains Of The Earth

This large cavern is all that remains of the once-great trove of artifacts that the Cult of Prometheus gathered. The walls of this cave are adorned with silver and gold chalices, great woven tapestries depicting the deeds of Prometheus, his punishment and the discovery by the Cult of the promethean chains high atop a storm-wracked peak.

The few remaining treasures found here include the following items:

- \* **Chains of Prometheus**
- \* **Beta Ray Wand**
- \* 3-dose phial of **Cocytus Water**
- \* Full flask of **Medea's Ointment**
- \* **Wand of Fire**
- \* **Ring of the Elements: Fire**

For details on these items, see the *Maze Masters Guide* (chapter IV).

This area is guarded over by **Charonts** (see the *Creature Compendium*, p. 27) - the spirits of the triumvirate of priests who found and retrieved the Chains of Prometheus. Their number should be equal to 50% of the party's size, rounded up (eg if there are five heroes, there will be three Charonts). These creatures will defend their hoard with all their might, wielding their Hammers of Hades like demons possessed.

If combat with the Charonts lasts for more than 5 rounds, Orlos Tegyrus (see Area 10) will, if he has not yet been defeated by the heroes, arrive to assist in the defense of the artifacts.

### Area 11: Restless Shadows

A fire burns atop a rough stone altar that stands in the middle of this room, casting eerie shadows upon the walls. Amongst these shadows are **Shadows** (see *Creature Compendium*, p. 103), 1 per hero inside this chamber. These malevolent things attack only after 75% of the heroes have entered the room. They fight to the death, but for each hero that falls so too does a shadow cease to exist.

If the heroes think to douse the fire that burns upon the altar, all of the shadows vanish immediately. The creatures will not return in the presence of a different light source.

### Area 12: The Hidden Temple

This area is clearly more than a simple cavern. It seems more like a temple that was swallowed whole by the earth itself. Broken marble columns, benches and other structures form most of the walls of this space. A single shaft of sunlight filters down from a fissure in the distant ceiling.

As the heroes enter this area, one of the columns animates and becomes a **Living Caryatid** (see *Creature Compendium*, p. 70). This monstrosity seeks to enact the vengeance of all the slain Prometheans upon any breathing creature within its sight. It will focus single-mindedly on any whose primary allegiance is to Zeus first, following on to other beings only after those who cleave to the destroyer have been eliminated.

### Area 13: Familiar Foes

This area serves as home to a second tribe of Fallen Prometheans (see Area 2 p 17 for more information). Only 8 of these creatures remain, two recently having been lost to the bats in Area 9.

Like their counterparts in Area 2, these Fallen Prometheans attack instantly and with an insatiable bloodlust. The leader of this tribe wears a **Ring of Mystic Lore** (see *Maze Masters Guide*, p. 43) as his emblem of authority.

### Area 14: A Ring Of Stones

This barren hole in the earth is empty save for multiple shapes laid out in stones across its floor. This chamber has served as the Fallen Prometheans' gathering space, where they have attempted to recapture some faint glimmer of the knowledge their ancestors once held. To date the best they have accomplished are a few simple words poorly produced by laying out stones to form letters. The words Fire, Sin and Chain are recognizable, but nothing else can be discerned.

Hidden amongst these stone words the heroes may be unlucky enough to come across a **Rocky Python** (see *Creature Compendium*, p. 95) masquerading as an Omicron. The Rocky Python, naturally, will attack the heroes and fight until destroyed.

## Area 15: The Manticore's Ledge

This is a ledge that looks out to far mountains and down upon the endless chasm below. It serves as the sometimes home of a **Manticore** (see *Creature Compendium*, p. 73) that dwells in these mountains.

If the heroes are already seriously wounded or weakened, the Maze Master should simply decide that the Manticore is not here at the moment. If, on the other hand, the characters have been exceptionally lucky so far (or, then the fell creature should definitely be around... Alternatively, the Maze Master may decide to treat the Manticore as a "wandering monster", present on a 1d6 roll equal to or lower than the highest level in the party (ie if the most powerful hero in the group is level 3, the Manticore shows up on a roll of 1-3).

If the Manticore is indeed present, it attacks without mercy but will flee if it takes more than 50% of its Hits in damage.

Further, the passageway that leads to this area is too small for the Manticore to pass through, so the heroes should be able to retreat back towards area 14 if they choose to flee in the face of battle with the terrible beast.

A battered **Breastplate of Ares** (see *Maze Masters Guide*, p. 37) can be found on this ledge, along with the not-very-recent remains of its former owner and occupant.

## Act III: The Enemy Revealed

After facing the perils of the Caverns, the heroes must make their way back down from the mountains, across Arcadia and back to their ship. But nothing is ever that easy. If you are feeling particularly cruel, the Manticore from Area 15 could easily be circling Area 1 - looking for a meal if it was not encountered or seeking to finish the fight if it was. Please note, though, that this is not *required* to happen. Only throw these challenges at the heroes if they are of sufficient strength to face them.

There's still one more major battle to go, and we wouldn't want Mythika to succumb to the enemy just because of a random Manticore, now would we?

## A Battle On The Beach

Upon reaching the site where they landed, the heroes are greeted by the dismal sight of a battle on the shore - a battle survived by very few of the heroes' crew.

Anchored off the coast next to the heroes' ship stands a proud Atlantean War Galley. The galley is under the command of Pylos of Atlantis, an **Atlantean Noble** (see the *Creature Compendium*, p. 9). Like most Atlantean Nobles, Pylos is accompanied by a contingent of **Atlantean War Slaves** (see the *Creature Compendium*, p. 9); their number should be equal to 150% of the characters (round up): thus, if there are three characters in the party, there will be five Atlantean War Slaves.

Pylos and his War Slaves have been sent to take the Chains of Prometheus and any other artifacts recovered by the heroes in the name of Atlantis.

Pylos' arrogance prevents him from giving up the fight even if the tide of battle turns against him. He will taunt the heroes throughout the battle, describing how their precious Mythika will soon be despoiled by the might of Atlantis just as it was in ancient times.

Aeson the Traitor - whether he accompanied the heroes to the caverns or was left at the ship - shows his true allegiance in this battle. He fights alongside Pylos and the War Slaves, alternately cursing the heroes and imploring them to surrender and join with Atlantis.

Aeson is Enslaved by Pylos (see *Players Manual*, p. 40) and if Pylos is killed he will break free of the Enslavement and rejoin the heroes - if they accept him. At the end of the battle, a freed Aeson weeps and confesses that it was he who revealed the heroes' mission to the Atlantean.

## Aftermath!

If the heroes defeat Pylos they will find themselves in possession of an **Atlantean War Galley** (see *Maze Masters Guide*, p. 45). This is a good thing, since they are unlikely to have the crew necessary to sail home normally. This amazing creation may also serve the heroes well as they prepare to deal with the approaching forces of Atlantis.

The heroes should now make their way back to Argos to deliver the Promethean Chains and the Fire of Prometheus to the House of Athena. The priests were never very clear about just what purposes these artifacts would serve. But the heroes should know by now that priests have their own ways of approaching things.

The adventure can resolve quickly back to Argos or can be drawn out into a veritable odyssey across countless Mysterious Islands at the whim of the Maze Master.

The third (and final?) installment of *Against Atlantis!* will appear in the next issue of *Minotaur*. Until then, Maze Masters should feel free to send their heroes on other quests and expeditions to keep them busy and hopefully earn them enough experience to reach a suitable "Save Mythika From Atlantis" power level - likely at or around 5th level.

# PANDORA'S BOX

*A regular selection of new mythic items for Mazes & Minotaurs*

## Arcane Accessories

Last issue's Pandora's Box offered you a selection of Wonders for Warriors... but why should warriors have all the fun? The twelve items detailed below were specifically created with magicians in mind and run the full gamut of Mythika's realms of magic.

### Harp of Heroism

The sound of this magical harp (Enc = 2) has a deep, inspiring quality which adds +2 to a Lyrists Orphic Voice and Mystic Strength when used to play a Song of Inspiration (Magnitude 1 Poetic Magic) or a Song of Freedom (Magnitude 2). These increases affect the effectiveness of the Lyrists Songs as well as their effective range and the number of individuals they can affect.

### Harp of Peace

The sound of this magical harp (Enc = 2) has an enchanted, appeasing quality which adds +2 to a Lyrists Orphic Voice and Mystic Strength when used to play a Song of Soothing (Magnitude 3 Poetic Magic) or a Song of Comfort (Magnitude 4). These increases affect the effectiveness of the Lyrists Songs as well as their effective range and the number of individuals they can affect.



*- Peace and love, folks...*



*Summoning the Flame Servant*

### Lamp of the Flamoïds

This magical lamp from the mysterious Land of the Sun (Enc = 1) can only be used by Elementalists with Fire powers. It allows the magician to summon a Flamoïd servant (*Creature Compendium*, p 41) that will obey all his orders. Summoning this being takes an entire battle round and requires an expenditure of 3 Power points.

The Flamoïd will exist for a number of rounds equal to the Mastery bonus of the Elementalist, after which it will disappear, once again stored within the ring. This duration is doubled for Elementalists who have Fire as their primary element.

### Mirror of Self-Contemplation

Legends say these disposable mythic items (see below) were crafted by Apollo himself as a "break up gift" for a group of charming Naiads with whom he had dallied in his playful youth.

When a Nymph first looks at herself in this magical mirror (Enc = 1), it acquires a number of charges equal to her Grace mod. Spending one charge will allow the Nymph to immediately regain 1d6 Power points (up to her usual maximum) without having to

meld with nature for hours. To spend one charge, the Nymph must look at her herself in the mirror (and do nothing else) for a full round.

When all the charges have been exhausted, the mirror loses its power forever for that particular Nymph who can still keep it as a memento, throw it away or (more rarely) give it to another Nymph.

Should another Nymph other than its mistress attempt to use the mirror while it is charged, the mirror will have no effect and will actually show no reflection : the only reflection it can show is that of its mistress (which means that it cannot really be used as a normal, proper mirror).

If a Nymph increase her Grace score while the mirror is still in her possession (and still holds at least one charge), any +1 increase to her Grace mod will add 1 charge to the item.

### Orb of the Eolians

This opalescent, unbreakable, head-sized magical sphere (Enc = 1) can only be used by Elementalists with Air powers. It allows the magician to summon an Eolian (see *Creature Compendium*, p 40) that will obey all his orders. Summoning this being takes an entire battle round and requires an expenditure of 3 Power points.

The Eolian will exist for a number of rounds equal to the Mastery bonus of the Elementalist, after which it will disappear, once again stored within the ring. This duration is doubled for Elementalists who have Air as their primary element.



Activating the Orb of the Eolians

### Pendant of Gloom

This amulet makes Sorcerers insensitive to the mysterious beauties of Nature and Poetry. In game terms, it adds +4 to a Sorcerer's Mystic Fortitude when defending against the powers of Nymphs (Nature's Gifts) and Lyristis (Poetic Magic). It also surrounds the wearer with a subtly depressing aura, reducing his Personal Charisma by -2.

This item can also be used by other characters, but with a reduced bonus of only +2, but with the same penalty to Personal Charisma.

