

OD&DITIES

THE ORIGINAL DUNGEONS & DRAGONS FANZINE

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Editorial

Hello everyone! Another issue at last, I thought we would never get here. Issue 7 is finally out. OD&DITIES is approaching its two-year anniversary – and how far has it come in that short time. It is all thanks to you – the readers, and especially those of you who have sent in articles for us. You have my thanks. While I'm on the subject, the deadline for submissions for Issue 8 will be August 9th. Get those pieces in! I'm also making a call for any artwork, either a front cover or internal. Black and white only, at least at the moment, but I'd like Issue 8 to have a front cover, and I leave it to you to make that a reality!

Lots of good stuff in this issue. A long adventure by Ville V Lähde, set in Karameikos. A piece by Geoff Gander, on handling treasure, and a piece from James John Gregoire on weaponry. Getting Started enters its seventh issue, and there is a return to the Street of a Thousand Adventures. All this, and much more.

Something that is of continual concern to me is the problem of recruiting new OD&D players, and of keeping interest in the game alive. I recently happened upon some websites for another early game, Dragonquest, whose life was pitifully, and undeservedly, cut short. This was an eye opener for me. Numerous websites, a newsletter that has been running for many years, and several active mailing lists. There have been several OD&D mailing lists in the past – I have subscribed to some of them, but they have all failed over time. The time has come for another attempt, so I hereby announce

THE GUILD OF ORIGINAL DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

OK, it sounds better than it is, for the moment, but it is a work in progress. At the moment, it is a Yahoo! Group, which is available at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/theoddguild>.

The associated mailing list will be the major feature, at the moment, and I urge all the readers to join, and to make this an active mailing list. The group is open as I write, so jump on in, and get subscribed. Every fortnight, a topic will be set for discussion, something that should hopefully keep this list more active than most. I have several ideas for topics, but please send any that you can think of, and of course anything can be discussed on the list.

There are a few little projects I have in mind as well, many of which should be kept under wrapsOk. You've pried it out of me. OD&DITIES will start to publish a series of campaign aids for games, short 20-page pieces, for any aspect of players. The first two in concept are planned as DM aids. The first (provisionally entitled 'The Good, the Bad and the Ugly') will be a book of nineteen NPC's, of various low levels, detailed with statistics, personality, background and adventure hooks. The second (titled 'Brief Encounters') will be a selection of short encounters, intended to be dropped into a larger adventure. More of this later, and on the mailing list!

Well, I hope you enjoy reading OD&DITIES this issue, and I certainly wish you all a good summer. Happy Gaming!

Richard Tongue
Editor, OD&DITIES

Letters to the Editor

We've had an excellent haul of letters for this issue, much better than last time. Please keep them coming in, just send them right along to Methuslah@tongue.fsnet.co.uk, on anything you like connected with OD&D, the magazine, or gaming in general.

At any rate, my congratulations to the contributors for another fine issue.
May it continue to issue #7 and beyond!

Geoff Gander

Thanks Geoff! Once the current three-part section of 'Getting Started' is complete, the series will be moving into the area of adventure design. Indeed, next issue's article will be covering tying adventure hooks into a campaign world, upon its creation. In this issue, there is an article on 'campaigns of rulership', where the PC's own their own dominion, as described in the Companion set.

Hello Richard!

I just thought I'd sent a note of congratulations to you for keeping OD&DITIES on an even keel. I think it's essential that the OD&D and Mystaran communities have some sort of presence in the e-zine world, and I am proud to see that OD&DITIES has been able to pick up where Tome of Mystara left off in this regard.

Your ongoing saga of "Getting Started" has always been a pleasure to read. I think many DMs, used to the complexities of Mystara or their own campaign worlds, sometimes forget how daunting it can be to actually create a world from scratch. Yet,

you have broken down the world-building process into manageable pieces - an aid to both new and veteran DMs. I hope you continue this series for many issues yet, as I personally wouldn't mind seeing some advice on how to guide players to higher levels (i.e.: expert to companion). How should encounters be staged so that the players will continue to be challenged, without having a super-powered campaign? What sort of tricks can DMs use to get an extra bit of use out of lower-level monsters? What would be the best way to pace world-spanning campaigns? Maybe these questions could be answered.

Hi there! I recently found your site quite by accident and I just wanted to congratulate you on a great zine! The reports of the death of OD&D were greatly exaggerated I'm glad to say! I've been

Continued on page 4

Getting Started

R. E. B. Tongue

Welcome back! Last issue, we went through the first half of the process of designing a campaign world. The map was drawn, and with it much of the important location work. This time, we will look at the process of fleshing out the map you have drawn, adding the little details that will make it special, and not just another random assortment of terrain features.

The first thing to decide is the dominant culture type of the region. This will affect everything from the architecture to the inhabitants, and must be decided first. It is usually best to stick to a real-world culture type, and history is replete with examples. The standard fantasy type is to use the culture of northern Europe in the Middle Ages, but others are available, such as:

The Roman Empire
Early China
Ancient Egypt
North American Indians
Aztec

As you can see, the list is almost endless. A complicating factor could be the presence of two cultures, of equal stature – both must then be decided. It can be interesting to have a 'culture clash' in this situation, but bear in mind that the cultures cannot be too dissimilar, or credibility will be stretched too far. It is also quite possible that different races might share the same culture, or at least be part of the same civilisation. Make sure you do some research on the culture beforehand, especially if it is something you are not familiar with. We could all probably manage to run a campaign in a medieval setting, but in one based on the Indus Valley?

To continue with the example of the setting looked at last issue, there are three cultures: the Dwarves, the (presumably Human) inhabitants of the village, and the Lizard Men in the Swamp. To simplify matters, we will combine the Dwarves and Humans into a single culture, reasoning that they are part of the same civilisation. The Humans are the 'major partners' in this culture, but the Dwarves are not oppressed. This culture will be Dark Ages, slightly less advanced than a normal

OD&D world. As for the Lizard Men, it might be interested to make their culture of an Aztec type. (Just imagine those step pyramids climbing out of the swamp.)

Having determined the culture, we must now provide place names. Towns, cities and villages must obviously be named, but important terrain features should also be given names, as well as any other sites of interest. At this point, it might also be interesting to add some other, minor terrain features to the map, to go along with the culture decisions. For a setting that is not normal, such as the Aztec one mentioned above, you can often just use real place-names, to make things easier and to add a realistic touch.

For the example setting, the following features require names: the Dwarven Mine, the village, the river, the swamp, the hills, the castle, the battlefield and the stone circle. It would be good to add in a feature for the lizard men – so a step pyramid is placed in the middle of the swamp. For the castle, it is important to note that such buildings are often named after their owners – so remember this when designing NPCs. Naming the area is often a good idea, also.

Dwarven Mine:	The Sinkhole	Castle:	Castle Tauron
Village:	Riverton	Battlefield:	Battle of the Mire
Swamp:	The Dark Mire	Stone Circle:	The Dancing Maidens
Hills:	The Desolate Hills	Step Pyramid:	Tenochtitlan
River:	Twisted River	Area:	Province of Tauron

Now, once this has been completed, it is time to take a look at languages. This can be as detailed or as simple as you like – but in my experience, keeping the number of languages limited is often for the best. Although the list of languages will expand as your campaign grows, here we will look only at the ones available to your players at the start of the campaign. You will probably want to consider removing the extra languages normally given to demihumans – they should speak Common and their own language.

Each major culture should have one language associated with it, naturally. Thieves often have their own special language, and wizards often should have one, also. (These should be allowed only to the relevant character classes, at least to

begin with.) Often, there will be older languages, from which the common ones developed – it is often useful to put these in also, to use as writing on old maps or the walls of tombs. Some of these languages can have interesting differences, so be creative. A primitive culture would probably have no written alphabet, for example. The wizard's language might have no spoken form, and is found only in arcane journals.

In this example campaign, there will be a number of languages available. The humans in the village will speak Common, the Dwarves in the mines Dwarven. The lizards in the swamp will have their own tongue, Saurian, but this will not be available to the players at the start of the campaign. (Though there will be NPC's who possess this language.) The old human language will be Auld Common, and will have no written form. The old Dwarven language will be Runic, and will have no spoken form. (Although it did in the past, it has long been forgotten.) The lizards, being a new and primitive culture, will have no older languages. Thieves' Cant will exist, but instead of being a written or spoken language, it is instead a collection of secret hand signals that amount to a crude sign language. Wizards have their own language also, Arcane, which is spoken and written.

The next step is a quite simple one, and that is to place your campaign setting on a world. All this means is that you should give brief thoughts to what lies

beyond your maps. If there is no city on your map, where is the nearest one, and what is it called. Is your setting part of an Empire or kingdom, and if so, what is it called. Are invading barbarians likely to cross over the border of the map and invade? Just make a few brief notes about this, for future reference. Your PC's may wish to ask questions about this, and some could even come from other areas. It is often useful to talk to your players beforehand, to find out if they want anything special included.

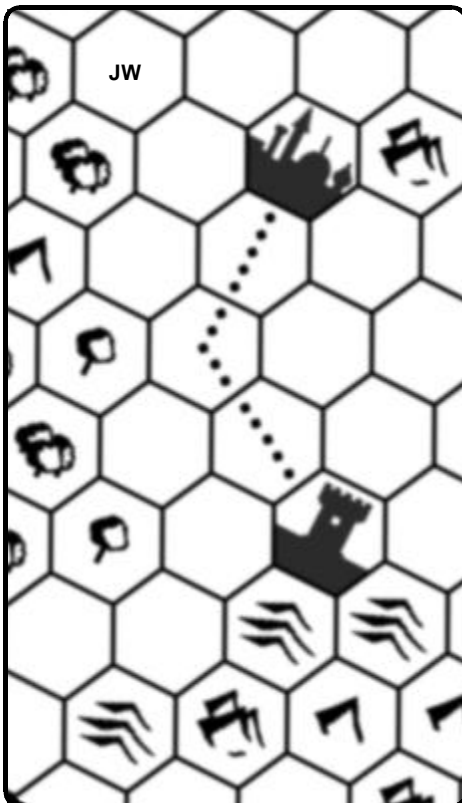
The sample campaign setting is an outer province of the Fourth Empire, which is ruled by the wise Emperor Alberon. It covers the western half of the continent, and has existed for nearly three hundred years. To the east are barbarian tribes, ➔

in savage country. They periodically invade, spurred on by the dark sorcerers who are their masters. The nearest city is Feldspar, which is a hundred miles down river, and ruled by the Guild of Merchants. It is rumoured that anything can be bought in Feldspar, that any desire can be filled. In the more immediate area, to the west and north are provinces of similar type to the Province of Tauron, which make their wealth through farming and logging. To the south is the Evergreen Forest, a land that is an associate state of the Empire, but is ruled by an Elven Prince. Humans are not welcome there. To the east are the Granite Mountains, which mark the border of the Empire. A number of passes reach through the mountains, all protected by Imperial Forts, but still, from time to time, the barbarians get through.

Now we come to the tricky subject of religion. It seems to be the habit of many campaign settings to create a huge pantheon of gods, one for every day of the week and every aspect of nature. Beginners, however, are well advised to keep it simple. The best way is to have one faith associated with each alignment – Lawful, Neutral and Chaotic. This process can often cause contention in a gaming group, so be careful not to offend anyone's sensibilities.

In the Fourth Empire, there are a number of faiths. The True Faith (Lawful) is the official religion. This is essentially an analogue of Christianity in the Dark Ages, with monasteries in remote areas, and

churches in towns. Cathedrals are being constructed in several cities, including Feldspar, but they will take centuries to complete. The Old Way (Neutral) is still worshipped in many areas, and reveres nature above all things. It is especially



popular in rural areas, particularly on the fringes of the Empire. There is a thriving Old Way centre in the Province of Tauron, centred on the stone circle. As well as these organised faiths, there are a number of cults worshipping dark Chaotic deities, but none of any great size.

Now comes a final step: history. This is a simple item to complete. Just write a long paragraph detailing the important events that have occurred in the last few years. There is no need to go back more than twenty years or so, just what the players and their parents are likely to know. (Myths and legends are also important, but will be covered in the next 'Getting Started' as adventure hooks.)

About twenty years or so, the Province of Tauron received a new Lord Tauron from the Emperor, to replace the old Lord who passed away childless. He soon proved to be a good lord, with two fine sons to succeed him. With only two exceptions, his reign has been peaceful. Ten years ago, there were several cases of Red Pox in the village, and many people died as a result. Some whisper it was the work of a Chaos cult. Three years ago, a group of Orc barbarians broke through and laid siege to Castle Tauron for nearly a month, but a force of Dwarven warriors from the Sinkhole broke the siege. Since then, all has been quiet.

Well, that's all for now! See you next time, when we detail adventure hooks, and how to work them in and around a campaign setting. Happy adventuring! ■

Letters to the Editor

Continued from page 2

playing OD&D for about 15 years and to find such an excellent OD&D resource is a revelation. I loved the "Swords High" ready to go campaign outline in issue 4, and the two modules: "Pindor's Tower" and "The Dragons Cage" in issue 6. They were a lot of fun to read and I can't wait to use them in my game.

Keep up the great work; I'm looking forward to issue 7!

Andrew Baker

Glad you like it! I hope you find Issue 7 as good. My aim from the outset was to try and provide a comprehensive resource for OD&D on the net – I'm glad it seems to be working so well. To all our readers: please do write in and tell us what you like, especially with regards to adventures. If you use them, I would certainly like to hear how the session went!

I've read all of the issues of OD&Dities and I must say that the fiction about the "Blades" group and their trip to the Island of Terror is really well written. You can really take the mood of the preparation and of the voyage. Congratulations again to the author.

Mostro Joe

'The Blades' is really going well – the third part this issue. I agree that it has an excellent writer. I'm waiting anxiously for the next part of the story myself. That's one of the perks of being the Editor – I get to see how the story goes weeks before the rest of you!

Hello, I just wanted to let you know that I enjoy your site and have probably read every word on it. I too, find myself yearning for the good old days when the game was less complicated and having fun and great adventures was what it was all about.

While I am in the unfortunate situation of being a DM without any players, I still consider myself a gamer and am always looking for a game. I love the D&D Rules Cyclopedia and am working on a campaign using just those rules. Well just wanted to let you know I visit your page and enjoy your work. Keep it up! As soon as I get up to speed on my own campaign I will try to send you something you can use in a future issue of OD&DITIES.

Mike Wilson

Sorry to hear you are so hard up for players. We've all been there. I hope you get a campaign going soon. Write in and let us know how it goes! I prefer simpler rules systems myself – they allow you to get on with the game, and not worry about the rules. OD&D is certainly not a game for rules lawyers. As for submissions, OD&DITIES always welcomes any articles people care to send in, and I am proud to say that we have had some extremely good ones.

