Goblinoid

VOL
1

ISSUE
4

Games

Scribe
of
Orcus

The *Scribe of Orcus* is a periodical produced by **Goblinoid Games** to support "retro-clone" game systems, and to provide "compatible" material for various old-school RPGs. These systems include (but are not limited to) OSRIC, Labyrinth Lord, Mutant Future, and GORE. Most issues of the *Scribe of Orcus* will vary from 5 to 10 pages, and will focus on solid gaming text.

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MUTANT FUTURE

Factions 2:
The Luds

By Ryan Denison

Introduction

Here we present the second faction in our series for Mutant future. Mutant Future Factions are groups of humans, mutants, or "others" who are united for a cause or belief. They may be inserted into any Mutant Future campaign to be used as antagonists.

Meet the Luds

Luds are people who believe that the use of the of the ancients' advanced technology is wrong. The exact reasoning changes from group to group; some feel that it is degrading to the human (and mutant human) spirit, while others believe that the ancients destroyed their own world with such devices, and do not wish to see a repeat performance. Likeminded Luds tend to clump together when living in larger settlements and may even form their own separate communities on the outskirts of such settlements.

Just as the Luds differ in their reasons for shunning technology, they also disagree over what constitutes advanced technology. Those who are classified as "true Luds" will use nothing more advanced than animal driven farm equipment or primitive weapons and firearms, while others have a more flexible stance on the use of utilitarian technology such as automatic farming machines, medical equipment, or powered vehicles. True Luds often refer to these individuals as "low Luds," a term the target would likely find derogatory. Even with these differences, all Luds agree that the use of the powerful weapons of the ancients is morally suspect, if not abhorrent. A Lud would only resort to using such devices in the direst of circumstances, if at all. Armors that cannot be fashioned by contemporary blacksmiths or armories are met with distaste by most true Luds, but only powered armors are completely shunned. All Luds are extremely uncomfortable in the presence of known androids or robots, and often react by distancing themselves as quickly as possible.

In Lud society, a person who is discovered to be using technology beyond what is acceptable is punished, usually by some form of public humiliation ritual or, in the case of particularly flagrant offenses, complete banishment from the settlement.

Luds may be of any mutational stock, as Luds generally have no prejudice against mutation. To pure human Luds, mutation is simply another example of the way the ancients harmed humanity by using technology. In fact, this belief in mutation being caused by an ancient failure of humankind often makes the less fortunate mutated Luds more fanatical than their pure human brethren.

Some Lud groups are not content to simply remove technology from their own lives, but feel that they must save those who are meddling with dangerous ancient technologies by any means necessary. These Lud extremist groups stage carefully planned raids and destroy technological artifacts in ruins and settlements.

The following example groups are meant to illustrate the differences between Lud societies.

The Keeton Luds

Formed under the guidance of a mutated plant elder named Keet, the peaceful settlement of Keeton lies in a valley covered in lush vegetation. This settlement may be placed in any Mutant Future campaign world. Keeton is a successful farming community that supports itself by selling vegetables and livestock to other nearby settlements or travelers. The settlement has a number of moderately large ranches housing domesticated xeno cattle and other livestock, and they plant a wide assortment of vegetables, including an immense patch of dangerous kernel plants tended to by Keet himself.

Keeton members are true Luds. The most advanced machinery the members will use is animal or human powered farming machines that they have built themselves. They do a great deal of trading with wasteland foragers for scrap metal, which they melt down to make farming utensils. They also do business with blacksmiths in local settlements from time to time. Many foragers have started out trying to make money off of the people of Keeton, only to find themselves drawn into the peaceful community as members.

Keeton accepts travelers very liberally, and it is made up of all types of mutants and pure humans. The members are naturally suspicious of robots and obvious androids. An android or other mechanical character will quickly overstay his welcome in Keeton, and any group with such a member will get very little interaction from most members of the society. Depending on the circumstances, the Mutant Lord might even apply negative modifiers to CHA rolls, reaction rolls, or other social interactions.

The Keeton Luds are religious, attending church meetings frequently. These meetings are presided over by Keet and other settlement leaders, and serve to reinforce the anti-technology teachings. During these meetings, Keet often delivers a sermon via telepathy, showing visions passed down to him through his plant ancestors. These visions often pertain to the end of the previous civilizations, and

contain scenes witnessed by plants outside of nuclear bases, war zones, and other areas where humans and mutants strike at one another using strange machines.