### Rings of Sorcery

There are four different types of rings of sorcery (one for each finger of the hand, excepting the thumb). These items, which were crafted in the Age of Magic by some unknown Autarch wizards, have very similar (and complementary) powers... but are very unlikely to be found in quartets, trios or even pairs, unless they have already been gathered by a Sorcerer who knows about their powers. Rings of Sorcery appear as ordinary silver rings, set with a different gemstone, as shown below.

Each ring gives a Sorcerer a +2 bonus to his Psychic Gift and Mystic Strength scores when using one or two of his powers :

Gemstone	Affected Powers
Emerald	Confusion & Illusions
Topaz	Cloak
Sapphire	Compelling & Enslavement
Ruby	Psychic Attack

Thus, a Sorceress wearing rings of Topaz and Sapphire would get a +2 Psychic Gift and Mystic Strength bonus when using her powers of Cloak, Compelling and Enslavement.

Note that the magic is in the jewel, not in the ring itself. Aside from its magical properties, each jewel is worth (1d6 x 10) gold coins.

### Sacred Sigils

The mystical virtues of these amulets can only be used by Priests of the appropriate deity. There are no generic sacred sigils : each one is engraved with the symbol of its tutelary deity – Zeus, Athena etc. Such items are usually only given as divine boons to Priests who become divine agents of their deity.

A Priest wearing the Sigil of his deity benefits from a permanent, full-power Divine Blessing. Thus, a Sigil of Athena worn by one of her Priestesses would grant her a +2 bonus to the Defense Class, Danger Evasion, Mystic Fortitude and Personal Charisma.

The effects of a Sigil cannot be combined with that of a standard Divine Blessing, since its wearer already benefits from his deity's magical protection.



*I like my new Scarf Belt of Seduction !*

### Scarf Belt of Seduction

When worn by a Nymph of any kin, this magical, silken scarf belt adds +2 to her Odylic Charm (and to her Mystic Strength) when using her powers of Nature's Seduction (Magnitude 1 Nature's Gift).

### Silver Lotus Dust

This silvery powder is used by Atlantean Sorcerers to regain some of their expended magical Power without having to sleep for hours. Silver Lotus Dust (SLD) must be sniffed through the nostrils to take effect. Each pinch taken in this manner allows a Sorcerer to immediately recover 1d6 Power points, up to his usual maximum.

This wondrous substance has, however, a major downside : Sorcerers who rely too much on SLD sleep less and less well, being tormented by weird dreams born of their addiction to the powder. Every time a Sorcerer takes a pinch of Lotus Dust, the player or Maze Master should note the result of the d6 and keep a running total of it. When this total goes over the Sorcerer's Will score, he becomes fully addicted and can no longer regain Power points by sleeping : the only way he can restore his mystical energies is by taking more Lotus Dust...

Furthermore, once the character is fully addicted, he permanently loses 1d3 points of Will (which will also affect his Psychic Gift, Mystic Strength and even his Power total) and will no longer be able to increase his Will upon reaching new levels.

Note that the d6 roll must always be added to the character's addiction total, even if it exceeds the number of Power points actually recovered by the character. Thus, if I need to recover 2 points and I roll a 4, I will recover 2 points but my addiction total

will increase by 4. In other words, it is preferable (or at least "more worth it") to use Lotus Dust when your Power reserve is seriously depleted.

Silver Lotus Dust only operates on Sorcerers. Other characters (including other magicians) who take a pinch of this magical powder will have to make a Mystic Fortitude saving roll with a target number of 15. Failure means the character suffers Confusion (same effects as the Sorcery Magnitude 1 power of the same name) for 1d6 battle rounds.

At the Maze Master's discretion, cures for SLD addiction may exist – possibly in the form of magical potions which could reduce the drinker's addiction total or even permanently cure him. Such a cure should also allow the character to improve his Will upon reaching new levels, according to the usual rules, but will not restore the lost Will points.

### Tunic of Protean Virtue

When worn by a Shapeshifter, this magical tunic always reappears on the character's body if he so wishes. Thus, a Shapeshifter wearing this tunic could turn into any animal form then revert to his human form, wearing the tunic again (instead of being completely naked). In addition, the tunic is virtually indestructible and the wearer can change its color at will, at the expense of 1 Power point.

### Wand of Divine Wrath

When used by a Priest of the appropriate deity (see below), this magical scepter (Enc = 1) allows the character to reduce the Power cost of his Divine Wrath power by 2 points (from 5pts to 3pts). These items exist in two different versions : one for Priests of Zeus and the other for Priestesses of Hera. Like Sacred Sigils (see above), Wands of Divine Wrath are usually only given as divine boons to Priests who have gained divine agent status.



*One more move and it's Divine Wrath time !*

## MAZE MASTER'S LORE

# MYTHIKA'S MIGHTIEST

## Part Two : Pellias of Seriphos and Titania the Amazon

by Olivier Legrand

The following article is the second instalment of a three-part series about the greatest heroes of Mythika's current era. . Each instalment presents two of these living legends, with complete game stats and a short biography. In this issue, we learn more about two royal-blooded heroes : Pellias, Sorcerer of Seriphos, and Titania, Princess of Amazonia.



### Pellias of Seriphos

Prince Pellias of Seriphos is the living proof that Sorcerers *can* be heroes too... and that Sorcerers are *not* necessarily obsessed with power. The eldest son of King Pellam of Seriphos, he has deliberately renounced his rights to the throne at an early age in favor of his younger brother, Prince Pellamon, to devote his life to the study of ancient knowledge, including the arcane art of Sorcery.

A true sage, Pellias is renowned for his exceptional wisdom and insight. He is also a perpetual rover, wandering the world of Mythika in search of scrolls of lost knowledge and other scholarly treasures, sometimes associating with adventurers to explore mysterious islands, ancient ruins and other places likely to contain fragments of forgotten lore.

Pellias is currently in his early forties. A tall, gaunt man with graying black hair and beard, he has an unmistakably aristocratic face and bearing but only wears the humblest clothes (usually a simple grey robe or toga). His black hair and beard are now tainted with grey and his deep, meditative grey eyes sometimes gleam with an almost silvery intensity.

### Pellias of Seriphos

**Level 6 Sorcerer**, age 46, former heir to the throne of Seriphos

**Personality** : Wise and well-travelled, Pellias is a prudent, resourceful adventurer who favors careful planning and clever tricks over brute force or spectacular displays of magical power.

**Attributes** : Might 11, Skill 13, Luck 19, Wits 21, Will 20, Grace 13.

**Combat** : Initiative 16, Melee +6\*, Missile +11\*, Basic Defense Class 17\*, Hits Total 18.

**Magic** : Psychic Gift +9, Mystic Strength 21, Power points 28.

**Saving Rolls** : Athletic Prowess +6\*, Danger Evasion +14\*, Mystic Fort +10\*, Phys Vigor +9\*.

**Personal Charisma** : +10\* (+16 to Minor NPC).

**Background Talents** : Actor, Scholar.

**Mythic Items** : Amulet of Dreams, Sling of Fortune, Dust of Hypnos (1d6 pinches in a small pouch), Potion of Healing (1 phial), Ring of Good Fortune, Staff of Power (12pts, usually fully charged), Sunstones (1d6). *These items represent Pellias' usual adventuring equipment; he also keeps many other magical objects (left at the Maze Master's discretion) in his Cave of Solitude.*

\* These scores take into account the +1 bonus to Luck mod granted by Pellias' Ring of Good Fortune.

**Note** : Using the variant formulas from this issue's and last issue's **Twist in the Maze**, Pellias' Danger Evasion score would "only" be +11 (or +10 without his Ring) while his Mystic Fortitude would be raised to +14 (or +13 without his Ring).

Pellias prefers to travel *incognito*. When meeting people for the first time, he never mentions his royal origins and usually introduces himself as "a simple traveller", "a wanderer" or some other elusive title. In game terms, this means that Pellias never uses his *reputation effect* on reaction rolls – at least not for first reactions. He is also known by a variety of nicknames, such as "the Grey Wanderer", "the Grey Sage" or "the Staff Bearer".



During the course of his adventures, Pellias has travelled as far as the Land of the Sun in the east, Hyperborea in the north, outposts of Atlantis in the west and the borders of Stygia in the south; he has battled many foes, including many evil Sorcerers, malevolent Spirits, Atlantean Nobles and Stygian Lords. He is particularly renowned for having met the same Sphinx three times in 12 years... and for having beaten the monster each time at an increasingly difficult contest of riddles. It is said that Pellias' final victory drove the Sphinx to such a deep depression that it committed suicide shortly after. One thing is sure : all Sphinxes in the Desert Kingdom now live in fear of the Grey Stranger, as Pellias is known in the southern regions of Mythika.

Over his years of wandering and delving, Pellias has accumulated quite an impressive collection of mythic items but never carries them on his person, except for a few really handy ones (see below). All these wondrous artifacts are kept safe in the underground chambers of his personal haven, the Cave of Solitude (see below).

When Pellias renounced the throne during his adolescence, his father King Pellam was deeply infuriated by this decision and, in his royal anger, banished his former heir apparent from Seriphos – a decision which drove the mother of Pellias, Queen Kallista, into a deep sorrow from which she never recovered, dying after ten years of dark melancholy. King Pellam never knew this but his exiled son attended the funerals of his mother, his presence Cloaked by his sorcerous powers. It was the only one time Pellias came back to Seriphos.

King Pellam is now a very old man and he would like nothing more than seeing his eldest son once again before dying – but his kingly pride has always prevented him from making such a confession, even to his other son (and royal heir) Prince Pellamon. As for Pellamon himself, he has fond memories of his long-gone brother but has never dared to raise the topic of Pellias' possible return with his father, who has never been the same since the death of his queen. It is highly probable that Pellamon will try to locate Pellias and have him come back to Seriphos when King Pellam's final days seem at hand – an interesting mission for a party of brave and resourceful adventurers...

### **Pellias' Cave of Solitude**

This magical cavern is located on an unnamed mysterious island of the Middle Sea. Its entrance is completely hidden from view by an ancient, very powerful enchantment and can only be opened by a secret command word. Inside the Cave are Pellias' humble living quarters, his vast library and a huge collection of mythic items; most of these were gathered by the Sorcerer throughout his travels but some were already there when he took possession of the Cave, during one of his early quests. The Cave is guarded by three Stone Titans (*Creature Compendium* p 110), which were the original guardians of the place and became Pellias' servants when he became the master of the Cave.



*Titania is so famous that she was chosen to pose for the Amazon illustration in the M&M Players Manual*

## **Titania the Amazon**

The Amazons of Mythika are famous for their marksmanship and swiftness in battle – but one of them, Princess Dyana of Amazonia, is also renowned for her extraordinary physical strength. Indeed, her admirers often point out that she is stronger than the strongest Hyperborean Barbarians and Centaurs – hence her nickname of “Titania”.

This overenthusiastic statement is not entirely true, since Titania owes some of her extraordinary might to a Girdle of Strength – but even without this item, Titania's natural Might makes her one of Mythika's strongest warriors. She has never concealed the true powers of her Girdle; indeed, she often takes it off to demonstrate her natural prowess in contests of strength and other athletic activities; she is especially fond of wrestling and often challenges arrogant male warriors to this form of unarmed combat (those who refuse to “wrestle with a woman” are usually met with scornful taunts about their manhood – and if things get nasty, Titania has no objection against bloodier forms of duels).

