



# Signs & Portents

**RUNEQUEST SCENARIO - THE WITCHING WHEEL - FOLLOW UP TO THE MALADY FROM ISSUE 67**  
**MAGIC OF KABALA - GENERIC SUPPLEMENT**  
**CONAN SUPPLEMENT - 10 REASONS TO LEAVE CIMMERIA**  
**THE FANTASY GM'S EMERGENCY TOOLKIT**  
**UK GAMES EXPO 2009 REPORT**

**ALSO TRAVELLER, GLORANTHA, UNIVERSE OF BABYLON 5 AND MUCH MORE!!!**

# Signs & Portents

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Being a horsey girl, summer should be my time to relax. Yet due to the fact that I am also a Mongoose girl, there is no time to relax!

June has been another classic month in the studio... non-stop work all round, a whole bunch of insane deadlines to meet and a few conventions thrown in for good measure! Dragonmeet South West was very well received and we all had a good day.

*Paranoia* and *Judge Dredd* are at the printers, which is a relief to all of us and preparations are well under way for GenCon in August.

As for *Signs & Portents*, Will Chapman and myself have spent a great deal of time in talks with each other and with Matt over the past few months. For now that is all I can say, except for letting you know to look out for the August issue... you will not be disappointed.

For now I shall get back to editing some *Conan* supplements. Have fun all and enjoy the fabulous July weather.

Charlie

PS. On July 2nd I have been with the company for 2 years... Happy Mongoose birthday to me!

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## **Convention and Events Diary**

### **AmberCon UK '09**

**Harben House, Newport Pagnell,  
Buckinghamshire, UK  
Fri 10th - Sun 12th July 2009  
[www.ambercon.org.uk](http://www.ambercon.org.uk)**

### **Yog-Sothoth.CON 2009**

**University of Bradford, Student's Union,  
Bradford, UK  
Fri 10th - Sun 12th July 2009  
[www.yog-sothoth.com](http://www.yog-sothoth.com)**

### **Constitution 2009**

**New Hall Cambridge, UK  
Fri 31st July - Sun 2nd August 2009  
[www.constitution-con.org.uk](http://www.constitution-con.org.uk)**

### **GEN-CON**

**Thurs 13th August - Sun 16th August  
Indiana Convention Centre  
Indianapolis, Indiana, U.S.A  
[www.gencon.com](http://www.gencon.com)**

### **Furnace 2009**

**The Garrison Hotel, Sheffield, UK  
Sat 10th - Sun 11th Oct 2009  
[www.rpgfurnace.com](http://www.rpgfurnace.com)**

### **Ludicrus '09**

**Kesgrave Community Centre, Ipswich, UK  
Sat 5th - Sun 6th Dec 2009  
[www.ludicrus.org](http://www.ludicrus.org)**

**More events will be added to this list on a  
monthly basis as they are confirmed**



# July 2009 Releases



**Alien Module 1: Aslan, Price:** \$34.95, **Ref:** ISBN 978-1-906508-42-5 | MGP3818

The Aslan are revealed as never before in this mighty 200 page tome. Including new careers, equipment and vehicles, Alien Module 1 also delves into their ship construction and features an entirely new sector to expand your playing area beyond the Spinward Marches – the Trojan Reaches.

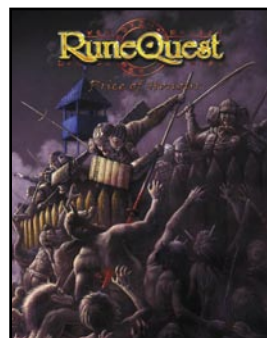
With this book, you will be able to create alien characters, use the Aslan as patrons, or simply let your players explore Aslan space as visitors, always mindful not to unintentionally upset or irritate these mighty aliens!

**Origins of the Specious, Price:** \$24.95, **Ref:** ISBN 978-1-906508-48-7 | MGP6137

The Origin of the Specious is the perfect book to turn the corpse of Charles Darwin into a powerful turbine to solve the energy crisis, especially this year. It contains consolidated and expanded research into the minds and bodies of the many different breeds of gamer along with miscellanea about their habitats, habits and habitual flaws. The book further explores the related subspecies of online gamer and speculates about the future direction of gamer evolution – perhaps giant, fleshy potatoes with the ability to poop dice?



Essential reading for gamers, gamer spouses, gamer family members and gamer victims – provided both they and the gamers involved have a sense of humour.



**Price of Honour, Price:** \$24.95, **Ref:** ISBN 978-1-906508-44-9 | MGP8161

Japan, 999 A.D.  
 Emperor Ichij rules Japan and the Imperial Court is dominated by the Fujiwara clan. The power base they have slowly built over the last two centuries is now being threatened by two rival clans, the Minamoto and the Taira. These two ambitious clans have gained much standing in the Imperial Court and their influence continues to grow. Although their losses have been great, if they defeat Enezga then both Minamoto and Taira will gain significant standing and influence in the Imperial Court for such a victory. Minamoto and Taira now face a war on two fronts, for not only must they defeat the invading army in Iwami province, but they also play a deadly game of politics in the Imperial Court against the Fujiwara clan.





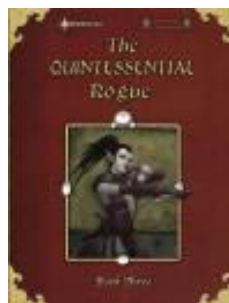
**Supplement 4: Central Supply Catalogue, Price:** \$39.95, **Ref:** ISBN 978-1-906508-43-2 | MGP3819

Once your ship is fully kitted out, it is time to bring your character up to spec. The Central Supply Catalogue advertises all manner of unique items that no self-respecting Traveller should be without. Whether you are looking for a new set of wheels, a more powerful gun, sophisticated bugging equipment or the finest in evening wear, this book has it all. Neatly divided into easy to find sections, the Central Supply Catalogue is suitable for any Traveller setting, including the Babylon 5 and Original Traveller Universe.

**Spycraft Declassified: Shadow Play, Price:** \$24.95, **Ref:** ISBN 978-1-906508-50-0 | MGP6139

Spy Like You Mean It

Spycraft Declassified: Shadow Play collects some of the very best in Crafty Games PDFs and Signs & Portents articles, including Agent X classes and feats, cutting-edge weapons and gear from Bag Full of Guns, advanced combat actions and tricks from Practice Makes Perfect, alternate gear systems from The Big Score, flexible Attribute-based classes from Back to Basics, and more! Whether you're a player or a Game Control, this is your chance to upgrade your clearance and raise your game to a whole new level.



**The Quintessential Rogue, Price:** \$24.95, **Ref:** ISBN 978-1-906508-20-3 | MGP5206

In this book you'll find new origins, many additional powers, paragon paths, new feats, new weapons, and many mundane and magic items specifically created with the rogue in mind. With so many options to choose from, your rogue will become truly unique. This book also features guidelines to role-play your rogue outside combat, and tactical suggestions to make the most of your skills. In addition, you'll find rules to create your own thieves' guild and build a refuge where you can hide your riches and plan your next daring raid.

**Tripwire, Price:** \$24.95, **Ref:** ISBN 978-1-906508-45-6 | MGP3820

Tripwire is set in the Jewell subsector of Spinward Marches. The story takes the players to every system in Jewell where an adventure awaits them at every turn. This book is more than just a campaign; it serves as a useful guide to the Jewell subsector, detailing each world with a brief history, local laws and places of interest. Tripwire also includes a timeline of Jewell subsector, random encounters, new equipment and spacecraft.



NOCTUM

# VIVISECTION

Many twisted are unique to a certain place or region. Eagle River Prison in Tearfall City is closed and sealed up, and has been that way since the 2003 riot ended in a hellish fire which killed seventy-five percent of the inmates. Since the fire, and even before it to some extent, the place has been surrounded by urban legends, erratic witness reports and bizarre occurrences. This is why I chose to investigate this place and the murders connected to it. This resulted in what I call the Eagle River files. Eagle River has spawned a variety of creatures, which I have been able to catalogue.

File 22034  
Eagle River  
Entity: HUNTER  
Victim: Jane Doe

Her abdomen has been slashed opened with one swift cut. The instrument appears to have been a rather large and unevenly serrated cutting tool of some kind. There is substantial tissue damage due to the tearing.

# HUNTER



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# Episode 8: Life in Shadow (part 1)

TRAVELLER

by Simon Beal

TRAVELLER

**Episode Date:** July 13th 2267

*'No-one knows the shape of that future, or where it will take us. We know only, that it is always born, in pain...'*

*G'Kar "Z'ha'dum"*

## MISSION BRIEFING

While the players enjoy some R&R, Chen will have his people translating the ancient tablets discovered in the previous episode. It will take approximately one week to translate enough information that can be used. If any of the players have the necessary skills, they can also help out with this. Once enough of the translation has been completed, Chen will call a meeting to discuss the players' new mission.

The information translated from the tablets reveals a story of strange beings that came from the stars to live with the ancient race that created the tablets. The aliens eventually returned to the stars but left details of how to find their world in the hope that the indigenous people would one day reach the stars and visit the aliens.

The navigational data is included on the final tablet and will match the details retrieved from the Columbus' computer system (as detailed in the previous episode). The data shows that the aliens

came from Sector 260 and the Columbus found the alien jump gate by trying different frequencies when they were near the Kandar beacon.

Nothing else is known of the race that created the tablets or the aliens that visited them. Any information on this and the IPX dig where the tablets were found was destroyed along with the Columbus.

## SECTOR 260

Travelling from Babylon 5 to the Kandar system will take five days in hyperspace. From there the players will need to find the Sector 260 jump gate as detailed later on.

## History

The alien race mentioned in the ancient tablets lived here in the third planet in this system for thousands of years. Unfortunately for them, the Shadows had occupied Z'ha'dum. The aliens were opposed to everything the Shadows were trying to achieve and were perceived by the Shadows as a threat. Just over 1,000 years ago the Shadows attacked the alien world, killing the entire race and leaving little evidence of their civilisation.

Since the last Shadow war, this region of the galaxy had not been explored much due to its

proximity to Shadows' home world. The system remained unexplored until Z'ha'dum was destroyed in 2260.

## Legacy Base 1

In 2262, the Legacy Group discovered this forgotten world and built their first base here. The planet may no longer have a breathable atmosphere but the gravity is similar to that of Earth making it a good place to build atmospheric domes. The hidden nature of the jump gate also made it an ideal location, safe from prying eyes.

This was the first base constructed by the Legacy Group and it formed the blueprint for their subsequent outposts. It consists of several domes on the planet surface and a large underground cavern.

The Legacy Group have a number of vessels leftover from the civil war and others that were hidden after the Psi Corp were disbanded. Their fleet here includes the Equinox, two Psi Corp Shadowcloaks (as detailed in Episode Three), the Shadow Striker, and a Psi Corp Mothership that is hidden nearby in hyperspace. Although the jump gate is hidden, there are always a number of these vessels nearby ready to react to any vessel that approaches.



## The Fate of the Columbus

The Legacy Group's secret remained until the Columbus and its determined crew found the beacon frequency. As they emerged from the jump gate they were greeted by a number of the Legacy Group's ships. The Columbus crew knew instantly that they should not be there and fled back into hyperspace, where they were pursued and destroyed by the Shadow Striker. The chase lasted for 30 minutes, during which time the Shadow Striker jammed all communications before it was able to catch up and destroy the Columbus.

## Finding the Jump Gate

The players will probably be thinking back to the previous episode where they had to find a jump gate off the beacons but this is slightly different. The beacon is transmitting on a non-standard frequency and can be found with a successful Astrogation check made near the Kandar beacon.

Once the players have found the hidden beacon frequency they can plot a course to the jump gate as normal. It will take approximately 16 hours to reach their new destination. As the players emerge from the jump gate, they will be greeted by the Equinox, the Shadow Striker and the two Shadowcloaks.

## End of the Line

All the Legacy Group ships will target the Star Dancer (which will be detected by anyone operating the sensors) and Seth will make contact. Appearing on the monitor he will shake his head.

*'What a pity you found this place; I was beginning to like you. Prepare to be boarded.'*

The players have little choice here. They are outnumbered and outgunned. Let them discuss



their predicament and panic a little before continuing. If they decide to run, their engines will be targeted as they try to leave. If they make it into hyperspace, they will be pursued and Seth will call in the Psi Corp Mothership to block the players' escape.

If the players do try to fight, the battle will be short as they cannot win. Seth will try to disable the Star Dancer as he wants to capture the players alive. Ultimately, the result will be the same and the Star Dancer will be boarded. If the players have any sense they will stand down as fighting will serve no purpose at this point.

*A Psi Corp vessel docks and squad of marines, lead by a telepath, board the ship to restrain everyone. They remove all personal items and lead you all into holding cells on their ship. The ship then heads towards the planet.*

The Legacy Group telepath is a P12 and any telepaths in the group will be given sleeper drugs.

*Through the portholes of the ship you see an orbiting repair platform. An Earthforce Omega destroyer is currently docked there. As you pass by you can read its name plate as the 'Orinoco'.*



The ship stops nearby and a shuttle heads toward the planet. On the surface you can see two large domes and the shuttle heads towards them.

The players wait in their cells for several hours. They might discuss potential escape plans but they are restrained and have no way out at this time.

After a few hours, you see the Star Dancer dock at the repair platform. A short time later you watch in horror as workers and repair bots begin to dismantle it. Whilst this is happening, the shuttle returns from the planet and the ship begins to move again.

It does not take long before you can see your destination as a moon slowly comes into view. A small base has been built into the moon's surface and the ship docks with it.

As the security guards lead you into the facility you feel the welcome sensation of gravity. You are marched through several heavy security doors, where a number of efficient-looking guards await your arrival. A large man with several nasty scars on his face, steps forward.

'Welcome to the Legacy prison facility, this your new home.'

## LEGACY PRISON

The Legacy Group prison facility became necessary to detain anyone who might pose a threat to the group. Most of the prisoners are those unlucky enough to have discovered the base or seen the Hybrid vessel.

Although some of these unfortunate victims were destroyed on sight, the Legacy Group likes to take prisoners when possible. Some prisoners are taken away to Legacy Base 2 and experimented on or

converted to peons using Shadow technology. However, the number of people they can convert is limited so the rest remain here to be used as slave labour in the work camps.

When the prison was being built the Legacy Group discovered some alien ruins on the dark side of the moon. Machinery cannot be used to excavate for fear of damaging any finds so the prisoners were used to do the bulk of the work. Most areas of interest are buried deep under rubble and hard rock so progress is slow.

### Ryan Hopper

**Str:** 10 (+1), **Dex:** 8 (0), **End:** 11 (+1), **Int:** 7 (0), **Edu:** 12 (+2), **Soc:** 9 (+1)

**Skills:** Computers 1, Drive 0, Gun Combat (Energy Pistol) 1, Melee (Unarmed Combat) 2, Persuade 2, Pilot 1, Recon 1

**Equipment:** PPG, Flak Jacket

**Information:** Ryan expects total obedience from his inmates and is very harsh with his punishments, ranging from physical violence to solitary confinement. He is a very violent man and has a nasty scar running up the left side of his face from a prison riot several years ago.

*'This is not an official facility so you have absolutely no rights. You cannot escape and you will not be rescued. You do what you are told, when you are told.'*

*As long as you understand this you might last more than a week here. Any questions?'*

If anyone asks a question, he will simply walk over and punch them in the stomach, as they double over in pain he will grab their head and knee them in the face. This is not a person you mess with. With his point made, he will continue.