The Isle

James John Gregoire

Flames from what was left of our rigging burned my face and hands as I looked around the corner of the navigation cabin. Immediately I saw our enemy, the dark ship had come broadside to the Amanda at a range of 50 yards. In front of my position, an occasional Blade would pop up from behind our side rail and fire his heavy crossbow at the strange ship. This was obviously causing no damage, we had only seen one opponent, a wizard, and he had quickly dropped from sight. I then noticed the major fire fighting effort on the Amanda's aft decks. We were on fire!

"Casualty report!", I yelled at a nearby plate mailed Blade named DeLocke.

"Sir, we lost the entire aft battery crew, 6 sailors topside, officer Melnair was blown over the aft rail in the last attack!", DeLocke answered from his covered position.

"Where are the captain and the first officer?", I asked.
"Fighting the fire, sir!", cried DeLocke.

"Concentrate your aim on that fore-hatch. You see anything, put a quarrel in it!", I ordered.

"Yes, sir!", was his response.

In a crouch I moved forward undercover of the side rail toward the foredecks. The enemy ship was rocking with the swells, but her decks were eerily still. "As long as we put out that damn fire, we will stand a chance...", I muttered to myself. I met the forward catapult crew hiding behind the forecabin, along with 3 Blades with loaded crossbows.

"I want you men up on that catapult, be ready to fire on my command!", I yelled. They all nodded and started to climb the steps of the forecastle where the front light catapult sat unloaded.

"Archers!", shouted the Blade next to me, who leaned around our cover and fired his crossbow at a group of dark shapes with short bows. I leaned over him and saw the enemy. In the bright sunlight I spotted about 10 men bristling with weapons taking cover. I also noticed under their dark cloaks the dull sheen of metal armour, probably plate. Cursing under my breath, I yelled, "Make those miserable pirates sorry they woke up today!" Five heavy quarrels hit the cover in front of the enemy archers, causing them to instinctively drop behind their side rail. However, they returned fire at an incredible rate. The Amanda was peppered with arrows. They were shooting at double speed, obviously magically hastened. I heard one of the blades beside me yell out in pain. Looking over I saw an arrow poked out from his breastplate. "Shoot the bastards down.", I ordered the man.

As I ran forward two arrows cracked through the air in front of me. I ducked through the opening leading to the ammunition hold beneath the forecastle. I grabbed a flaming shot from the

storage barrel, the tar oozing between my hands. I heaved it on the small-boxed platform on the pulley system leading upward to the catapult. "Ammo, up!", I yelled. The platform did not rise. "Damn you cowards! Pull this ammo up, now!", I continued. Finally the platform rose upward through the ceiling hatch.

"Fire on those archers, turn them into cinder!", I shouted upward through the hatch.

"Yes, sir", was the answer from above. The loading platform came sliding back down empty, making a clanging sound at the bottom. I heard the whoosh of flame, as the pitch was set alight. A thudding sound followed which shook the small ammunition room.

"A miss, sir!", I heard from above. I quickly threw another flaming shot in the pulley box.

"Ammo, up!", I yelled.

A Blade came stumbling into the ammo hold, carrying his loaded crossbow in one hand. I could see an arrow was embedded in his arm plate. "Sir, they have us pinned down! We can't match their rate of fire.", he said.

"Give me your weapon, and man this ammo pulley! Flaming shot only!", I commanded.

I ran to the holds doorway, and leaned around, levelling the crossbow towards the dark ship. Squinting from the smoke and bright sun, I saw the enemy was still around 10 strong. They were quickly popping up from cover and firing two arrows at a time. I aimed the heavy crossbow at one with a crest on his plate, possibly a leader. My bolt found its mark, a critical hit in the neck. The man fell over backwards, dropping his short bow. A shout followed from the Blades amidstships as they saw the enemy fall. "Fire at will!", I yelled up towards the catapult crew. Four arrows snapped into the doorways wood frame. Another arrow hit me square in the shoulder, while another missed, inches from my un-armoured head.

Another shot from the fore catapult shook the small room, I watched as the pitch seared forward, leaving a black smoke trail through the blue sky. The shot hit in front of the covered archers, and exploded, covering the enemy with burning pitch. The men quickly started to remove their cloaks and flammable outer garments, standing up from their cover to do this. The Blades didn't hesitate at this opportunity and cut them down, dropping another 4 or 5 with crossbow fire. The remaining enemy archers dropped and did not come back up.

The dark ship was then silent for several minutes. I commanded the remaining Blades to fight the aft fire on the Amanda. Our fire was put under control, but not after serious damage. Not seeing anymore enemy I ordered the fore catapult to set the enemyship a blaze, targeting the main decks. They easily hit the ship, and with no one to fight the fire, was soon full ablaze. After a few more minutes we saw a lone human figure magically fly from the burning wreck, not looking back towards us. Three blades fired at the retreating wizard, but he seemed to be protected. We watched him disappear on the eastern horizon. The enemy ship soon was listing badly completely on fire. It sank minutes later, hissing and sputtering to the depths. ■

Street of a Thousand Adventures

The Wishing Well

R. E. B. Tongue

This issue sees the return of a popular column – the Street of a Thousand Adventures. It will detail a city location for use with your OD&D game, something out of the ordinary. This week, it details an unusual wishing well

For as long as anyone can recall, the square at the heart of the city has contained a wishing well. The well has survived many centuries of use, and some speculate that it is of Elvish design, and that it possesses real magical powers. However, in recent years, the area has come to be regarded as somewhat unsavoury, and so law-abiding citizens tend to stay away from the well.

It is a fact that anyone of good heart (DM's discretion) who drinks from the well feels unusually refreshed (1d2 HP

restored). To reap the benefits, however, a coin must be thrown down the well, a coin that is of current legal tender in the city. It must be appropriate to the means of the thrower. A beggar could throw a Copper Piece – a wealthy merchant should throw down Platinum.

Larcenous adventures may get the idea that if people have been throwing money down the well for centuries, there must be quite a considerable stock present. A cursory glance down the well, however, will reveal that there is nothing. Some may suspect magic or divine intervention, but the truth is simple: someone else thought of it first. About fifteen years ago, an apprentice of the Thieves Guild had the same idea, and began to remove the coins. The wealth found was considerable, and enabled him to rise up through the ranks of the Guild rather quickly.

Another idea dawned on this bright thief. The well could make a good safe

house for 'hot' items or wanted Guild members. About fifteen feet down the well, halfway, he had a short passage carved out of the side of the well, and carved out a chamber at the far end, about 20x20x10 feet. Although the bright Guild member is now long dead, assassinated, the chamber is still used, and is filled with stolen property. It is guarded by at least three Guild fighters day and night, as well as anyone else seeking shelter. For a hefty fee, the Guild will even allow non-Guild members into the chamber, to hide out when needed.

Adventure Hooks

A young urchin goes missing near the well. The suspicion is that he has fallen in – his parents ask the PC's to investigate.

The ghost of the assassinated thief returns to haunt the well, driving out the guards. The Thieves Guild hires the PC's to remove the ghost. Of course, once the job is done, they know too much....

The PC's are wanted for a serious crime, and the Guild allows them to hide in the chamber (for a fee). Also present, however, is one of their greatest rivals.... ■

BASIC D&D CUSTOM CLASS TEMPLATES

Scott W. Ludwig

The following is intended to expand the options available to player characters, while remaining true to the mechanics and "feel" of Basic Dungeons & Dragons. The template for the appropriate race is

referred to, and ratings are chosen for each category—with the total ratings equalling FOUR points. Those values which appear in parentheses exceed the abilities normally found in Basic D&D, and may therefore be prohibited in a given campaign; they are included here for the sake of completeness, and to provide ideas for personal expansions or changes.

A character's allowed weapons and armour, as well as special combat abilities, are determined by the Combat Rating: Fighter allows all; C/T allows a limited selection, comparable to the standard Thief or Cleric; M-U allows for no armour, and a very limited selection of weapons.

✧✧✧

Human Template

Rating	Hit Die	Combat	Thievery	Divine	Arcane
4	(d12)	N/A	(3/2 lvl)	(200% Spells)	M-U*
3	(d10)	(Monster)	Thief*	(150% Spells)	2/3 lvl
2	d8	Fighter*	5 Skills	Cleric*	½ lvl
1	d6	C/T	3 Skills	½ lvl	1/3 lvl
0	d4	M-U	none	none	none

class*: Prime requisite bonus as member of this class (if two (*), choose one class).

(_): Optional, exceeds normal limits.

x/y lvl: Treat as Thief, Cleric, or Magic-User of appropriate level; Round ½ up and 1/3 down (ex. 2 1/3 -> 2; 2 ½ -> 3).

n% Spells: Multiply the number of spells available to be memorized/prepared by this percentage. So, a 4th level Cleric with a rating of 4 would be able to prepare 4-1st level and 2-2nd level spells; while a 4th level Cleric with a rating of 3 would be able to prepare 3-1st level and 2-2nd level spells (you may, of course, choose to round down instead).

X Skills: Choose X Thief skills, and improve in these as if a Thief of equal level. You may want to allow Backstab to be chosen at the cost of 2 skills (note: Thief skills, as with spell-casting, may be prohibited or penalized while wearing certain armours).

Combat Specialist Option (optional): I don't allow a character to select a Combat Rating of 3 (Monster); instead, I allow a character to increase his Melee Ability by ONE level by lowering his Missile/Thrown Ability by TWO levels. Similarly, I allow a character to increase his Missile/Thrown Ability by ONE level by lowering his Melee Ability by ONE level. No ability may be raised above "Monster" or lowered below "M-U" in this manner, and the Rating remains the original value.

→

Elf Template

Rating	Hit Die	Combat	Thievery	Divine	Arcane
4	(d10)	N/A	(3/2 lvl)	Cleric*	(200% Spells)
3	(d8)	(Monster)	Thief*	2/3 lvl	N/A
2	d6	Fighter*	5 Skills	½ lvl	N/A
1	d4	C/T	3 Skills	1/3 lvl	N/A
0	d2	M-U	none	none	M-U

Prime requisite 13-15 and Int 13+ (+5%); Prime requisite 13+ and Int 16+ (+10%).

Elves with Arcane Rating (0) may cast spells while wearing armor (alternately, they do not

suffer a chance of spell failure for wearing armor).

Elves with Arcane Rating (4) may not cast spells while wearing armor (alternately, they suffer normal penalties

for wearing armor when casting).

10th level maximum.

50% experience penalty till 10th level.

Dwarf Template

Rating	Hit Die	Combat	Thievery	Divine	Arcane I	Arcane II
4	(d12)	N/A	(3/2 lvl)	(150% Spells)	M-U*	2/3 lvl*
3	(d10)	(Monster)	Thief*	Cleric*	2/3 lvl	½ lvl
2	d8	Fighter*	5 Skills	2/3 lvl	½ lvl	1/3 lvl
1	d6	C/T	3 Skills	1/3 lvl	1/3 lvl	1/4 lvl
0	d4	M-U	none	none	none	none

Prime requisite 13-15 (+5%); Prime requisite 16+ (+10%).

12th level maximum.

10% experience penalty till 12th level.

Either the DM or the player chooses between Arcane Options (I) and (II) from below.

Halfling Template

Rating	Hit Die	Combat	Thievery	Divine	Arcane I	Arcane II
4	(d10)	N/A	(3/2 lvl)	(150% Spells)	M-U*	2/3 lvl*
3	(d8)	(Monster)	Thief*	Cleric*	2/3 lvl	½ lvl
2	d6	Fighter*	5 Skills	2/3 lvl	½ lvl	1/3 lvl
1	d4	C/T	3 Skills	1/3 lvl	1/3 lvl	1/4 lvl
0	d2	M-U	none	none	none	none

Prime requisite 13+ or Dex 13+ (+5%); Prime requisite 13+ and Dex 13+ (+10%).

8th level maximum.

Either the DM or the player chooses between Arcane Options (I) and (II) from below.

Arcane Options for Dwarves and Halflings

Rating	Option I	Option II
4	M-U*	2/3 lvl*
3	2/3	½ lvl
2	½ lvl	1/3 lvl
1	1/3 lvl	¼ lvl
0	none	none

Option I: Every time a spell is cast roll a d4, if a "1" is rolled the spell fails and is lost. This represents the character's magically resistant nature exerting itself.

Option II: The character has learned to overcome the mixed blessing of his magically resistant nature through slow and methodical study.

You may assign one option to Dwarves and the other to Halflings, assign the same option to each, or allow players to choose based upon character conception. For myself, I prefer Option II for Dwarves—to better reflect their serious natures. While for Halflings I prefer Option I—in order to convey a more whimsical, carefree, or comedic bent.

Human Template continued...

Sample Human: "Paladin", HD: d6 (1), Combat: as Fighter (2), Divine: as Cleric of ½ level (1). Being a righteous warrior, who eschews missile weapons— considering them fit only for peasants and cowards—he chooses to raise his Melee Ability to that of a Monster, and so lowers his Missile/Thrown Ability to that of a Magic-User (however, his Combat Rating remains 2).

Base Experience Points for Advancement

Rating	Hit Die	Combat	Thievery	Divine	Arcane
4	2000	N/A	1100	1000	2500
3	1500	1500	700	750	1875
2	1000	1000	400	500	1250
1	500	500	200	250	625

To use this table, find the value in each category that corresponds with your rating and add them together. This is the experience required to advance to 2nd level—the rest of the experience table can be extrapolated from this.

Note: For Thievery, I multiplied the number of skills minus one by 100. Those with Rating (3) gain an advantage, as I assume Backstab, Read Language, and Use Scrolls to be a single special skill for experience purposes (making for a total of eight "skills"). For Rating (4) I assumed half again as many "skills".

Example: Elven Scout

- (1) Hit Die: d4 (500exp)
 - (2) Melee: as M-U (1000exp)
 - (*) Missile: as Monster (*)
 - (1) Thievery: HN, HS, MS (200exp)
 - (0) Arcane: as M-U (0 exp)
- Exp for 2nd level:** 1700 (effectively 3400 w/exp penalty)

Saving Throw Table Determination

First, the easy part: Demi-Humans always use the table specific to their race. Now, on to Humans...

- Compare the ratings for Combat, Thievery, Divine, and Arcane;
- If the rating for one category is highest, use the Saving Throw table for the class which is associated with that category—Fighter for Combat, Thief for Thievery, Cleric for Divine, and Magic-user for Arcane;
- If two or more abilities are tied, use the table for the first of the categories to appear on the following list:

Continued on page 12

The King is Dead! Long Live the King!