That being said, Titania is not an “Amazon bully” looking to challenge every male in sight to single combat; she always behave in a courteous (if a bit taciturn) manner with men, as long as they show her the respect she deserves as a warrior, as a princess and as a free woman.

## Titania the Amazon

**Level 5 Amazon**, age 28

**Personality** : Fearless, resolute and honorable; Titania values loyalty and friendship about all things; she prefers action to words but is more patient than your typical Amazon hot-head.

**Attributes** : Might 19, Skill 17, Luck 17, Wits 13, Will 18, Grace 13.

**Combat** : Initiative 14, Melee +12\*, Missile +7, Basic Defense Class 15\*\*, Hits Total 34\*.

**Saving Rolls** : Athletic Prowess +12\*, Danger Evasion +7, Mystic Fort. +7, Phys. Vigor +12\*.

**Personal Charisma** : +7 (+12 to Amazons).

**Weapon of Choice** : Bow.

**Special Abilities** : +3 damage with bows; +1 melee EDC if unarmored (or +3 to Initiative with bow – for a total of 17 - if using this issue's variant version of the Amazon class).

**Background Talents** : Healer, Wrestler.

**Mythic Items** : Aegis, Girdle of Strength, Spear of Athena (Damage +3).

\* *These scores take into account the +2 bonus granted by Titania's Girdle of Strength.*

\*\* *Her Aegis givea Titania an EDC of 19 and a +9 mod in both Danger Evasion and Mystic Fortitude.*

**Note** : *Using the variant formulas from this issue's and last issue's **Twist in the Maze**, Titania's Danger Evasion and Mystic Fortitude scores would stay unchanged, since her Skill and Will produce the same mod, as well as her Wits and Grace.*



*Princess Titania, Mythika's Mightiest Amazon*

Her exploits are too numerous to be listed here; her most famous deeds include slaying the Great Hydra of Murias and the Chimera of Thelnos, defeating the Great Brutaur Horde of Kromach, vanquishing the maleficious Hag Sycorax and, of course, killing the Three Giants of the Isle of Doom. She also went into the Underworld at least once on some mysterious quest but won't talk about it.

Titania has been known to associate with other famous heroes on epic journeys and perilous expeditions, including Pellias of Seriphos and Prince Argan of Argos. She does not get on very well with Theseos of Thena (probably because Theseos' seduction of her aunt Antiope (see *Minotaur n2* for more details) and *really* loathes Tharsus of Heraklia (see *Minotaur n2* again). According to some rumors, Titania once wrestled against the Boar of Heraklia (that's one of Tharsus' nicknames) after he made an especially unsavory comment about her womanhood but neither of them was able to best the other and they eventually gave up after several hours of furious grapples and key-holds. This was the birth of a great mutual dislike.

Titania's extraordinary Might comes from her very athletic build and constant physical training; it was also boosted by her eating a magical Golden Apple of Strength (see *Maze Masters Guide* p 40) during one of her earliest adventures.

Dyana / Titania is the third daughter of the current Queen of Amazonia; unlike her sisters, she has chosen to leave her homeland to lead a life of danger and adventure... and unlike all the other members of the Amazonian royal family, she is a follower of Athena (rather than Artemis) – a fact which may also have played a part in her decision to leave the Queendom.

She sometimes returns to her homeland to visit her sisters and mother but never stays very long, always eager to embark on some new perilous quest or daring expedition. Over the years, she has come to be seen as a truly heroic role model by many young Amazons, especially those who, like her, have chosen Athena as their divine patron.

**Coming Soon from LGS**

### **TOMB OF THE BULL KING**

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**Find out in the ultimate maze adventure !**

# THE TRIDENT OF RHANA

A heroic mini-quest for first level adventurers by **Kevin Scrivner**

*Stopping at an island for fresh water, our heroes find themselves embroiled in the interminable war between the miniature cities of Mus and Rhana. Can they end the conflict, or at least escape the island with whole skins?*

## Setup

The player-characters are members of an expedition to defeat the pirate Agag the Underhanded, who has been terrorizing merchants and travelers in the seas near the Three Cities. The adventurers are promised appropriate shares of whatever loot is recovered.

If the Maze Master elects to warm things up with a pirate attack, **Agag** is a swaggering **Barbarian** from the Land of the Sun while the members of his crew are **Bandits** (pages 59 and 60 of the *Creature Compendium*). The pirates have a small galley with a single set of oars. There will be two pirates for each player-character in addition to Agag himself. Some of them carry shields but none except Agag will wear a breastplate, since heavy armor can be a liability on the water.

Agag is a wiry, swarthy man with a thick braided beard and an even thicker accent. If cornered, he will fight to the death while constantly taunting the PCs. But he'd prefer to live to fight another day and will escape if possible. His crew is a superstitious and cowardly lot who will attempt to flee if Agag is slain or if more than half their number is killed. If the unthinkable happens and Agag wins, he will bind surviving adventurers for sale at the southern slave markets. But he too will have to stop someplace for water or repairs...

## Choices on the Beach

After the battle, the adventurers will need to beach their ship. It may have been damaged in the fight, or they may desperately need to replenish their water supplies after an extended hunt for the pirates. A large, verdant island soon beckons on the horizon. Once ashore, they will easily find the water or repair materials they need. Upon their return, however, they'll find their ship swarming with mice – large, fierce bipedal mice armed with miniature javelins and shields. Their ship has been discovered by a **Muscussi** foraging party (*Creature Compendium*, p 84).

If the adventurers surrender or try to talk to the Muscussi, they'll be escorted to hilly ground higher up on the island, where the mice have their capital of Mus. The mouse city is an entire hill pierced by innumerable tunnels and surrounded by a yard-thick wall as tall as a man.



*Agag the Barbarian Pirate*

A temple to Athena dominates the city's center. It is small compared to the heroes, but the doll-sized statue of the goddess is clearly visible. At the gates, they will be confronted by stern, young Pontikos III, who recently became king when his father was murdered by Rhabdosian assassins. Pontikos will accuse the PCs of being spies for the frogs and will demand that they prove their good intentions by performing "a small service."

The evil Rhabdosians are attempting to seize a terrible weapon, the Trident of Rhana, housed in a ruin on the far side of the island. Pontikos wants the adventurers to get their hands on it first and, of course, bring it to him. He'll send a guide, Fonias, and a phalanx of mouse warriors along to ensure the PCs aren't ambushed by the frogs on their way. The escort also ensures the adventurers don't make a dash for their ship instead, although Pontikos won't mention the fact. Fonias, a gaunt, scarred rodent who more nearly resembles a rat than a mouse, is actually the head of the Muscussi secret police. He has a dual mission: to recover a mythic item sacred to the mice, the Aegis of Iroas, and to see to it that the Trident of Rhana remains lost.



We just couldn't resist re-using Emmanuel Roudier's classic illustration from the *Creature Compendium*

If the heroes make a fight of it, their size advantage enables them to attack four mice at once. But the Muscussi are disciplined soldiers, and there are dozens of them. No matter how the battle goes for the adventurers, they'll be "rescued" by the arrival of a larger force of armed bipedal frogs, a patrol of the **Rhabdosians** (*Creature Compendium*, page 84). The frog commander, Aristarchus, a muscular frog with a booming voice and a princely bearing, will insist on escorting the player-characters "for your safety" down the beach to the swampy lower portion of the island where the Rhabdosians dwell in their capital city of Rhana.

The frog city is on a large patch of firm ground surrounded by deep water and quicksand. A temple to Poseidon stands in its center, the doll-sized statue of the god clearly visible. Rhana is enclosed by a tough hedge of thorns to discourage predators such as herons. The PCs will be granted an open-air audience with the king, Batrachos. The Rhabdosian monarch is so immensely fat and elderly he has to be carried on a litter by six brawny frogs. He has crafty eyes and a bleached, warty skin. Batrachos says the adventurers can demonstrate their gratitude for his protection by doing him "a slight favor."

Years ago, the Muscussi villain Iroas stole a sacred treasure from Poseidon's temple, the Trident of Rhana. The treasure is believed to be in a ruin on the far side of the island. Both Batrochos and Poseidon would appreciate them getting it for him.

Naturally he'll send along a guide, Aristarchus, and a phalanx of frog soldiers to make sure the adventurers aren't ambushed by the evil mice (and incidentally don't skip out on the deal).

The adventurers could choose to reject either king's quest and try to escape to their ship. To do so, they'll have to fight their way across rough, unfamiliar territory against hundreds, if not thousands, of tiny opponents.

Should they make it back to the beach, they may find that the monarch has posted a guard on their vessel, or they may encounter an opposing army and be caught between both sides.

If they succeed in launching the ship, they could find dozens of small, aggressive stowaways on board. And they still need repairs or water.

## The Temple

The ruin is an ancient Proteusian city near a rocky beach. The mud brick dwellings have long since collapsed but some of the stone public buildings remain.

Chief among these is a weathered complex of dark stone built into the face of the cliff. The front part of the building features a large, pillared hall with a central round fire pit and a skylight overhead. Stone benches run along the sides of the hall. The tapestries that once hung on the walls have rotted but a few spears and shields, green with age, remain (see Map 1).

The back half of the building is a temple to Dagon carved out of a natural sea cavern, with fissures and passages going deeper into the cliff (see Map 2). It is in these fissures that the temple treasure was stored and where the artifacts sought by the Muscussi and the Rhabdosians may be found.

Unfortunately for the adventurers, the city isn't as deserted as it appears.

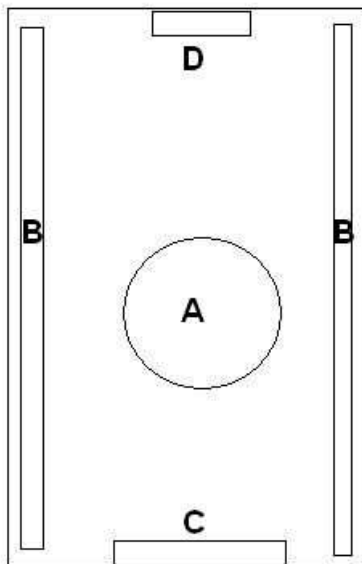
The humans are gone but **Sons of Dagon** (*Creature Compendium*, page 106) still worship regularly in the temple, entering through cliff passages that lead to the sea. There are at least three of them per player-character, and they are none too happy to find the heroes defiling their temple and looting its treasures.

The presence of these finny fiends is why Pontikos (or Batrachos) was so eager to enlist the PCs, not that he bothered to mention them. The mouse (or frog) escort will largely leave the bloodletting to the adventurers, although they will finish off any opponents the heroes manage to knock down. Fonias (or Aristarchus) will use the fighting as a distraction so he can hunt for the aegis (or the trident) without the adventurers' interference.

If the PCs find the desired mythic item first, their guide will be overeager for them to hand it over. If they discover the competing city's mythic item, their alarmed guide will frantically insist that the object is cursed and must be abandoned or destroyed.

If the battle is going poorly for the adventurers, Fonias (rat that he is) will abandon them to their fate, particularly if he already has the Aegis of Iroas in his possession. Noble Aristarchus will attempt some sort of rearguard action to enable them to escape, although his first priority will be to get the Trident of Rhana out of the temple.