*'You will now be shown to your cells and tomorrow you will begin to earn your keep.'*

*The warden turns around and walks away. One of the guards motions you to follow and you are all escorted to a holding area.*

### Prison Guard

**Str:** 8 (0), **Dex:** 9 (+1), **End:** 8 (0), **Int:** 7 (0), **Edu:** 8 (0), **Soc:** 7 (0)

**Skills:** Athletics (Co-ordination) 0, Gun Combat (Energy Pistol or Energy Rifle) 2, Investigate 0, Melee (Unarmed Combat) 1, Persuade 1, Recon 1

**Equipment:** PPG or PPG Rifle, Flak Jacket, Flashlight

## Other Personalities

### Captain Ando Kim

Captain Kim is the warden's right hand man and is in charge of new arrivals and cell allocation. He has the same details as the other prison guards.

### Dr Sakina Avari

Dr Avari was called in to oversee the excavation of the alien ruins discovered on the moon. She spends most of her time in a secured laboratory located near the dig site and is separate from the prison facility. Once the prisoners are locked in their cells, Dr Avari and her team are transported to the ruins to work through the night.

### Bob Nash

Bob supervises the work camps and reports to Dr Avari; however he delegates the organisation to one of the inmates. Bob uses the same character details as the other prison guards.



# Signs & Portents

## Hank Muller

Hank is one of the nicer guards and often helps out inmates if they do not cause problems but always collects on his debts. He has the same details as the other prison guards.

## Lucas Abel

The least liked guard in the prison. Simply talking to him usually results in a beating. He has the same details as the other prison guards.

## Dr Peter Moore

Dr Moore is a medical doctor stationed in the prison infirmary. He is a good surgeon but has a terrible bedside manner.

## Holding Area

This is where new arrivals are processed. Once the party is inside, the door will be automatically locked. Six guards stand at the sides while two more search the party and remove all personal items except the clothes they are wearing. If anyone has a concealed item, the guard must make an Investigate check to see if it is discovered.

The players would have already been searched when they were first apprehended so it is unlikely the guards will find anything, it is just an additional security measure. If the guards do find anything, a swift punch to the stomach will remind the party that such things are not tolerated. Once the searches are complete, the players will meet the captain of the guard.

*A short skinny man with glasses enters the room and speaks with a loud clear voice.*

*'I am captain of the guard and I run a tight ship. You will address me as Captain Kim. When things do not run smoothly, I get upset. And when I get upset, people get hurt.'*

*He smiles.*

*'You will now be assigned your prisoner ID and cell number before proceeding to your cells.'*

Hank Muller will allocate each member of the party with a prisoner ID and cell number. A bracelet marked with these details is attached to their wrists. They will also be given some basic hygiene items such as a towel and some soap before being marched to their cells. Unlike most prisons, they are not given uniforms and are left in whatever clothes they were wearing when captured.

Prisoner ID numbers will start at 422 and be assigned sequentially. Cell numbers (1 to 60 for men, 61 to 90 for women) can be assigned at random or to coincide with whichever inmates you want them to share with (as detailed later on).

## Security Bracelets

The bracelets are made from kirrilium and contain a small tracking device, which automatically sounds an alarm if they are anywhere they should not be. The bracelets can only be removed by transmitting the correct release code; this requires an appropriate device to be constructed using appropriate materials and an Engineer (Electronics) check -6 DM.

## Cells

The cell walls are reinforced with korrilium making them virtually impossible to break through. The doors look like typical barred prison doors and are made from the same material. The only way of breaking through is with a high performance cutting tool or with explosives, neither of which is available to the inmates.

The cells are split over three wings. A wing and B wing house the male inmates and C wing is for the female prisoners. Each wing has 30 cells split over two levels. Like most prisons, the cells here are very small consisting of two bunk beds, a wash basin and a toilet.

Male guards are stationed in wings A and B, whilst female guards are in charge of C wing. The wings and showers are restricted by sex but everywhere else is considered common areas where anyone may go.

Most of the players will be sharing their cell with one of the other 80 inmates. Details of the main personalities are listed and you can assign their cellmates randomly, or pick ones that might make an interesting match.

If anyone wants to change cell due to a clash of personality, they will have to speak to Captain Kim and convince him to allow the transfer. Kim will most likely refuse the request but he may agree if he wants something in return (such as acquiring information).

## Prison Security

A number of reinforced doors separate each section of the prison and the entire facility is



heavily monitored and guarded. If any situation gets out of the hand, each section of the prison can be locked down as appropriate. Even if the players somehow manage to break through the security and beat the guards, there is no way they can get off the moon as no transport remains docked here.

## INMATES

All the prisoners here are those who were unlucky enough to see the hybrid vessel or be in the area when the jump gate was being used. The prisoners are a mix of races and backgrounds including mercenaries, traders, raiders and the Earthforce crew from the Orinoco. Due to this mix of captives, a number of gangs have formed making it much like any other prison in the galaxy.

## Gangs

A natural evolution of any prison is the formation of gangs, as like minded people gravitate together. There are many gangs in the prison community, but the most important ones are listed here.

### Cage's Gang

This gang was established shortly after Cage (detailed later on) and his men were captured. The gang initially comprised of his raider group but the numbers soon grew as Cage made a name for himself.

### Orinoco Crew

Of the 280 crew on the Orinoco, only 120 survived the battle with the hybrid vessel. Many of the survivors have since been transported to Legacy Base 2, leaving only 20 of the original crew including several of the command staff.

### Alien Groups

Cage's gang make life very unpleasant for most of the aliens, so they tend to stick together. There are several alien groups, the most notable one being the Narns.

## Personalities

Rather than list separate statistics for each NPC, a number of character types are detailed here that you can use as appropriate.

### Crew

**Str:** 8 (0), **Dex:** 9 (+1), **End:** 7 (0), **Int:** 9 (+1), **Edu:** 8 (0), **Soc:** 8 (0)

**Skills:** Astrogation 1, Comms 1 or Gunner 1 or Sensors 1, Computers 0, Gun Combat (Energy Pistol) 0, Mechanic 0, Pilot (any) 2, Vacc Suit 0, Zero-G 0

### Officer

**Str:** 8 (0), **Dex:** 8 (0), **End:** 8 (0), **Int:** 9 (+1), **Edu:** 9 (+1), **Soc:** 10 (+1)

**Skills:** Computers 0, Gun Combat (Energy Pistol) 1, Leadership 1, Mechanic 0, Melee (Blade) 1, Pilot (Capital Ships) 1 or Pilot (Small Craft) 1, Tactics (Naval) 1, Vacc Suit 0, Zero-G 0

### Lurker

**Str:** 7 (0), **Dex:** 8 (0), **End:** 8 (0), **Int:** 7 (0), **Edu:** 8 (0), **Soc:** 7 (0)

**Skills:** Athletics (Co-ordination) 1, Deception 1, Gun Combat (any) 1, Pilot (any) 1, Recon 1, Stealth 1, Survival 0

### Merchant

**Str:** 7 (0), **Dex:** 7 (0), **End:** 7 (0), **Int:** 9 (+1), **Edu:** 8 (0), **Soc:** 9 (+1)

**Skills:** Advocate 1, Broker 2, Comms 0, Computers

1, Drive 0, Persuade 2, Pilot (Spacecraft) 1, Vacc Suit 0, Zero-G 0

The most prominent inmate personalities are listed here with their statistic type in brackets. Please feel free to add your own NPCs as required.

### Captain Marco Sanchez (Officer)

Captain Marco Sanchez was in command of the Earthforce destroyer, Orinoco. Their mission was to investigate the ship disappearances near the rim. After patrolling hyperspace for many months, they finally encountered the Equinox and hybrid vessel but even the Omega class destroyer was outgunned by the forces of the Legacy Group. The surviving crew from the Orinoco stick together and due to their number most inmates do not give them any trouble other than the odd passing insult.

### Claudia Kaufman (Officer)

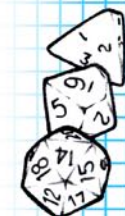
Claudia is Captain Sanchez's first officer. She is loyal and always looks out for her captain and crew.

### Chris "Cage" Jackson (Officer)

Cage was the commander of a raider wing and is now the leader of the toughest gang in the prison. If he was not locked up in prison, Cage would most likely be a crime lord in some seedy underworld.

### Malcolm "Roach" Adams (Lurker)

Cage's right hand man. He gets his name because he will not die. One look at him confirms this as he only has one eye and one arm. He also has a



variety of scars and walks with a slight limp but still looks like he means business.

## Nina Stubbs (Lurker)

Nina used to be a mercenary and once she was imprisoned, she knew her best chance of survival would be to join a gang.

## Chris “Napes” Napier (Merchant)

Chris Napier and his friend Bruce Murphy went into business together, trading supplies to backwater worlds. Having had a few run-ins with the law, he found it increasingly difficult to trade in the more civilised areas but managed to make some good money buying and selling off the main trading routes.

## Bruce “White Boy” Murphy (Crew)

White Boy, as he has become known to the prison population, is anaemic. This frail individual is Chris Napier’s business partner and co-pilot. Both Bruce and Chris keep a low profile to avoid any trouble but Bruce is a common target of several gangs.

## Brandon Dodge (Merchant)

Dodge used to be an independent trader and is one of the few people who has not made any enemies in here, even the guards like him. He is the guy who can get you things, for the right price of course. He does not belong to any gang to maintain his neutral position amongst the inmates. This standing has led to certain privileges, which gives him access to goods no other inmates can get hold of.

## Ja’Lon (Crew)

Ja’Lon was a communications operator on a Narn trading vessel. Several of their number were killed by the hybrid vessel including the captain who was also her mate. She soon established herself as a strong leader. Her own gang comprises of her six remaining crew and a few other aliens that have rallied to her cause.

## INTERROGATION

Shortly after arriving in their cells and meeting their cell mates, the player captain will be taken to the interrogation room.

*Captain Kim arrives at your cell with two guards. He speaks into his link.*

*‘Open on (captains’ cell number).’*

*Your cell door opens and the two guards come in. You are cuffed and the guards pushed you out as Kim orders the cell to be closed behind you. You are then led out of the cell wing into a separate part of the prison. After going through several security doors and corridors, you come to a stop outside a room labelled IR1.’*

*One of the guards unlocks the door and you are led in and forced into a metal chair. As you sit in the chair, restraints clamp around your ankles and the guards hold you down as two more restraints lock your arms in place.*

*Kim and the guards then exit the room, leaving you in total darkness.*

The player will be left here for some time but they will have no sense of how much time has elapsed.

*Eventually, the darkness is broken as light fills the room, blinding you for a moment. Two men enter the room, closing the door behind them. You instantly recognise Seth Warner but the other man looks familiar too.*

*‘Hello again Captain. I believe you already know Mr Quinn here.’*

*It takes a while for you to register who it is but then you remember from his photo. This is William Quinn, the man who used to work for Chen before he ran away. The man you pursued to Mars before he finally eluded you.*

Allow this to sink in for a while as the player will hopefully start to put the pieces together, that the seemingly unrelated situation back in Episode Three was all part of a larger plot.

*I just wanted to meet the man who chased me all the way to Mars. You do like poking around don’t you? However, your curiosity has finally got the better of you this time.*

*We need to find out what you know. Personally, I like to do things the old fashioned way but telepaths tend to be more efficient.’*

*Seth walks up to you and places his hand on your face. An intense pain erupts in your head as he begins to scan you.*

Seth (detailed in Episode Two) will then begin a deep scan and he will not be gentle. He will make three separate checks to get what he needs. His main focus is to find out if anyone else knows the location of the base but he will also look for anything else of interest.



It is unlikely that the player will be able to resist the scans and after a few seconds it will all be over. The player will suffer damage as appropriate and the experience will be so intense that their nose will start bleeding and they will feel mentally exhausted.

## Resisting the Scans

If the player managed to resist any of the scans, Quinn will have to resort to more traditional methods of getting the information. Quinn's interrogation techniques are quite brutal and the player will wish they had not resisted the scan.

Whatever happens, the player is going to be feeling pretty rough. They will be so exhausted by the experience, that they are carried to their cell.

If Seth determines that the location of the beacon is known to anyone else, the jump gate will be destroyed to prevent anyone else from finding the base. Since no one has ever escaped from this system, the precise jump coordinates are not known to anyone outside the Legacy Group.

## Fugitives

Seth realises that having the Star Dancer added to the list of missing ships may draw attention, especially since they came looking for the hidden jump gate. Using the transponder codes from the Orinoco, Seth transmits a false report stating that the Orinoco is out near the rim pursuing the so called 'Ghost of Hyperspace', the ship responsible for the missing ships.

He will name the Star Dancer and its crew which will filter through official channels and eventually to the media. The players become known fugitives and Seth is rather pleased with himself as he has solved several problems with one swift move.

## PRISON LIFE

### Daily Routine

Life in prison consists of a strict daily routine, as follows.

#### 07:00 – Wakeup call

A buzzer sounds as the lights come on. Inmates get 15 minutes to freshen up before count.

#### 07:15 - Count

Another buzzer sounds as the cell doors open. The inmates must line up outside their cell and the guards do a count to make sure everyone is present.

#### 07:20 - Breakfast

The inmates must walk in an orderly fashion to the mess hall where they are served breakfast.

#### 07:45 - Work Schedule

Inmates are assigned duties in the excavation site, kitchens, laundry, workshop or as janitors. These tasks are detailed in the next episode.

#### 12:55 - Count

A buzzer sound indicates the second count of the day.

#### 13:00 – Lunch

Inmates get one hour for their lunch.

#### 14:00 – Work Schedule

The inmates return to their assigned duties.

#### 18:25 – Count

The third count is conducted as before.

#### 18:30 – Dinner

Inmates get one hour for their dinner.

#### 19:30 – Recreation Time

The inmates get one and a half hours to themselves as detailed later on.

#### 21:00 – Cell Time

Inmates spend the rest of the evening locked in their cells but are free to pass the time as they choose.

#### 21:55 - Count

The final count of the day.

#### 22:00 – Lights Out

The cell doors are locked and the lights go out.

### Telepaths

Any telepaths in the prison are given frequent doses of the sleeper drug to inhibit their telepathic abilities.



## Eating & Recreation

### Gym

A gym is provided so inmates can help maintain their physical health. Facilities are quite basic and include bench presses, treadmills and exercise cycles.

### Mess Hall

Inmates are served set meals and are free to talk amongst themselves without much interference from the guards.

### Recreation Rooms

There are several recreation rooms where inmates gather to talk, play cards. Gambling is quite common for the meagre scraps the inmates have to bet with.

### Sports Hall

The small sports hall has facilities for several Earth-based sports including basketball and football. However due to the lack of organisation, small groups tend to use different corners for their own preferred activities.

### Possessions

Some prisoners have managed to get hold of various items to help pass their time here. If an item is not regarded as a threat, the guards will acquire certain items (sometimes in exchange for favours). Other items are liberated by inmates during their duties.

## Duties

The players will most likely be allocated to the work camps unless their skills make them more useful elsewhere. For example, an engineer or mechanic would be assigned to the workshop.

### Excavation Site

This is where most of the players will spend their time and is the key to their escape. This is detailed in the next episode.

### Infirmary

Characters with the appropriate skills are sometimes chosen to help out in the infirmary. This is another highly sought after duty but due to the drugs and equipment kept here, only the most trusted and well behaved inmates are selected to work here and they are always supervised by a security guard.