The teachings of Keet are geared toward fostering a simplistic lifestyle of self sufficiency and goodwill. A reverence for plant and animal life is important to the Keeton Luds, with each harvest of plants or livestock prefaced by a long and solemn prayer of gratitude. This reverent animism has resulted in Keeton Luds addressing plants and animals as though they are related to them. It is not unusual to hear such statements in Keeton as "Pardon me, brother tree, you're looking well today. My, what shade you give!" or "By the grasses! Look at sister cow over there, her pseudopod is quite strong!"

Keet does not wish to be worshiped or idolized by the members of the settlement, and views himself as more of a father figure than a true leader. He truly cares for every member of the settlement, and knows them all by name.

Gear

Keeton Luds carry items you might find on the average wasteland traveler. They carry very little money unless they are on a shopping journey to a nearby settlement. Individuals will often carry blades or farm tools that could be used as weapons depending on perceived levels of danger and personal preference.

NPCs

Keet – Founder of Keeton
11th Level Mutant Plant

STR	10	INT	11
DEX	13	WIS	13
CON	17	CHA	10
hp	89	AC	9

Mutations: Neural Telepathy, Metaconcert (plants)

Keet's body looks like long, slender leaves folded and twisted into a humanoid shape that can range anywhere from 5' to 7' tall. He is capable of unfurling his body parts and reshaping them in different areas, giving himself two hands on the same side of the body, for example, or fashioning more than two legs for extra stability. The one constant feature of Keet is his face, which is an eerie replication of a human face.

If asked about his face, Keet explains that the face is a likeness of a friend from his youth. He will relate the story of his friend's death. The two traveled the wasteland, trying to make their fortunes scavenging ancient weapons and devices from ruins and selling them to a newly formed outpost of the Steel Clad (see the *Scribe of Orcus*, Vol. 1 Issue 5). During one such salvage operation, his friend was killed by one of the strange devices they had taken from the ruins. Devastated, Keet vowed never to use
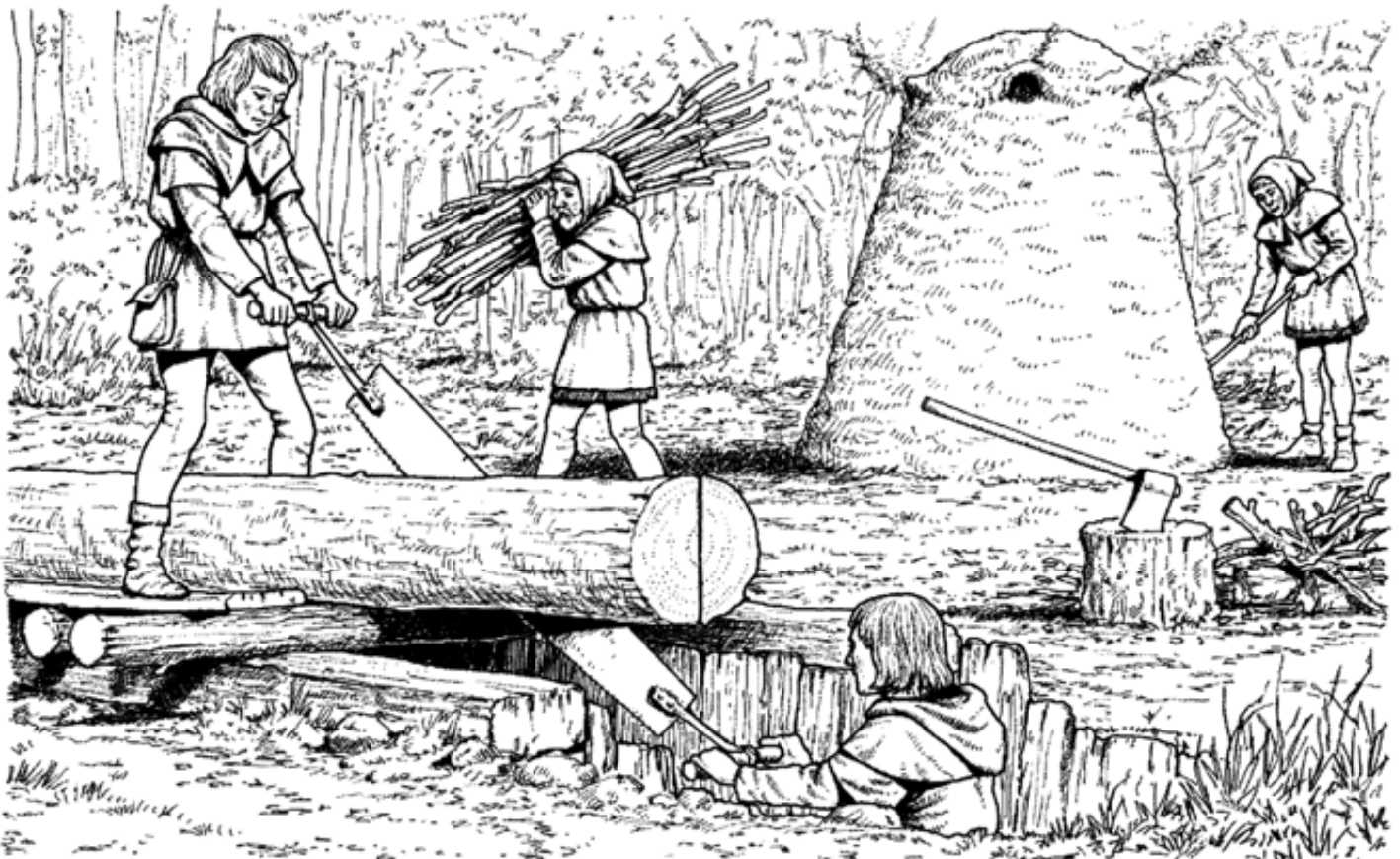
technology again. He took on the countenance of his friend as a reminder of the dangers of the ancients' technology.