R. E. B. Tongue

In the OD&D rules, once a PC reaches ninth level, he has the option of settling down, of building his own fortress, and gaining control of a dominion. There were some rules published to cover this, in the Companion Boxed Set, and in the series of articles by Bruce Heard in *Dragon* magazine, but never much in the way of ideas, or explanation. (Module CM1 is greatly recommended for this style of play, however.) This article will attempt to rectify that, covering a campaign where the PC's will gain and administer a territory.

First, it is a common misconception that players have to be highly advanced, ninth level, in order to have control of a territory. It could be an interesting campaign if the PC's began at first level, with the responsibility of pacifying a territory for conquest. (Also, I suspect that such activity would result in a rapid rise in levels!)

Anyway, the first step is all down to the DM. You must decide where the territory is to be, and design it. Any small area is fine for this starting plot of land; around twenty by twenty miles should be more than adequate. This can be a simple plot of land, an island, but must be clearly defined. Then, place any villages on the map, as well as any other important features. (It is best to have no large population centres on the map, and probably more realistic.) Mark terrain features, roads and rivers, then copy the map for the PC in question. After that, you can work out the problems the PC will face. Mark any hostile villages, of orcs, goblins or barbarian tribes, and also mark out the territory they claim. Other interesting features might be powerful NPC's, who have chosen to settle in the area, or other groups who are neutral, such as gypsies or mercenaries.

At this point one other issue emerges – who is the ruler of the land. The rules suggest that each player should have his own territory, but this seems unrealistic in a campaign sense. Some character classes, such as Magic-Users or Clerics, would not be disposed towards rulership of this sort anyway. It is probably best to establish one



player as the ruler, the others being advisors or allies.

Once this is done, establish what is beyond the borders of the dominion. On at least one side should be the home kingdom, remember. Possible options are an enemy kingdom, other dominions, uninhabitable land, the ocean, wild steppe – the possibilities are endless. These border areas will have important effects on the dominion. Viking-type raiders could attack from the sea, a rival dominion lord could have ambitions towards the PC's territory, and so on. Some of these justify warning the PC's in advance, in character, so they can make preparations; building coastal forts to fight the Vikings, for example.

Then, you must establish the nature of the inhabitants of the dominion. Are they loyal citizens, who have lived in the area for generations? Was the area one of the spoils of war with a rival kingdom, leading to unrest and possible revolt? Has the area recently been settled with pioneers, and of what sort are they? They could be honest settlers, convicts, or religious zealots, anything of that sort. Establishing this is important because it will have a definite effect on relations between the rulers and the ruled.

There is one more point that the DM should take note of before starting this new campaign: magic. It is important to take note of what magical items and spells are available to the PC's, and see if any of them might have relevance to the campaign. Some will be more obvious than others. It is a good idea to involve the PC's in this process – but make sure that they do the work of planning for themselves.

Once you have done all this, the fun can begin. Your PC's should spend a few sessions travelling around the new dominion, making first appearances. This will establish friends, and enemies. It is a good idea to have lots of small problems for the PC's to face – this will increase game interest, but also provide an opportunity for the PC's to show their abilities to the new subjects.

Some of these should be standard adventure hooks – a group of bandits in the wood to be dealt with, or a lost caravan of vital supplies to be found, but others should showcase the new role of the PC's. For example, in one village, the ruling PC may be asked to act as judge in a murder trial. Making the right decision here is all-important, as is the sentence.

It is also a good idea to foreshadow any forthcoming major events in this initial run. If an enemy invasion is planned, then have an envoy from the power in question meet the PC's in a border village. If you plan to have a secret society attempt to topple the PC's, have an assassination attempt on the leader.

Once this has been done, the construction of a base should begin, if one is not already apparently available. The PC's should design and set into motion the construction of a small castle, or similar building. This should be left entirely to them, with regards to location – out in the wilderness, near a village, anything of that sort.

Once this is begun, the PC's should not supervise the process themselves, as it would likely not make for an interesting adventure. They should be required to hire an engineer to do the job. This seems to be an opportune moment to introduce employees.

The PC's will require any number of people to help the running of their →

dominion. Some roles can be filled by NPC's encountered in the past. A fighter henchman can become Captain of the Guard, the Sage the party has been using can be invited to move to the area permanently to fill that role, and so on. This could also work for larger groups, as well. If the PC's are friendly with a mercenary captain, then they have their local guard. Other contacts can be used in similar ways.

Others, however, will have to be found. It is best to only make the PC's hire senior or special NPC's. (Large groups are another story.) A castellan should be first on the list, as he can then be delegated to hire other menials. Engineers, magistrates, and so on should also be hired. (A comprehensive list is in the Companion set.) Play out an interview with these people, at the very least. Work out their statistics, and decide if they are trustworthy or not, and give them a personality. Also, importantly, work out whether or not they are competent at their job.

Special NPC's are another matter entirely. These come in two types – those you don't mind the world knowing about, and those you do not want the world to know about. The first category includes characters such as Sages, Historians, Churchmen, and special characters, most of which will be high-ranking characters in their own right, maybe higher than the characters. The second includes more nefarious types; Spies, Bounty Hunters, Assassins, Pirates. You might wish to hire these for any number of reasons. These

types of NPC's are more likely to lead to an adventure. Simply finding them could be a challenge, and they might demand some sort of special payment, which must also be found. Use your imagination!

Simply setting up the kingdom should take several sessions, and involve much travelling. Visits to the capital city, or other major cities of the world, should be required, to recruit specialists and mercenaries. (After all, you cannot walk into a small village and expect to find a brigade of heavy cavalry.) They should also need to visit more remote places, particularly if they require the services of special NPC's. They might need to get the blessing of the High Patriarch, who lives on the tallest mountain of the world. This process can be as long or as short as players and DM want – but it can be a good intermediate step between adventuring and dominion rule.

Now that the dominion is established, you should start to play. Originally, your group will probably have played day-to-day, skipping over occasional times (healing, researching, etc.), but generally continuing day-to-day. This now must change. The DM should work out in advance events that will happen during the year, and present these to the PC's. At least one event should happen each month on average, but there will be some 'busy times', especially during summer, and some 'low times', especially during winter. In addition to this, of course, the PC's have to go through the mechanics of running their kingdom, working out taxation and

economics, keeping morale high, and so on. The mechanics of this are all in the Companion Set and the Rules Cyclopeda. They might be constructing a stronghold of some kind in which case that will have to be played out as well. (Downloading the Castle Guide from the WotC website is a good idea – it will give numerous ideas and is easy to convert.)

Getting back to the events, at this point I advise you to break with the rules. They suggest that random rolls should be used, but this can easily be counterproductive. It is a better idea for the DM to create events, taking ideas from the table, but also coming up with his own. Some will involve limited participation while others will involve full-blown adventures. A sample year's events are included, and it is suggested that you construct 'year sheets' in such a form.

This will require something more of a free-form approach to adventures than you have been using in the past, but by now you will have been running games for some considerable period, and so your skills should easily be up to it. Remember to allow for flexibility in the calendar. If the PC's become more heavily involved than you expect in an event, feel free to remove the one after it to make room.

Dominion rule can be full of fun and adventure, but care must be taken to prevent it becoming a collection of dry statistics. If such care is taken, then there is no reason that it cannot be as much fun, or more, as the types of adventures you have been used to. Have a good time, my liege.

Sample Game Calendar for Norwold Dominion

Nuwmont

Tribe of Ice Barbarians from the north begin raiding villages. PC's might wish to try and deal with the Barbarians themselves, paying them to leave or forming a treaty, or may wish to form a small army to deal with them. Some evidence that tribe are Thyatian-backed.

Vaterrmont

Arrival of King's tax collector. PC's should make sure to have taxes ready in plenty of time if they intend to pay – remind in Nuwmont.

Thaumont

Queen gives birth to a son. Tribute should be sent to capital – PC's might wish to attend celebrations. Excuse for diplomacy, contact with nearby domains, etc.

Flaurmont

No significant events.

Yarthmont

Assassination attempt on Dominion Ruler. Assassin is an Ice Barbarian, with documents that suggest he was working for Thyatian Empire.

Klarrmont

No significant events.

Felmont

Grain crop blighted by mysterious disease. Local sage informs PC's that it is a magical blight, but the Wendarian Elves have a cure. PC's must journey to Wendar and seek cure. King Gylharen will seek PC's to help him get an alliance with Norwold against Denagoth in return for the cure.

Fyrrmont

PC's must travel to capital with Gylharen, and try to persuade King Ericall to form the alliance.

Ambyrrmont

No significant events.

Sviffmont

Holy man arrives in Dominion – PC must resolve conflict between him and clergy.

Eirrrmont

No significant events.

Kaldmont

War with Denagoth begins. PC's must help raise army to fight next year as part of King Ericall's force. Will involve a trip to the capital, as well as to most of the Dominion.

An Effective Weapon Analysis for OD&D

James John Gregoire

What good is a fighter without his trusty sword? How can a magic-user fend off that nasty goblin hiding in the alcove without his heavy oaken staff? What thief would be caught dead without a dagger in his boot? Weapons are the food and drink of any good OD&D game. This article will discuss the exciting world of non-magical weapons for OD&D. It will focus on the decisions a player must make when first arming their characters. It will also outline some basic weapon strategies, while comparing cost, encumbrance, and damage.

The most important factor in weaponry decisions for the 1st level professional is the character's class. Five of the basic seven classes are limited in weapon choices: cleric, magic-user, thief, dwarf, and halfling. The least restricted is the thief. Thieves cannot use two-handed melee weapons. All other weapons are available, however they cannot backstab with a blunt weapon or effectively use a lance or spear for bonus damage. Clerics cannot use weapons with a sharp edge or point. This restriction not only hinders clerics combat potential in regards to missile weapon options, but reduces the melee weapons available to just a handful. Magic-users were originally barred from any weapon except a dagger. This was a severe limitation. Now at the DM's option, magic-users can employ the staff, blowgun, flaming oil, holy water, net, thrown rock, sling, and whip. With this optional rule, a starting magic-user can be more than just a sleep spells on legs! Dwarves (on average, 4 feet tall) can use short bows and any crossbow (light or heavy), but are limited from any other "large" weapons. The most crucial banned "large" weapons for dwarves are the bastard and two-handed swords and the longbow. Although the spear and lance are considered large weapons, dwarves can use these effectively due to their natural fighting ability (set spear vs. charge and lance attack). Halflings (3 feet in height on average) are the most limited fighting character class in OD&D when it comes to weapons. Due to their size, halflings can

only use small weapons. Two medium sized weapons that are the only exceptions are the short bow and light crossbow. The next important factor on weapon procurement for the beginning 1st level character is starting funds. All starting characters in OD&D roll 3d6 x 10 (30-180) for gold pieces. As stated in the rules: "This represents money saved up by the character before he embarked on his adventuring career, or money given to him by his family before he left home". A low roll for starting money can be a serious factor in arming a character.

Not only do new characters need to buy



weapons to protect themselves from the nasty creatures they will inevitably meet, but there are also countless other beginning expenses. Ammunition, adventuring gear, food, water, armor, riding animals, and other miscellaneous equipment can stretch the budget for weapons quite thin. Described below are three schools of thought someone can use when deciding what percentage of starting funds to allow for weapons. There are others, but this article will touch on these three: More Bang for the Gold Piece, The Turtle Principle, and Mounted Hit and Run.

More Bang for the Gold Piece (MBGP) Starting characters that follow the MBGP buying philosophy want cheap and effective weapons. The damage a weapon can inflict is a top priority, but so is a low gold piece cost. Weight, loss of initiative, or style is not extremely important to these shoppers. Three good examples of MBGP weapons are the javelin, pike, and burning oil.

The most underrated weapon in OD&D, and in most fantasy games, is the javelin. The javelin's most attractive feature is its cost, only 1 gold coin. Even a 1st level

character can throw one away and not worry about going bankrupt. If that Orc runs away with your silver dagger stuck in him you are out 30 gp's! That's a fortune for a new character. The javelin is one of the best bargains of all the weapons. Its relative low damage of 1d4 (1-4, average 2.5) points isn't tremendous, but put a strength of 16 behind that and it becomes 1d4+2 (3-6, average 4.5, more than an arrow at 3.5). That is enough to take the fight out of most 1st level monsters. The range of a thrown javelin is 30/60/90 (feet/yards). This allows most javelin throwers to get one or two good throws in before an attacker can melee with them at typical encounter speed (40 feet/yards per round, or less). This can't always be said for the javelin's cousin, the spear, with a 20/40/60 range. A Javelin only weighs 20 coins each (2 lbs.) which is almost half that of a spear. An extra javelin or two with quick release ties on a backpack is the quintessential missile weapon for very little cost. A nice effective package is a oversized quiver (2 gp's cost) with a set of 5 javelins (5 gp's), total expenditure of 7 gold with a weight of 100 coins. This is perfect for a character with a strength of 13 or greater, for defensive missile fire or even as back up melee weapons. How many times does someone wish they had an extra weapon to give a rescued prisoner or use in an emergency? The javelin is a nice overall weapon for the starting adventurer with a small budget.

The pike, a relative newcomer to OD&D is a variation of the old reliable polearm. As listed in the weapon's table of the *Rules Cyclopedia*, the pike costs a paltry 3 gold pieces. Essentially a long spear, the pike inflicts a terrifying 1d10 damage (5.5 average). This is perfect for the hand-to-hand combatant who doesn't get much of a strength bonus. Its ability to set vs. charge and cause double damage to a creature that moves more than 20 yards towards you, is effectively 2-20 damage. This could take out an Ogre (average hit points of 19), and is a perfect MBGP weapon in the hands of a fighter or elf (dwarves receive a minus 3 to hit penalty with a pike). The pike only weighs 80 coins, almost half the weight of a standard polearm. The drawback of all two handed weapons is the loss of individual initiative. This is compensated by the fact that a set vs. charge deals damage before the charging creature does, therefore winning initiative in the first round! The pike is a must for an adventurer who needs a cheap weapon that can chalk up big damage. All experienced adventurers know the next weapon and its ability to dish out significant damage. A flask of burning oil as a →

thrown weapon puts fear in even the toughest foe. With a good range of 10/30/50 (feet/yards) anyone unfortunate enough to be struck by oil, takes 1d8 (1-8, average of 4.5) for two rounds. At a cost of 2 gold, a flask of oil complete with a wick for lighting is an excellent MBGP weapon. In order to ignite and throw the weapon in one round, a character needs another lit object nearby. Six torches and tinderbox costs another 4 gold pieces, but makes this simple fuel a devastating weapon, useable by all classes.