### Janitorial Duty

This is usually a punishment duty, or failing that, the unpleasant cleaning jobs are given to the least popular inmates. However, one advantage of being given this task is that the inmates are given access to areas they would not normally be in (even if they are supervised most of the time).

### Laundry

Laundry duty is hard work in a hot and steamy environment. On the scale of duties, this one sits just above being a janitor.

## Kitchens

Only the more trusted inmates are given kitchen duty. Anyone working in the kitchens has a slightly different schedule, as they must have the food ready and start serving as the other inmates come to be fed at the appointed times. This is one of the most sought after roles as the inmates get a lot more recreation time, even if they do have to work the more unsociable hours.

## Science Labs

Anyone with archaeological or linguistic skills might be asked to work in the science laboratory to help Dr Avari and her team research the findings here. This provides a rare opportunity for players to befriend Sakina and gain her trust.

## Workshop

The workshop is where tools and equipment are repaired. This is considered one of the better duties, although inmates must demonstrate the appropriate skills to work here. Although the workshop is more heavily supervised than other duties to prevent anything being stolen by the prisoners, inmates still manage to smuggle out items now and then.

## NEXT TIME IN THE LEGACY OF WAR

The story continues as the players slowly adjust to prison life. After several months of hard labour in the work camps, the players discover an alien ship buried deep underground. This could provide the party with a means of escape but keeping it a secret while they prepare the way will not be easy.





# Gamesfest 4 :

## 24/10/2009 10:00 -17:00

WATFORD COLSSEUM  
RICKMANSWORTH ROAD  
WATFORD

A one-day convention encompassing RPG's, Board Games, CCG's War Games, Comics, Books, Film, Video and PC Gaming.

Our aim is for an informal event that enables the enthusiast and casual gamer to sample the best the hobby has to offer.

This year will see Gamesfest's fourth convention and our move to the exciting venue of the Watford Colosseum.

This year's event represents a greatly increased scope and scale as we look to build on our previous successful events and firmly establish Gamesfest as a regular and firm favourite in the convention calendar

The Watford Colosseum is a fantastic 1,000 person plus venue that is accessible by all forms of transport. By moving the event from our humble origins we aim to make this one-day convention a truly memorable occasion. The increased space gives us scope to have a more exciting and varied line up.

The Major Manufacturers, Publishers and Retailers that are coming to Gamesfest with hopefully some exciting new releases , are: Games Workshop ,Forge World, Warhammer Historical ,The Black Library ,Mongoose Publishing, Simple Miniature Games, Flames of War, Project Hydra ,Warlord Games ,Chaos City Comics Calamity Comics ,Murky Depths, Cardbreakers plus many more.

There will be Tournament/Demo/participation games of: **WH40K** , **Warmachine / Hordes**, **Flames of War**, **4<sup>th</sup> ed Dungeons & Dragons**, **Pathfinder** , **Memoir 44** , **Helldorado** and of course games from **Mongoose publishing** plus many many more.

Our guest includes luminaries such as **Dan Abnett** , **Gav Thorpe** , **Simon Scarrow** , **Robyn Young** , **Richard Williams** and many , many more

See you there – and Let the fest be the best – The Gamesfest Crew.

[www.gamesfest.co.uk](http://www.gamesfest.co.uk)

# UK Games EXPO 2009

## By Katrina Hepburn

It was 6am on the morning of June the 6th 2009... wait...6am on the 6th of June?...666?...OMG! Anywho...

It was the morning of the UK Games Expo. We jumped out of bed at lightning speed, totally enthusiastic about the coming day. Of course, I say lightning speed, 'Lightning' being our neighbours' pet tortoise, which had an unfortunate biking accident in his youth and is now lame in both of his back legs. Yet it was 6am and we were enthusiastic.

Arriving at the Mongoose office we began the loading of all the fantastic goodies we would be placing on sale at the stall at this most snazzy



*History Lesson*

of events. We eventually arrived at the venue, 4 floors of gaming fun for the whole weekend! After the initial set up of the Mongoose stand, both Sandrine and myself decided to check out the floor we were on before the hordes of gamers were allowed entry. Seeing familiar faces in the crowds, like Mel from pagan angel with her bountiful array of jewellery and Ralph Horsley, the wonderful artist who has contributed so much to Blizzards World of Warcraft Trading Card Game, we knew this event would be simply fantastic.

After a hearty breakfast of sausage and bacon rolls, cash in hand and an air of enthusiasm that can only come from 3 espressos drank one after the other, we hit the gaming floors. Our first game of choice which immediately caught our attention was a game very similar to Warhammer, though instead of controlling a vast army of possibly hundreds of miniatures you control a party of beasts and heroes, each model having its own distinct abilities. 'Hordes' is a tabletop game which, as well as being aesthetically pleasing to the eye, is also a strategy wargame, which does not require a huge table to play on or a massive amount of miniatures at your disposal. If you are anything like myself, you love playing the game but hate having to paint hundreds of miniatures – painting days at the Mongoose offices for me consist of a can of coke, the next series of Battle star Galactica DVDs and an insightful word of appraisal when Matt or Sandrine show me the masses of figurines they have managed to paint over the course of the day.

*Hug a Dalek*



Hordes is also the perfect tabletop game for those people who love the Warhammer style of gaming but do not have hundreds of pounds to spend on an army of models. This being said, we also had a game of the World of Warcraft Miniatures (which are purchased pre-painted! WooHoo!).

Through the course of the day we also witnessed the Deluxe edition of Settlers of Catan, which is the most beautiful set of this classic board game I have ever seen; Numerix, a simple yet amazingly strategic game; And It's Alive! by Reiver Games, a game where you need to try to build your own Frankenstein monster. This game is one of those particularly fun games, which are amazingly brilliant for those nights where you have a few

# Signs & Portents

*Mongoose Crew*



friends round for food or drinks and you want something quick to learn and easy to play. Other featured games at the Expo included Hellfrost by Triple Ace Games, Starblazer Adventures by Cubicle 7 and of course many games we all know and love including the 4th edition of AD&D and Warhammer.

As we continue through my little article on the UK Games Expo of 2009, I feel a need to stress the benefits of having a cafeteria at a convention held in Birmingham. Myself, Matt and Sandrine decided that on the second day, it would be nice to try the cuisine of a local pub just a few minutes' walk from Expo. Let's just say potatoes that deflate when a fork is stuck into them would have been bad enough, however the resounding "pppprrppphh" noise that followed made us decide that the food served at the convention itself was indeed the food of the gods. My personal opinion, for what it is worth, is to never eat anything outside of the safe confines of the convention. At least not in

Birmingham. Anyway, the sunlight tends to burn our pale gamer skins so it's probably not worth stepping outside at all.

One of the things about this particular convention that I found unique was the Historical aspect. Not only was the whole of the second floor dedicated to portraits and masses of Medals of honour from numerous wars around our globe (the complete collection of medals being in the hundreds) but also Kevin Goodman, a well known and experienced medieval re-enactor, while giving out the occasional basic swordplay lesson, was showing off his impressive collection of real medieval weaponry and giving talks and insight on medieval weapons, armour, herbology and numerous other historical subjects. To say this man knows his stuff is an understatement. It was an amazing pleasure to be able to chat on and off with him throughout Expo.

This report would not be complete without a mention of the Living Dungeon. Now before you bite my head off, this is not LARP but rather



*Nick...Erm...Anyway*

*We cornered him Sir!*



inspired by the likes of Nightmare and Crystal Maze. The emphasis is instead on teamwork, tactics and logical thinking with the players trying to solve the various challenges. Both myself and Sandrine were taken on a tour through the dungeon that spiralled around numerous areas of the building, each room presenting its own brain teasers and perils and we both agreed that it was one of the most impressive live action dungeons we had ever seen.

Add to all of the above Stormtroopers, Battle Droids, live Daleks, Doctor Who with his Tardis and even characters from Final Fantasy VII collecting for children charities. The thrill of actually getting to hug a Dalek is still wearing off.

The UK Games Expo 09 was an experience to remember: Gaming, Live Role-play, Charity work, History and much much more all glooped together with that sickly sweet substance we all love called FUN!

# FURMAN: FREELANCER, INTERIOR SPOTS



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# The Witching Wheel

By Carl Walmsley

When a band of slavers take prisoners into the forest to sell them to a notorious witch, the PCs are called upon to intervene. Before long they discover that the slavers themselves have been betrayed and that the witch's plans involve a terrible sacrifice in order to resurrect her long-dead family.

This scenario will work perfectly well as a stand-alone adventure but can be run as a continuation of the events which began in *The Malady* (Signs & Portents 67).

## A Century of Darkness

For longer than anyone can remember, there has been a witch in the forest. She is hard and cruel but will bestow great gifts upon those who venture deep into the Grimwood and seek her favour. Each time that a petitioner's wish is granted, however, there is a high price to pay. It is said that the witch can turn the truth into a lie or make a sword strike off the hand that wields it.

For this reason she is known as Malyce – The Lady of Lies.

It has not always been this way. Malyce was once mortal and the youngest daughter of a midwife called Estabel. During her childhood years, she and her sisters learned their mother's craft, gathering

flowers and herbs in the forest to make poultices and unguents to heal the sick. Whenever a local woman gave birth, she and her sisters would assist with the delivery.

On one occasion things did not go well. A mother and child both perished and the finger of blame was pointed at Malyce's mother. Gripped by grief and religious fervour, the locals turned on Estabel and her daughters. Her first child was crushed beneath a witchblock; the second burned at the stake. Only the youngest managed to escape – fleeing deep into the Grimwood. Estabel herself was drowned on *the witching wheel*.

What happened to the child whilst she was alone in the forest is not known but a decade after she fled, she returned to Colmfet – the village where her family had been slain – now a fully fledged witch. Capable of all the terrible ills that her mother had once been accused of, she first cursed and eventually destroyed the entire settlement. Since then the Grimwood has been hers – and hers alone.

Recently, Malyce's power was – temporarily – augmented by a pestilential plant: a cursed creature able to drain the life force of living creatures and channel it to her. The witch used this power to learn of a ritual that would enable her to resurrect her murdered family. No longer would she need to be alone.

All she needs now, is three hearts that are pure – and three as black as night.

## Taken

The adventure begins when the PCs encounter Jeriniah, an escaped slave. This can occur either shortly after the conclusion of *The Malady* as the PCs are planning to leave Sicklemede or any time they are travelling the wilds, close to a large forest.

Read or paraphrase the following:

*A lone figure, her bloodied arm hanging by her side, half runs, half staggers into view. A sheen of sweat and grime covers her limbs, which are visible through her tattered clothing. Still clinging to her wrists is a broken tether. Her lips move breathlessly, trying to form words that are clearly a plea for help.*

Jeriniah is one of several people recently captured by slavers. Whilst being marched northwards she managed to escape and, after a chase, eluded her captors in the woods. She is now desperate to find someone who will go after the slavers and rescue their prisoners. Despite her ragged appearance, it is apparent that her clothing was once finely made, indicating that Jeriniah is a lady of some means.

If the PCs talk with Jeriniah, she will reveal the following:

- A group of a dozen slavers lead by a man named Calus captured several locals and marched them into the forest.
- Amongst the captives were Jeriniah's father, Henrick and a pregnant lady named Bethan. There were three other slaves, whose names Jeriniah does not know. They are Mardin, Glaim and Caffod.
- Henrick is a rich man – a banker – and will certainly offer a rich reward to anyone who frees him.
- Jeriniah overheard Calus reassuring his men that 'the witch' would abide by her word and that she could be trusted to provide the gold in exchange for the slaves.
- Calus' men are afraid of the woods; several of them believe they are cursed.
- One of Calus' 'men' is actually a dark troll.

## The Grimwood

If the PCs talk to any locals, they will be able to hear the legends surrounding the witch and the Grimwood.

- A witch holds sway over portions of the forest, accepting offerings from the animals and beasts in a sort of 'wild court'. Her name is Malyce.
- The witch was once wronged and, in revenge, cursed the forest.

- Calus is the name of a brigand who used to terrorise the region. When travel through the area decreased, he faded almost from memory.

## The Beginning of the Trail

Despite her injuries and exhaustion, Jeriniah will offer to lead the PCs into the woods to find the slavers. She will certainly benefit from some healing and any fatigue-relieving potions or spells that the PCs can rustle up. Otherwise, she will need to stop frequently and rest.

Alternatively, the adventurers can trust to their own tracking abilities and tell Jeriniah to stay behind. In this instance, checks made to follow Jeriniah's trail are Simple (+20% modifier). The tracker must test once per hour to stay with the trail and five successful checks must be made to reach the slave party's trail. From this point onwards, no further tests are required: the passage of 16 people – including four dragging tethered feet – is unmissable.

Once the party embarks on their journey, read or paraphrase the following:

*Stepping within the confines of the Grimwood is like entering another world. A weave of branches, leaves and glistening fronds obscure the sky, casting an eerie twilight over the forest interior. This gloom is accompanied by a sense of violation – a feeling that you are intruding in a place that does not welcome you.*

## The Trees Have Eyes

A few hours into the journey (if the PCs are following Jeriniah) or as soon as a Tracking Test is failed (if they are guiding themselves) the party will encounter a very strange forest denizen – a wytchwood tree. The first of these trees was created by Malyce as a fitting punishment for those who hang witches. A wytchwood tree grows creepers that are tipped with nooses and seeks to wrap these around the throats of trespassers in order to string them up.

The first the PCs will know of this tree's presence will be when it attacks the lead two characters.

### Wytchwood Tree

#### CHARACTERISTICS

STR	3D6+6	(17)
DEX	1D6+6	(9)
CON	5D6+9	(26)
SIZ	6D6+6	(27)
INT	3	(3)
POW	1D6	(3)
CHA	2	(2)

#### Wytchwood Tree Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-12	Trunk*	5/40
13	Noose One	1/6
14	Noose Two	1/6
15	Noose Three	1/6
16	Noose Four	1/6
17	Noose Five	1/6
18	Noose Six	1/6
19	Noose Seven	1/6
20	Noose Eight	1/6

If its trunk is reduced to 0 Hit Points, a wytchwood

tree dies. At this point – and with a resounding crack – it will topple. All creatures within 5m of the trunk must succeed with a Dodge test or suffer 1D8 Damage to a random location.

A Noose vine reduced to 0 Hit Points is severed. It will take a week to re-grow.

## WEAPONS

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Noose vine	50%	Grapple + suffocation*

\*A successful noose vine attack initiates a Grapple and begins to suffocate the target. Trying to escape from this grapple is considered heavy activity: therefore, once a number of rounds equal to half the victim's CON have elapsed, it must start testing for suffocation (see *RuneQuest*, page 90 for rules on suffocation). Once a Resilience test is failed, the victim suffers 1D3 Damage to his Chest location each round.

## SPECIAL RULES

**Combat Actions:** 2\*

**Strike Rank:** +5

**Movement:** 0m

**Traits:** Tremor Sense

**Skills:** Perception 70%

**Typical Armour:** Thick Skin (5 AP on trunk; no Skill penalty; 1 AP on vines; no Skill Penalty)

\*A wyitchwood tree may attack with two noose vines as a single action.