The New Luds

The New Luds are roving bands of extremists who travel the wasteland looking for ruins and settlements that they can free from the tyranny of technology. They believe that a policy of slash and burn is the fastest way to salvation from technological pollution. New Luds will try to permanently seal off ruins if they can, using explosive pods from mutated plants as bombs. The New Luds breed such plants for just this purpose, in a location that is a closely guarded secret. Rumor has it that New Luds are working on new breeds of mutant plants and animals to use as weapons in their fight against technology.

In circumstances where a large number of New Luds gather together at one time, they will not hesitate in attacking a settlement, rounding up any advanced weapons and artifacts and destroying them. They will try to refrain from harming anyone during such raids, but sometimes these things cannot be avoided. The New Luds justify such acts of violence by explaining that death is the ultimate escape from the clutches of technology.

The secret settlement of the New Luds is relatively small, as it is rare for all of the members to be there at the same time. They hide out in a cluster of abandoned buildings that is miles from the nearest settlement. The settlements closest to them are aware of their presence, but are too small to do anything about it. As a result, these settlements are free of technology after having been targets of New Lud activity for a number of years.

New Luds are generally encountered in groups of 3d6+6, and will usually include a mix of mutated individuals. The New Luds will align themselves with anyone who follows their cause regardless of mutations. They will never work with androids or other robots, and will not hesitate to kill or injure them if they feel they can get away with it.

Gear

New Luds will carry all kinds of primitive weapons, but favor knives and long blades. They wear leather armor hardened with special plant oils (AC 6). They will also be in possession of specially bred exploding plant pods. Each member typically holds one or two of these pods in a padded pack or pouch.

Explosive Plant Pods

These mottled blue and yellow pods are between 7 and 10 inches long, and roughly 2 inches in diameter. They explode when thrown or heavily impacted, inflicting 3d6 damage to everyone within a 5 foot radius. If necessary, they can be bundled together and thrown to create a

bigger explosion. Add 1d6 damage for every 3 bundled pods, to a maximum of 7d6.

NPCs

Oren Prout – Leader of the New Luds
9th level Pure Human

STR	11	INT	12
DEX	12	WIS	9
CON	9	CHA	10
hp	58	AC	7

Mutations: None

Oren became the leader of the New Luds when his father accidentally blew himself up while sabotaging the doorway leading into an underground complex. Oren leads a group of New Luds from a hidden base into the wasteland to raid technology-heavy settlements and ruins. Always interested in plant life, it was he who started the process of cross breeding mutant plants in an effort to increase their useful mutations. He developed the plant line that eventually produced the powerful plant pod bombs.