The Turtle Principle

The Turtle Principle of weapon purchase and use involves heavy armor and shield, and one handed weapons that deal good damage. Maximizing potential damage each combat round isn't as important as outlasting your opponent in order to win by attrition. The secret behind The Turtle Principle is a substantial defence (very low A.C), and consistent ability to cause damage each round. Weapons that are good examples this school of thought are the normal sword, hand axe, and blackjack (for clerics). A quick look at the weapons table, one can easily see that the normal sword is one of the best weapons available for the Turtle Principle. Its cost of 10 gold pieces is relatively high, sometimes cost prohibitive for beginning characters. However, its damage of 1d8 (average of 4.5) is great enough to punish an opponent each round. An 18 strength can cause 11 points of damage in one round with this weapon! If your opponent cant hit you, and you are dealing this amount of damage to him each round, you will find yourself winning most fights out there. Add magical bonuses (Sword +1, as an example) and/or multiple attacks (haste, high level, potion of speed, etc.), plus an extremely low A.C. (-1 or better), a normal sword is the perfect weapon choice for a fighter or elf using the Turtle Principle.

The hand axe is another of underrated weapons in the OD&D world. An excellent buy at only 4 gold pieces, a hand axe is a solid melee weapon, 1d6 damage (3.5 average). A good one-handed weapon for the Turtle Principle, in a pinch a hand axe can be used as a superb short-range missile weapon. As with all thrown weapons, the hand axe receives a strength damage modifier. A hand axe can also be used as a multi tool of sorts: breaking open locked doors and chests, chopping down trees, a hammer for pounding stakes and spikes, an anchor for ropes, etc. No adventurer should be without a trusty hand axe; there is no need to dull your sword

anymore! With a weight of 30 coins (3 lbs.), everyone should have one on their belts, if not for their primary Turtle Principle weapon.

At first glance the blackjack seems a unsuitable weapon for clerics. People assume it is only used in ambushes and devious sneak attacks. Its damage, 1d2 (avg. 1.5), is weak and its cost is exceptionally high for its damage, 5 gp's. However, the special effects of the blackjack make it a effective close quarters weapon. The blackjack can disable an opponent in one strike, effectively ending the combat. Anyone using a blackjack can choose to target an opponents head with a (-4 penalty to hit), or attack normally. The severe head shot penalty can be compensated by a high strength bonus, bless spell, or other magical means. On a successful hit, opponents without a helmet or an AC lower than 0 must make a save vs. death ray:

Victims level or HD	Bonus to save	Result
Up to 1	None	Knockout
1+1 to 3	1	Knockout
3+1 to 6	2	Stun
6+1 to 9	3	Stun
9+1 to 12	4	Delay
12+ or more	5	Delay

Most low level monsters can easily be knocked out for 1-100 rounds. The standard death ray save for any non magical monster under 4 hit dice is 12 or greater on a 1d20. This calculates to a 55% percent chance of knockout on a successful hit. Being knocked out in a fight tends to ruin an opponent's day. A knockout makes the enemy completely vulnerable. An edged weapon can kill the opponent in one round, or all other blunt attacks are on AC 9. If fighting multiple opponents, the helpless victim(s) can be left until the end of the fight, to be dispatched later. Most hand-to-hand combats wont last 55 rounds, the average length of time in round someone is knocked out. This makes the blackjack very effective on low hit dice creatures. If the knockout effect doesn't take out an enemy, a 1d2 damage + strength bonus will still add up. The blackjack is beautiful example of a Turtle Principle weapon, with an added kick.

Mounted Hit and Run

This weapon equipping strategy is based entirely on missile weapon fire while on horseback. The "Hit and Run" is

designed for the character who wants to stay out of melee combat. Magic-users, halflings, thieves, and characters with high A.C's are good examples of classes that could concentrate on the Mounted Hit and Run. A pre-requisite for this combat strategy is the Riding (Horse) skill. This skill will allow use of a weapon from the back of a moving riding animal. The most important elements of Mounted Hit and Run are strategic movement and weapon range.

The two riding animals that are best used for Mounted Hit and Run are the Riding Horse, move of 240' (80'), and the Pony, move of 210' (70'). The Pony is usually reserved for halflings, due to weight allowances (see below). For 1st level characters the cost of either animal and its gear is a formidable financial obstacle. A Riding Horse, saddle and tack cost 100 gold pieces! A Pony, saddle, and tack is less expensive at 60 gold pieces. To be

effective in Hit and Run, both need to be used at full speed. This limits weight of rider, barding, weapons, and equipment to 3000 cns. and 2000 cns., for riding horse and pony, respectively. As an example: A 150 pound thief, with leather armor, short bow, quiver with 20 arrows, backpack, standard rations /fodder/water (mount and thief for one week, total weight 390cns), short sword, 6 torches, tinderbox, saddle and tack, and saddle bags weighs a total of 2775 cns. without barding! Any heavier character or someone with heavier armor, equipment, or weapons would drop the horse's movement to 120'(40'). This speed is ineffective for Mounted Hit and Run attacks.

The primary combat strategy for Mounted Hit and Run is the half move and attack. Under the combat rules, a combatant can move its encounter speed in one round, Riding Horse (80') or Pony (70'), and still attack in the same round. Staying out of melee range (less than 5 feet), and still being in effective missile range (short bow 150' / long bow 210' / sling 160' / javelin 90'), is relatively easy. If an opponent gets to close a rider can still move at full speed running speed to increase the distance between them. →

To continue with the above example: Our thief encounters 2 Hobgoblins, with a movement 90'(30'), in an open field with clear daylight and no surprise at a distance of 120 yards (4d6 x 10 yards, standard encounter range). Winning initiative (due to the thief's two handed weapon, a short bow) the hobgoblins scream battle cries and charge at running speed. They charge at their running speed, 90 yards, leaving 30 yards between them and the thief. The thief then half moves his horse at 80 yards, distancing at 110 yards total, and fires at long range with his short bow. The hobgoblins still close at running speed, 90

yards, closing to 20 yards. The thief moves his horse at 80 yards, and fires now at 100 yards, now at medium range. If the hobgoblins are still alive or didn't fail morale, they can close at 90 next round, closing to 10 yards. The thief will now use a full movement (up to 240 yards) on his turn to move away to 120 or farther, and start the whole routine over again.

The Mounted Hit and Run fighting technique requires an outdoor setting with plenty of open space with clear conditions. It will not work in all combat situations! It functions better against opponents with a slow movement rate, i.e. less than 90'(30').

A mounted archer could technically run circles around a enemy firing every turn, while the target stumbles to move into melee range. The Mounted Hit and Run strategy, while not brave and gallant, is an effective tool to damage opponents at range, while keeping all your hit points. As someone makes a new character in OD&D they will have to make some choices on weapons to purchase when starting out. While not a complete list of all the combinations and weapon strategies available to new characters, I hope this article illustrated a few new ones. ■

Basic D&D Custom Class Templates

Continued from page 7

- Arcane
- Divine
- Thievery
- Combat

This is designed, as are the Demi-Human templates, to disadvantage non-standard classes—it serves to explain why they aren't standard (i.e. they're generally less efficient than the optimized standard). You may, of course, choose to determine this differently—perhaps simply basing it on the combat rating or character conception.

(Note: Hit Points gained after 9th level are determined by the Saving Throw table used—(+1) per level for Clerics and Magic-Users, and (+2) for Fighters and Thieves. Demi-Humans use the value given for their race.)

Sample Archetypes

Bard

HD: d6

Combat: as Thief

Thievery: PP (Read Writing and Read Scrolls when of sufficient level)

Arcane: as Magic-User of 1/3 level

Save: as Magic-User

Prime Req: none

Exp: 1825

Friar

HD: d6

Combat: as M-U

Divine: 150% Spells

Save: as Cleric

Prime Req: Wis

Exp: 1250

Priest

HD: d4

Combat: as M-U

Divine: 200% Spells

Save: as Cleric

Prime Req: Wis

Exp: 1000

Swashbuckler

HD: d6

Melee: as Monster

Missile: as M-U

Thievery: HS, Backstab

Save: as Fighter

Prime Req: Str

Exp: 1700

Assassin

HD: d4

Combat: as Fighter

Thievery: Backstab, CW, HS, MS

Save: as Thief

Prime Req: Str

Exp: 1400

Bumbling Halfling "Wizard"

HD: d4

Combat: as M-U

Arcane: as M-U of 2/3 level with 1 in 4 chance of failure

Save: as Halfling

Prime Req: none (special, see Halfling, +5% max)

Exp: 2375

Dwarven Loremaster

HD: d4

Combat: as M-U

Arcane: as M-U of 2/3 level

Save: as Dwarf

Prime Req: Int

Exp: 2500 (plus 10% penalty)

Elven Priestess

HD: d2

Combat: as M-U

Divine: as Cleric

Arcane: as M-U

Save: as Elf

Prime Req: Wis (special, see Elf)

Exp: 1000 (effectively 2000 with 50% penalty)

Streetwise Urchin

HD: d4

Combat: as M-U

Thievery: as Thief of 3/2 level

Save: as Thief

Prime Req: Dex

Exp: 1100

Unlikely Hero

HD: d12

Combat: as M-U

Save: as M-U

Prime Req: none

Exp: 2000

Less Unlikely Hero

HD: d10

Melee: as M-U

Missile: as Fighter

Save: as Fighter

Prime Req: none

Exp: 2000

Dabblers

HD: d4

Combat: as Thief

Thievery: PL, HS, MS

Divine: as Cleric of 1/2 level

Arcane: as M-U of 1/3 level

Save: as M-U

Prime Req: none

Exp: 1575

A Fool and His Money...

DM Strategies to Handle Treasure

Geoff Gander

Special thanks to Gordon McCormick, Mike Harvey, John Jones, David Knott, James Ruhland, and Dylan Gault for their input. This article expands on a discussion that took place on the Mystara Mailing List in August 2000. The author felt that the ideas discussed herein would be useful to DMs.

DM: "Okay, Maeglin the Mighty climbs the mountainside in an effort to evade his pursuers, and succeeds."

Player: "Great! I'll look around and see what's up here."

DM (checking notes): "You see a wide open plain, dotted with the occasional stunted tree. The sun is high in the sky, the grass is parched, and there's not a cloud to be seen. I hope your waterskin is filled up. Oh yes, there's also a large, multi-tentacled horror here, wielding three glowing spears."

Player: "Is that all? I open my 'Gargantua's bag of holding' and dump all my money on it. My initiative is 5."

DM (rolls monster's initiative): "Well, you're quicker than the monster, and you proceed to dump 27,000 gold pieces, 84,752 silver pieces, and 272,890 copper pieces on your foe. It's reduced to jelly because of the accumulated weight, which also creates a four foot wide depression in the ground."

Player: "Great! I'll scoop up all my money, and loot its body."

Although the example above is thankfully an exaggeration (one would hope), the issue of treasure – specifically money – is one that dogs many a campaign. Player characters, after many campaign years of adventuring, often amass great fortunes, in some cases having millions of gold pieces – a sum far

greater than the economies of some small kingdoms. While this wealth was initially essential for the purpose of obtaining experience points (assuming the DM follows that rule), it is unlikely that the player character can possibly spend it all during his or her lifetime, unless they happen to rule a nation or dominion of their own. What this article concerns itself with are those player characters who do not have such financial considerations, and who spend their time happily wandering throughout the campaign world, slaughtering more monsters and acquiring still more wealth.

While the players should not be actively planning how to rid themselves of as much wealth as possible to make the DM's job easier, they should at least be aware of the effects of their wealth on the campaign world, and ultimately on themselves. This will be discussed now.

The Impacts of Wealth on Campaign Worlds and Player Characters

Before one can ponder the potential ways of addressing the problem, it is essential to first understand how problematic extreme wealth can be. First, let us consider the simple fact that a large sum of coins weighs a lot. As stated above, barring magical aids for carrying this wealth, or a place to store it safely, the player character in question is going to be heavily burdened with coinage. If one were to follow the rules, ten coins weighs one

pound (hence, the system of coin weight used in D&D®) – an amount that I personally find unrealistic. Even with the solution I use in my own campaign, in which 100 coins weigh one pound on average, does not wholly address the problem, when one is dealing with sums of money in the thousands. So, encumbrance is one reason why DMs, and players, should be concerned about the amount of coinage in the campaign – most players would not want their favorite character killed on account of having an overloaded bag of treasure in their backpacks.

Secondly, one should consider the likely consequences of player characters carrying this sort of money around with them, or worse yet, spending large amounts of it in one place. On the one hand, depending on how much and how conspicuously they spend, the player characters could come to the attention of every ambitious thief, mugger, and murderer for miles around. The resulting nighttime visits and ambushes in lonely streets might make them think twice about being so open in terms of their spending habits.

Finally, the very act of spending large sums of money in one region can destabilize a local economy. When adventurers ride into town, carrying with them enough wealth to buy the inn in which they are staying, the economy will be affected, much as a thrown stone causes ripples in a pond. By spending their money, and perhaps leaving exorbitant (by local standards) tips, player characters can increase the local money supply by several percentage points. This could, in turn, have an inflationary effect, as the excess money works its way through the system. This could disrupt livelihoods, promote jealousy (over the newfound wealth of some of the locals), and cause social strife. The resulting turmoil could lower the local standard of living, and future adventurers might find themselves unwelcome. Granted, some DMs might not want to add this dimension of realism to their campaigns, but I believe it is something worth thinking about.

Strategies for Dealing with Excessive Wealth

Storage

Barring bags of holding with abnormally large carrying capacities, most player characters will have to deposit the money somehow, or hide it. Stashing the loot in a remote location might work, but then the money will be unguarded, and any person

(or thing) who finds the treasure will claim it as their own. Higher-level player characters might place wards on the loot, but this can cost a lot of money (to hire the spellcaster to create the wards, if the player characters cannot do it themselves). Player characters could go the conventional route, and deposit the money in a bank or similar institution, but these can be robbed (especially if the player characters are well-known, and they are seen doing business there), and some banks might charge a fee every time the player character wishes to do something with their money. Still, a bank would be more secure than hiding the money in a cave or in the woods, so maybe the occasional fee might be worth it.

Cost of Doing Business

Into this category fall such measures as user fees for services ("I'm sorry sir, we can't give you your spell casting license until you pay a one-time fee of 150 gp."); inn, sales and income taxes; tithes; and the like. DMs can siphon off more excess wealth through such methods as encouraging player characters to convert their wealth into gems (for portability), but having a tax (perhaps 2-20%) levied on the value of the transaction. This way, the players might see this as a minor nuisance compared to the problems their characters would have if they had to carry their treasure as coinage. On a related note, money changers and jewelers (the ones who would exchange gems and jewelry for money) are likely inclined to estimate the value of a given gem in their favour, even if they are not very skilled in appraisal – this means that unless the player characters are good hagglers, or skilled appraisers, they will likely lose money in an exchange. Another means of reducing wealth is to levy import duties on player characters crossing between two countries – whether or not the player characters intend to sell what they are carrying, some of it might have to be declared to armed customs officials.