If the PCs topple the wyitchwood tree, they will discover the remains of a rotted corpse strung from an upper branch. The putrid remains are held together within an impressive suit of armour

that has not rusted despite the fact it must have been in the tree for several months. The armour is a full suit of chain, reinforced with ornately decorated strips of plate depicting scenes of battle. The accompanying helm is topped with an effigy of a winged cobra about to strike. Unfortunately for the former owner, all this armour provided no protection from a wyitchwood tree's noose.

All told, the armour encompasses:

Item	AP	ENC	Locations
Chainmail	6	4	Chest
Chainmail skirt	6	3	Legs
Full Helm	6	2	Head

There is unique enchantment on the armour that not only prevents it from tarnishing but enables it to repair any damage it suffers. Overnight, any dents of holes miraculously vanish.

## Ruins

After several hours trekking through the forest, the party will reach the point where Jeriniah escaped from the slavers. The trail from this point is easy to follow and after another couple of hours hiking, the PCs will discover a set of ruins, within which the greater part of the slaver band is encamped.

Part of Calus's instructions from Malyce was that he should wait at these ruins until one of her servants contacted him. This has occurred a few hours before the PCs arrival and, taking three of his most trusted men, Calus has followed the servant – a blood nymph – deeper into the forest. He has taken with him a single slave – Bethan, the pregnant woman. The other members of the band – eight men and a dark troll – have orders to wait in the ruins for Calus's return.

The ruins have an almost organic look, so overgrown are they with moss and creepers, they seem very old indeed. They form a rough ring with only one obvious route in. Accordingly, the slavers have positioned their troll on guard duty at this point.

The walls of the ruins are 0.5m thick and 4m high. They are pitted and worn, providing plenty of handholds for anyone who attempts to climb them (+20% modifier).

## Ruins Map

1. Reasoning that the eyes of any would-be-attackers will be focused on the troll, the slavers have constructed a simple trap in this location. It consists of a tripwire that releases a weighted net suspended in the branches above.

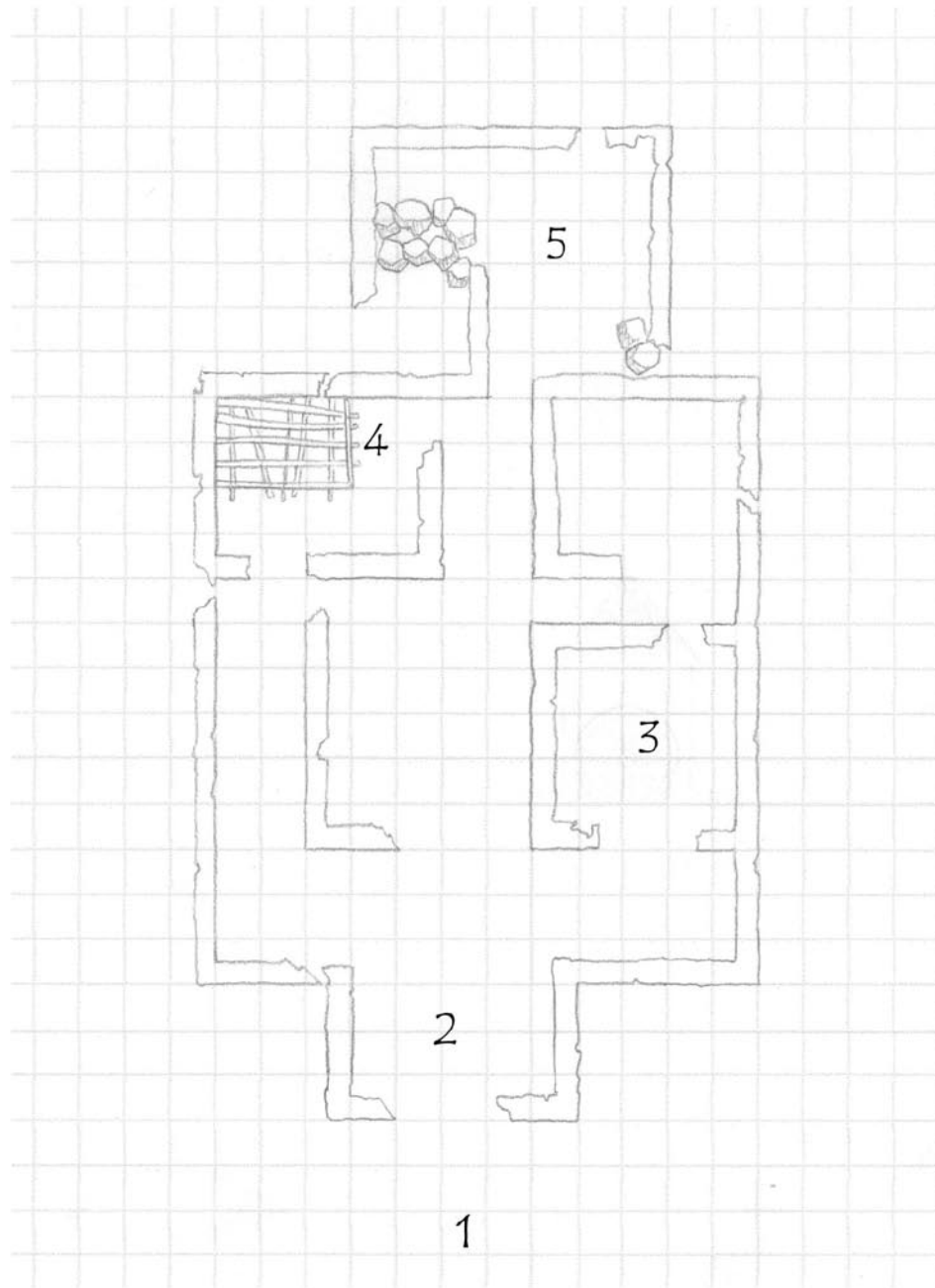
Characters that are looking for traps need simply pass a Perception Test to notice the tripwire and net. Those who are not looking may still test but receive a –30% Modifier.

If sprung, the trap immobilises a character until he passes an Unarmed or Brute Force Athletics test and struggles free of the net. Activation of the trap will alert the troll (2.) and any slavers by the fire (3.)

2. Standing watch over the entrance to the ruins is a hulking troll. It carries a great hammer and has five javelins slung across its back. It has orders to hold the entrance against attackers and will hurl javelins at assailants rather than be drawn forth into a fight.

**Dark Troll** (*RuneQuest Monsters*, page 31); replace skill with sling for javelin.

# Ruins Map



Scale 1 square = 2m



3. The slavers have built themselves a campfire, secure in the knowledge that its glow cannot be seen beyond the circle of ruins. Whilst they wait for Calus to return, 1D4+2 of them will be sitting here chatting, eating or playing cards.

4. Using an alcove within the ruins, the slavers have constructed a simple pen to hold their captives. Henrick and three other men are held here. One of the slavers sits nearby, keeping watch over the prisoners.

5. The slaves have selected this secluded spot as a sleeping area. Any of the eight human slavers not at locations 3. or 4. will be resting here.

This area may be accessed by climbing over the rubble in the south western corner. Doing so requires both an Easy (+40%) Athletics (Climbing) Test and a Stealth Test to avoid knocking loose rocks and alerting any sleeping slavers.

All of the slavers are unhappy with the way their current assignment is working out. Calus was promised a rich payment from Malyce in exchange for the slaves but now it seems the witch is only interested in buying the pregnant woman. Once divided between the group, the slavers are wondering how any payment for a single person can provide enough to make this journey worthwhile.

If the PCs can get close enough to listen to the slavers talking, their dissatisfaction will be apparent. This will present the PCs with an alternative to an all-out fight. The slavers are unscrupulous men. None of them have any great loyalty to Calus. If the PCs can present a bargain that provides the slavers with a way to leave the forest and still earn some coin, they may well accept the deal. Such an encounter

should ideally be role-played out and not simply left to the whims of the dice gods. The key thing to remember whilst running such a negotiation is that the slavers are essentially cowardly bullies but they will not accept a deal that stings their pride: they want to leave but also want to feel this trek has not been a complete waste of time.

If the PCs elect to attack the slavers camp, they will have quite a fight on their hands. Many of the slavers are former brigands and highwaymen, recruited by Calus when he practised such a trade himself. Only if half of their number is downed will the slavers seek to retreat or, if that is not possible, surrender.

### Slavers (8)

STR	(12)
CON	(13)
DEX	(10)
SIZE	(13)
INT	(10)
POW	(11)
CHA	(9)

### Slaver Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	1/6
4-6	Left Leg	1/6
7-9	Abdomen	2/7
10-12	Chest	2/8
13-15	Right Arm	2/5
16-18	Left Arm	2/5
19-20	Head	0/6

### WEAPONS

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage	AP/HP
Battleaxe	42%	1D6+1	3/8
Buckler	37%	1D4	5/8

### SPECIAL RULES

*Combat Actions:* 2

*Strike Rank:* +10

*Movement:* 4m

*Skills:* Athletics 32%, Dodge 32%, Perception 40%, Resilience 35%, Stealth 32%, Survival 35%, Tracking 35%

*Armour:* Padded Shirt (2 AP on Abdomen, Arms, Chest; -6% skill Penalty) and Leather Trews (1 AP on legs; -2% Skill Penalty)


Note: Skill penalties from armour have already been applied to relevant skills

## Freeing the Slaves

Assuming that the party manages to either defeat the slavers or strike a bargain with them, they should be able to free the captives. If Jeriniah is with the party she will be happily reunited with her father. Regardless of whether his daughter is present, Henrick will promise to reward the adventurers for saving him and will offer to increase the payment if the PCs go after Calus and save Bethan. Exactly how much he offers is up to the GM but he is a rich man and somewhere in the region of 1,000 SP per party member is not unreasonable.

The rest of the slaves will be eager to leave the forest as soon as possible. Though grateful to the PCs for any rescue, they will be unwilling to venture further into the forest.

If the PCs have left any of the slavers alive they can question them about Calus' plans and destination. A subdued slaver will be even more cowardly than usual and will quickly reveal that:

- A half woman, half-tree creature with red, hoary skin came out of the woods and spoke with Calus. This is the blood-nymph messenger sent by Malyce.
  - Shortly after this creature arrived, Calus took the pregnant woman and three of the slavers and followed it north. He said that he would be back in a day or two with a hefty payment in gold.
  - He insisted that nobody was to harm the other slaves whilst he was away, as he might yet be able to sell them to Malyce – though, at least for now, she seemed only interested in the pregnant woman.
  - Calus went to an awful lot of trouble to acquire this particular woman. There is something special about her, though the slavers are not sure what it is.
- 


Whether the party is able to question the slavers or not, it should be apparent that their path leads further north – perhaps to deal with Calus, almost certainly to rescue Bethan. Let the party get to a point where they have decided what to do and then begin the next encounter before they have a chance to leave the ruins.

## A Lying Witch

Read or paraphrase the following:

*The noise of pounding feet and snapping twigs echoes from the forest. Moments later, a man dressed and armed just like the slavers comes bounding into view. A look of wild panic is writ large of his sweating features.*

The man is Zhimon and he is one of the three slavers who travelled north with Calus. Things have not gone according to plan and he has fled back to his companions. As soon as he sees the



party, his befuddled mind will be thrown into further turmoil. This will give the party a chance to challenge him or simply surround him. Once he recovers his wits, if not restrained in some way, he will flee again – southwards and out of the forest.

After what he has seen, Zhimon is terrified. He no longer cares about getting paid – he just wants to get safely out of the forest. If talking to the PCs seems like it will help accomplish that, he will need no prompting before he starts recounting what has happened:

- Calus, Zhimon and the two other slavers followed the blood nymph northwards to the edge of a clearing. There were signs that this had once been the site of a village.
- Malyce appeared, rising from the ground. She wore a cloak of rotting leaves and twigs and smelt of decay.
- She seemed pleased with the pregnant woman Calus had brought and promised him payment.
- Without warning, a pair of centaurs rushed from the trees and, with the help of the blood nymph, subdued Calus and two of the slavers. Zhimon managed to escape. He was surprised that no one gave chase but he heard Malyce call ‘Leave him. We have what we need.’

Learning that Calus has been betrayed is unlikely to change the party’s plans – nor to generate any sympathy. It should emphasise how duplicitous Malyce can be, however.

Whether or not the party tries to persuade or coerce the slavers into accompanying them (not a good idea – they will flee first chance they get),


their path will still lead north: and from what Zhimon can reveal, it will seem more important than ever to rescue Bethan.

## The Bones of Colmfet

After a few hours trudging through the forest, the party will discover the clearing where Calus, Zhimon and the others met with Malyce and were betrayed:


*Ahead, you notice more light filtering through the dense canopy, making it apparent that the trees are thinning out. Just visible beyond the foliage, you spy a clearing. Irregular bumps and grooves and few rough-hewn stones whisper of a settlement that must once have existed here.*

*Perhaps a dozen yards from the tree line are two large slabs of stone, one resting atop the other. A sort of scaffold has been erected around them, with thick vines strung about the uppermost stone. A dark stain runs in trickling lines from between these monstrous slabs.*




This is the site upon which the village of Colmfet once stood. It was destroyed by Malyce and her followers a little over a century ago: an act of revenge for the villagers’ murder of her family.

The scaffold surrounding the witchblock is newly constructed. A wheel-operated winch built into the frame allows for the upper block to be raised and lowered. Currently pressed flat between the two huge stones (each weighing 1,500 kg) is the body of one of the slavers who accompanied Calus northwards. His murder is the first step in a ritual that Malyce is performing in order to resurrect her family.



There is little else of interest in Colmfet – just old stones and crumbling foundations. A character that searches for tracks may discover fresh hoof and footprints clustered around the witchblock. In fact, it is apparent that someone was forcibly dragged to the stones. There are further prints leading eastwards into the forest.

## Malyce's Ritual



There are three stages to the ritual that Malyce must complete if she is to summon her family from beyond the veil. Each stage involves sacrificing a black-hearted soul – Calus and the slavers – in the same manner that Malyce's family were killed. Her eldest sister was crushed between the same witchblocks that the PCs can see have recently been used. Her mother's second child was burned at the stake and Estabel herself was fixed to the wheel of a watermill and drowned.

Malyce has completed the first sacrifice by crushing a victim between the witchblocks. She plans to burn the second at the stake and drown the third on *the witching wheel*. This will allow her to place the souls of her dead family inside the triplets that Bethan is currently carrying. It is the fact that she is due to bear three children that made her of such value – first to Calus, who was told to find a woman bearing three babes and consequently Malyce.

## A Voice from the Past

Once the PCs have had a brief opportunity to explore the village site, a ghostly apparition will materialise:

*Appearing as if from nowhere is a figure that stands on what must once have been the centre-ground of the village. With slow, deliberate movements, she raises a hand and beckons you nearer.*

The newcomer is the ghost of a former villager, doomed to wander this site in shame for the acts committed in life. She played a pivotal role in the murder of Malyce and her family. The arrival of the PCs and the plans being enacted by Malyce, present the ghost with some chance at atonement.