### Map 1 : The Hall



A = Central fire pit

B = Benches

C = Main Entrance

D = Access to the Cavern Temple



*Devils from the Deep : Sons of Dagon*

## Outcomes and Alternatives

Assuming the heroes succeed, they could encounter several possible outcomes.

If the PCs found and kept one or both mythic items, they can use them to bargain for peace between the Muscussi and Rhabdosians.

Each monarch would be willing to agree to almost anything, even negotiations with his hated rival, to ensure the return of his civilization's sacred object or to prevent it from being handed over to the other side. The heroes might do exactly the latter, giving the Trident of Rhana to the Mouse Folk and the Aegis of Iroas to the Frog Folk, each belligerent holding the other city's holy gift for ransom.

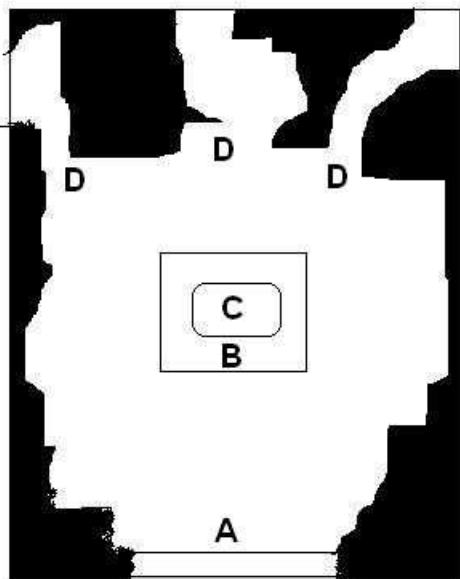
Such tactics won't endear the heroes to either race, but they could at least turn the long war into a cold one, with espionage and skullduggery replacing overt battles.

If one side succeeds in regaining its sacred token while preventing the other side from acquiring theirs, it could encourage an immediate assault. The possessors of the mythic item might attack their enemies, counting on it to give them the edge that assures final victory. Or the side without its mythic item might make a pre-emptive strike on the other. The adventurers may want to head for the high seas to avoid the general slaughter whether their ship is ready or not.

If the characters find the mythic item (instead of Fonias or Aristarchus) and present it to the king, they'll be feted as heroes and suitably rewarded. If Fonias or Aristarchus does the presenting, the adventurers will get thanks and safe conduct back to their ship (they were only the hired help, after all). Of course, they'll instantly become loathed enemies of the other side.

The Sons of Dagon will remember them without fondness in any event.

## Map 2 : The Cavern Temple



- A = Entrance
- B = Ceremonial Dais
- C = 40' tall statue of Dagon
- D = Passages leading only the gods know where

There also is a small chance that they will have offended either Athene or Poseidon, although the gods tend to pay even less attention to their animal worshipers than they do their human ones.

## Follow-up Adventures

### Agag Again

If Agag escaped or was driven off he could return to harass the adventurers, having gotten wind of the treasure hidden in the temple of Dagon. Depending on how things turned out, the Muscussi and Rhabdosians might adopt him as an ally against the adventurers, or ask them to help them against the pirates invading their domains.

### Star-crossed Lovers

Once the heroes are apparently safely away from the island, they discover a pair of stowaways: Aristarchus and Fidelia, Pontikos' betrothed. It seems the frog prince and the mouse princess have fallen in love and decided to run away together – on the adventurers' ship. Do the heroes take the lovers back home or drop them off someplace where they'll be able to enjoy marital bliss unmolested? Naturally they'll be pursued by the soldiers and assassins of both animal nations. The heroes will have difficulty persuading their hunters that they knew nothing about the whole affair. Their tiny, determined foes will repeatedly turn up at the most inconvenient moments possible during the heroes' subsequent

adventures. They'll never be sure whether that skittering or distant croaking in the night is the sound of normal animals or of their pursuers.

## The Revenge of Dagon

The Sons of Dagon will dog the player-characters' steps to avenge the desecration of their temple as long as the heroes remain on or near the ocean. Vessels will be sabotaged, cargoes spoiled, crewmen and trading partners terrorized. Fish-men might even swim upriver to surprise the adventurers at inland locations. The persecution will continue until the player-characters kill off or (less likely) buy off the Dagonites with a suitable offering to the god.

## The Trident of Rhana

This exquisitely jeweled silver artifact is the size of an exalted salad fork. A gift from Poseidon to the Rhabdosians, it has no powers discernible to human-sized adventurers but is supremely sacred to the frog people. They would agree to nearly anything for its return, even peace talks with their hated rodent rivals, the Muscussi. It was stolen by Iroas, a long-ago mouse hero, and lost in the ocean. The trident made its way into the treasure rooms of a remote and seemingly deserted temple to the sea god Dagon, a competitor of Poseidon's.

When wielded by an appropriately sized being, the trident vibrates like a tuning fork, emitting ultrasonic waves beyond the range of normal human hearing. They can be heard by frogs, mice, and Myrmidons. The effect is similar to the Vocal Entrancement monster power; it can lull the wielder's enemies into a helpless stupor or incite his comrades to fanatical bravery.

The vibrations of the Trident are also believed by the Rhabdosians to encourage the rapid development of their eggs.

## The Aegis of Iroas

The Aegis of Iroas is a highly polished concave bronze disc inlaid with gold, just the right size to serve as a war shield for a mouse or frog. It was a gift to the Muscussi from Athena and is sacred to them.

It has no powers discernable to human-sized adventurers (other than to serve as a shaving mirror). It was lost during Iroas' mission to steal the Trident of Rhana and has since also found its way into the temple of Dagon. The Rhabdosians would prefer that it remain lost.

When wielded by an appropriately sized being (Tiny), the Aegis begins to glow and shine until it spreads a blinding glare over a wide area. The Aegis of Iroas also gives the wielder the usual +4 Defense Class.

## MYTHIC BESTIARY

# MONSTROUS (RE)MIX

Variant Versions of Classic Creatures from Mythology, M&M and Miscellaneous Sources



## Classic Harpy

*These Harpies are not the bat-winged humanoids described in the **Creature Compendium** and inspired by the movie **Jason & the Argonauts** (1963) but the bird-bodied, women-faced Harpies of Greek mythology.*

**Taxonomy** : Monster

**Description** : These beings look much like Sirens, without their vocal powers and with a more vicious behavior. They are ravenous scavengers who enjoy stealing food and tormenting their victims but they are also cowardly creatures, who always attack *en masse* and prefer to prey on the weak. Against dangerous foes (like adventurers), they will usually gang up at two or three against a single target. They will fly away as soon as they are wounded.

**Size** : Small

**Ferocity** : Aggressive

**Cunning** : Clever

**Mystique** : Weird

**Movement** : 60' / 240'

**Initiative** : 19

**Melee Attack** : +3

**Damage** : 1d3 (talons)

**Defense Class** : 15

**Hits Total** : 6

**Detection / Evasion** : +4 / +12

**Mystic Fortitude** : +2

**Special Abilities** : Dive into Battle (Initiative 19, Melee +4). Lightning Fast, Supernatural Vigor, Uncanny Agility, Winged (-4 to Missile rolls).

**Awards** : Glory 26, Wisdom 10.

## Hamadryad

*In Greek mythology, Hamadryads are a special type of Dryad whose life-force and life-span are irrevocably tied to their tree of birth : if the tree withered and died or was destroyed by fire, the Hamadryad died too.*

*Instead of trying to directly translate these concepts in game terms, the Hamadryad described below offers a distinctively M&M-esque adaptation of this old myth.*

**Taxonomy** : Spirit

**Description** : Hamadryads, also known as Tree Women, have the upper body of a human female and the lower body of a tree. Like trees, they are rooted in the ground and cannot move. Their powers also allow them to camouflage as normal trees, fooling all but the most observant onlookers. Unless circumstances force them to, Hamadryads never show themselves to mortals, preferring to let this kind of things to their Dryad allies.

**Size** : Medium

**Ferocity** : Peaceful

**Cunning** : Crafty

**Mystique** : Unearthly

**Movement** : n/a (rooted)

**Initiative** : 13

**Melee Attack** : 0

**Damage** : n/a

**Defense Class** : 17

**Hits Total** : 8 \*

**Detection / Evasion** : +10 / n/a (rooted)

**Mystic Fortitude** : +10

**Special Abilities** : Camouflage, Magic Resistance, Grapple (with branches, Might 16), Regeneration (1 Hit / round), Sixth Sense, Stealthy (22, but cannot move), Supernatural Vigor, Tough Skin.

In addition to their special abilities, Hamadryads can also use the same **Nature's Gifts** as Dryads, with an Odylic Charm bonus equal to the sum of their Cunning and Mystique (+6) and a number of Power points equal to 4 times their Odylic Charm (24).



The only way to kill a Hamadryad is to burn or chop down her tree. Hamadryads are completely immune to all other forms of physical damage (but not to magical attacks). Setting fire to her tree will cause the Hamadryad 2 Hits of damage per round, reduced to only 1 Hit by the Hamadryad's powers of Regeneration. If this reduces her Hits to zero, she and the tree will both be destroyed. Killing a Hamadryad brings neither Glory nor Wisdom – only blight and misery to the forest she was protecting.

#### Additional Lore

Like Dryads, Hamadryads often act as guardians of their forest – but they also embody the very soul of their forest (which is why, unlike Dryads, they cannot leave their native soil).

Each forest usually only has one to three well-hidden Hamadryads as its “soul keepers”. Should they be destroyed, the forest will become a blighted and sinister place, which will no longer qualify as “natural environment” (including in game terms) for Dryads and other forest creatures.

Needless to say, Hamadryads are held in the highest respect by Dryads, who view them as the “sacred mothers” of their forests. The origin of Hamadryads is a well-guarded mystery. Only the wisest Dryads know that Hamadryads are former (usually high-level) Dryads who have chosen to abandon their physical body and meld forever with a chosen tree to nurture the soul of their home forest.

## Serpentine Hydra

As depicted on many ancient vases and paintings, this large (rather than truly gigantic) Hydra has a serpentine (legless) body, unlike the various types of Hydras described in the M&M **Creature Compendium**, which have dragon-like, quadruped bodies.

**Taxonomy** : Monster

**Description** : In the world of Mythika, Serpentine Hydras are the degenerate descendants of a true Hydra and some form of Giant Snake. Whether this hybridization was done by magical or more natural means is best left to the imagination of naturalists.

**Size** : Large

**Ferocity** : Deadly

**Cunning** : Alert

**Mystique** : Eldritch

**Movement** : 90'

**Initiative** : (17 + heads)

**Melee Attack** : +9

**Damage** : 2d6 (bite)

**Defense Class** : 22

**Hits Total** : 36

**Detection / Evasion** : (heads +2) / +4

**Mystic Fortitude** : +8

**Special Abilities** : Fearsome, Magic Resistance, Multiple Heads (from 3 to 9), Natural Armor, Poison (death in 1d6 rounds), Regeneration (2 / round), Stealthy (14), Supernatural Vigor, Uncanny Agility.

**Awards** : Vanquishing a Serpentine Hydra will bring a number of Glory points equal to 460 + 40 per extra head and a number of Wisdom points equal to 50 + 10 per extra head. Thus, a four-headed Serpentine Hydra will be worth 580 Glory and 70 Wisdom.