Oren's followers listen to him unquestioningly; they are ready to give their lives to further the cause of the New Luds. The group functions as a family, with Oren and his uncle Treno Prout at the head. Treno acts as Oren's adviser, and his suggestions are heeded much of the time.

Treno Prout – Oren's uncle and adviser
12th level Pure Human

STR	16	INT	11
DEX	9	WIS	8
CON	14	CHA	10
hp	80	AC	7

Mutations: None

Treno Prout was part of the mission that killed his brother. He hoped that he might become leader after his brother died (Oren's father), but was surprised when the group chose to shift Oren into the position of leader. Oren never makes a move without consulting Treno, and often has him act as a de facto leader when he is not there to make decisions. This small amount of power assuages Treno's feelings of jealousy somewhat, but should Oren become more comfortable and decisive in his role as leader of the New Luds, it is quite possible that Treno might attempt a power play.

The Assassin

A New Class for Labyrinth Lord

By Daniel Proctor

Introduction

This new class for *Labyrinth Lord* is heavily inspired by classic *Original Edition* and *Advanced Edition* assassins. The class may be seamlessly incorporated into existing *Labyrinth Lord* campaigns, and notes are presented in this article for using assassins with rules for separate races and classes from the article, "Breaking Up Can be So Hard" in the *Scribe of Orcus* Vol. 1 Issue 3.

Assassin

Requirements: STR 12, DEX 12, INT 12
Prime Requisite: None
Hit Dice: 1d6
Maximum Level: 15

The assassin class is a specialized variation of the thief class, with the primary objective of killing for hire. Assassins may also be hired as spies. An assassin will usually belong to an **assassin's guild** from the character's local town. The guild provides protection and may offer jobs to an assassin in good standing. At the Labyrinth Lord's discretion, an assassin may have to forfeit a portion of his earnings to the guild in exchange for these services. Assassin guilds can be much more territorial than thieves' guilds, and a character may face penalties, including death, if he is not a member of a local guild and he has decided to practice his trade in their domain. Assassins, like thieves, cannot wear armor heavier than leather; however, assassins may use shields and any kind of weapon. An assassin may backstab as a thief, in addition to having all other thief skills, but thief skills function as a thief of two levels lower. As a result, no thief skills are available until 3rd level. To backstab, an assassin must catch an opponent unaware of his presence, usually by using *move silently* and *hide in shadows*. Assassins may also roll to instantly kill a victim of a backstab (discussed later). When backstabbing, an assassin will receive an attack bonus of +4 and will multiply all damage by 2. The damage multiplier applies even if the instant assassination roll fails. Assassins attack using the thief attack values, and use thief saving throw values. They advance in level using the same experience table as thieves. Assassins are restricted to the chaotic and neutral alignments, because no lawful character can be a hired killer.

Assassins are restricted in when they may have hirelings. Beginning at 4th level, assassins may have hirelings, but they only may be assassins of an equal or lower level to the character's. Starting at 8th level an assassin may also hire thieves, and at 12th level an assassin may hire members of any class.

Thief Abilities: Assassins have all thief skills at two levels lower. Refer to *Labyrinth Lord* for these abilities.

Assassin Abilities

In addition to thief abilities, assassins have the following special abilities.

Additional Languages: An assassin with INT 16 may learn another alignment language other than his own. An assassin with INT 18 may know all three alignment languages.

Assassination: Assassins may attempt to kill a target instantly. The assassin must attempt and succeed in a backstab and achieve *surprise* on his opponent. The base chance of success is 50% against a victim of equal level or monster HD to the assassin. This probability is raised or lowered by 5% for each level or HD the target is above or below the assassin. For example, if a 5th level assassin attempts to assassinate a 7th level character, the probability of success goes down to 40%. If that same 5th level assassin attempts to assassinate a 3 HD monster, the probability goes up to 60%.