If the PCs move within a few metres of the ghost they will notice that is she is ever so slightly translucent. She will – in as non-threatening a way as possible – reach out to touch one of the PCs on the forehead. If she is allowed to do this, the character will experience a vision:

*With a sudden jolt, you are forced onto your belly, the stone rough and cold against your skin. The wild jeering of a crowd fills your ears. There is a creaking of wood and something above you blots out the sun. Sudden and terrible pressure exerts itself upon your shoulders and you feel your lungs pressed flat. Bones creak and deform, splintering within your pinned body. The taste of blood fills your mouth. The pain is indescribable.*

*You are somewhere else. Flames rise like wailing demons with red tongues that lick and burn. Beyond the haze of smoke and the stink of your own crisping flesh, a crowd bellows and shrieks. Their faces are twisted by hatred.*

*The world turns and the sky lurches. Water gushes into your screaming mouth and down through your*

*nose. The swirl of colours and sounds pounds against your skull and a terrible cold panic chills your bones. There is sudden sunlight – a gasp of air – and then a return to frosty depths.*

*The visions end as suddenly as they began. It takes a moment more for you to realise that the woman before you was present in each scene – screaming for murder and baying for blood – the blood of a family she now knows to have been innocent.*

The visions are glimpses of the last moments of life for each member of Malyce's family. Once the ghost imparts this vision, she will draw a simple map in the mud using the temporarily possessed character's finger (see Player Handout One).



After this, she will fade away to nothing, having done what she can to help.

If none of the PCs are willing to let the ghost touch them, she will leave them in peace and fade away. They will soon be able to pick up Malyce's trail but will have missed an important clue in terms of working out what she is doing.

## The Watchers

By this stage of the adventure, regardless of how careful the PCs might have been, their passage through the forest will not have gone unnoticed. There are many creatures that serve the witch of Grimwood and they have told her about the strangers that follow her.

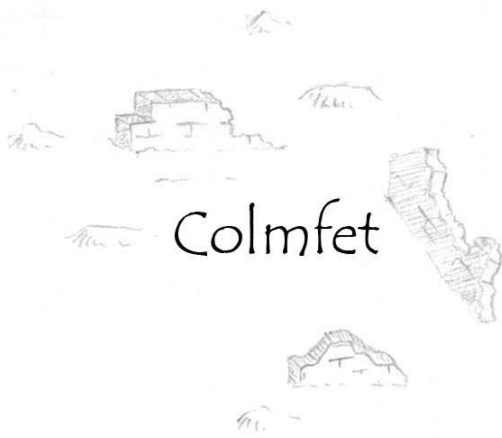
As a result of this, Malyce will begin preparing a few surprises for the adventurers.



# Player Handout One



Maiden's Mill



Colmfet



Charnel Knoll

## The Second Sacrifice

Heading eastwards from the ruins of Colmfet, Malyce has ascended a small hill that rises to just below the level of the surrounding trees. The hill is a desolate place, barren but for a few patches of rough grass. Atop this hill, she has constructed a pyre and, at just about the same time the PCs are encountering the ghost, she sets it ablaze – leaving Calus' slaver companion to be burned alive.

The PCs will see smoke from the pyre, rising above the tree line. If they have the ghost's map they can determine that it originates from the direction of 'Charnel Knoll'. If they investigate the tracks leading from the village – which include two sets of centaur prints and are therefore rather easy to follow (+40% Modifier) – they will see that these head off in exactly the same direction.

By the time the PCs arrive at Charnel Knoll, the slaver will be dead – his corpse a blackened husk. However, Malyce has left a grisly surprise in the form of a spell that reanimates the charred body as soon as anyone draws near:

*Charred and lidless eyes swivel suddenly and the still steaming corpse wrenches itself from its pole. Clenching black fingers of protruding bone, the thing lurches forward.*

### Smouldering Corpse

STR (22)  
CON (3)  
DEX (9)  
SIZE (11)  
INT (2)  
POW (2)  
CHA (2)

### Smouldering Corpse Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	2/5
4-6	Left Leg	2/5
7-9	Abdomen	2/6
10-12	Chest	2/7
13-15	Right Arm	2/4
16-18	Left Arm	2/4
19-20	Head	2/5

### WEAPONS

Typ	Weapon Skill	Damage
Burning Rake	50%	1D3+1D4+1D2 fire

### SPECIAL RULES

*Combat Actions:* 2

*Strike Rank:* +7

*Movement:* 2m

*Traits:* Dark Sight, Night Sight

*Skills:* Athletics 35%, Resilience 35%

*Armour:* Scorched chain (2 AP; no skill penalty)

The smouldering corpse will fight fearlessly until destroyed.

Tracks around the hilltop show where wood was gathered from the forest and used to construct the pyre. The stump of a small tree sits at the edge of the tree line – its trunk having been used to fashion the pyre's central stake. From the pyre itself, the trail leads northwest.

If – following the attack of the smouldering corpse – the PCs do not realise that Malyce is aware of their presence, you may want to nudge them towards this conclusion. Ideally, the adventurers should be cautious as they approach the final encounter, as the witch is not a foe to be taken lightly.

## The Final Sacrifice

Following the trail or making use of the ghost's map, the party should be able to find its way to Maiden's Mill. This is the spot where Malyce's mother was executed – lashed to the outside of the water wheel, submerged time and time again until her body and spirit gave out.

The old mill is in a poor condition but enough of the structure still stands to serve Malyce's purpose. When the PCs arrive, a number of important things will be happening:

- Calus is in the process of being tied to the blades of the water wheel by Malyce's blood nymph servant. He has been drugged and is not struggling.
- The two centaurs, each carrying a bow, stand watch over the forest, searching for signs of the PCs.
- Malyce is out of sight within the Mill. She has prepared Bethan for her role in the ritual, binding her fast to the frame of an old bed on the ground floor.

If, for some reason, the PCs head straight to the mill from Colmfet (effectively cutting out a visit to Charnel Knoll), they will be able to get ahead of Malyce and her followers. It is clear from her activities what Malyce will be planning to do – however in this instance the PCs will have a chance to interrupt her plans earlier on.

## The Ritual Begins

If the PCs do not intervene, Malyce will climb to the upper floor of the Mill from where she can look down on the water wheel and watch as Calus is drowned. All the while she will chant quietly. It will take three minutes for the drugged slaver to die. At this point, the ritual will be complete

– and the souls of Malyce’s dead family will be recalled from the spirit world to inhabit the three unborn babes within Bethan’s womb. The shock of this will immediately trigger the beginnings of childbirth.

Whatever the PCs do, Malyce’s priority will be to complete the ritual, while her servants do everything they can to keep the PCs on the southern side of the river. As soon as she is aware of the PCs, Malyce will make her way to the wheel and begin to strike Calus in the stomach each time he cycles on the wheel. This will drive the air from his lungs and half the amount of time it takes him to drown. Only if it becomes impossible for her to complete the ritual will Malyce seek to escape into the forest. If she manages to do so, the PCs will find that they have a powerful enemy to contend with.

You should aim to run this final encounter as a race against time. The PCs will have no idea how long it will be until Calus drowns – or exactly what will happen if he does. Though they will have little concern for the slaver’s safety, they should be worried about the fate of Bethan and her children.

The **Maiden’s Mill Map** provides a layout of this location:

1. A simple stone bridge spans the river at this point. The river is 5 metres wide, requiring a Difficult (–20% Modifier) Athletics Test to leap from one bank to the other without falling into the fast-flowing water. Swim tests to cross the river suffer are Difficult (–20%).
2. Two Centaur guards (*RuneQuest Monsters*, page 25) are positioned here to watch for the PCs. They will open fire with their bows as soon as they see

them, retreating to the bridge to make a stand if necessary.

3. Maiden’s Mill is a ramshackle building but still structurally sound. It stands two floors high and has a cellar where the workings of the wheel are housed.

4. The Witching Wheel itself has clearly been repaired in recent times – new wood fitted to the rusted iron frame. The circumference of the wheel is 4 metres and it takes 1 Combat Round to revolve completely.

## A Final Drama

Once the encounter is concluded, regardless of whether Malyce has succeeded with the ritual, Bethan will go into labour. The stress will have simply been too much.

At this point, Malyce and her allies will withdraw (if not already defeated) and leave Bethan for the PCs to take care of. Either the witch has been successful in her attempts to return her family’s souls or she has failed. There is no reason to hang around either way.

The PCs will need to comfort Bethan, who is understandably upset and make a Simple (+20%) First Aid or Easy (+40%) Healing Test to deliver each of her three children. Failure with any roll indicates a complication with one of the deliveries. The character should make a second roll to rectify the situation. If this too fails, the child will unfortunately not survive the birthing.

After this, the PCs will be free to leave the forest (unless you wish to further subject them to the horrors of the Grimwood) and collect their reward from Hendrick.

## Saving Calus

If Calus survives this encounter then, whether they want it or not, the PCs will have earned his gratitude. He will offer to share the location of some of his ill-gotten gains, dating back to the time when he was a brigand. Of course, this ‘reward’ will also act as incentive for the PCs not to kill him – Calus is one of life’s natural survivors. In other words he is an amoral blackguard with a devious streak a mile wide.

Exactly what is in this stash and where it is located, is entirely up to the GM. Perhaps it is hidden deep in the forest – and that, with Malyce around, Calus was unable to retrieve it. Heading off to claim this money (with an ex-brigand, slave master whose gratitude will only last so long) could provide a fitting beginning for the PC’s next adventure.

## Dramatis Personae

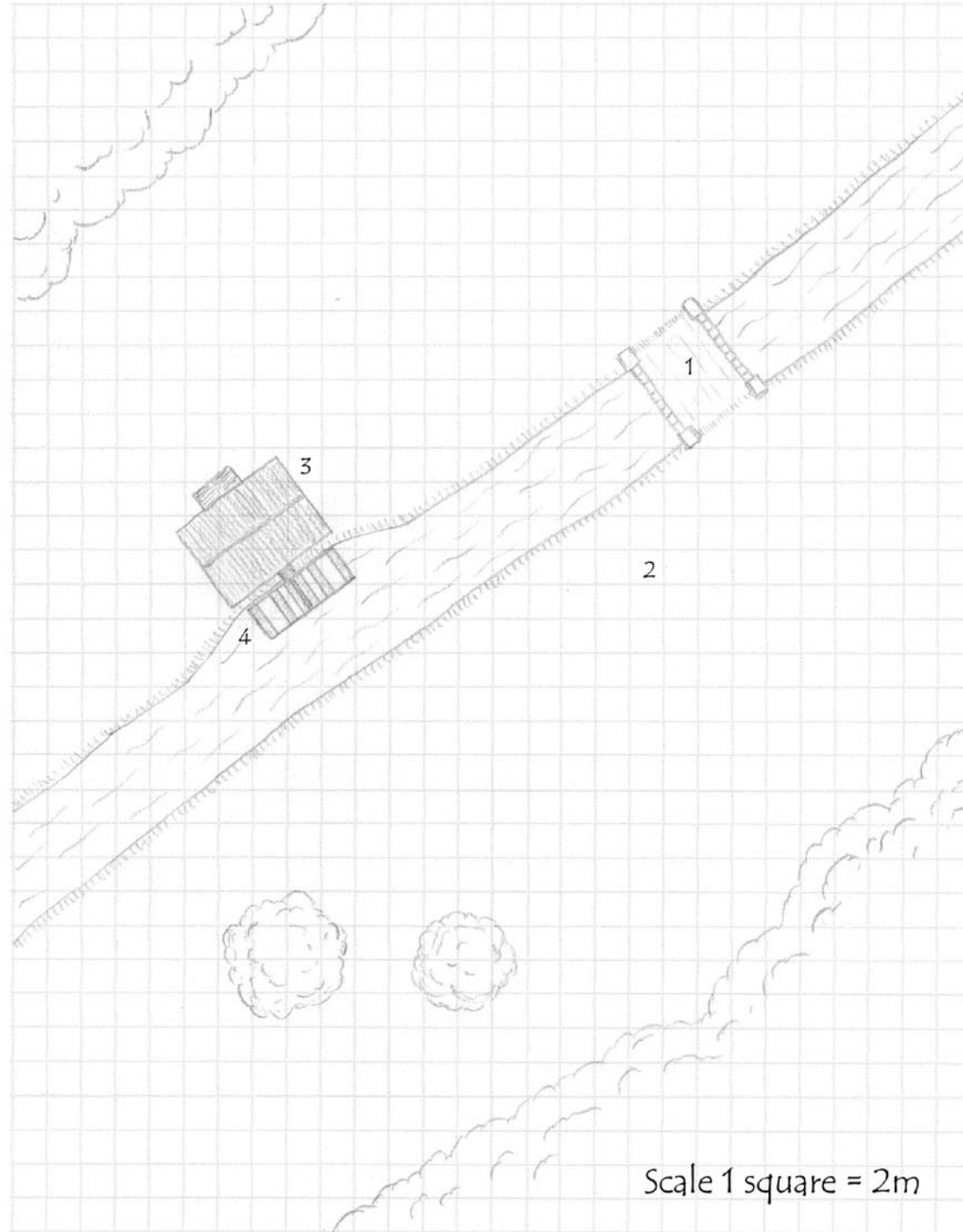
### Malyce, Lady of Lies, Mistress of the Grimwood

STR	(14)
CON	(17)
DEX	(15)
SIZE	(10)
INT	(18)
POW	(16)
CHA	(13)

#### Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	2/6
4-6	Left Leg	2/6
7-9	Abdomen	2/7
10-12	Chest	2/8
13-15	Right Arm	0/5
16-18	Left Arm	0/5
19-20	Head	4/6

# Maiden's Mill Map



## WEAPONS

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage	AP/HP
Sickle	65%	1D6	4/8
Spider Bundle*	60%	special	-

Within her cloak, Malyce stores a number of web sacks – each filled with hatchling spiders. Up to a range of 10m, she can hurl these at her foes. Upon contact a bundle bursts in a chattering spray of hungry arachnids that bite and feed. The spiders automatically introduce the following the venom into the target's system:

Spider Venom

**Type:** Smear

**Delay:** Immediate

**Potency:** 50

**Full effect:** 1 Hit Point Damage to random location, applies -3 penalty to victim's DEX and STR

**Duration:** 1D6 Minutes

A creature struck by a spider bundle will continue to be bitten for 1D6 rounds, with the effects from each attack being cumulative. A creature reduced to 0 DEX or STR is paralyzed until the venom wears off.

## SPECIAL RULES

**Combat Actions:** 3

**Strike Rank:** +14

**Movement:** 4m

**Skills:** Dodge 70%, First Aid 55%, Influence 66%, Lore (Animal) 95%, Lore (Grimwood) 97%, Lore (Plant) 101%, Perception 87%, Persistence 79%, Resilience 70%, Stealth 75%, Survival 75%, Tracking 80%

**Magical Skills:** Runecasting (Beast) 76%, Runecasting (Death) 75%, Runecasting (Plant) 91%

**Rune Magic Spells:** Animate Husk, Clear Path, Verdant Surge\*, Vigour, Worms in the Apple\*,

**Armour:** Grimwood Cloak (2 AP on legs, abdomen, chest; no skill penalty), boar's skull helm (4 AP on Head, no skill penalty)

**Equipment:** Beast Rune, Death Rune, Plant Rune, Grimwood cloak, boar skull helm, Grim Heart, sickle

*\*RuneQuest Spellbook*

The Grim Heart is a magical artefact that holds the key to Malyce's power. She found it within an ancient, hollow tree deep inside the forest. It was placed there by a long forgotten faerie lord. In form, it resembles a root ball, laced with glistening tendrils that seem rainbow-hued in the light.

The Grim Heart bestows upon a mortal owner the life span of a great oak. The owner may also commune freely with all creatures within the Grimwood, with a +40% modifier to all interaction tests. Finally, it allows him or her to grant a single wish, once each year – though the results of this wish will be twisted in some way.