The DM can extend this even to such tasks as buying healing potions (certainly not cheap – in my campaign they start at 250-300 gold pieces each), and paying for the services of clerics and wizards. An adventuring party will likely have to pay a high price to bring a friend back from the dead, for example, or to have drained levels restored (using my campaign as an example once more, raise dead costs about 1,000 gold pieces per level of the slain character, plus an additional percentage fee if the fallen character does not follow the same Immortal as the cleric

does, and perhaps another 5-10% for applicable taxes and the like). Likewise, the costs of recharging spent wands, rings, and staves should be quite high.

In addition to the above, DMs should never forget that tipping is always a good idea, no less so in a medieval world than a modern one. Anytime someone performs a service for the player characters, and they tip him or her, have that person become more favourably disposed towards them in the future (depending on the size of the tip). The players should catch on that paying a little extra will help them establish friendly networks in almost every place they visit, upon which true friendships and allegiances might develop at a later time; at the very least, this will avoid the risk of having someone carry a grudge against the player character in question. This should soak up a few extra gold pieces here and there.

Finally, remember that if the player characters need a specific item obtained, or a service performed, right this minute, they will have to pay more for the privilege – sometimes much more. It would not be out of the ordinary for someone to charge twice or three times the regular rate for something, if they know their customer desperately needs it, and they are the only one around who can help them.

Idle Luxuries

What's the point of having all that wealth if you can't spend it? Luckily, player characters with lots of money will find ways to get rid of it quickly, if the DM lets them. In my campaign, one of the player characters is a clothes horse – even his traveling clothes are tailored from the richest fabrics (he will routinely pay 25 gold pieces for one hand-embroidered silk shirt), and I am more than happy to role-play encounters with shopkeepers who salivate at the prospect of selling some rich nitwit an overpriced pair of trousers. Of course, after a few adventures, his clothing is ruined, so it's off to yet another clothing shop to buy more goods. Player characters may also gravitate towards exotic (and expensive) food and drink, luxurious inns, high-priced curios (such as rare books, bizarre idols, and the like), visits to high-end bathhouses, and hire the services of prostitutes (a visit to the cleric afterwards for a casting of cure disease will lighten one's pockets still further).

As a corollary to this, it is likely that, as the player characters increase in social and political stature over time, they will gain the attention of local nobles and other members of the upper classes. Such people would no doubt love to invite the

adventurers to their exclusive parties and other social gatherings, but being accepted into the upper classes means the player characters would have to adopt the upper class lifestyle, which means buying better clothes, eating in better restaurants, buying expensive gifts for their new acquaintances for parties, and so forth.

Perhaps the best, and most entertaining, means of separating characters from their wealth is through games of chance. Few treasure-hungry adventurers can resist the enticing lure of winning even more money by gambling, and even if the casino or gambling hall in which they find themselves does not run crooked games, the odds are still in favour of the house. The benefit of such a scenario is that the players could very well enjoy the prospect of squandering much of their loot – especially if the DM has a deck of playing cards lying around, and knows the rules of a few card or dice games. The players could play their own characters, and real cards or dice could be used in combination with poker chips or pennies representing the money at stake.

Upkeep

While the player characters might not have a dominion to run (on which they would pay taxes, salaries for retainers, and maintenance costs), even a life on the road can drain a personal treasury. Armour and weapons need to be repaired and replaced (clothing too – an extreme example of this has already been mentioned), general provisions must be bought, and one should not forget the need for riding mounts and pack animals. In the latter case, such animals must be fed, be sheltered in stables while in town, and they may be eaten by large monsters, or run away in the middle of a battle – meaning they must be replaced, and anything carried by the animal is gone, possibly for good.

Monetary Matters

Just because there are heaps of coins lying around in a dungeon, that does not necessarily mean they are particularly valuable. In ancient times, coins were often not worth their face value, but were often valued by their metal content (which is why ancient traders were depicted as biting gold coins to determine if they were real – gold is a soft metal, and purer gold is easier to dent); otherwise there would be nothing stopping a kingdom from issuing paper currency. Therefore, those tantalizing piles of coinage yearning for the player characters' attention might actually be debased, such as a less precious metal →

(such as bronze, tin, copper, or even lead) plated with a precious metal like gold or platinum. Therefore, if one assumes the standard gold piece is 24 karat gold, then a debased gold coin might have only 12 karats – it would only be worth one electrum piece in terms of its metal value. That would be quite the surprise, to learn that all those thousands of gold coins liberated from that goblin lair were worth only 100 silver pieces!

Alternatively, perhaps the money found by the player characters is worthless in the country in which they are currently located - maybe the money was minted by an enemy nation, and the coins simply will not be accepted anywhere, or perhaps for cultural reasons the metal in the coins has no monetary value. Either the player characters can have the coins melted down (for a fee) or they can carry it to another nation (risking the attentions of bandits, monsters, and other perils) where they might be able to use it.

Finally, depending on where the player characters are located, they may not be

able to use the more valuable coins in their possession. Assuming that the DM enforces encumbrance rules, and the adventuring party takes only the most valuable coins in a treasure hoard, the situation could very well arise where the player characters find themselves in a place where platinum coins (for example) cannot be accepted because no one can make change.

Deus Ex Machina

Occasionally, the DM might be able to get away with reducing player character wealth in a direct manner, without having to go through transactions with non-player characters, taxes, fees, and the like. As a matter of course, such tactics should be used sparingly, lest the DM be seen as heavy-handed. One example of this is the classic shipwreck scenario, in which the player characters manage to swim to safety, but their wealth is now sitting at the bottom of the ocean. Similarly, natural disasters can be used to destroy player

character strongholds and their contents, or just the bank where they frequently deposit their loot. Such a scenario should be used only sparingly.

Winging It

DMs might decide not to bother with any of this, and just determine (with the players) what lifestyle they want their characters to have, and base their finances on that. Thus, the DM could tell a player that his character could buy that new suit of armour (complete with built-in wrist crossbows), but that he would be short on cash for a few weeks afterwards. The advantage to this is that the potential administrative headache of keeping track of financial transactions in the campaign is eliminated – assuming the player characters adventure regularly, they will always have enough money to maintain themselves. The drawback is that a certain level of detail is lost, and some players derive satisfaction from knowing how much treasure their characters have. ■

The Fighter

Richard Tongue

The Fighter is possibly one of the most difficult character classes to personalize in OD&D. Looking at a purely rules standpoint, there is very little to differentiate one Fighter from another. At least a Magic-User can use his spells as a tool – the fighter has very little. The rules, however, are the least part of a good OD&D game. Role-playing is the key to playing the fighter well. For this, the fighter is the easiest character to play, because there are so many classic examples from history and from fantasy. Robin Hood, Spartacus, Sir Lancelot, Conan, Elric, all characters that can be drawn upon. For a beginning player, (for whom a fighter is the easiest character class anyway), it is simple enough to point him to a source such as this for inspiration.

This, however, is still copying to a certain extent. To take things further, it is important to remember that there are different types of fighter. These

archetypes can be broken down quite easily. Some examples are the barbarian warrior, the noble knight, the city thug, city guard veteran, the village hero. All of these would create different types of character, and they are just a small sample. It is often useful to work a character into your campaign setting – the remainder of this article will describe two such as an example, describing a character background using one of these archetypes.

Bardon began his life in the streets of Kelvin, orphaned early in life through a fire in his home. He took to the streets, where he joined a street gang, the 'Red Terriers'. They lived in a small abandoned tenement on the bad side of town, and managed to live through petty theft and mugging. At fourteen, Bardon was approached to join the local Thieves' Guild as an enforcer, a suggestion he accepted quickly. He spent the next four years working as 'muscle' for the guild, until he saw the opportunity to steal the pickings of a recent theft. He managed to get away, but with only a fraction of the

proceeds, and now roams through Karameikos looking for money, and for safety – he knows that Kelvin Thieves' Guild is on his tail. He is a cold, calculating man, who enjoys showing off his strength at any opportunity. He only respects those who can match or best him in combat.

Elidor was born in a small farm near the Dymrak Forest. He lived most of his childhood expecting to be a farmer when he grew up, learning the skills of his trade, though he always showed an interest in combat, and became quite skilled with the battle axe. On his sixteenth birthday, his baby sister was kidnapped by a local bandit, who demanded a large ransom for her return. Elidor knew that the payment would cripple his father, so unknown to anyone, he sneaked out to try and rescue her. He came back, both with his sister, and the head of the bandit. It was then he knew he was destined for better things, and so he set out in search of adventure. He is a fairly innocent young man, with an idealistic view of the world – a con man's dream come true. He always seeks to be a hero, and will take any quest, however risky, to attain this goal.

This shows what can be done with the simple fighter. He can be so much more than d8 hit points, plate armour and a broadsword, so long as the player, and the DM, show sufficient imagination. ■

The Might of Rock and the Heavens

Ville V. Lähde

"In their own times, told the Makers,
sang the people of the Stars their enchantments
in chorus with the roar of the deep

Under feet, under soil, in rocky hollows
were forged and kissed the mighty unions
of the Underfolk and the Kings of Stars

But unions and alliances grew rotten, forgotten
were the children of rock and the heavens
Aspiring to pass beyond the veil."

- A forgotten and lost Traladaran lament

This adventure was originally written over 10 years for D&D, to be used in the official Mystaran world, then known (to me) only as the Known World from the Blue-Box Expert Set. It was published in the Finnish RPG magazine "Magus". The experience levels of the PC's were designed to be around 5 - 6, but the adventure can easily be adjusted with minor changes. The original location for this adventure was the Grand Duchy of Karameikos, described in the Gazetteer by the same name. However, some details concerning the adventure area, the Barony of Dmitrov, were changed, and some new mythological elements were written to create the background of the story. If the DM doesn't wish to effect those changes, the adventure can be easily rewritten for any similar locale. (Note: Upon the writing of this adventure I was still using the older demographic features of Karameikos used in the old Expert Set, with a much lower population. Using the Gazetteer demographics may change the atmosphere of the story a bit, creating a much less frontier-like setting. Also some details of the Barony of Dmitrov deviate a bit from the Gazetteer.)

Note: This adventure was inspired by various works of fiction, including C.S. Lewis's "The Silver Chair", Ursula le Guin's "Wizard of Earthsea", a wonderful

continental sci-fi comic series "Khen a et Scramouche", the One-on-one D&D adventure "Blade of Vengeance", and some poetic elements in the work of Susan Cooper.

HISTORY

As the keepers of elder lore still remember it:

Countless of seasons ago, long before the people of Traldar arrived to the land that are now called Karameikos from the lost Nithia, a strange people lived in the southern parts of the land. They called themselves The Children of the Old Covenant. Their appearance and the details of their life are unknown by latter generations and other peoples, as they vanished a long time ago and also tended to keep isolated. Only a few scattered sages, especially those of the elder races, still remember the story of the Old Covenant and its cursed children.

The roots of the story reach far. The world was in its infancy. The Hinterlands and the latter Empire of Thyatia weren't separated by the Dread Sea, as the land hadn't yet felt the wrath which the dark Loremasters of Blackmoor awoke. In the bosom of Mystaran rock lived the People of the Rock, sometimes called the Underfolk,

harvesting riches from the living veins of the world and growing mighty abodes out of them. The lands above them were largely uninhabited, but high in the heavens lived the People of the Stars in their cloud islands. They harvested the tears of the Cosmos, decorated their ethereal halls with them, and this was good. Neither of the two peoples desired that which belonged to the other.

The unstoppable wheel of Time kept turning, however, and brought a fateful moment of transition for both peoples. Still it wasn't marked by wars or suffering, but the greatest and most unpredictable of all forces, love. The Underfolk grew slowly fond of the fair People of the Stars, and the latter in turn sought peace and silence in their solemn countenance. Thus was the Old Covenant formed and sealed with caresses and kisses across the rifts of difference. But the fruits of this union were sad ones, because the children born from it were a mockery of the beauty and solemnity of the parents – some say this was a punishment for breaking laws so ancient that both of the two peoples had long forgotten them, never aware of their own transgression. In the rough beastly forms of their children the parents saw their own most vile and despicable features, ones they had for ages hidden from themselves, buried under layers of custom, ritual and oblivion. The Underfolk returned to their hidden chambers, behind lock and key, and the Cloudy Castles slipped to lands unknown. The Children of the Old Covenant were trapped forever on the land, between Rock and the Heavens.

Cycles of the Sun went on, and many cataclysms rocked the world, but by luck, fate or providence the Children's abodes were left intact, and they never touched the concerns of other peoples. Still their numbers dwindled and their blood grew rotten. When death was already reaching for the last of them, they appealed to their lost parents for one last time – but alas, those above or below couldn't hear them anymore, or chose to ignore this sad plea. To keep death at bay they built Circles of Star Monoliths as temples of Rock and the Heavens. With the skills inherited from their parents they shackled the might of the land and the air to help them rule their land and keep the sparkle of life alive. But this accursed existence didn't appease them, and the feeling of power didn't substitute their worldly homesickness. As their last act of defiance they gathered at their last monoliths of rock and the heavens, and faded away like a whispered lament in the wind. The accursed fruits of the Old Covenant were laid to oblivion.

For the DM

Rare as it is, old legends are sometimes close to the truth. Yes, there were the Underfolk and the People of the Stars, although both of them have long since retreated to destinies unknown. And the story of their children is equally true, except for their final fate. Instead of finding the long-sought rest, their tortured souls were bound to the Monoliths, perhaps by the same forces that had punished their parents.

These stories have been mostly forgotten, however, and none of the PCs have ever had the chance to learn them. As said earlier, the stories have been preserved in the most obscure lore of the elder races, save some scattered laments or anecdotes of the Traladara. And even in the case of the elder races, the stories haven't been preserved in clear narrative form. Instead they have been disguised as moral stories, philosophic lessons in the form of stories, and mostly only as oral tradition. Few sages ever saw point in writing them down.

LOCATION

(Note: Originally I had drawn detailed maps of the scenes of the adventure. There was a map of the Barony of Dmitrov, the village of Dmitrov, the Star Monoliths, the Seagull island and the Elder Woods logging camp. But since I don't have the original issue of Magus anymore, I couldn't include them. And anyway, I don't own a scanner. Sorry.)