A mighty Barbarian battling a nasty Serpentine Hydra



## Sylvan Centaur

*In some modern-day, mythology-inspired tales (such as the stories of Thomas Burnett Swann – see the Muse’s Corner of our very first issue), Centaurs are depicted as predominantly peaceful (if a bit hot-headed), nature-attuned beings, rather than as boisterous warriors. The Sylvan Centaur is an attempt to integrate this gentler vision of the Centaur race in the M&M world.*

**Taxonomy :** Folk

**Description :** As their name implies, members of this Centaur tribe have a good deal of Sylvan blood in their veins. They trace their ancestry to the mythic union of a Centaur archer and a Sylvan princess – but this tale is obviously an embellishment of some long-forgotten, less pleasant events. They look like Centaurs but with nimbler, less muscular bodies, elfin features and distinctively Sylvan-like pointed ears. They usually don’t get on very well with either of their parent races : true Centaurs tend to view them as “suspiciously effeminate” (but will always side with them against Brutaurs) while Sylvans tend to find them too feral and, well, “horsey”. Yet, like their appearance, their culture clearly reflects their mixed heritage. They are rovers at heart but love forests and usually get on very well with Dryads (especially the younger ones, who find them far cuter than other Centaurs). They love music, poetry, wine and hunting; they are far less aggressive than normal Centaurs but are excellent archers.

**Size :** Medium

**Ferocity :** Peaceful

**Cunning :** Clever

**Mystique :** Weird

**Movement :** 60’ (240’ galloping)

**Initiative :** 14

**Melee Attack :** +1

**Missile Attack :** +4 (no penalty while moving)

**Damage :** 1d6 (weapons)

**Defense Class :** 15

**Hits Total :** 8

**Detection / Evasion :** +4 / +6

**Mystic Fortitude :** +2

**Special Abilities :** Charge into Battle (Init 16, Melee +3), Gallop, Marksmanship, Missile Weapons (bow, 300’), Supernatural Vigor, Trample, Uncanny Agility.

**Awards :** Glory 55, Wisdom 10.

*Players who actually wish to play a Sylvan Centaur can create him with the usual rules for the Centaur class, except that his primary attributes include Wits instead of Migh). His weapon of choice must be the bow. Like the standard Centaur’s Might, the Sylvan Centaur’s Wits is not directly tied to any of his special abilities, but the Might / Wits swap will tend to make the character less powerful at Melee, Physical Vigor and starting Hits and better at Missile, Danger Evasion and Initiative, thus reflecting the Sylvan Centaur’s distinctive profile.*



*Are you looking at my ears ?*

## Infernal Archfiends

*These epitomes of might and malevolence are, of course, a direct tribute to the “Type X Demons” of a certain RPG of Ancient Design & Dweomer, whose creator sadly passed away earlier this year.*

Infernal Archfiends are malevolent beings of great power who dwell in the Abyss, a pit of dark oblivion which connects with the lower depths of Hades and other Infernal Realms.

These hellish creatures of formidable might and malignancy can sometimes be found in the service of dark deities such as Hecate and (more rarely) Hades or Persephone.

Some ancient Stygian scrolls of eldritch lore may also give the power to summon these foul entities in the waking world (or, if you prefer, the Prime Material Plane) to wreak havoc at the command of a sinister Stygian Lord or some other adept of the Forbidden Arts of Really Great Power.

There are actually four different types of Archfiends, each with its own characteristics and powers but all Archfiends share a number of common traits. All have a Large or Gigantic Size, a Deadly Ferocity as well as an Unearthly Mystique. Their special abilities always include the following : Fearsome, Magic Resistance, Sixth Sense, Regeneration and Supernatural Vigor as well as Tough Skin, Natural Armor or Invulnerability.

Lastly, the Special Taxonomy of these beings reflect the fact that they occupy their own special niche in the Grand Mythical Bestiary of the Multiverse, being at the same time Monsters and Spirits, as shown by their doubled Glory and Wisdom awards below.



*A Balotaur or, if you prefer, a Type I Archfiend*

### Type I Archfiend (Balotaur)

**Description** : Balotaurs look more or less like a cross between a giant bat and a Minotaur, with razor-sharp claws and very nasty teeth.

**Size** : Large

**Ferocity** : Deadly

**Cunning** : Alert

**Mystique** : Unearthly

**Movement** : 90' / 360'

**Initiative** : 16

**Melee Attack** : +8

**Damage** : 2d6 (claws)

**Defense Class** : 19

**Hits Total** : 36

**Detection / Evasion** : +10 / +10

**Mystic Fortitude** : +10

**Special Abilities** : Charge/Dive into Battle (Initiative 20, Melee +12), Fearsome, Grapple ( Might = 20), Magic Resistance, Regeneration (2 Hits / round), Sixth Sense, Supernatural Vigor, Tough Skin, Trample, Winged.

**Awards** : Glory 480, Wisdom 120.

### Type II Archfiend (Dracodemon)

**Description** : Gigantic, bipedal dragons covered with prodigiously hard scales. They can breathe devastating bursts of a strange, infernal black fire.

**Size** : Gigantic

**Ferocity** : Deadly

**Cunning** : Average

**Mystique** : Unearthly

**Movement** : 120' / 480'

**Initiative** : 15

**Melee Attack** : +10

**Damage** : 3d6 (claws)

**Defense Class** : 25

**Hits Total** : 60

**Detection / Evasion** : +4 / +4

**Mystic Fortitude** : +10

**Special Abilities** : Breath Weapon (hellfire, 40'), Charge/Dive into Battle (Initiative 21, Melee +16), Fearsome, Invulnerability, Magic Resistance, Regeneration (2 Hits / round), Sixth Sense, Supernatural Vigor, Trample, Winged.

**Awards** : Glory 1450, Wisdom 180.



*Dracodemon about to unleash the Fires of Hell*



*A towering, grinning Thanator*

### Type III Archfiend (Thanator)

**Description** : Gigantic, bat-winged, hoof-legged humanoid horrors with a white, skull-like face, horns, spear-length claws and a dark, leathery skin.

**Size** : Gigantic

**Ferocity** : Deadly

**Cunning** : Alert

**Mystique** : Unearthly

**Movement** : 120' / 480'

**Initiative** : 16

**Melee Attack** : +10

**Damage** : 3d6 (claws)

**Defense Class** : 21

**Hits Total** : 60

**Detection / Evasion** : +6 / +6

**Mystic Fortitude** : +10

**Special Abilities** : Charge/Dive into Battle (Initiative 22, Melee +16), Crushing Missiles (rocks etc), Fearsome, Magic Resistance, Natural Armor, Regeneration (2 Hits / round), Sixth Sense, Supernatural Vigor, Trample, Winged.

**Awards** : Glory 1300, Wisdom 120.

### Type IV Archfiend (Hellazon)

**Description** : 12' tall bat-winged female humanoids, with grey skin and bluish hair. Unlike most other Archfiends, they are often armed with weapons, usually spears, often coated with deadly venom.

**Size** : Large

**Ferocity** : Deadly

**Cunning** : Clever

**Mystique** : Unearthly

**Movement** : 90' / 360'

**Initiative** : 19

**Melee Attack** : +9

**Damage** : 2d6 (spear)

**Defense Class** : 21

**Hits Total** : 36

**Detection / Evasion** : +8 / +8

**Mystic Fortitude** : +10

**Special Abilities** : Charge/Dive into Battle (Initiative 21, Melee +13), Fearsome, Magic Resistance, Poison (on weapon, effect varies), Regeneration (2 Hits / round), Sixth Sense, Supernatural Vigor, Tough Skin, Uncanny Agility, Winged.

**Awards** : Glory 540, Wisdom 120.



*Hellazon, warrior-woman (?) of the Infernal Realms*



A big, bad Anakite Champion

## Anakite Champion

Created by Kevin Scrivner, these half-human brutes are based on various elements of Biblical lore (such as the Philistine champion Goliath and the half-human children of the Nephilim), aptly adapted by Kevin to the Bronze Age fantasy setting of Mythika.

**Taxonomy :** Folk

**Description:** These giant (10-15 feet tall) warriors are descended from the Nephilim, demon-human hybrids bred in prehistory. Popularly known as the "Children of Anak," a distant ancestor, they survive among former Proteusian trading colonies in the Land of the Sun, where they win renown as soldiers and professional athletes. They tend to be arrogant and overconfident, used to intimidating man-sized mortals with their size and exaggerated physiques. On the battlefield, an Anakite champion will typically have a common soldier armor-bearer carry his shield before him while he readies his javelin. Like Heraklian hoplites, Anakite champions use their huge (15-pound head) spears as their primary weapons, reserving their swords for close combat should their spears become unavailable.

**Size :** Large

**Ferocity :** Aggressive

**Cunning :** Average

**Mystique :** Normal

**Movement :** 90'

**Initiative :** 11

**Melee Attack :** +4

**Missile Attack :** +4

**Damage :** 2d6 (big weapons)

**Defense Class :** 14 (20 w. helmet, breastplate & shield)

**Hits Total :** 24

**Detection / Evasion :** 0 / 0

**Mystic Fortitude :** 0

**Special Abilities :** Charge into Battle (Init 15, Melee +8), Grapple (Might 20), Crushing Damage (bear-like hug), Marksmanship, Missile Weapons (javelin, 180'), Supernatural Vigor, Tough Skin.

**Awards :** Glory 110, Wisdom 10.

**Additional Lore:** Anakites are worshippers of the sea god Dagon but have no known relationship with the so-called Sons of Dagon. The exact identity of the Nephilim is uncertain (although the tribesmen who live east of the Proteusian settlements have no doubts about the demonic nature of the Anakites' ancestors). Some scholars have speculated that these so-called "Nephilim" might have been the half-legendary Hyperborean Giant Kings or even the Olympians themselves under another name.

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# A TWIST IN THE MAZE

A Regular M&M Column by Luke G. Reynard

## IT'S ALL IN THE MIND !

*Last issue, I dissected the Danger Evasion saving roll, identified its fatal flaws and presented a far more logical alternate formula; This issue, we'll see why Mystic Fortitude sucks big time too... and what can be done about it.*

### Mystic Fortitude, Revisited

In the opinion of many Revised Maze Masters, the incidence of Grace on Mystic Fortitude is utterly gratuitous and illogical. The only justifications that come to mind are the "need" to make Grace more important in game terms and, perhaps, the desire to give Lyrist and Nymphs (who have Grace and Luck as primary attributes) very high Mystic Fortitude.

As far as the sacrosanct and dubious concept of game balance is concerned, these justifications might seem defensible but such considerations should never have taken precedence over simple common sense. No matter how hard you look at it, it really seems very, very hard to understand why being charming and attractive can actually make you more resistant to magic... especially when there was another, much more logical choice : Wits.

In other words, the big problem is not the incidence of Grace *per se* but the non-incidence of Wits... and since neither Will and Luck can logically be taken out of the equation, Wits can only replace Grace.

Of course, one might argue that magic resistance has little to do with intelligence... but one should also keep in mind that in M&M, a character's Wits does not so much reflect his brainpower or intellect than his alertness and presence of mind – "raw wits", if you will – which is why (among other things) this attribute affects a character's Danger Evasion score or a Thief's dodging ability... and why it should also affect a character's resistance to magic, as reflected by his Mystic Fortitude.