If Malyce is slain, the Heart will sink into the ground and then reappear within the tree where it once lay.

Malyce appears as a woman in her thirties, her skin smeared with mud and covered in scratches. Her hair is cut short and tucked beneath a fearsome boar's head skull that she wears as a helm. Her cloak, which covers her from head to foot, is made from animal pelts and a covering of rotting forest detritus.

Against foes that violate her forest, Malyce typically uses *Verdant Surge* to hamper their progress. If she gets close enough, she will add their bodies to the rot of the forest floor with *Worms in the Apple*.

## Blood Nymph

STR	3D6+6	(19)
CON	3D6+3	(15)
DEX	4D6	(18)
SIZE	2D6+6	(12)
INT	2D6+3	(9)
POW	3D6+3	(14)
CHA	3D6	(10)



## Blood Nymph Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	4/6
4-6	Left Leg	4/6
7-9	Abdomen	4/7
10-12	Chest	4/8
13-15	Right Arm	4/5
16-18	Left Arm	4/5
19-20	Head	4/6

## WEAPONS

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage	AP/HP
Blood root claws	70%	1D4 + 1D4	—
Blood thorns	50%	1D8	—

A blood nymph attacks its enemies with snaking root fingers that burrow beneath the skin and drain a target's blood. A creature injured by these root claws loses 1 point of STR. This will be recovered once the injured body part is completely healed.

At range of up to 20m, a blood nymph can hurl barbed thorns. It may do so only twice each day: after this, it needs time to regrow the thorns.

## SPECIAL RULES

*Combat Actions:* 3

*Strike Rank:* +14

*Movement:* 6m

*Traits:* Vampiric Touch

*Skills:* Dodge 55%, Lore (Plants) 90%, Resilience 40%, Stealth 90%, Tracking 100%

*Armour:* Bark Hide (4 AP; no skill penalty)

A blood nymph resembles a bark-skinned woman with hair of grass and moss. Their rough skin is the colour of congealed blood and their eyes are orbs of an even deeper hue. They cannot speak but communicate with an intricate sign language and the release of potent fragrances.

## New Spell

### Animate Husk

Casting Time 10, Duration Special, Magnitude 5, Touch

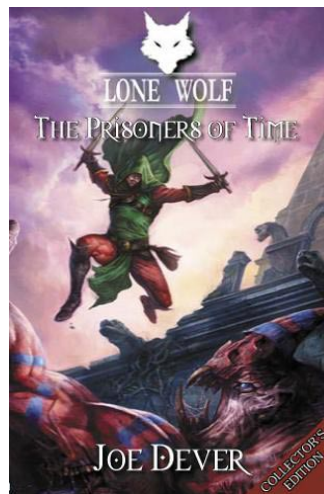
*At the touch of your hand, the dead flesh twitches and moves. Long sightless eyes roll down from a skinless skull in order to watch and wait for the next fool who blunders near.*

The touched corpse becomes a lethal trap – lying dormant until any living creature other than the caster comes within 3m of it. At this point it animates and attacks.

The corpse has the same characteristics as a zombie. It will continue to attack until either it is destroyed or 10 Combat Rounds have elapsed – at which point, the husk de-animates.



**LONE WOLF**



Book 11: *The Prisoners of Time*, is the latest instalment from Joe Dever's Lone Wolf Series.

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# Magic of the Kabala

Uri Kurlianchik

Throughout their long history, the Jewish people have often been confronted with various threats, ranging from murderous pogroms and persecutions to supernatural assaults by evil spirits and antediluvian demons. Always the minority, and far from warlike, the Jews had developed a system of charms based on exploiting the immense power hidden in the explicit name of God (YHVH), also known as ‘The Great and Terrible Name.’

The charms presented here are mostly taken from the works of Rabbi Moshe ben Mordecai Zacuto of Venice (1625-1697), a poet and a philosopher who also dabbled in kabalistic mysticism in his old age.

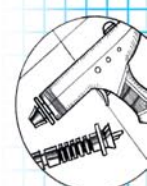
Because kabala is a tricky art at best, every charm has a chance to fail even if performed properly and with the best of intentions; whenever attempting to use a kabala charm, make a Wisdom knowledge check against the charm’s DC. Failure indicates the charm fizzled harmlessly, while a critical fumble bestows a *curse* (as if cast by a 20<sup>th</sup> level cleric) on the kabalist or afflicts him with some other kind of misfortune (chosen by the DM). In most cases, the kabalist will not know whether the charms worked or fizzled until it is too late.

The author does not recommend trying these charms in real life... just in case.

## Kabala in Your Game

These charms work best in modern or historic settings where magic is not taken for granted. In such a setting, uncovering these charms and finding all the right materials to perform them could serve as exciting quests in and of themselves and the charms, quite often, will be the only escape from an otherwise hopeless situation. On the other hand, a villain who somehow got his hands on these charms and uses them for evil could make a formidable nemesis with his newfound magic powers. To battle this villain, the PCs will have to gain access to various charms themselves and do it as quickly as possible, for a man who can walk hundreds of miles per day, become invisible at will and manipulate anyone to do his bidding is a dire nemesis indeed.

These charms can come in handy for a low-level fantasy hero as well. Although greatly inferior to their arcane and divine spell analogues, these charms can



be performed by characters of any level or class, provided they gain access to the needed materials and texts. In this case, they will fill the roll of improvised, low-level magic, rather than the powerful and awesome mysticism that they would be in a historic or modern campaign.

## The Seven Virtues

The Seven Virtues are a collection of powerful charms given to Adam and Eve after they sinned before the LORD and were exiled from the Garden of Eden. The Holy, blessed be He, realising that the fragile couple would not survive in the harsh primordial environment into which they were cast, naked and unarmed, had created the Seven Virtues to ensure the survival of humanity.

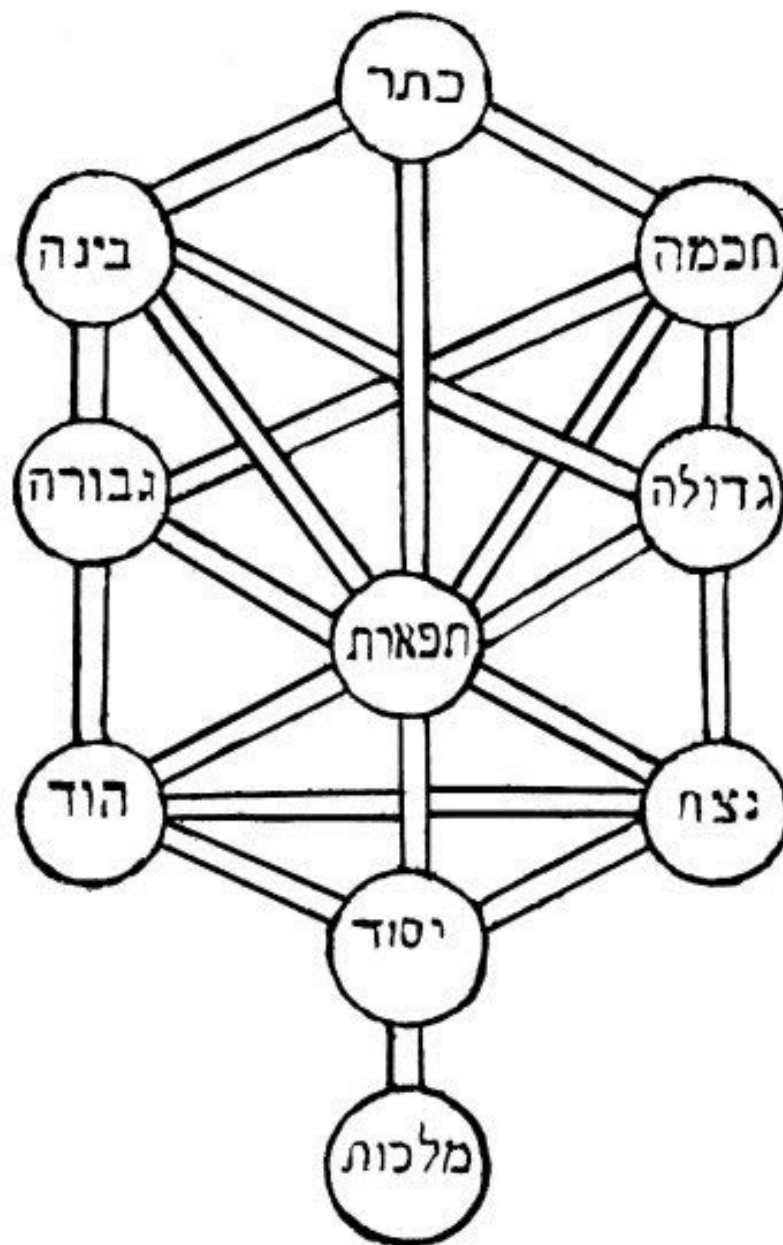
Upon finishing this wonderful tome, a massive book with sheets of crimson gold, letters of precious stones and covers of lustrous sapphire, He passed it to his most trusted servants, *Raziel* and *Galizor*, who delivered it to Adam and told him, 'from these virtues you will know all that is destined to happen and will be able to accomplish whatever you want. But,' and the great angels' features suddenly turned severe and terrible, 'be wary, for it is consuming fire to abuse them; perform every virtue as ordained and you will succeed with great purity!'

The original tome given to the First Man was lost eons ago but lesser versions of these charms are practiced by students of the mystic art of kabala to this very day. However, even the greatest scholars rarely choose to attempt these for fear of the consuming flame of God. Even these lesser virtues are extremely powerful and must be treated with caution and purity. Any of the following is considered impure and will result in the automatic failure of the charm and inflict a curse or some other kind of divine retribution on the kabalist;

- Touching a dead humanoid.
- Eating non-Kosher food.
- Straying from Lawful Good alignment.
- Practicing any form of arcane magic or psionics.
- Worshipping any beings save God.

### 1. The Virtue of Kings (DC 13)

*If you wish to go before a king or a ruler and have him do as you desire and to give you everything you want, take a mitre on which a baby was born and*



*write on it these 10 names and put it in your sash and go with it before the king, the lord, or the government and he will undoubtedly give you your desire.*

The Virtue of Kings grants a 2d4 temporary enhancement bonus to

Charisma, adding the usual benefits to Charisma-based skill checks and other uses of the Charisma modifier. This bonus applies only to NPCs who are wealthier or more experienced than the kabalist and only if the request is just and sincere or works for the common good. So, while asking for a bag of gold to help the community would work, suggesting the baron executed the kabalist's rival would not (and probably cost the villain his own life).

## 2. The Virtue of Flying (DC 17)

*For the Jumping of the Path, that is, to walk the path of a year in a single day or to cover the passage of a month in one hour, write these 10 names on deerskin parchment and take a cane of four cubits, as the measure of a man and cut the cane and insert the scroll inside it and, during prayer, put on your face a handkerchief and ride on the cane and say this: 'by the 10 names which are written on the scroll which is inside this cane on which I ride, lead me from this place to place so-and-so,' and you will be there.*

*And be careful not to remove the handkerchief from your face before you reached your destination for then you will surely fall. And after you arrived to wherever you wanted to go, feast in reverence for three days and wash and purify your body and praise the LORD, for he is great and merciful.*

The Virtue of Flying enables the kabalist to fly at the speed 50 miles per hour for as long as a day (12 hours) at a time, after which he must rest and purify himself before attempting the virtue again. During flight, the kabalist is extremely vulnerable because he must keep his face covered with a handkerchief, his arm holding the cane and his tongue repeating the prayer. If he fails to do so, the cane will lose its divine powers and the kabalist will plummet to his death.

## 3. The Virtue of Success (DC 11)

*Wash and purify and write these holy names on the newborn baby's mitre and on a forged silver flier and bury the mitre and flier under the earth when the sun does not rule and in the morning remove them and hang them on the entrance to your shop or home and you will succeed in all of your endeavours.*

This useful virtue grants the kabalist a +2 luck bonus to all non-combat rolls made inside his shop or home, as long as the kabalist deals fairly with his customers and treats his family kindly. Greedy kabalists who try to bless both their home and shop, suffer a -4 luck penalty to all rolls as long as both fliers are in their places.

## 4. The Virtue of Invisibility (DC 15\*)

*Take a twig, make a small cut in it and write on a parchment made of a fallen deer's carcass these excellent names and put the parchment inside the twig and place it against your heart and walk in front of any man and he will not be able to see you. But be warned; it is not proper to write it save during the month of Tamuz\*\*.*

\* Wisdom check must be re-rolled for every minute of invisibility

\*\* mid-June to mid-July.

This useful virtue has enabled many Rabbis to escape their persecutors without committing the sin of bloodshed. This works just like *invisibility* but is cancelled if used for theft, peeping, assassination or any other immoral purposes. In any case, the kabalist is able to see himself and can judge whether he is visible or not only by others' reactions.

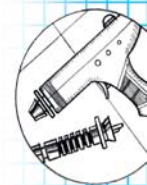
Also, the old manuscripts say that one should not stay invisible for more than 10 minutes per day else he would disappear from the world completely. So far, no one has dared to test the truth of this dire warning, which might or might not be true.

## 5. The Virtue of Safety (DC 15)

*To pacify the sea's rage, take a new cauldron and write on it: 'I, so-and-so, implore with the 10 names of the fifth virtue that the lord of the sea, Zerukhael and the lords of the four winds pacify the sea from its rage and tumult and safeguard this ship from all evil until it comes to shore and let it be unharmed.' And shatter the cauldron and throw the shards to the four winds of the sea and reach your destination safely.*

This powerful virtue is usually used by travellers who must travel to faraway lands. If properly performed, it guarantees good weather throughout the passage and automatically cancels any harmful encounter such as pirate raids or monster attacks.

The Virtue of Safety does not work if there are more evil than good NPCs on the ship, instead turning the voyage into a nightmare of violent storms and murderous assaults until the good-to-evil balance is restored.





## 6. The Virtue of Commanding (DC 17)

*Take a staff of the loz or ashira tree and write on it these fabulous names. And if, while walking down the road, you see people who are mean to you or seek to do you harm, take the staff and strike the earth with it three times and say each time 'go your way' and they will go their way and if you wish to hold them, say 'stand' and they will stop and write these names in great purity and use them not for evil lest you be swallowed by the earth.*

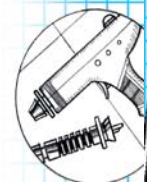
This virtue is designed to protect the lone traveller from brigands and thugs. It affects anyone able to see and hear the kabalist and whose attitude is hostile. The first command causes the target/s (7 humanoids maximum) to walk away in a random direction for 2d4 minutes, while the second simply causes them to stand confused in their places, unable to decide what to do or where to go. Both commands can be avoided with a successful Will save (DC 20).

Any violence towards the target immediately ends the virtue's effect and cracks the staff, rendering it useless.

## 7. The Virtue of Love (DC 19)

*If you wish to be loved by all people and have them follow you because of the power of their love, take the new born baby's mitre or a deer parchment that was worked by a pure man and write on it these admirable words in purity and holiness. And after you have finished that, roll the parchment into a scroll and touch with it every man or woman and immediately they will follow you.*

This virtue is the most morally ambiguous and as such is the least used by honest Rabbis and the most abused by corrupt kabalists. It causes anyone who doesn't hold a specific grudge against the kabalist to become helpful for 24 hours, after which his attitude returns to what it was before the virtue's



application. Only one person can be affected at any given time, and the same person can only be affected once per lunar cycle.