The events take place in the Grand Duchy of Karameikos, more specifically in the Barony of Dmitrov. The barony consists of a small (about 20 miles long) cape in the southern part of the country. The lands of Dmitrov are bordered by the much larger Barony of Vorloi to the north, and the waters of the Sea of Dread surround it elsewhere. Baron Dmitrov rules his lands from his manor, which is actually more like a fortified homestead. It is surrounded by a small village called Dmitrov. The village includes a small river harbour, as it has been built near the only river of the cape, Narodnik (Traladaran, translated roughly as "Forestfolk"). As can be seen from the maps (check Thibault Scarlet's page <http://perso.wanadoo.fr/mystara/> for several maps of Karameikos), the village is located at the southern parts of the cape.

A very old and battered Thyatian road, built after the invasion 100 years ago, leaves from the village of Dmitrov to the north, branching near the northern border of the barony. The western branch leads to Specularum through the lands of Vorloi,

and the northern branch leads eventually to the Eastern Duke's road. Note: Dmitrov and Vorloi have often clashed over the road taxes that Vorloi collects from the traffic leading to the lands of Dmitrov, who claims that the taxes are higher than they should, and are designed to keep a Traladaran dominion from developing. Vorloi, on the other hand, has repeatedly accused Dmitrov of taking part in smuggling... an accusation that might have some truth in it.

The barony is not only small, but has also a small population of only a few hundred. Approximations are hard to make, as the last census was carried out a few decades ago by the Thyatian invaders, and since then some families have moved in to the barony, ruled as it is by a Traladaran lord. Baron Dmitrov rules over several dozens of tenant families who farm the rich soil of the barony, and a small fishing community on the western beaches of the cape. In addition to this there are several freeman farmers who pay a portion of their taxes to Dmitrov as "shield tax", to pay for the protection the baron offers. (Note: As Karameikos in the Gazetteer era has been written to be a quasi-feudal society, that is, no serfs, some explanation had to be offered for the remains of feudalism in the country. I decided that the Karameikan land policy is a mixture of elder Traladaran clan practises [the freeman farmers] and tenantry. The tenants rent the land and have to pay taxes and perform work services in the same manner as serfs, but they are not so strictly bound to the land... although this difference sometimes escapes the poorest of Traladaran tenants. But for example, tenantry isn't a hereditary bond, and a tenant could in principle buy his freedom, although many lords tend to make this very difficult.) In the village and the fishing community there are some craftsmen, but only the ones essential to the functioning of the community.

The barony is mainly plains, except for a dense forest in the western parts of the cape, north of the fishing community. The forest is called Narodnasjak; the Thyatian version is roughly "Elder Woods", which describes very well its nature. The forest is very old and densely grown. Next to nobody ever goes there, as old stories tell of a Guardian of the Forestfolk who will extract revenge on anyone harming the trees. Nearly all of the wood that is used in the barony is imported, even though baron Dmitrov has started a few experimental forestry projects and organised some logging in the fringes of the forest. The latter doesn't produce much, however, as the morale of the workers tends to be very

low, and strange non-lethal accidents plague the logging camps. So, in general the barony produces grain, fish and some dairy products and meat, nothing else of significant commercial value. Anything else than food is more expensive than usual, compared even to the neighbouring Vorloi lands. However, the local population tends to favour the local (mainly Traladaran) merchants, as they are traditionally suspicious of the merchants of the Vorloi family.

The southwestern tip of the cape narrows to a small headland, "Star Rocks", which has high and dangerous cliffs and stunted woods. A mysterious circle of stones at its highest point has generated wild stories among the local population. A few miles to the sea from Star Rocks is Seagull Island, a rocky islet that is the home of thousands of sea birds. Some of the local fishermen visit the islet from time to time to gather eggs and guano, which they sell to the local farmers as fertiliser.

OUTLINES OF THE PLOT

Until now the barony of Dmitrov has been relatively peaceful. In spite of the political clashes with Vorloi, the Traladaran population has been basically left alone to tend to their own business. The land is remote from the wilder humanoid-infested areas of the country, and the curse of lycanthropy has never reached it. Since political relations with Ierendi and Minrothad are good, no significant threats come from the sea either. However, things have been changing lately. Some freeman farmers have disappeared from their huts, and twice a fishing boat along with the crew has vanished without a trace. There are rumours of halfling pirates, Ierendi buccaneers or even something worse... old wives watch the skies, muttering the words of ancient songs and warning of bad times. This is the situation when the PCs arrive in Dmitrov. (Note: It is up to the DM to decide how the PCs are brought into this matter. They may have been sent here by a rich Traladaran merchant, who is a supporter of Dmitrov, or by the Thyatian officials to investigate reports of strange events etc. Or Dmitrov may simply hire them as investigators.)

In reality the disappearances are the work of a learned mage Askold Ragnhild. He comes originally from Soderfjord jarldoms. Initiated to the secrets of the Art by a local wise woman, he studied at first in the magical college of Uppsala in Vestland, and travelled later to Glantri. In Glantri he found old elven documents that described the forbidden rituals that the Children of the

Old Covenant used to control the Elements. When researching the rituals he found out that the Star Monoliths function as magical amplifiers. Casting spells and weaving enchantments in the middle of the circles is much more effective than normal, giving a learned mage powers tenfold, even hundredfold greater than before.

Askold couldn't resist the temptation and started organising an expedition to find a working or recoverable Circle of Star Monoliths. About time, since life in Glantri had become very hard for him. Even though Askold had chosen the path of magery, unusual among the Northerners, he was still a child of their traditions, believing strongly in their gods. In the end Askold couldn't keep his beliefs totally hidden, and he was banished. He travelled to Karamaikos, and eventually Black Eagle Barony, asking baron Ludwig von Hendricks for funds and resources for the expedition. He could of course have contacted the Guild of Mages is Specularum, but he was afraid that public exposure would tempt other wizards, and he would have to compete for power.

(Note: When I originally wrote this adventure, I didn't account for Bargle, who would certainly learn of Askold's plan and try to exploit it. But this is easily remedied, if the DM wishes: Bargle may very well be using Askold as a pawn in his own political and magical games. Also, Bargle may well be aware that what Askold is attempting is way beyond him) The baron realised that the execution of Askold's plan was risky and dangerous, and any accidents would hurt the reign of Stephan Karamaikos badly, which suited him well. (Note: You may include agents of Hendricks in the adventure, trying to create a disaster. But as is told later on, real success of Askold's plan isn't an option, he may just succeed in creating a catastrophe) Thus he gave Askold the assistance he asked for. A small warship transported Askold and his goons to the Seagull Island.

Very soon Askold learned of the remaining monoliths. But time had had its toll on the circle of the monoliths, and it would have to be restored. (Overview of the original Circle: A circle of 10 standing stones enclose the ritual grounds. In the centre is a large stone slab, on which the rituals are supposed to be performed. On either side of it are two large stone rings, through which certain constellations are supposed to be seen during the rituals. A smaller circle of runestones spreads around these centrepieces.) There would be a lot of work to be done. One of the huge stone rings had broken, runes had eroded from most of the runestones, and several of the outer monoliths had fallen

and/or cracked. In addition to that, wild vegetation had taken over the area. Askold knew that many new stones would have to be cut and enchanted in order to make the Circle work again. He didn't have enough manpower to do this in time, as the next potential moment of the ritual was nearing. Thus he began kidnapping Dmitrov's subjects and using them as slave labour. The stars and the rock would be in the correct constellation soon, and the people of Dmitrov were nearing their moment of doom...

In the beginning of the adventure the PCs are asked to investigate the disappearance of many people. During the course of the story they'll look into various kidnappings, meet the ancient guardian treat of Elder Woods, are thrown in the middle of a foreign politics conflict, and finally if they are successful, they are led to the ancient monoliths, where ancient powers are about to be unleashed.



THE CAST

As noted above, the capabilities of the villains can easily be changed to meet the needs of the DM:

Askold Ragnhild Magic-user level 7

Appearance: Bodily he is nearing 70 (see below), but spiritually and intellectually he is still a vigorous and energetic person. He has long blond hair with a touch of grey, and a long beard. He wears a pitch black cape, which has Northern runes embroidered on it. His eyes are bright, and his voice seems to be much younger than he looks.

Background: Askold was born in Soderfjord Jarldoms, in Whiteheart valley. He grew up as a son of a lumberjack, raised by his father with a strong and sometimes cruel hand. In early age the boy showed talents for reading and writing, even for magic, and a local wise woman encouraged the family to send the boy to learn in the magical college of Uppsala in Vestland. Literate men were still scarce in the North, and one would have brought fame to the family. But in the college Askold could never yield to the hard discipline, once escaped from his father's harsh regime. He became obsessed with old and forbidden books of black lore, perhaps the wise woman had already planted this desire in him. Eventually he was caught bribing the library guard, and he was expelled. The bitter youth joined

with travelling conjurers, tricksters, soothsayers and alchemists. When he reached the age of a man (14-16 in the case of the Northerners), he arrived in Glantri.

During his travels Askold had gathered some funds mainly by stealing, and could start wizardly studies. For years he studied, enjoying the more chaotic atmosphere of the Great School of Magic, compared to the dry academia of Uppsala. However, his progress was slow, as he didn't have exceptional talents. True to his nature, Askold blamed his teachers for this, saying that they hid advanced knowledge from him and pampered other students. He started stealing from other students, and even from graduates. Secretly he managed to gather a small library of expensive books of secret lore. It was during this time that he stumbled upon the fragmentary lore of the Star Monoliths.

As mentioned before, Askold's religious nature would cause him trouble. Askold and some other Northerner immigrants used to gather in an empty house to pay homage to the Northern gods. One of his teachers found out about this and confronted his student with this information, saying that the only way to avoid a trip to the Tower of Whispers would be to give in all of his accomplishments. The teacher had assumed that the young student would crumble under his authority, but he hadn't taken Askold's northern blood into account. Askold grabbed the old master by the throat, stopping him from using his magic, and squeezed the life out of him. But with the last dying breath the master uttered a command word of a necromantic spell, which aged Askold by decades in a heartbeat. As told before, Askold had to flee Glantri, and he begun his search for the Monoliths.

Personality: Askold isn't actually a cruel or evil person, but he simply can't tolerate anything or anyone getting in front of him or deceiving him. Life hasn't been gentle on him, and he has become very bitter. He is intelligent and wise, but not a very accomplished wizard (especially for his apparent age). He considers himself to be the most important person in the world, and is interested only in power. Due to some bodily maladies neither sex arouses any interest in him. For the PCs he should be a devious and dangerous opponent, who uses his magical resources to the best of his abilities. One of his current ambitions, in addition to gaining control of the Monoliths, is to get his youth back.

Strength: 13, **Intelligence:** 16,
Wisdom: 13, **Dexterity:** 12,
Constitution: 12, **Charisma:** 8

Hit points: 21

Languages: Soderfjord, Thyatian, Glantrian, Elven (ancient dialects, only written)

Skills: Stealth (Urban) 12, Knowledge of Northern Runes 16, Sleight of Hand 12, Knowledge of Star Monoliths 16

Equipment: Quarterstaff, 4 silver-inlaid throwing daggers, Pearl ring (250 gp), Pouch: 10 Glantrian pp, 200 Thyatian gp, ruby (1000 gp), Pouch: 4 stones, "Continual Darkness" spell on them
ROD OF CANCELLATION, SCROLL: Conjure Elemental (Note: Askold will use this only during the ritual of the monoliths)

Spell Book:

(Some Glantrian/Northern spells may be added to give Askold some flavour)
Read Magic, Floating Disc, Shield, Magic Missile, Read Languages, Protection from Evil
ESP, Mirror Image, Web, Continual Light Fly, Protection from Normal Missiles, Haste Hallucinatory Terrain, Massmorph

"Bark"
Ancient Treant

"Bark" is a guardian of the Elder Woods, and he may thousands of years old. His powers and spells have kept intruders away from this forest, even though most of the southern forests of this land have been cut away by Traladaran. "Bark" remembers the times when the southern woods still reached the Great Dymrak. The Thyatians are still newcomers, "children", to him. He lives in a magically hidden cave in the middle of the Elder Woods.

Personality: Nowadays "Bark" has stiffened a bit, as during the last centuries he hasn't been able to take the long walks to Dymrak that he so loved. The Elder Woods are his home, but alone they are a bit small for a treant. The smallest violation of the trees makes him angry. He would enjoy chats with elves.

Statistics: Standard Treant, or if the DM wishes, some positive modifiers of "Larger" Creatures.

Languages: Treant, Traladaran (ancient dialect), Dryad, Elf (Callarii, ancient dialect), All Faery languages

Special Abilities: May animate 4 trees (see "Treant" in Monster section of rulebook). Non-edged weapons do only 1hp damage. Knows every part of Elder

Woods, acts without hindrance even if blinded and/or deaf.

Spells/day (Note: Some of these may be replaced with druid spells and/or elven spells from the Alfheim Gazetteer, or Faery Spells from the Tall tales of Wee Folk –book.)

Cure light wounds, Light, Purify Food & Water

Bless, Know Alignment, Speak with Animals

Growth of Animals, Cure Disease, Striking Talk with Plants, Create Water

Note: These are the spells "Bark" normally memorises. If he knows that conflict is imminent, he is sure to choose more offensive ones.

Baron Dimitri Dmitrov
level 4 Thief

Appearance: A shortish 48 years old man, with black hair and brown eyes. He likes to dress in tight leather armour, which is adorned with his coat of arms. Generally prefers rich and beautiful clothing. Has an especially nice voice.

Background: When Stephan Karameikos began luring Thyatian nobility to his newly purchased realm decades ago, a proud and rash young noble arrived to his castle. However, he wasn't of Thyatian descent, but a son of a prominent Traladaran merchant family. The young man, Dimitri Dmitrov, didn't see his commoner background as an obstacle, and wanted to get a new opportunity in the service of the new duke. Karameikos found this youngster an appealing person, and what's more, a skilful politician and tactician, and after a suitable period of service knighted him and gave him a dominion. Later on this was to become the Barony of Dmitrov. Dimitri was content with this, and he didn't wish to waste time sulking over Stephan's apparent favouritism of Thyatian nobles. He didn't take part in the early Traladaran insurrections, he just received refugees of beaten clans and incorporated them to this dominion.

In the next decades Dimitri Dmitrov served Stephan Karameikos well, managed to establish the economy of his dominion, and drove away several bands of smugglers and buccaneers which had plagued the area. As a reward for these deeds he was given the title of Baron. The other nobles grumbled about this – the Thyatians were suspicious of the Traladaran upstart, the Traladarans refused to

acknowledge the breach in traditional rules of nobility. To all of them Dmitrov would remain a commoner in noble's garb. Thus Dmitrov hasn't had much influence in the politics of the nation. This doesn't matter much to him, though, as he sees that there's much more to do in improving his baronial lands. As a symbol of defiance, however, he selected as his coat of arms a Griffon pierced by a Traladaran spear.