Disguise: Assassins frequently employ disguises in their trade, in order to better deceive their targets, conceal their identities, and pass without notice. Assassins may disguise themselves to appear as another class, race, or sex, but they may not convincingly alter their height by more than 3" shorter or 5" taller. The base probability of successfully disguising oneself is 95%. A 5% penalty is applied for disguising as another race or as the opposite sex. This probability is further modified in the following way: add the INT and WIS of a victim to be deceived. For ever point below 20, add 1% to the probability of success for the assassin. For every point above 24, subtract 1% from the chances of success. For example, if a victim has a combined INT and WIS of 19, and the assassin is disguised as a different class and appearance but the same race and sex, his probability of success goes up to 96%. Finally, this disguise becomes less convincing the longer people are exposed to it. There is a cumulative 2% penalty to the success roll for each day after the first that the same disguise is maintained around the same people. This penalty is doubled if the assassin is imitating a different race or sex, but the maximum penalty is 8%.

Poison Use: Assassins are trained in the safe use and handling of poisons. They may adulterate a victim's food or drink with poison, using stealth and/or disguise, or use poison on their weapons. However, when using poisoned weapons there is a cumulative 10% probability each round that anyone within 10' will notice that the weapons are

poisoned. Those who notice the poison will either attack the assassin or call out for the city guard, or both. Roll on the table below.

Noticing Poison Reaction Table

Roll 1d10	Reaction
1-5	Calls for guards
6-8	Calls for guards and attacks
9-10	Attacks

Assassination and Experience

When an assassin successfully assassinates a victim, he receives XP equal to 90% of the gp fee. In addition, the assassin receives XP based on the character level of the victim, treating the character level as an equivalent HD level from the Monster Experience Points Table in *Labyrinth Lord*. Experience is awarded just as it is from a monster of the same HD, and special abilities are accounted for as well. For example, if a 3rd level cleric were assassinated, he would grant a base of 50 XP +15 per ability. A cleric has two special abilities, spell casting and *turn undead*, so the total XP is 80.

Assassination Fees

The typical fee an assassin may charge is dependent on his level and the level of the victim. The base fee is listed in the Assassination Fees table. This base is for a 0 level victim, and the fee increases depending on the victim's level. Note that these fees may apply to NPC assassins as well, and the fees may be raised if the target is a person of importance, such as a city mayor or a prince.

Reaching the 13th level: When an assassin reaches 13th level he may no longer advance in levels until he is able to take over an existing assassin's guild. This can be done through a direct challenge or through duplicity. The rival guildmaster will be a 14th level assassin. A typical guild will have 4d6+3 members, but there is a 75% probability per member that they leave when the guild is taken over by a new guildmaster. Any new members recruited will be 1st level assassins, and the Labyrinth Lord will determine the maximum possible number of guild members. Note that a guildmaster must be powerful, cunning, and strong, else the guild members revolt or commit treachery. In order to achieve 15th level, an assassin must seek out a legendary grandmaster assassin of 15th level. Only by defeating a grandmaster may an assassin reach 15th level. These rare killers have reached near perfection in the art of death, and live secluded lives where they may deal treachery from a distance by fear and manipulation. Assassins do not advance beyond 15th level.

Demi-Human Assassins

If using separate races and classes, the following demi-humans may be assassins with the indicated level limits:

Demi-human Assassins

Race	Level Limit
Dwarf	9
Elf	10
Half-Elf	11
Half-Orc	Unlimited (15)

Assassination Fees Table

Assassin Level	Base Fee (gp)	Victim Level						
		1+	3+	5+	7+	10+	13+	16+
1	50	100	150	200	250	-	-	-
2	65	130	195	160	245	310	-	-
3	75	150	225	300	375	450	525	-
4	100	200	300	400	500	650	800	1,000
5	150	300	450	600	750	975	1,200	1,500
6	250	500	750	1,000	1,250	1,625	2,000	2,500
7	400	800	1,200	1,600	2,000	2,600	3,000	3,800
8	600	1,200	1,800	2,400	3,000	3,900	4,800	6,000
9	850	1,700	2,550	3,400	4,250	5,525	6,800	8,500
10	1,200	2,400	3,600	4,800	6,000	7,800	9,600	13,000
11	1,700	3,400	5,100	6,800	8,500	11,050	13,550	16,950
12	2,500	5,000	7,500	10,000	12,500	16,250	20,000	25,000
13	4,000	8,000	12,000	16,000	20,000	26,000	32,000	40,000
14	7,000	14,000	21,000	28,000	38,500	49,000	59,500	70,000
15+	10,000	20,000	35,000	50,000	70,000	90,000	120,000	240,000