Those affected by the virtue are not aware of the fact that they are being manipulated and attribute their sudden helpfulness to genuine respect or attraction, depending on their gender and orientation. The Will DC to avoid this effect is 25 for indifferent or friendly targets and 20 for unfriendly ones.

## Additional Charms

While not part of the seven virtues, these charms are also useful and powerful and are worthy of mention. They follow the same rules as virtues but do not require such strict purity to attempt and have lesser consequences of failure (usually simply a -1 luck penalty to all rolls for 1d4 days or a minor misfortune of the DM's choice.)

### The Charm of Augury (see below)

*Take a new knife with a black hilt and make a circle on the ground of such a size so that you will be able to sit inside it with a boy or a girl who are younger than nine years and older than eight years and anoint the child with oil mixed with soot scraped from a pan and warn him not to look outside the blessed circle and after that whisper in his right ear 'Catriel who Answers, may you show yourself to this boy and answer truly to what I ask.' Three times whisper this and then the child will see a strange man riding a white mule and say to the stranger three times 'welcome in the name of God,' and after that say 'right before my eyes, may you get down from this mule,' and after that ask your question. And after you have found out what you wanted to know, tell the stranger 'leave in peace' and if the boy did not see anything of that, he will repeat all the above mentioned three times but if the stranger lied, the child will say 'in the name of Sansiel, may you tell me the truth,' and remember naught of this and that.*

*And do this only once for every cycle of the moon\* lest you invoke the wrath of the Almighty's great host of righteous angels.*

\* a lunar month (29 or 30 days).

This powerful charm summons an angel (or any other Lawful Good outsider appropriate for the campaign) to answer a single question asked by the kabalist, before returning to whatever task it was practicing before being interrupted. In theory, the summoned angel should answer

all questions truthfully and to the best of their knowledge. However, since not all angels are friendly and certainly none of them are Omni sentient, the given answer is very likely to be untrue or partial, depending on the angel and on how well the charm was performed. In any case, as long as the kabalist and the child remain within the circle, both are safe from any physical or magical attacks attempted by the summoned angel, who has only a few minutes to attempt anything before being expelled from this world. Nevertheless, angels are powerful and immortal beings and should one decide to go on a personal vendetta against the kabalist, sooner or later they will find a way to hurt him.

### Roll Outcome

1	The angel is offended and attempts to harm the kabalist.
2-10	The angel gives a false answer.
11-16	The angel gives a partial answer.
17-19	The angel answers the question honestly.
20	The angel answers the question and gives a useful advice.

### The Charm of Protection (DC 13)

*To bring in the thief, take a newly-bought axe and write on it this holy name and hang it above your door and the thief will come and surely be destroyed.*

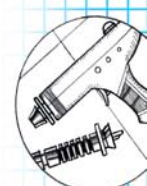
As soon as someone with ill-intentions enters the kabalist's home, the axe immediately comes to life, attacking the intruder with a +14 attack bonus for 2d8+14 points of damage for three rounds before becoming an inanimate object again. Only one door per home can be trapped; trying to trap more doors simply cancels the previous charms.

This charm can be used in conjunction with the Virtue of Success, for the more success one enjoys the more enemies he has.

### The Charm of Legacy (DC 14)

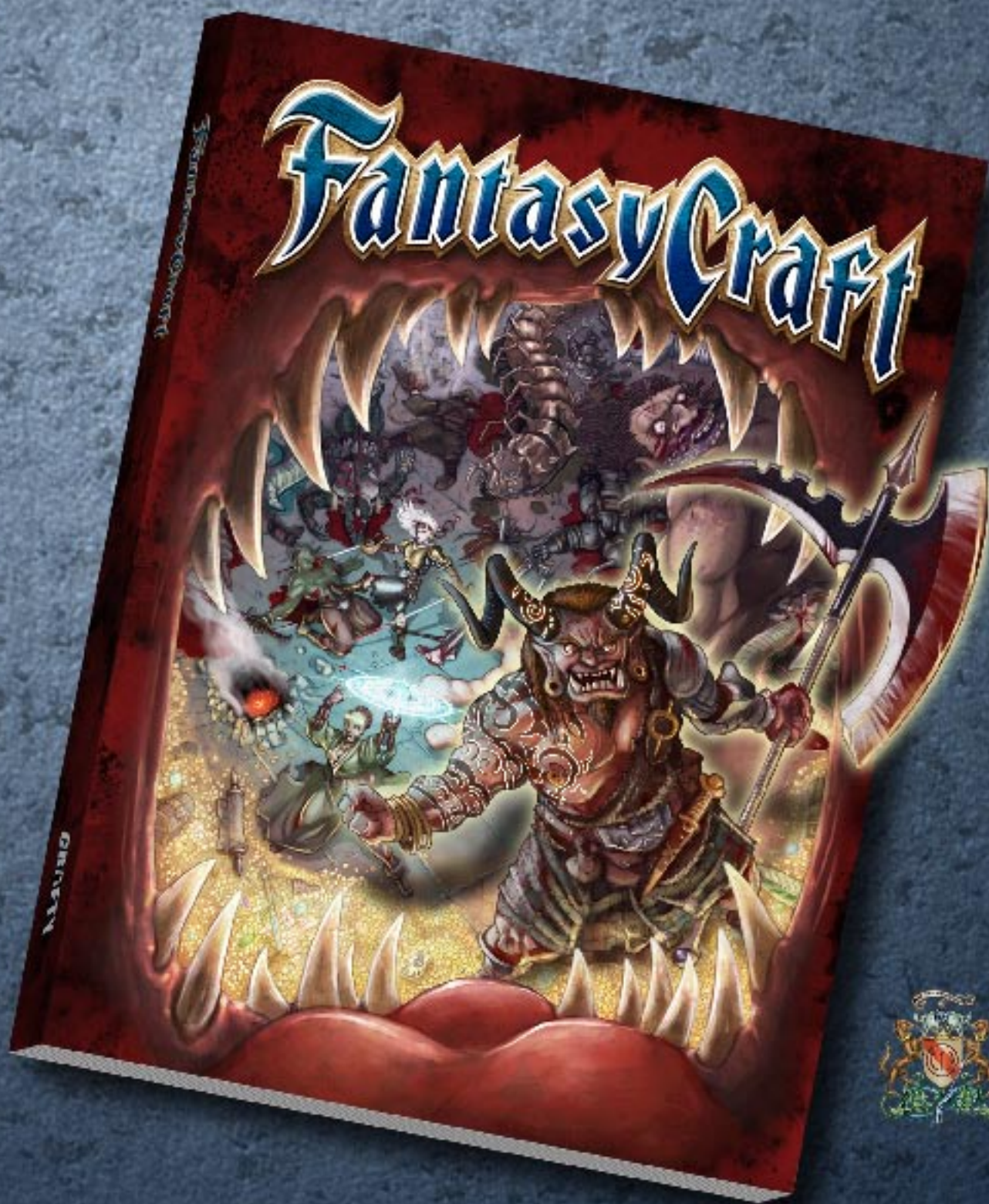
*For the baby to be wise, let the woman's son or husband write on her breasts; 'Asa' on the right breast and 'Tma' on the left breast and the baby will suck wisdom and grow in wisdom and walk only the path of righteousness and fear no evil.*

This charm is used by Rabbis who want to ensure they have proper heirs to inherit their places and lead their communities in justice and wisdom. A baby who enjoyed this charm will gain a +4 inherent bonus to all mental abilities and his alignment will be Lawful Good regardless of









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# TEN REASONS TO LEAVE CIMMERIA

**Rodrigo Vilanova de Allende.**

A land filled with violence and adventure, Cimmeria can present a small obstacle for Game Master and Players alike: its inhabitants are somewhat reclusive, which makes it hard to understand why one of the native barbarians would even try to go beyond their Forested borders. Although not illogical to start any barbarian campaign with the characters already involved in a foreign land, sometimes the Game Master and Players may wish to start from the very beginning, with their barbaric characters climbing and fighting (literally!) their way out of their homeland. This article presents some ideas for Game Masters and Players alike for their Barbarian characters to leave their home country.

Some of the reasons proposed in this article need an extra effort on behalf of the Players or some background development by the Game Master but they can be used as a link to more long-term Campaign objectives or simply as a convenient excuse to place the characters in an unfamiliar situation, especially when playing new or low-level characters.

The suggestions presented in this article can be easily adapted to suit not only other barbarian nations but as starting scenarios for 'civilised' characters as well.

## 1.- The Character's clan loses a blood feud.

It is well known that Cimmerians hold a grudge like no other and that they will as soon fight Nordheimir, Gundermen or Picts as they will fight each other. Taking this into account, it is just a matter of time before the characters get involved in an intra or inter-clan feud. The reasons for this feud can be as real or as imaginary as the Games Master wishes, ranging from scorned love interests, to cow stealing and the accidental death of a relative. The important thing is that the character's side losses in a definite way, with the characters the only survivors having to choose between leaving Cimmeria for the time being or a certain death. The characters may swear to return and finish the feud later on but for the time being they will be on the run in foreign lands.

## 2.- The character's tribe is attacked by slavers from the Border Kingdom.

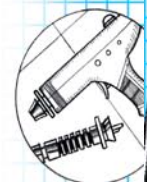
Living near a border has never been easy and the Hyborian World is no different, quite the


contrary! Not only do the inhabitants of border regions have to ensure their survival, they have to withstand the depredations of their neighbours, both local and foreigners. In this scenario (*expanded in 'Cimmerian Moons'*) the characters either suffer directly or the aftermath of a foreigners raid intended on capturing slaves. Granted, Cimmerians do not make up for good slaves but at a pinch, the slavers might make do (in bulk) with the Cimmerian captives, keeping them weak enough to prevent their fury until passing them to another fool.

The characters will have to track down the slaves, rescuing them and exact all the revenge due to every single person involved. Depending on their abilities and sheer luck this can be over very quickly or drag on for years.

## 3.- The characters hire themselves as mercenaries for Aesgard or Vanaheim.

If Conan found it bearable, it surely is for the characters! This line of thought obviously works better if the characters live near the Northern borders of Cimmeria. There are several reasons





for hiring themselves out as mercenaries: there is a shortage of work in the characters' village, a grudge against either Aesir or Vanir requires the characters to track down a particularly doomed Nordheimir and news of a war party assembling is heard, the characters catch a glimpse of a pretty maid and decide to steal her for themselves or simple wanderlust to name a few options. This idea stresses the fact that there is a constant relation between the three cultures and allows for several character races to be played simultaneously in an ambient of fragile tolerance and honour-bound contracts.

#### **4.- The characters are part of a war party raiding a Pict village.**

Cimmeria has several borders, all conflict ridden and a brutal experience without a doubt is living in the Pictish-Cimmerian border. Living in a semi-constant state of war, it is just a matter of time before the characters are involved in one of the most violent conflicts in memory. Perhaps a hunting accident resulted in a tribesman killed by Picts (or vice versa), a trade agreement went awry with one side growing too greedy, a shaman has a wild vision of death and destruction and a pre-emptive strike is assumed in order... Whatever the reasons for the attack, the characters have not only the challenge of surviving but also to choose what terms are going to be offered the survivors and losers of the war. Assuming the characters' side wins, they may be affected by the senseless violence and decide to leave their homeland or, even worse, they actually lose to the Picts, having to find a way out of the situation.

#### **5.- The characters are sent as scouts into Gunderland.**

This can be quite an exciting adventure, either pre or post-Venarium, where the characters are charged by the tribe's elders to investigate the activities of the Aquilonian. Perhaps a host of Aquilonian warriors seeks revenge on past offenses or the Cimmerians are planning several raids on Gunderland or the information the characters gather is even more disturbing than what they thought (a powerful sorcerer's designs on the characters' tribe, a traitor Cimmerian dealing with the enemy) either way, a good face-off between the characters and the Aquilonian borderers is in order, with no quarter asked or given!


#### **6.- The characters' tribe has a long tradition of trading with foreigners (Aesir, Vanir, Border Kingdom) during Spring.**

Being a Cimmerian is not all about bloodshed and violence. Perhaps the characters belong to a border clan that trades furs (or timber or brass trinkets) with the neighbouring kingdoms. This year, an opportunity to trade with wealthier races presents itself and the characters cannot resist, either through pure greed or simple need to actually sell the merchandise. If the characters can trust their informants they may find themselves travelling to Nemedica, or even Zamora trying to sell their

rare wares (the King of Nemedica wants his newly formed royal guard to wear a Cimmerian panther sash!), running the risk of every single merchant in the Hyborian Age: either being robbed in the road or swindled in the markets! It is extra fun to imagine the Cimmerian characters haggling with a Shemite!

#### **7.- Winter is particularly harsh this year, in order for the tribe to survive, the characters volunteer to exile themselves.**

A good option for low level or very high level characters, life in Cimmeria is known to be brutal most of the time and winter is particularly hard. Usually, the elders of a tribe will have to decide who dies in order for the tribe to survive but in this case, the characters volunteer themselves (or are chosen by petty envies) for a chilly death if that is what it takes for the tribe to survive. Once in the wilderness, the characters may decide to survive and migrate southward (or westward, or anywhere else) now as lone wolves with no tribe of their own. This idea lends itself to exciting 'Nature vs. Barbarians' adventures, with lots of wild encounters, including some of the great monsters presented in past supplements of Sign & Portents (e.g. S&P # 65, Feb. 2009) and lost civilisation and cultures near the borders and sierras of Cimmeria.



## 8.- A capricious lover of a character demands proof of his/her love: to recover some 'exotic' item across the borders.

Perhaps it was the 'golden helmet' of a Hyrkanian horse-lord (yeah, right) or a length of rope made of Pict's hair (good luck!). Whatever the item, real or imagined, the love interest of the character has decided, out of boredom, to impose this fool's errand on them. Done in several works of literature and film, this idea is none the less good in stubborn characters that can either be competing for the prize set by their love interest or can be honour-bound to follow and help the love-stricken character. It is particularly interesting to develop the characters understanding in human nature until they have to actually choose between their home bound love and a very real soul mate, found during their travels through Hyboria.

## 9.- One (or several) of the Characters learn that they are not full-blooded Cimmerians (i.e. half-Gunderlander, half Aesir, half Hyborian and so on)

## and decide to search for their true identity.

A Cimmerian's life is not expected to be an easy one but being a pariah in the hills of Cimmeria is surely a hard lot. This idea has a lot of character-developing opportunities, especially around the character's background. These stories can be of tragic violence or of deep love (à la Romeo and Juliet) involving the characters parents but the main spirit of this idea is the search of identity and validation on behalf of the characters, perhaps they are better received on their other parent culture or perhaps they are pursued and attacked on sight. Tolerance, cross-classing and even religious leaps of faith can be focal points in this type of adventure (which would include the Characters losing all their Crom-given traits!).

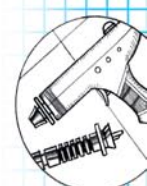
## 10.- The characters are afflicted with a strange curse/malady and have to look for a cure.

Perhaps, during a hunting trip, one of the characters got bit by a strange, poisonous animal; or they met one of the many terrible monsters of the dark woods of Cimmeria, barely escaping but ending with a strange debilitating affliction. It is possible also that, during a raid against Picts, a shaman curses all the raiding party, including the characters (a variant of Awful Rite of the Were-Beast is can be very appropriate). One way or another, the characters are in a race against time and have to travel far and wide to learn and obtain the cure for their disease. The Games Master may decide to make the afflicted characters Fortitude

checks in order to add more pressure to the mission. A variant to this adventure is having someone important or cherished by the characters afflicted with said disease/curse, thus the characters are called for to obtain the cure.