Personality: Although in game terms Dmitrov is a "thief", this doesn't mean that he practices thievery as his profession. He is more like a rogue or "rake" – his skills were learned in his youth. Thanks to his intellect, charisma and sleight of hand he managed to make several good deals (first one when he was 14!). He treats all humans well, regardless of their religion or ethnic background, but is reserved and suspicious around elves and halflings. Dwarves he sees as "sleeping lions", whom one shouldn't aggravate, so to them he is polite, if a little stiff. In general, behind his polite and sweet countenance is a stealthy observer, who is constantly watchful for attempts to undermine his rule.

Strength: 11, **Intelligence:** 17, **Wisdom:** 9, **Dexterity:** 18, **Constitution:** 8 (A hereditary heart defect), **Charisma:** 16

Hit Points: 14

Languages: Traladaran, Thyatian, Minrothadian, Ilerendian

Skills: Bargaining 16, Negotiation 16, Administration 17

Equipment: Adorned leather armour +1, Short Sword with a silver-inlaid hilt, Medalion of Office, 3 golden rings (100 gp each)

Porius
Cleric level 4 (of Thanatos)

Appearance: A man who dresses in blackened mail and black clothing. With pale face and especially pale skin he resembles a skeleton, especially as his eyes are deep in their sockets. He is also bald.

Background: Porius comes originally from Thyatis, Hattias, where he was initiated in the cult of Thanatos, the patron of death and destruction. The cult has been traditionally strong there, and is equally strongly persecuted by the followers of the official churches of Thyatis. Years ago Porius fled religious persecution (or specifically, death penalty due to grievous murder of children) to Black Eagle Barony,

and has been in the payroll of the Baron ever since. Porius is the leader of the men that Baron Hendricks has sent with Askold to help in his task. Porius has been instructed to keep close tabs on the mage and stop him if he gets powerful enough to threaten Black Eagle. The most important thing is that this mission inflicts damage on Karameikos.

Personality: Porius is an exceptionally brutal and cruel man, who simply enjoys violence. Inflicting pain arouses pleasure in him. This applies also to himself – he has hired a soldier to torture him whenever the opportunity arises. This has actually nothing to do with more conventional masochism, as Porius's intention is to inflict and experience intense pain, fear and suffering. As a fanatic servant of Thanatos this comes with the territory. Porius never uses healing spells.

Strength: 13, **Intelligence:** 9, **Wisdom:** 16, **Dexterity:** 8 (limps due to self-inflicted wounds), **Constitution:** 10, **Charisma:** 4

Hit Points: 20

Languages: Thyatian

Skills: Ceremony (Thanatos) 16, Torture 9, Intimidate 13, Bravery 16

Equipment: Blackened chain mail, Shield "The Stranger of Dark" – a war hammer +1, 1 Darkness spell/day, Unholy symbol of Thanatos (value 100 gp), Pouch: 200 Thyatian gp

Spells:
Darkness, Cause Fear, Blight

Secretary Megreit Wissenschaft Normal Woman

Appearance: A beautiful woman in her thirties, Megreit has long blond hair and a soft voice. She dresses in shirts of white silk and wears leather pants, complemented with a red cape.

Background: Megreit is the personal secretary of the ambassador of Ilerendi in Karameikos. When during the adventure rumours spread about the involvement of Ilerendian pirates, she is sent to investigate. Megreit's relatives came originally from Heldann, but she has been thoroughly integrated to the Ilerendian society.

Personality: She is a nationalistic person who will be very offended if (unfounded) accusations are made against her homeland. She doesn't use her good

looks as a tool in politics. Reports everything to the ambassador in Specularum.

Strength: 12, **Intelligence:** 16, **Wisdom:** 13, **Dexterity:** 12, **Constitution:** 13, **Charisma:** 15

Hit points: 7

Languages: Thyatian, Ilerendian, Minrothadian, Traladaran

Skills: Negotiation 15, Knowledge of Karameikan politics 16, Knowledge of Ilerendian politics 16

Equipment: Dagger, Ring of spell storing: Sleep, Shield, Protection from Evil



THE PLOT

This adventure is divided into main stages of events. The PCs are led through these stages, hopefully moving towards the climax. In the descriptions of each stage I have included the essential information and some suggestions about the way the events could unfold. But eventually it is up to the DM and the PCs how the adventure forms. I haven't made any suggestions about the length of the stages. The DM may, if she/he wishes, decide when the time for Askold's ritual is ripe, and make this a race against time. Note however, that then the option of "forcing fate" to make the climatic battle happen is not available to an honest DM – if the PCs are surprisingly clever and resourceful, and manage to stop Askold very early.

STAGE I

During this stage the PCs get acquainted with the Barony of Dmitrov. As mentioned before, there are various ways to bring the PCs into the story. They might arrive in the village of Dmitrov due to some other errand, and be contacted by the Baron there. Or the herald of the Baron might try to contact them elsewhere, perhaps in Specularum. In any case, this section has been written assuming that the PCs are in the service of Dmitrov, but that is not necessary.

Information on the village of Dmitrov

The village is a small community that is centred in the surroundings of the Baron's manor. There are about 200 inhabitants in the area – in the manor live the baron, his

family, some of his "court" and a garrison of 30 soldiers. There's also a small harbour in the village, situated in the mouth of the strong river Narodnik. From the harbour ships can move to the sea too. The Northern Road starts from the central marketplace (see above). The local population lives by fishing and growing grain. After each harvest wagons with heavy loads of flour travel to Specularum. The mill is few miles up the river. The people of the village are happy with their life and respect their baron, although the latest events have rattled them somewhat.

The Manor

Dmitrov's Manor is a large, well-built house, which includes a fortified tower and a small palisade. From the top of the tower one can see far across the surrounding countryside, as the manor is on top of a small hill. Due to its location the manor is easily defensible. The soldiers of the garrison live in the tower, the "court" of 10 people in the eastern wing and the baron and his family in the western wing. The rooms of the manor are very tall, and the walls are covered with old Traladaran gobelins and frescoes that depict the old legends of the people. The baron doesn't have a lot of riches, but in the recent years the (smoked) fish and grain trade has brought more silver and gold in his coffers.

(Note: I haven't included prices to the services below, although they were included in the article. Every DM has her/his own policy in these matters. The descriptions offer some guidelines, though.)

The Stables

This establishment is owned by a young couple who moved here from the north a few years ago. As horses have to be transported here a long way, they take a high price and make a healthy profit. The husband is called Julius (Thyatian), nearing his thirties. Tatjana, 23, tends to do the bargaining, leaving the labouring to her husband.

The Inn "Sloshing"

The Innkeeper is a retired seaman called Stanislav. He charges a slightly high price for a night, even more for a room with a lock (4 rooms without lock, 1 with lock, and many square yards in the common room). The food is exceptionally good, and comes with the room, which tends to lessen the complaints of travellers over prices. Onion and dill –filled flounder is the house speciality, beetroot soup with sourcream (borsh) is a favourite during

winters, and during the summers Stanislaw serves mountains of smoked fish with schnapps of vodka.

"The Shining Lantern" – a bar

The hostess Galina is a 60-years old widow. She has hired a sturdy doorman Jura (Fighter 4) to protect her both from violent customers and over-enthusiastic courtiers – especially the older farmhands seem to think that life as the husband of a well-off barkeep wouldn't be too bad. The food is cheap, and the drinks can be bought with a reasonable price, depending on the quality. If a customer speaks nicely and politely, she might slip in a small glass of dwarf spirits, bought from passing Minrothadian merchant vessels. Most of it is however reserved to the smith and the storekeeper (see below), who guard this special priviledge jealously.

The Smith and the General Store

This combined establishment is kept by two dwarven brothers Gron and Hil (both Dwarf 4). They make a lot of their wares in the smithy and workshop, but they have to buy something from the north. Rations and clothing is cheap, so is rope, leather, simple metal tools etc. But weaponry, armour, oil, glass etc. are very expensive. Both are very good craftsmen, although their wide area of expertise means that they aren't specialists in any field.

The Harbour

The harbour is enclosed by two breakwaters. Mainly fishermen's boats are kept there, in addition to the small sailing ship that is converted into a warship, "The Hawk". It has a crew of 10 seamen and 20 marines, who live in a small barracks in the buildings of the docks. Evenings one can hear interesting stories in their regular tables at the bar, since they know the surrounding waters very well.

Beginning of the adventure

When the PCs arrive in Dmitrov people have already begun to disappear. Many villagers are nervous and slightly suspicious of strangers, but they won't start throwing accusations...yet. If the PCs inquire into the apparent nervousness, they have a good chance of hearing about the disappearances. Since well-armed parties are seldom seen in this area, the word of their arrival will soon reach the baron, who will send his herald to contact them very soon. The herald will offer them a job. At

this time he won't go into specifics, other than hint at a substantial reward for a job well done. He'll ask the PCs to meet the baron at his manor the next morning.

The character of the baron has been described earlier. The DM should try to pose him as an honest man, who very well knows that some of the PCs may be more capable and experienced adventurers than him. The PCs are offered goblets of exquisite Minrothadian wine, and the baron meets them in the sitting room by a warm fireplace. He gives them the following information: During the last week several men, about 10 in total, have disappeared from his tenant farms. In addition to this, two boats from the fishermen's village at the western coast of the cape haven't returned, even though there haven't been any storms lately. The subjects of the baron are worried, and rumours abound about ghosts of the Elder Woods, halfling pirates of the Five Shires, even werewolves. The baron himself suspects that the brigands that plague the Duke's roads have expanded their activities to his dominion. He requests that the PCs would visit the three tenant farms where people have disappeared, plus the fishermen's village.

If the PCs inquire about possible rewards, the baron gives a generous down payment (100 gp for example, depending on the way the DM handles money in her/his campaign). In addition to this the baron gives them a letter of recommendation, which states that they are on his official business and should be given (reasonable) assistance. The herald provides them with a sketchy map of the Barony.

STAGE II

During this stage the PCs should visit the three above mentioned tenant farms and the fishermen's village. Depending on their success at the investigations, they gather a few important clues. Also, during this time rumours about the involvement of lerendians in the recent events begin to spread. The ambassador's secretary Megreit Wissenschaft arrives at the Baron's manor, and a political conflict is in the making. It is up to the PCs how the situation develops. Note: The lerendian thread of the adventure is the most open-ended factor, and can be used by the DM to expand the adventure.

Travel in the Barony: If Askold's mischief is discounted, the area is very peaceful. There are no monster encounters, roving packs of predators (like wolves), or even brigands.

The Tenant Farms

"**MARUNA**" is a rare sight in this area, a tenant farm owned by a halfling. William Maruna has won the baron's trust and disarmed his customary suspicion of halflings. A total of 20 halflings live at the farm. No halfling residents have disappeared, but two temporarily employed human farmhands vanished few nights ago while herding sheep in a nearby meadow. The weird thing is that only two sheep were taken, which would suggest that this isn't the work of ordinary robbers. If they have time, the PCs can spend a nice evening here, enjoying the hospitality of the halflings – good food, pipe tobacco and storytelling. If the PCs hint at the suspicions about halfling pirates, William dismisses them outright. He knows that the pirates wouldn't practice kidnappings of ordinary citizens. He will laugh at suggestions about werewolves.

POROS FARM is the largest one in this area, with 30 farmers working in the area. The house is large and well built, with the appearance of some riches. The master of the house, Ivan Poros, will gladly talk to the guests and answer their questions. The following information is available:

→ Four men have disappeared, all during the night. All of them were working at the fields when they disappeared, repairing fences or guarding the herds.

→ One of the farmhands claims he saw a ghost in the night of the third disappearance. In reality he saw the cleric Porius, whose pale face seemed to hover in the dark. The farmhand can give sketchy description of the "ghost".

→ There are rumours that the ghosts of the Elder Woods are responsible of the disappearances.

IVANOVICH FARM is in the southern parts of the cape. Since most of the disappearances have taken place there, the residents are very suspicious of any strangers, especially non-humans. If the PCs act politely, succeed in employing their charisma and using the authority of the Baron, they can find out the following:

→ Six men disappeared from the farm, all of them while working at the fields that are close to the sea.

→ A group of Ivanovich's workers were scared a few days ago, when they found a small forest near the southern coast – forest that seemed to have sprung up overnight. When the place was visited the next day, nothing else was found than a sword lying in the sandy beach. It was not rusty. It is clearly of Karameikan craftsmanship. (Askold had cast Massmorph

over his men during the raid.) Old wives have started talking about "the walking trees" of the Elder Woods.

→ The master of the house, Pjotr Ivanovich, is convinced that Ilerendian buccaneers are to blame.

THE FISHERMEN live in a small village north of the Elder Woods. They are very scared after two boats vanished without trace. Their leader, a classical sea-dog (eye patch, munches tobacco) tells what he knows. In total six fishermen have been lost. Both boats were heading for southern waters. Guesses about the culprits range again from Ilerendians to halflings and Sea-Bane.

Note: It is very possible that at this stage the PCs decide to make further investigations, for example in the Elder Woods. The DM must decide how to handle them. See Stage III.

The Trouble with the Ilerendians

During this time Megreit Wissenschaft arrives in village Dmitrov to investigate the allegations that have been made against her people. She is very angry and demands that the baron finds out who is responsible for spreading them. In the bars and the streets there is already talk of revenge, of the deviousness of the Ilerendians, even surprisingly of war. The atmosphere seems to have changed very quickly. The baron is puzzled by this, as his subjects are rarely openly hostile about anything. He doesn't think that the Ilerendians are to be discounted as culprits, but angering the ambassador without proof wouldn't be wise. He sends word to the PCs and asks them to intervene.

Finding the origin of these rumours will require both streetwise and small bribes, best of which being a few pints here and there to loose the tongues. The trail will lead to a dockworker. If intimidated sufficiently, he will confess that he was paid handsomely to spread the rumours and aggravation. The man who employed him had a pale face and spoke with a distinct Thyatian accent (Porius, of course). Also, the sword found at the Ivanovich farm may be used to direct suspicion away from the Ilerendians, but it is hardly conclusive evidence.

When the culprit has been found, the rumours subside slowly. Miss Wissenschaft remains in the village, however, to keep tabs on the situation. The baron will give the PCs a small reward if they solve the situation without bloodshed.

STAGE III

During this stage, or possibly earlier as mentioned above, rumours direct the PCs into the Elder Woods, where they meet the Guardian treant Bark. He asks their assistance against the henchmen of Askold, who have felled many good trees of the forest. If they are successful, the PCs may find out that the villains live in the Seagull Island.