After all, characters with a quick, alert mind should have better chances of resisting a spell or magical power than slow-witted ones. This is especially true for Sorcery, which directly affects a character's mind and includes powers such as Confusion or Illusions... yes, that's right, under the Revised M&M rules, your Wits have nothing to do with your ability to discern illusion from reality or from *keeping your wits about* when affected by magical confusion... There is obviously something wrong here.

Indeed, if we take a closer look at the various magical powers which can be avoided or resisted by Mystic Fortitude, one is forced to admit that Wits should definitely be part of the equation..



*Forget about your Sorcery, old man ! I mean, just have a look at my curves : how Graceful do you think I am ?*

**Sorcery :** Mystic Fortitude can be used to resist the effects of all sorcerous powers, from Confusion, Illusions and Cloaking to Compelling / Enslavement and Psychic Attacks; in all cases, the target's alertness, cleverness and presence of mind should definitely come into play.

**Divine Prodigies :** The only Divine Prodigy which calls for a Mystic Fortitude roll is *Divine Wrath*, which the rules describe as "a bolt of pure spiritual energy". Here again, a character's alertness and presence of mind (his Wits) should logically be taken into account, for the same reason it affects Danger Evasion rolls versus more mundane threats.

**Elemental Magic :** Mystic Fortitude is of no help against elemental powers, which usually call for Danger Evasion rolls (see the *Players Manual* p 32) because of their inherently physical effects. This is a very interesting distinction, since it clearly implies that all magical powers which can be resisted with Mystic Fortitude do not have physical effects but mental, spiritual or psychic ones... which is another strong argument in favor of Wits.

**Nature's Gifts :** Mystic Fortitude can be used to defend against *Nature's Seduction*, various versions of *Nature's Curse* and the Heliad's *Fatal Kiss*. In the case of *Nature's Seduction*, the arguments in favor

of Wits are, once again, pretty obvious, since the powers directly 'attacks' a target's ability to reason clearly and stay aware of his surroundings. As for *Nature's Curse* and *Fatal Kiss*, one could argue that the importance of Wits is less obvious here... but then it does not make less sense than Grace.

**Poetic Magic** : Mystic Fortitude can be used to defend against *Songs of Soothing* and *Songs of Wrath*. As for Sorcery and Nature's Charm above, it seems perfectly logical that an alert and sharp mind should advantage you when trying to fight off any form of emotion-based magic.

And what about the various special abilities of creatures ? Mystic Fortitude is used to resist against highly mystical special attacks such as *Petrification*, *Vocal Entrancement*... and, of course, *Psychic Powers*. Here again, an alert, sharp mind should definitely be a decisive defensive asset... more than a pretty face or a nice figure, anyway.

Honestly, which sentence makes more sense ?

(A) "Ah, your foe is charming and graceful, he will be harder to fool with your Sorcery !"

(B) "Ah, your foe is clever and wise, he will be harder to fool with your Sorcery !"

So I think we have a pretty clear-cut case here : Wits should definitely replace Grace in the Mystic Fortitude formula, or in other terms :

**Mystic Fortitude** = Will md + Wits md + Luck md

Note that this alternate formula also makes Wits more important for all types of characters – not just for specialists and some magicians.

Incidentally, it's quite funny to notice that this formula actually corresponds to the one used by the regular rules for calculating Danger Evasion – but we saw last issue how much this formula sucked, didn't we ? That being said, you should only use the variant Mystic Fortitude formula given above if you are also using the variant Danger Evasion formula from last issue, otherwise every character would have exactly the same scores in Danger Evasion and Mystic Fortitude...

So what does this new formula really change ?

Well, it doesn't change anything for Priests but will give Sorcerers and Elementalists a far better Mystic Fortitude score, since both classes have Wits and Will as their primary attributes.

Among the non-magicians, Hunters will get a slight boost but the big winners will be Thieves, who have Wits and Luck as their two primary attributes. This may seem a bit odd at first, but personally, I like the idea of clever, alert Thieves being good at "evading" magic - much like they are good at evading blows and danger in general.



A Valley Nymph reacts to these variant rules

The "big" losers seem to be Nymphs and Lyrist, who can no longer count on their high Grace to boost their Mystic Fortitude, but keep in mind that :

(a) both classes have Luck as their other primary attribute, so they are already quite advantaged in a lot of departments (including Mystic Fortitude)...

(b) both classes can improve their Wits as part of their usual advancement...

(d) such things are bound to happen whenever you modify the way a score is calculated : some characters will get a better deal, while others will be less advantaged than before. As Olivier Legrand's compatriots say : *C'est la vie*...

Under these new rules, our old friend Pyros the Spearman (Players Manual, p 8), whose low Grace of 8 made him more vulnerable to magic, would now be able to take full advantage of his average Wits and claim a Mystic Fortitude of +3, instead of +2 !

*For the sake of further illustration, let's take another example : the NPC Xalton the Sorcerer, featured in the scenario A Dark Alliance published in the first issue of this zine (see Minotaur Quarterly n°1, p 29 for his complete stats). Xalton is an interesting case, because his Grace (9) and Wits (19) score are dramatically different ! Under the regular rules, his extraordinary Will (20) and very high Luck (17), combined with the +1 from his Amulet of Protection, give him a Mystic Fortitude of +8, which is good... but not that good for a guy who is supposed to be a VERY powerful Sorcerer (level 5) and who should logically be extremely resistant to magic. Using our variant formula, Xalton's Mystic Fortitude would be boosted to a formidable (and much more sensible) +12. Keep in mind that in most sword and sorcery stories, powerful, evil magicians tend to be more vulnerable to swords than to spells and often gloat or laugh when "weak magic" is used against them – something which our alternate Mystic Fortitude formula reflects far better than the regular one.*



*The return of Xalton : Ah, these variant rules rock !*

But doesn't this, you ask, make Grace even less important than before ? Well, yes and no, depending on how you look at it. Under these new rules, a high Grace is still a very important asset for some characters (such as Nymphs and Lyristis)... but a low Grace is no longer a liability as far as magic resistance is concerned.

Let us now take a look at **Creatures**. If we make Wits part of Mystic Fortitude, shouldn't a creature's Mystic Fortitude also take into account its Cunning in addition to its Mystique ? Well, frankly, there's no need to go this far, for at least three reasons.

Firstly, it would be an awful lot of work to go through the 200+ entries of the *Creature Compendium* and recalculate each beastie's Mystic Fortitude... only to find out that this does not significantly alter the scores of most creatures, since those with high Mystique usually have high Cunning as well...

Secondly, since the characteristics of creatures are supposed to be "for Maze Master's eyes only", there is much less potential for litigious discussion here. As many Maze Masters have had ample opportunity to observe when discussing house rules with their players, creatures' stats and scores are a much less "touchy" subject than the abilities of characters for the vast majority of players.

Thirdly (and, perhaps, most importantly) keep in mind that a creature's Ferocity, Cunning and Mystique are NOT exact equivalents of attributes but broad indicators of the degree of danger or challenge they represent for player-characters - so there is no real need to change or "balance" things here. Mystique, for instance, is a direct measure of a creature's inherent "supernaturalness" (don't you love those clunky neologisms ?), which has no real equivalent among the six attributes used to define a character... and which should logically have a heavy incidence on its Mystic Fortitude. (see *Olivier*, *I didn't destroy the whole system, did I ? - Luke*)

*Luke G. Reynard*

## Dear Minotaur

Welcome to our semi-regular column !



Dear Editor,

In the (otherwise brilliant) scenario published in the second issue of *Minotaur*, **The Wisdom of Stones**, written by the excellent Andrew Trent, a great deal was made about a mythic item called the **Sextant of Eryximachos**, the "McGuffin" of the adventure. Aside from the fact that its name was almost impossible to pronounce properly, the appearance of this item was left annoyingly vague - I do know what a sextant is, of course, but what is an ancient magical sextant supposed to look like, especially in a 'low-tech' world where sextants are not supposed to exist in the first place. Why didn't you provide at least an illustration of the damn thing ?

Steven Hanson, New York (NY)

Dear Steven,

a) For your information, sextants were used by Greek navigators at least as early as in the third century BC, so such items do exist in the world of *Mythika*, which is, as you know, loosely modelled after ancient (or rather mythical) Greece.

b) We DID have an illustration for the Sextant of Eryximachos but forgot to include it in the scenario ! Here it is (better late than never, eh ?)



c) Are you the same guy who wrote to us in issue 2 to make all the fuss about the word 'peplumesque' ?

Each issue, **Griffin Archives** unearths an old Griffin article from the glorious 1980s

Written by famous M&M veteran Erik Sieurin, this article was first published in the April 1982 issue of Griffin magazine (five years before the M&M rules got Revised), as part of a series detailing "Exotic Magicians". For the sake of archaeological accuracy and out of respect for the work of Erik, who is known to prefer the Original M&M rules over the Revised ones (those grognards...), we have left the article in its original state... but we have also added a fully Revised version of the class, bringing the Beastmaster up-to-date with the 1987 Revised rules.

# THE BEAST MASTER

An Exotic Magician Class for Mazes & Minotaurs by **Erik Sieurin**



*Behold the powers of Beastmastery !*

Beastmasters are magicians who hold mysterious power over the animal kingdom.

On the world of Mythika, they are most often encountered in the wild jungles of Charybdis, where the local savages hold them in deep respect.

Some Beastmasters were chosen and tutored as apprentices by an older Beastmaster, but most of them have actually been reared by wild beasts and grew up among them.

Their brand of magic, known as *Beastmastery*, is innate in a manner similar to a Nymph's Gifts ; Beastmasters do not need to perform any ritual or chant any words to use their magic.

## BEASTMASTER

**Prime Requisite** : Grace

**Gender Restrictions** : None

**Basic Hits** : 8

**Beast Tongue** : A Beastmaster can speak with Beasts as if they were human. From 4th level, he can likewise speak with any Monster as if it was human. Nothing says they will stop and listen, or have anything worthwhile to say.

**Beastmastery** : Beastmasters practice their own special form of primitive magic (see below). Their Power Points are based on Grace. A Beastmaster recovers Power points by wandering alone in the wilds, at the usual rate.

**Level Advancement** : Every level after the first, a Beastmaster gets the following bonuses: Hits +2, Danger Evasion +2, Mystic Fortitude +1.

**Equipment** : Knife, minimal clothing and various animal fetishes (necklace of fangs etc).

**Starting Wealth** : None.

As usual, each new level in the class brings the character a new magical power :

### Level 1 : Beast Soothing

This power affects up to one Beast per level of the Beastmaster. The Beastmaster must be able to see the Beasts and be heard by them. It causes the Beasts to become Friendly for a number of minutes equal to the character's level.

Any hostile action will of course break this effect. If the Beasts are already Hostile, they may resist with a Mystic Fortitude roll.

This power can cause horse riders or charioteers to become helpless, by targeting their horses.





*Bird Calling in action*

## Level 2 : Beast Calling

This power affects either the closest group of Beasts of one particular species (roll for number appearing as per the creature description in the M&M rules) or one individual Beast which the magician is familiar with. It sends out a call that the Beasts in question must follow unless it makes a Mystic Fortitude roll.