NPC Assassins

There may be times when assassin NPCs are hired by the PCs or against the PCs. When an assassin is hired to assassinate a PC, the encounter should always be played out in the game. However, if an assassin is hired to kill an NPC, the Labyrinth Lord may wish to assign a probability of its success, taking into account the approximate difficulty of the task. Alternatively, the encounter can be set up and played out, having a player play the assassin.

Other times, NPC assassins may be hired as spies. In these cases a simple system may be used to determine if the spy gathers the information sought. This system should not be used for PC assassins. If a PC is hired as a spy, these situations should always be played out in the game. Any spying mission's difficulty should be classified as either easy, moderate, or hard. Guidelines for defining these categories follow.

Easy: These missions require little in the employment of specialized assassin skills, and generally only require the assassin to look around in public places, or observe conditions in an environment where concealing his presence or identity will be easy and virtually unchallenged. Examples of easy missions might include making note of a building's external defenses, or scouting ahead to look for dangers in a given region. Easy missions have a base 50% chance of success, +5% per assassin level beginning at level 2. An easy mission takes 1d8 days to complete.

Moderate: Moderate missions require the assassin to enter areas he should not be, utilizing stealth, disguise, thief skills, or all of the above. Examples include tasks to steal an item or observe an item or activities in restricted or locked areas. These tasks could include breaking into areas or fooling guards through cunning and disguise. Moderate missions have a base 30% chance of success, +10 per 3 levels of the assassin beginning at level 3. A moderate mission takes 4d10 days to complete.

Hard: These missions may reflect similar activities as those in the moderate category, but could reflect breaking into tightly guarded, and/or trapped, areas. Hard missions may also reflect missions of a long term nature, where slow and careful subterfuge and long term infiltration of organizations is necessary. The base chance of success is 10%, +5% for every 2 assassin levels beginning at level 3. The time to complete a hard mission is determined by the Labyrinth Lord on a case by case basis.

Note that all of these probabilities can be altered by the Labyrinth Lord to take into account special circumstances. The probability of success can never be higher than 95%.

Assassin Spying Failure

There are various reasons why a spy may have failed at his task, and specific reasons are left to the Labyrinth Lord should the success roll fail. The table below provides options as they pertain to the disposition of the mission and the assassin that was hired should the success roll fail. The overarching concerns are whether the mission and any possibility of its success have been compromised, and whether the spy has been captured, killed, and possibly given his captors information about who hired him. Consult the table below.

Spy Failure Outcome	
Roll d%*	Outcome
01-05	The spy actually succeeds, but withholds the information and will only give it up if his price is tripled.
06-40	The spy fails due to circumstance, but may try again.
41-52	The spy fails, attracting suspicion; if attempted again there is only a 10% chance of success.
53-62	The spy is captured and imprisoned.
63-72	The spy is killed.
73-88	The spy is detected and fed false information.
89-93	The spy is captured and tortured, revealing everything he knows about his mission and who hired him. The spy is then killed.
94-98	The spy is captured and tortured, revealing everything he knows about his mission and who hired him. The spy escapes.
99-00	The spy is captured, and for twice the normal assassination fee is convinced to kill the person/s who hired him.

*moderate mission, add 7% to the roll, hard missions add 3%

less stats, more story

Wicked Brew
Poisons in Labyrinth Lord

By Daniel Proctor

Introduction

This article briefly covers different poisons that can be introduced into the campaign. They are particularly important if the assassin class is in play, but poisons can be used to make foes much more formidable or to add additional dangers to labyrinths through unlabeled and mysterious potions, or poisoned traps and food. Much of this material is adapted from the System Reference Document, but revised toward more typical old-school sensibilities.

Poison Basics

When a character takes damage from an attack with a poisoned weapon, touches an item smeared with contact poison, consumes poisoned food or drink, or is otherwise poisoned, he must make a saving throw versus poison. If he fails, he dies or takes the poison's damage. Even if he succeeds, he may face damage.