One morning a farmhand of one of the tenant farms arrives in the village. He says that he has seen a small column of smoke arising from the Elder Woods. The baron asks the PCs to investigate if this has anything to do with the disappearances, after all there have been various rumours about the ghosts of the forest. If they haven't heard of them earlier, the PCs could be supplied with some local legends of the forest.

Elder Woods is an ancient oak forest. The thick foliage blocks practically all sunlight from reaching the ground, thus the undergrowth is scarce, mainly consisting of various species of fungi. When the PCs are nearing the forest, smoke is no longer visible. When they enter the forest, Bark will become aware of them almost instantly, and will spy on them, using his magic to determine their intentions before making contact. If the PCs don't harm the forest and are "good" as far as Bark is considered, he'll eventually lead them to a small clearing, using his animal servants to accomplish this. There he'll contact them. The treant is very polite and talks in a very roundabout way, and expects same kind of behaviour from others. If the PCs are silly enough to attack him, he'll use his animated trees and spells to repel them.

Bark is very worried, because a large group of humans have invaded the forest (as the Seagull island is virtually barren, Askold's servants need firewood and timber for scaffolding in the monolith building site). If the PCs mention something about their mission and/or offer their help, Bark is very happy and will be even more polite in the future. He could of course try to repel the invaders himself, but he is busy repairing the damage in one area where a small forest fire was lit yesterday (one of Askold's goons was careless with his torch). He promises to help the PCs in their mission if they help him.

→ The camp of Askold's goons is in the western edge of the forest, near the coast. The burnt section of the forest is north from it. In the camp are 15 soldiers, one magic-user and 5 slaves. They have felled a good amount of oaks and are presently stripping them and readying them for

transport. The camp is in a round clearing of about 50 yards wide, surrounded by the forest on all sides. Five soldiers patrol the perimeter at all times, and five guard the slaves who are working by the piles of logs (Note: At times the soldiers have to do some labouring also, as Askold needs all capable hands). There are three tents in the camp, two big ones for the soldiers and one small for the magic-user.

15 soldiers, Fighter 2
ST +1, DX +1, CON +1, Hit Points: 13

Equipment:

chain mail, shield, sword, crossbow, assorted coins of 10 gp worth each.

Julius the magic-user, level 4
INT +2, DX +2, Hit Points: 12

Equipment:

dagger, 3 throwing daggers, spell book, 50 Thyatian gp in pouch, a pearl-decorated flute (100 gp)

Spell Book:

Magic Missile, Shield, Light, Read Magic, Read Languages, Levitate, Web, Wizard Lock, Mirror Image, ESP

The slaves won't fight, even to liberate themselves, as they have been tortured to utter submission by Porius. The soldiers are experienced and skilful, and won't easily flee, as they wouldn't have anywhere to go. (They would be picked up from the coast, but not until a certain signal has been given.) If the PCs are losing the fight, the DM can always bring in Bark.

In addition to the personal effects of Askold's goons, nothing of significance if found in the camp. However, the slaves are aware of the following:

→ The base of the villains is in the Seagull Island. They can describe the island and the base approximately.

→ Their leader seems to be an old and powerful wizard.

→ These particular slaves have been used in cutting trees and preparing the base camp, but the others were sent by boat to somewhere else. (To repair the Circle of Monoliths, but only the magic-user is aware of this, and he doesn't know the exact location. He only knows that it is somewhere in the capeland.)

By interrogating possible prisoners the PCs can find out the location of the base, the watchtower on Seagull Island (see below), the total amount of Askold's troops and the identities of Askold and Porius.

After the battle is over, Bark thanks the PCs and rewards them. First of all, he'll use his healing magic on any wounded PCs.

Then he'll offer them a unique treat feast at his home. In addition to this, he'll give them a Potion of Healing, and a Potion of Animal Control.

STAGE IV

This stage is written under the assumption that the DM wishes to realise the climatic battle of Stage V. This means that when the PCs arrive at Seagull Island, the Circle of Monoliths has been restored and Askold has already left to perform the ritual. Thus they must hurry to the Star Rocks, as the time of the ritual is nearing...

In order to find Askold's base, the PCs must find out it's exact location, the Seagull Island. This can be done at the Fishermen's village of village of Dmitrov. If asked, the Baron will give them a letter which authorises them to seize a boat from either the harbour of the fishermen. He can afford to give them only a few, two or three, soldiers, as many of his troops have been sent to patrol at the request of the tenant farmers. "Hawk" is pursuing smugglers, so it can't be used either (this is of course up to the DM).

If the PCs contact the Fishermen, their leader will grudgingly give them a sailing boat called "Foamhead", with a crew of two sailors, who are quite reluctant to participate in the actual combat.

Sailors Yuri and Kiril: Normal Man, Hit Points: 5, Leather armour, dagger

→ The trip to the Seagull Island is fast from the Fishermen's village, a bit longer from Dmitrov. If the PCs briefed the slaves well, they should have a good idea of the layout of the island. The boat can land anywhere except for two high cliffs. In the southern shores of the island there are thickets which provide good cover. Askold's goons won't notice the approach if the PCs don't sail towards the island from the direction of the Watchtower or the temporary "harbour".

THE SEAGULL ISLAND is a barren, rocky islet. As a hiding place it is ideal, since very few people visit it with the exception of a few guano- and egg-gatherers, who tend to do their "harvesting" on the cliffs on the opposite side of the island from the camp of the villains. The islet is the home for thousands of seagulls, whose constant screams drown any noise. Note: If the PCs haven't acted quickly after the battle of Elder Woods, the soldiers here will be very vigilant, as the expected signal wasn't given.

A small sailing ship "Lightning", fitted with a ballista, has been hidden in a temporary harbour. At the moment 5 soldiers and the captain are guarding the ship. If the PCs search the ship, in the captain's cabin in a locked chest they can find the sea charts of Black Eagle waters, a Black Eagle banner and an lerendian pirate banner. (The ship has been making small sorties in the nearby waters to increase the lerendian rumours.) The captain and the soldiers live in two tents at the beach.

Captain, level 4 thief
DX +1, Hit Points: 10

Equipment:
leather armour, sword, crossbow, 25 Thyatian gp, a pearl ring (200 gp)

Soldiers: see Stage III

Slaves: The rest of the slaves, were sent here, back from the Monolith site, when the restoration was complete. Sadly, Porius has them all executed seremonially. They are buried in a shallow grave a few hundred yards downhill.

→ If the PCs interrogate them, they can find about the Watchtower and the base camp. They will also find out about the sorties under the lerendian flag, and Askold's plans of increasing them and beginning serious raids after the completion of "the boss's business". They know nothing about the Monoliths themselves.

→ The Watchtower was built from the timber of the Elder Woods, and it is placed to guard the approach to the harbour. Its sides have been "painted" with guano as camouflage. Three soldier man the tower constantly, one standing guard at the top at all times. The ground level is comprised by a shed, from which a ladder leads to a platform supported by four long poles. There are three bunks and a small table (a crate). On the table is a deck of cards and assorted coins.

→ The soldiers here have the same information as above, except of course that they know that Askold has sailed somewhere with Porius and some elite soldiers.

→ The base camp was established in natural caves. At the moment there are only a few soldiers, because Askold, Porius and the elite goons have already departed for Star Rocks with a boat. At the mouth of the caves two soldiers are constantly at guard. In the evenings they have a small fire in which they mull wine. If the soldiers notice any intruders, they retreat to the first "room" and prepare an ambush, calling the

rest of the soldiers here. If a battle is initiated, the rest of the soldiers will arrive in a few rounds.

→ "The Guardroom" is the first cave, in which six soldiers live. It is followed by "The Soldiers' Room", in which there are normally a lot of men, but now only 10 since some are at the Star Rocks and some died in Elder Woods. One notable feature here is a chest, which holds 100 bolts, three swords and 2 shields, all of lerendian craftsmanship.

→ The room of the lower-level mage branches off the previous cave. His personal effects are in a small chest, an they include 1 wolfsbane, 2 silver daggers and a silver pentagram (the mage was pathologically afraid of lycanthropes). Under his mattress he had hidden a small onyx (50 gp).

→ From the Soldier's room another doorway opens to Porius's room. The only features here are a symbol of Thanatos painted on the wall, a small altar and two whips. Porius slept on the floor.

→ Askold's room is behind Porius's room, and it is comfortable, even though it is just a temporary hiding-hole. The floor is covered with a carpet, there is a small gobelin of a red dragon on the wall, and instead of a mattress Askold had his goons build a bed of sorts. It is covered with furs. There's a small table and a locked chest (trapped according to the wishes of the DM). There are maps of Glantri and Karameikos, a pouch of money (a substantial sum, decided by the DM), plus an ancient elven parchment that has a picture of the Monoliths and the Star Rocks. His diary is also there. On the pages the PCs can read his life story in general details – it is solid evidence of the involvement of the Black Eagle Barony, although the real intentions of Black Eagle aren't revealed. Between the pages is a transcription of an ancient scroll, describing the needed rituals. The Children of the Old Covenant aren't mentioned, but it is clear that Askold is trying to gain permanent control over powerful elemental entities, which clearly represents a huge threat to Karameikos. The time of the ritual is of course mentioned – for dramatic effect it should be very very soon, but again this is up to the DM.

STAGE V

This is the climatic stage of the adventure. The PCs must battle their main adversaries and stop Askold from conjuring up armies of elemental beings. The tormented souls of the Children of the Old Covenant will also intervene, making a final attempt to get the long-deserved rest. It is

up to the PCs to save not only the people of Dmitrov, but also this forgotten people.

The Star Rocks is a steep neck of land in the southern tip of the Barony of Dmitrov. It can be reached only via inland, because the cliffs are high and almost impossible to climb. Askold arrived here with a boat that is hidden in thickets on the northern side of the isthmus. The Monoliths are at the highest point of the Star Rocks.

When the PCs arrive, Askold has already started performing the ancient ritual. The sacred stones have been restored and the area cleared of vegetation. Askold in standing on the central stone slab, with five bonfires surrounding him. The moon is low, and its rays pierce the two stone rings, making them glow. Askold is chanting ancient chants with alien words and drawing mystical runes into the air.

Porius and five elite soldiers are guarding the scene. Porius especially is ready to defend Askold to the very end.

5 Elite Soldiers, Fighter 3
ST +2, CON +1, Hit Points: 20
Equipment: plate mail, shield, sword

At some point of the battle, if the PCs don't manage to stop Askold in the very beginning, the mage turns to them. He is smiling victoriously and holds the Conjure Elemental scroll in his hands. He holds his hands up, reciting the magical words, and beams of ancient energy emerge from him, hitting the great monoliths. The ground trembles and the stars in the sky seem to vibrate.

Then two oval shapes, like wounds in the very fabric of the world itself, appear inside the stone rings. Behind one of them the PCs can see huge, brown figures, whose movements are slow but seem

unstoppable. Behind the other they can see swirling figures, like living clouds, and a great gust of wind is felt. These are legions of earth and air elementals, summoned by the magnified power of Askold's ritual. If someone happens to be looking, Askold takes on the expression of utter horror. He realises that even though his powers of summoning have been magnified, he is still too inexperienced to bind the elemental hordes. Without anyone controlling them, the elementals are poised to enter the world, unhindered.

However, the elementals cannot reach the world. Hunchbacked and mutilated figures rise before them, blocking the portals in the stone rings. These are the Children of the Old Covenant, who despite aeons of torture are still ready to help the world. The PCs start hearing strange whispers in their minds, urging them to destroy the vile upstart wizard, for the sake of their own land and the sake of these accursed children.

Askold, as always, is not ready to see his own folly. He blames the PCs for ruining his plans and tries to kill them with his spells (is the DM wishes, the magnifying effect might strengthen his powers in the battle too). The battle should be very hard, potentially deadly. During the whole time the elementals and the Children of the Old Covenant struggle at the portals. Only the death of Askold can cancel the summoning spell and send the elementals back to their plane of existence.

If/when Askold is killed, the remaining soldiers will surrender, but Porius fights to the death. The portals will close, and the Monoliths of Rock and the Heavens will crumble to dust. For a fleeting moment the sad souls of the Children of the last Covenant hover in this world, before slipping into oblivion. Only a barely audible "Thank you", spoken by gruff voices,

remains in the minds of the PCs.

If the PCs lose the battle, the consequences will be disastrous. The legions of elementals will destroy the Baronies of Dmitrov and Vorloi, including the Elder Woods. They will continue their march towards Specularum, where only the combined efforts of the Mages of the Guild, the few high-level priests, the Elvanguard, and the few high-level fighters who wield magical weapons (mainly the Order of Griffon) manage to stop them. Perhaps the portals are finally closed, leaving only some enraged and mad elementals to cause havoc in the countryside. However, the spine of the Karameikan army is broken after heavy losses, and Black Eagle will attack, supported perhaps by several local humanoid tribes. Fire and blood engulf the lands of Karameikos. Askold will not have time to enjoy his work, however. The elementals have no respect for those who destroy their solemn lives by ripping their souls to foreign planes.

EPILOGUE

The PCs have saved the lands of Dmitrov from great harm (and the whole Karameikos, but they don't know it), and have given a nasty blow to the Black Eagle. Dmitrov rewards them with handsome sums of money and perhaps even gives them some lower noble titles. Miss Wissenschaft thanks them also, opening up a good contact to lerendi and possible future adventures. Bark will also contact them by a messenger bird and asks them to visit him one last time. He knows the story of the Old Covenant very well, and has decided to tell it to them (the "short" version, as the treat version is sooo long). In the end he sings the PCs themselves into the fabric of this ancient story. ■

Funny Pub Names

Compiled by: **James John Gregoire**

At Least the Mead is Warm ...

- Keep Out
- The Lucky Louse
- The Tortured Adventurer
- The Angry DM
- The Unfortunate Stain
- The Tomb
- Puke and Go

- The Inn Definitely Not Run by Doppelgangers
- The Illusionary Floor Inn
- The Inn Where You can Get Into Lots of Fights, and Maybe Even Get Started on an Adventure or Two
- The Tavern of Elemental Evil
- The Puking Palace
- Ye Olde Saving Throw Inn
- The Open Grave
- Inn of Horrors
- The Tavern With a Man Shrouded In Darkness In the Back Corner

- Hey, We Don't Like Your Kind In This Here Inn (I like this one)
- Kill the Adventurers Inn
- Inn on the Borderlands
- Still Smoking Inn
- The Uncursed Inn
- The Slaughtered Lamb
- The Closing Coffin
- The Random Encounter
- The Plague Inn
- Ye Olde Plot Device
- Inn of the Damned
- Chateau d'Amberville (X2 reference)