The Beasts travel at top speed towards the Beastmaster until they reach him. The Beastmaster cannot move from the spot or the Beasts will lose interest and stop.

The Maze Master must guesstimate the time it will take a specific individual to reach the Beastmaster. When calling the closest group of Beasts of a particular species, use the following table :

### 2d10 Waiting Time

2-3	1d10 minutes
4-7	1d6 x 10 minutes
8-14	1d6 hours
15-18	1d6 x 10 hours
19-20	1d10 days

The Beastmaster will know the dice rolled but not the exact time. The Beasts will not necessarily obey him when they arrive, but their First Reaction roll is automatically modified by the Beastmaster's level, (as per the Reputation rules).

## Level 3 : Beast Command

This power will cause a number of Beasts equal to the Beastmaster's level to obey him for a number of hours equal to 1d6 + his Grace bonus.

Each Beast gets a Mystic Fortitude roll to avoid being controlled. The Beast must be within sight of the Beastmaster and able to hear him. When the effect ends, the Beasts may flee, ignore or attack the Beastmaster (make a new First Reaction roll).

## Level 4 : Monster Soothing

This power has the same effect as Beast Soothing, but affects Monsters as well.

## Level 5 : Monster Calling

This power has the same effect as Beast Calling, but affects Monsters. Since Monsters are decidedly rarer than Beasts, a different roll is made to see how long it takes for them to reach the Beastmaster:

### 2d10 Waiting Time

2-1	d10 minutes
3-4	1d6 x 10 minutes
5-8	1d6 hours
9-16	1d6 x 10 hours
17-20	1d10 days

## Level 6 : Monster Command

This supreme power has the same effects as Beast Command, but affects Monsters as well.

## 2008 Comments

### Ah, Beastmasters...

This apocryphal class proved quite popular with vegetarian, eco-conscious female gamers (yes, the two of them). It was also something of a spectacular hit with the many fans of Don Coscarelli's movie *The Beastmaster*.

What ? Never heard of this 1982 masterpiece of silver screen sword-and-sorcery ?

Well, give yourself a treat and... uh, see for yourself. Remember, these were the eighties.

The Beastmaster class also spawned one of the oddest (and silliest) magician classes ever designed for *Mazes & Minotaurs* - the infamous Plantmaster variant, published in the last issue of the infamous fanzine *Satyrs On Speed*.

Remember, these were the eighties...

# RETURN OF THE BEAST MASTER

A Revised Version of Erik Sieurin's Classic Class

## The Question of Magic

The first thing to consider in order to Revise Erik Sieurin's Beastmaster class is the way magic works in the Revised M&M rules. As far as magic is concerned, the biggest difference between the Original *Mazes & Minotaurs* rules of 1972 and the Revised rules of 1987 is what some first edition grognards called the "Magic Overflow".

In the Original rules, magicians received a single new power at each new level : in other words, a first level magician could only use a single power, while a third-level magician had access to three powers, one for each level he had gained.

In the Revised rules, magicians have access to their full repertoire of powers right from level 1, but with a variable Power points cost : thus, novice magicians do have access to the most powerful abilities of their class, but the magical effort required is likely to leave them drained of mystical energy after a few uses. This, as you might guess, brought spectacular change to the way magicians operated, making them more powerful as well as more versatile.

Like all apocryphal magician classes created before the release of the Revised rules, the Beastmaster was based on the original, level-by-level approach – and like all other Revised magicians, our Revised Beastmaster will have access to his full repertoire of powers right from the start (as per the usual rules), making him more powerful and more versatile.

## Animal Affinity

In addition to their usual repertoire of six magical powers, which are detailed below, all Beastmasters have an innate, natural affinity with animals.

This affinity allows them to speak with Beasts as if they were human beings (which does not mean the Beasts will have anything interesting to say or will be willing to communicate) as well as the power to Tame Beasts by Charm, using the rules given for Nymphs in the *M&M Companion* (p 43) – but unlike Nymphs, Beastmasters can use this ability on any Beast, but NOT on Monsters.

Unlike the Beastmaster's powers of Beastmastery, these abilities are not magical in nature and do not require any Power expenditure

## BEAST MASTER

**Primary Attributes** : Will and Grace

**Gender Restrictions** : None

**Basic Hits** : 8

**Animal Affinity** : In addition to their magical powers, Beastmasters can speak with animals and try to Tame them by Charm, as detailed in the general text of this article.

**Beastmastery** : Beastmasters practice their own special form of feral, primitive magic. Their magical talent is known as Animal Empathy.

**Animal Empathy** = Will mod + Grace mod

**Mystic Strength** = 12 + Animal Empathy

**Starting Power** = (4 + Will mod)

**Power Recovery** : A Beastmaster recovers his Power points by wandering alone in the wilds and communing with primitive nature. Each two full hours of such activity will restore a number of Power points equal to the character's level.

**Level Benefits** : Each level beyond the first gives a Beastmaster +2 Hits, +4 Power points, +1 to Luck and +2 to Will, Wits or Grace.

**Possessions** : Knife, minimal clothing and various animal fetishes (necklace of fangs etc). Beastmasters receive no starting wealth.

**Restrictions** : Beastmasters can never wear any form of metal armor (including shields or helmets), since this would disrupt their mystical connection with the Powers of the Wild.

**Patron Deity** : Beastmasters do not have any identifiable patron deity – instead, they show devotion to the primal powers of the Wild.

**Background Talents** : All Beastmasters have the Beastmaster and Woodsman talents. Maze Masters who wish to avoid all risk of confusion between the class and the background talent of the same name might consider changing the name of the class to Beastlord.

**Reputation Effect** : Beastmasters receive their reputation bonus when dealing with primitive tribesmen from their homeland.



*Make friends with Beast Soothing !*

## Beastmastery Powers

### Magnitude 1 : Beast Soothing

This power allows a Beastmaster to influence the natural reactions of Beasts. To use this power, the magician must be able to see the Beasts and be heard by them. This power can be used on multiple targets, at a cost of 1 Power point for each Beast, up to a maximum number of Beasts equal to the magician's Animal Empathy.

It causes the Beasts to become Friendly for a number of minutes equal to the character's Animal Empathy. Any hostile action will of course break this effect. If the Beasts are already Hostile, they may resist with a Mystic Fortitude roll against a target number equal to the Beastmaster's Mystic Strength.

This power can cause horse riders or charioteers to become helpless, by targeting their horses.

### Magnitude 2 : Beast Calling

This power affects either the closest group of Beasts of one particular species. The number of Beasts summoned in this manner depends on the Size of the species : Tiny 3d6, Small 2d6, Medium 1d6, Large 1d3, Gigantic 1. Alternatively, this power may also be used to summon a single individual Beast which the magician is familiar with.

This power sends out a call that the Beasts in question must follow unless it makes a Mystic Fortitude roll against a target number equal to the Beastmaster's Mystic Strength. The Beasts travel at top speed towards the Beastmaster until they reach him. The Beastmaster cannot move from the spot or the Beasts will lose interest and stop.

The Beasts summoned must be native to the area : you cannot, for instance, summon Hyperborean Beasts in the jungles of Charybdis. The Maze Master must guesstimate the time it will take a specific individual to reach the Beastmaster. When calling the closest group of Beasts of a particular species, use the following table :

#### 2d10 Waiting Time

2-3	1d10 minutes
4-7	1d6 x 10 minutes
8-14	1d6 hours
15-18	1d6 x 10 hours
19-20	1d10 days

The Beastmaster will know the dice rolled but not the exact time. The Beasts will not necessarily obey him when they arrive : to determine their initial reaction, make a Reaction roll as is the Beasts were NPCs, using the Beastmaster's Animal Empathy in lieu of his Personal Charisma.

### Magnitude 3 : Beast Command

This power causes one Beast to obey the Beastmasters for a number of hours equal to his Animal Empathy. It may be used on multiple targets at no additional Power cost, up to a number of individual Beasts equal to the Beastmaster's Animal Empathy; this is only possible if the Beasts belong to the same herd, pack or group.

Each Beast targeted by this power gets a Mystic Fortitude saving roll against the Beastmaster's Mystic Strength to avoid being controlled. The Beast must be within sight of the Beastmaster and able to hear him. When the effect ends, the Beasts may flee, ignore or attack the Beastmaster : make a Reaction roll as for *Beast Calling* above.

### Magnitude 4 : Monster Soothing

This power has the same effect as Beast Soothing, but affects Monsters. Unlike Beast Soothing, it can only be targeted at a single creature. Also note that Monsters will tend to attack the Beastmaster once the effects of this power wear off.

### Magnitude 5 : Monster Calling

This power has the same effect as *Beast Calling*, but affects Monsters. Like *Monster Soothing* above, it can only be used to summon a single creature.

Since Monsters are decidedly rarer than Beasts, a different roll is made to see how long it takes for the creature to reach the Beastmaster:

#### 2d10 Waiting Time

2	d10 minutes
3-4	1d6 x 10 minutes
5-8	1d6 hours
9-16	1d6 x 10 hours
17-20	1d10 days

### Magnitude 6 : Monster Command

This supreme power has the same effects as *Beast Command*, but affects Monsters instead and can only target a single creature.

# OFFICIAL ORACLE

*Official Oracle* is a new, regular Q&A page about the *Mazes & Minotaurs* rules and how these rules can be applied to situations which are not explicitly covered in the various M&M rulebooks. As its title implies, all the answers given in this column can be treated as official rulings (if such things really matter to your gaming group). For this first installment, we take a closer look at the toxic topic of poison. Talk about auspicious beginnings...

## Curing Poison

**The M&M rules cover the effects of poison but say nothing about antidotes or treatments. Can magical healing powers like Divine Vitality be used against poison too? And what about characters with the Healer background talent?**

The M&M rules treat poison (ah !) in a deliberately simplified, all-or-nothing manner that has little to do with medical realism (and everything to do with the spirit of old school fantasy adventuring). Things will probably stay this way until someone decides to write a detailed study on venoms and other toxins for *The Minotaur*. That being said, the issue of magical healing should have been addressed in the rules, especially given the number of creatures with the *Poison* special ability... So here is a quick rule fix, which will undoubtedly be warmly acclaimed by players who have seen their 6<sup>th</sup> level character die from poison while being surrounded by useless Priests or Nymphs and listening to the Maze Master's ruthless verdict or embarrassed apologies.

Poison as defined by the *Poison* special ability can have three effects : instant death, quick death (in 1d6 rounds) or paralysis (for 1d6 minutes).

### Instant Death

The only possible "cure" in such cases is a *Napaea's Kiss of Life* or any similar power (such as the Priest of Mithras' *Divine Resurrection* (*M&M Companion* p 27) – as long, of course, as the power is used within the proper time limit (which is usually equal to the magician's magical talent in rounds).

### Quick Death

If the victim receives magical healing before the fatal 1-6 rounds have passed, this healing may also prevent the poison from taking effect (in addition to its usual healing virtues) but only if the victim succeeds at a *Physical Vigor* saving roll (target number 15) with an extra bonus equal to the healer's magical talent. Thus, a victim with a *Physical Vigor* mod of +3 healed by a Priest with a *Spiritual Aura* of +4 would roll 1d20+7.