One dose of poison smeared on a weapon or some other object affects just a single target. A poisoned weapon or object retains its venom until the weapon scores a hit or the object is touched (unless the poison is wiped off before a target comes in contact with it). Unless otherwise determined by the Labyrinth Lord, any poison smeared on an object or exposed to the elements in any way remains potent until it is touched or used. Poisons are divided into four basic types according to the method by which their effects are delivered, as follows.

Contact (CT): Merely touching this type of poison necessitates a saving throw. It can be actively delivered via a weapon or other physical attack. Even if the attack causes no physical damage, the poison can still affect the target. A chest or other object can be smeared with contact poison as part of a trap.

Ingested (IG): Ingested poisons are virtually impossible to utilize in a combat situation. A poisoner could administer a potion to an unconscious creature or attempt to dupe someone into drinking or eating something poisoned. Assassins tend to use ingested poisons outside of combat.

Inhaled (IH): Inhaled poisons are usually contained in fragile vials or eggshells. They can be thrown as a ranged attack just as when throwing flasks of oil. When it strikes a hard surface (or is struck hard), the container releases its poison. One dose spreads to fill the volume of a 10' cube. Each creature within the area must make a saving throw. Holding one's breath is ineffective against inhaled poisons; they enter the body through the nasal membranes, tear ducts, and other parts of the body.

Injury (IN): This poison must be delivered through a wound. If a creature does not suffer damage from an attack, the poison does not affect it. Traps that cause damage from weapons, needles, and the like sometimes contain injury poisons.

The characteristics of poisons are summarized on the Poison Table. Terms on the table are defined below.

Class: This is an abstract identifier for a specific poison. It does not suggest anything about the ingredients, as any number of formulas might produce similar effects.

Type: The poison's method of delivery (contact, ingested, inhaled, or via an injury).

Save Adjustment: Some poisons are weaker or stronger than others, and saving throws are modified accordingly.

Onset: The amount of time it takes for the poison to take effect.

Failed Save Damage: The damage the character takes immediately upon failing his saving throw against this poison.

Save Damage: The amount of hp damage the character suffers even if the save versus poison succeeds.

F.M.

Class	Type	Save Adj.	Onset	Failed Save Damage	Save Damage	Price
				Poison Table		
1	CT	+2	2d4 rounds	10	0	20
2	CT	+1	1d6+1 rounds	20	0	80
3	CT	-	1d4 rounds	30	10	800
4	CT	-1	1d2 rounds	40	15	2,000
5	CT	-2	1 round	death	30	4,000
6	IG	+4	2d4 rounds	20	10	6
7	IG	+3	1d4+1 rounds	30	15	35
8	IG	+2	1d2 rounds	40	20	220
9	IG	+1	1 round	death	25	520
10	IG	-	1d4 turns	death	30	1,200
11	IH	+3	1d4 rounds	5	0	5
12	IH	+2	1d2 rounds	10	5	25
13	IH	+1	1 round	15	7	35
14	IH	-	instant	20	10	150
15	IH	-1	instant	death	15	1,200
16	IN	+4	2d4+1 rounds	15	0	15
17	IN	+3	1d3 rounds	25	0	75
18	IN	+2	1 round	35	0	650
19	IN	+1	1 round	death	0	1,700
20	IN	-	instant	death	10	2,500

Price: The cost in gp of one dose (one vial) of the poison. It is not possible to use or apply poison in any quantity smaller than one dose. The purchase and possession of poison is always illegal, and even in big cities it can be obtained only from specialized, less than reputable sources.

Perils of Using Poison

A character has a 5% chance of exposing himself to a poison whenever he applies it to a weapon or otherwise readies it for use. Additionally, a character who rolls a natural 1 on an attack roll with a poisoned weapon must succeed in a DEX attribute check or he poisons himself and must make a save versus poison. However, assassins are trained in the use of poisons and there is no chance an assassin will poison himself when employing it in any way.

There is a chance that a target in close proximity to poison will detect its presence due to its appearance, smell, or taste, before it is significantly contacted. The chance is related to the save adjustment of each poison. Poisons with +4 have an 80% probability of detection; +3, 60%; +2, 40%, +1, 20%.

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