Such an emergency treatment is only possible with magical powers that can operate faster than the poison itself, such as *Divine Healing* or *Nature's Comfort*, which require one round to use – but a

*Lyrist's Song of Comfort* won't work, since it would take one minute to perform.

If this roll fails, each additional use of a magical healing power will allow the victim a new saving roll, with the same bonus and target number, as long as the victim is still alive. If the victim dies, then the only solutions left are the ones mentioned under *Instant Death* above.

### Paralysis

The chances of neutralizing the poison are the same as for *Quick Death* poisons above but since paralysis lasts for 1-6 minutes, multiple attempts are not as limited as with lethal poison (as long as the healer agrees to spend his *Power* points, that it).

### Natural Medicine

If the rules on background talents from the *M&M Companion* are used, characters with the **Healer** talent may be able to counter the effects of a quick death poison, provided they act before the poison takes effect. Such an emergency treatment (which represents things like sucking venom out of a wound etc) takes 1d6 rounds to administer and will only have a chance to work if this duration does not exceed the number of rounds left to the victim.

Even in this case, the victim will not be automatically saved but will be allowed a last chance *Physical Vigor* saving roll against a target number of 20 (rather than the usual 15) to survive, thanks to the Healer's diligent efforts. Note that this can only work against poison delivered by a *Poison* attack, but not against swallowed or inhaled poison. And what about antidotes ?

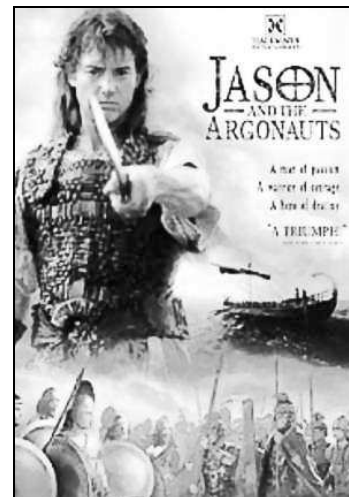
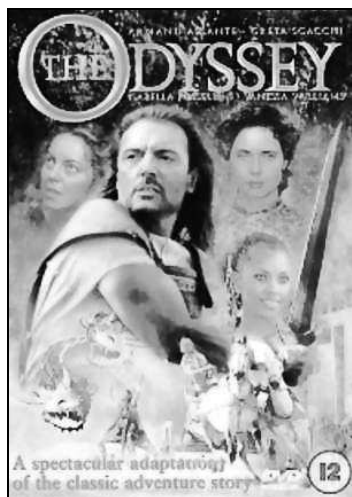
Well, each type of poison is a specific substance and there's no such thing as an universal antidote. An effective antidote against the venom of a specific species of *Giant Snake*, for instance, would be completely useless against the venom of a *Cave Spider* (or even against other species of *Giant Snakes*, for that matter). This is an additional proof of the inherent superiority of magical healing over any form of natural pharmacy.

At the Maze Master's discretion, the use of a proper specific antidote could lower the target number of the victim's last chance saving roll to 10 or even make it automatically successful, as long as it is taken before the poison takes its full, terminal effect.

# Muse's Corner

A semi-regular column about books, movies and other sources of inspiration for Maze Masters

## WHAT'S ON MINOTAUR CHANNEL ?



As any Maze Master worth his salt knows, the most "M&M-esque" movies ever made were the 1963 classic *Jason and the Argonauts* and the 1981 blockbuster *Clash of the Titans*, two epic, mythical movies graced with the very special FX-magic of the great Ray Harryhausen... but other, lesser-known films also capture some of the spirit, style and mood of the *Mazes & Minotaurs* universe, like the three television movies / mini-series (no, don't worry, we won't talk about *Xena* here !) reviewed below,

Each of these television movies is available in DVD and has a duration of approximately 3 hours.

### Helen of Troy

Forget the over-rated, over-hyped 2004 movie with Brad Pitt, Orlando Bloom et al. Made for television one year earlier by one John Kent Harrison, *Helen of Troy* delivers a much more enjoyable adaptation of Homer's classic tale of the Trojan War.

Sure, the two movies are not in the same budget league... but all other things being equal, *Helen of Troy* has everything that Wolfgang Petersen's *Troy* lacks : atmosphere, spirit and, well, substance. Yet, these two films were obviously made with a very similar ambition in mind – to produce a dramatic, cinematic adaptation of Homer that could appeal to a wide 21<sup>st</sup> century audience.

With this objective in mind, both movies chose to downplay the role of the Gods in the story in order to emphasize the decisions and actions of the mortal protagonists – a sensible choice, since modern audiences are usually more interested in human-level dramas than in divine power plays. The script of *Troy* simply removed the Gods from the story to replace them by... well, nothing else, turning the whole story into a disappointingly hollow affair, full of equally hollow characters for whom you did not really give a damn.

*Helen of Troy* adopts a much more clever bias, by showing the Gods in a variety of guises – dreams, hallucinations, strange coincidences or unexpected twists of fate – which leaves the viewers wonder about the reality of the divine powers, creating a sense of wonder and mystery to the whole thing.

Sure, the battle scenes may not be as "big" as those in Petersen's *Troy*, but they certainly convey more tension and drama.

The cast is superb : the very talented Rufus Sewell plays an extraordinary, truly tragic Agamemnon, torn between his visions of grandeur and a darker sense of his own destiny, while Sienna Guillory gives us a very surprising and original Helen, starting as a rough-and-tumble tomboy and gradually turning into a *femme fatale* whose beauty will bring discord and destruction to the world...



Rufus Sewell is a mean Agamemnon in "Helen of Troy"

A special mention should also go to British actress Emilia Fox, for her excellent portrayal of the doomed, vision-haunted Cassandra.

*Helen of Troy* also features John-Rhys Davies (yes, the Gimli guy) as King Priam and a somewhat unusual take on Achilles, shown as a bald, brutish bully (a Bronze Age skinhead ?) – much more interesting, if you ask me, than the "cool surfer dude" played by Brad Pitt in *That Other Movie*.

## The Odyssey

Directed in 1997 by Andrei Konchalovski, this adaptation of Homer's epic tale runs for approximately 3 hours and is reasonably faithful to its original source – just to be sure the viewer does know who Odysseus is and why he ended up so far away from home, the movie even covers some events from the *Iliad* at an impressive break-neck pace, cramming up Odysseus' departure from Ithaca, the Trojan War, the death of Achilles and the Trojan Horse in the first 30 minutes of film !

Once the Trojan War is out of the way, however, things begin to go downhill. The globally uninspired directing never lets you forget that you are watching something made for TV. The actors, on the other hand, are quite good – especially Armand Assante, who makes a very believable Odysseus.

The script incorporates all the major fantastic elements from Homer's tale (including divine interventions) without attempting to "rationalize" them (which is a good thing, since the *Odyssey* is far more fundamentally fantastic than, say, the *Iliad*)... yet the set and costumes obviously try to move away from the classic representations of the Trojan War era, attempting to convey a more historically-believable vision of the Bronze Age; Ithaca has a very "rustic" atmosphere and you won't see many Hoplite shields or Corinthian helmets (if any) around. These two approaches don't mix well and give the impression that the movie constantly hesitates between two directions.

That being said, the biggest weakness of *The Odyssey* are its special effects which, even by 1997 standards, look very cheap, without having the quaint charm that such things can sometimes have. Some visual FX simply don't work and Polyphemus the Cyclops looks more pathetic than terrifying.

One of the few "magical" moments is the encounter with Calypso (played by the beautiful black actress Vanessa Williams), her ingénue Nereid friends (who seem straight out of an M&M adventure) and their weird, white, unreal island – a surprisingly original approach, in sharp contrast with the wholly uninspired treatment given to the other great seductress of the story, Circe the sorceress.

As you've probably guessed it by now, I didn't really enjoy this movie – not because of the cheap" feel inherent to many TV mini-series of the 90s, but because this inherent cheapness could easily have been counterbalanced by a bolder, more inventive (or simply more consistent) treatment of the fantastic elements of Homer's tale. Yet, *Maze Masters* may find some interesting ideas here (including some unintentionally kitsch ones, like the "gay sylph" looks of Hermes).



A Chubby Polyphemus from "The Odyssey"

## Jason & the Argonauts

Before you read further, please bear in mind that this 2000 TV movie does not present itself (and should not be taken as) a remake of the 1963 cult classic of the same name, but a different take on the original tale of Jason's quest for the Golden Fleece. With that in mind, I've tried to judge this new version for its own merits (or flaws) – which is, as you probably guessed, quite hard. Suffice it to say that this 3 hour long television movie never rises to the level of our beloved 1963 Harryhausen movie in terms of action, drama or atmosphere... but it does

contain some very interesting ideas, especially in the way it revisits some mythical clichés or classic characters in a truly M&M-esque vein, often with a healthy dose of kitsch.

Let's start with the cast. While Jason London makes a pretty bland Jason, veteran actor Dennis Hopper of *Easy Rider* fame delivers a convincingly callous Pelias (Jason's evil uncle).

Special mentions should go to Adrian Lester for his suitably meditative Orpheus and to Jolene Blalock Medea for her suitably bewitching Medea. We also get sadly all-too-brief guest star appearances by Ciaran Hinds (the guy who played Julius Caesar in HBO's *Rome* series) in the role of Jason's father and Derek Jacobi as the blind seer Phineas.

This version of the Argonauts' quest includes quite a few mythical creatures, including some well-done bat-winged Harpies that look like a cross between the Harryhausen-inspired Harpies of M&M and the bird-women from myth (or "Classic Harpies" as this issue's *Mythic Bestiary* calls them) and a really nice fire-breathing Bronze Bull.

We also get an extremely brief scene with Jason's Centaur mentor, Chiron. I suspect it was made extremely brief for FX-related reasons (and we all know how hard Centaurs are to render on screen, especially when your budget has nothing to do with that of, say, a *Narnia* movie.



*The treacherous King Pelias and his nephew Jason*



*Bewitching beauty : Jolene Blalock as Medea*

The Gods also make an appearance, with several good scenes of divine domestic quarrels between Zeus and Hera... and a less convincing intervention by Poseidon, shown here as a grey/green-skinned, weed-encrusted (and somewhat lethargic) giant.

But what makes this movie most interesting in a M&M perspective is its rendition of some of the Argonauts, who seem to be taken straight out of the list of M&M character classes – including a Thief, a Mariner, a Lyrist (Orpheus himself), a Noble and a sharpshooting Huntress. The crew of the ship also includes a fairly classical Hercules and the famous Dioscures Castor and Pollux, portrayed here as some sort of Bronze Age comic duo.

*Jason and the Argonauts* is really a mixed bag, with a great variety of pros (good costumes, some good special effects, some good actors) and cons (an unmistakable "television feel", especially in the sea scenes, some average special effects and some really debatable casting choices, including that of the main protagonist, who may have a pretty face but really lacks the kind of presence and *élan* we could reasonably expect from a true mythical hero). It's definitely worth a look, but don't expect anything like the 1963 cult classic of the same name.

Speaking of cult classics, did you know that a *Clash of the Titans* remake was currently in the works ?

**Olivier Legrand**



*THE HAMADRYAD, by John W. Waterhouse*