## Aftermath

The ideas presented here are merely suggestions to allow your barbarian Players Characters to interact with other non-Cimmerian races and classes or to simply offer some background for their campaigns. After this initial foray outside Cimmeria, the Player Characters (and Games Master) have to come up with a valid motivation to remain outside Cimmeria. Wanderlust and curiosity are the main obvious reasons but, as always, other justifications can be found/made (revenge for a fallen comrade, ambition, sorrow and so on). Mercenary work is cut for the barbarian character, either as scouts or as part of a skirmishing unit, on the other hand, the characters may wish to follow Conan's footsteps and learn about the 'civilised' lands they have caught a glimpse of.



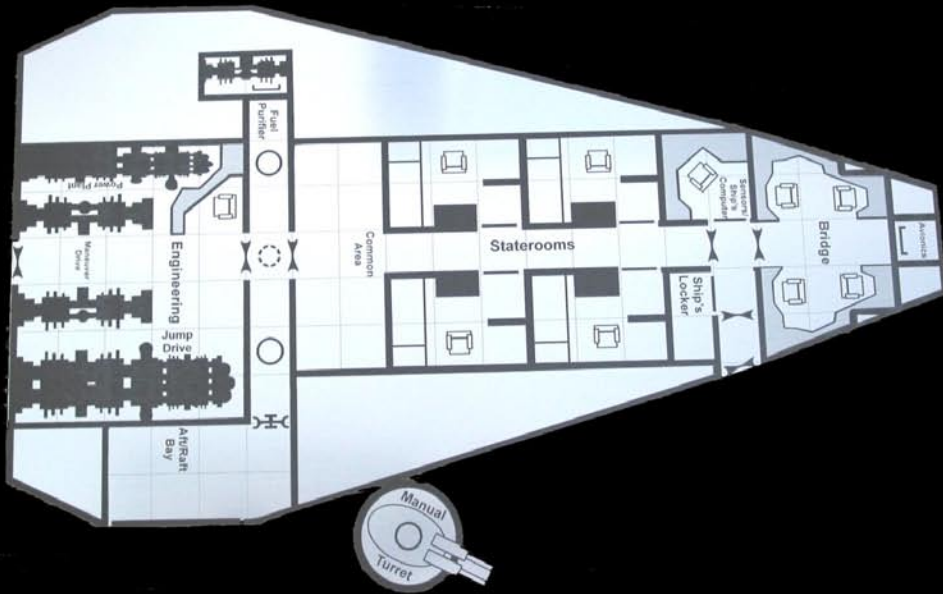


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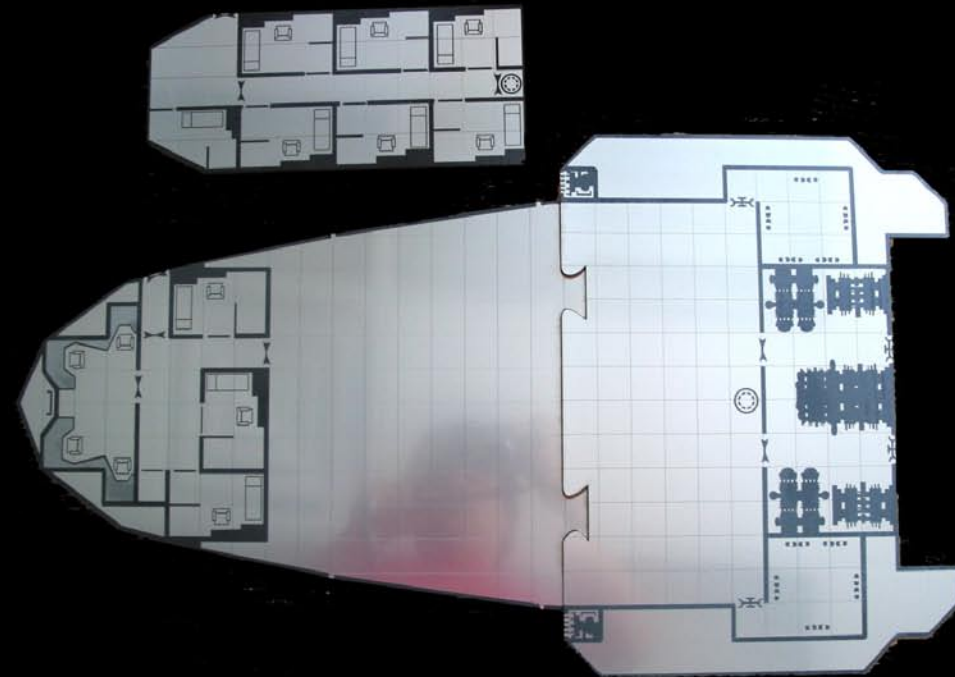
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# The Fantasy GMs Emergency Toolkit

By Alan Oliver

This article is aimed at all Fantasy Referees, Games Masters, Storytellers and whatever else we choose to call ourselves. The aim of the article is to provide said worthies with some emergency tools for those situations that are not covered in the prep. Some games are going to be more subject to this than others. Storyline scenarios where the players are following a specific plot are less likely to jump the rails and go off on unusual tangents. However, when they do there is less background material for the GM to use. On the other hand a sandbox game does provide the GM with more background material to work with, by default, however it is much more likely that the players will do something unexpected during a session that necessitates the GM reaching for the Emergency Toolkit.

The ideas presented here are not tied to any specific game system and no game stats are provided. Should the situation develop to the stage where combat occurs the GM will have to rely on their own resources.

For ease of use the ideas have been grouped together by type. There are Stall, Delay, Distractions, Kit removal and finally Bar-fluff.

## Stalling the Characters

So, the players have just come up with a plan that involves attacking someone the GM had not thought they would be silly enough to pick a fight with but there have been no preparations made for running a fight. What you need is a stall, something to keep the players occupied while you do some emergency staving. That is the purpose of the following.

## Players love lists

Knowing what most players are like, they love lists. So get them to list all their equipment, weapons and other hardware. This should include how heavy it all is and where it is carried or worn on the body. This should keep the players busy for a while, as they will want to make sure that they have not missed something that they are going to need. Make the point that anything not listed now they will not have available later.

This should give you at least half an hour. More if some of the group are not especially organised and have to produce these lists from scratch. Do not worry about the player who already has all of this done, he or she will just have to wait for the others to finish.

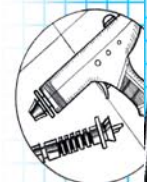
This may also highlight some interesting things. For example the belt pouch that has over 50,000 gold pieces in it. Even assuming that these are tiny coins, no more than 10g each, this would still come in at 500 kilos of gold hanging from your waist. Even Conan himself would have some difficulty with that. Not to mention that the pouch would have to be the size of a body bag and made of heavy duty leather.


## What does he look like again?

Get each player to describe their character or characters again. It has probably been a while since this was last done. It is a useful thing to do regularly anyway, as it keeps the imagery sharp in the players' minds. It should also take up a bit of time, during which you can be frantically scribbling away.

## Second thoughts

Most players are by nature rather cautious. This can be used against them in this situation. If you have an NPC within the party have them highlight some potential flaw in the plan, as well as bringing some new small piece of information





to the table. The players will then want to go over the plan again, possibly starting from scratch. If you keep quiet and concentrate on getting the stats you need while they do this, they are likely to talk themselves round in circles as they try and figure out what the safest way of reaching their objective might be.

If there is no NPC within the group that you can use for this, then you will have to find a way for the group to get access to some new information. If the game has a strong mystic element to it you can have some sort of premonition dream sequence, where one of the characters sees everyone else die horrible deaths because of something they have not planned for. Alternatively have a contact that they know offer to sell them some information that looks like it might be relevant to the situation. That information should include some detail that will again make them want to rethink their plans.

As to the nature of the information, unfortunately that will depend on their plan. However some possibilities would be a rumour that the normal guards have been replaced with elite troops of some sort. If their plan relies on some form of invisibility, then a rumour that the target employs a specialist who can see through invisibility in some way. If they are trying to steal something, then a rumour that its location has been changed at the last minute. Another rumour is that some rebellious part of society is planning a riot or demonstration at the time the party are planning to conduct their raid. This might actually help them if they use it right and they will want to take advantage of this apparent good fortune. Of course the riot need not actually occur.

The point of all stall techniques is to keep the players talking among themselves for a little while to give you a chance to get some work done.

## Delaying Tactics

There are times when the characters are making too good progress and will arrive at a plot point or location at the wrong time. That is when you need a delay to throw at them. They are not intended to weaken the party, kill characters or otherwise be a major challenge, just slow them down.

## The Tax Man Cometh

This only works within an established kingdom or empire with state institutions. The rulers will not want to let a lucrative income stream like adventurers avoid paying taxes to the state. However in a world filled with sorcery, magic or just huge barbarians with big choppers and bad attitudes, you are going to need something more than a middle aged tax collector. This is the solution that they come up with.

This will occur at some natural narrowing of the route, somewhere that you cannot just leave the road and travel cross country to avoid the encounter. Whether this is on a mighty bridge over a big river, or a mountain pass, does not really matter. Use something suitable to the established terrain.

Players will see traffic on the road backed up for some distance at the narrow point. They can either join the cue or turn around and take another route to where they are going. If they do just walk away, that is fine. All you are doing is trying to delay their arrival and so whatever alternative route they take can take them as long as you need it to.

If they do hang around, those ahead of them in the cue will probably be talking about what is happening. They will learn that it is a state tax inspector. Everyone travelling along the road is being searched, inspected and assessed, their

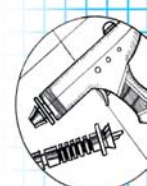
identities recorded and their tax bill calculated. The tax inspector does not collect the taxes, so there is no money to be had.


They will probably hear about the curse or geas that the tax inspector is under. He was once a mighty warrior, prince by his own hand sort of hero. However he was forced to give it all up suddenly when he crossed paths with the royal tax inspector. Not wanting to be inspected, assessed and billed and believing himself too powerful to fear any reprisals, they killed the tax inspector. That is when the curse descended upon them, forcing them to take up the position until death. How true this story is the other travellers in the cue cannot say but nobody dares find out.

Whether it is actually true will depend on what happens, as if players do decide on violence then it could result in major characters being written out of the game as they become tax inspectors.

What is true is that the tax inspector is protected by the best sorcery, magic or science available to the state. Not to mention being an ex adventurer of at least twice the skill of the hardest character in the group. If they resort to violence after being warned then character's deaths should be a real possibility. Even if they win, their careers as adventurers are likely to be over as the geas or curse will take effect. Violence basically is not an option here.

Their only option, other than running away and taking another slower route to where they are going is to sit and wait their turn, then be inspected. The inspector will be very diligent, going through every last pocket, pouch, backpack, saddlebag, chest and basket. Everything will be noted down, as will the personal details of the characters. Again,





they might try to lie to the inspector; however the game world will probably provide some sort of truth potion, magic amulet or other method of ensuring that the characters have to give their real identities. Without this, the tax inspector could not gather the information to raise taxes and the state does not get it's money.

If you want to further annoy the characters, you can have their clothing searched as well or maybe even more invasive searches but that depends on the style of game being played.

Overall this should keep the characters busy for much of a day, while giving the game world a greater sense of realism and detail. It may even lead on to further plotlines, for example the players setting up an enemy to kill the current tax inspector, to become victim to the curse.

## A Bridge too Gone

A straight forward delay, their route takes them across a major river or deep ravine and when they arrive the bridge across is out. This will mean the characters having to navigate across the natural obstacle for themselves. This can be made to take as long as you need it to.

They may choose to use magic to get across, if it is available to them but this will at least use up some resources. Try to make this awkward if you can but basically there may be little you can do about it.

They may try wading or swimming across a river. If they do small but valuable pieces of kit might be swept away. This can either force them to travel down river to find it. Or if they do not notice that it is gone might deprive them of it permanently.

For added delay against a party who are not

powerful enough to just kill it, you can have the bridge troll or giant demand their help in rebuilding the bridge. This could easily take days, possibly even weeks, which will certainly keep them away from whatever it is you need them not to see.

Against a paranoid party you can also leave signs that this was no accident. They are likely to assume that their enemies have sabotaged the bridge to get at them. This will make them more paranoid which is likely to slow them down later as they look for ambushes and so on.

## Do not shoot the weather mage

For some adventuring parties there is little that you can throw at them in the way of a fight that will slow them down. If you have to deal with a party like this, then you can always turn to the weather. For many purposes heavy rain will be the most useful for a number of effects.

To start with it will reduce visual range drastically, which will slow them down as they look for ambushes at every turn. You do not even need to ambush them at all, just have them see things in the rain that make them suspicious can be enough. I have once kept a whole party of powerful characters occupied as they crossed farmlands with heavy rain and a black horse standing out in a field. The more they watched it, the more paranoid they became about it.

Rain will also turn most roads to mud, slowing down progress and making travelling much more tiring to man and beast. Again this is nothing that experienced characters will not be able to handle

but they will not be able to maintain a fast pace through these conditions. It may take two or three times as long to reach their destination, which may buy you enough time for whatever needs to happen.

Obviously if there is a real weather mage among the characters then they will be able to do something about the weather directly. Yet in my experience few players see much fun to be had with such characters so they are rarely used, even in game worlds where they are available.

Other weather will be more specific to circumstances, so is rarely as useful as heavy rain. Strong winds will generally not make much difference but if the characters are climbing high in the mountains or through the treetops of some mighty forest, then strong winds will suddenly become a serious issue.

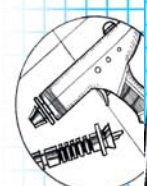
Deep snow is very good for slowing down movement, however it is only really possible in arctic or winter conditions or high up on mountains.

Strong sunlight can be useful, dehydrating characters and possibly causing heat exhaustion if they don't take precautions. However for the sun to be this strong they will have to be in the right part of the world.


## Slime Plague

This one is slightly different; it is designed to stop the players going somewhere that they previously wanted to go to.

Have the area infested with a plague of slimes large and dangerous enough to make the area







seriously uncomfortable, not to mention gross. They should not only be dangerous but really unpleasant as well, staining or dissolving clothing and hardware while causing acid burns to people. If that is not bad enough, you could have the slimes actually turning other living things into slime. Either consuming them, growing and splitting, or actually infecting living things by touch so that they gradually disintegrate into slime.

This should make the area seriously unattractive, scary or outright dangerous depending on how bad you make the slime plague. However there can be more to it than that. Why are there so many slimes in the area, is it just the giant slime breeding season or has some mad mage or sorcerer let loose some evil spirit that is turning people into slimes. If playing a techno-magic game like Hawkmoon, you could even get into nanotech, some sort of nano weapon running riot and dissolving everything to reproduce more of itself.

If the players do start to investigate the slimes then this may shift from a simple delay into a whole distraction sub plot. They may be investigating the cause of the slimes or get involved in slime-slaying for the bounty offered by the local princes. Killing slimes, if it is even possible, should be a hard and messy business.

## **Practical and Mundane delays**

These will require little actual game play to resolve but will add time to the journey.

If they are riding animals of any description, then one of them can be injured or go lame. This forces the party to either slow down to allow the injured animal to keep up or abandon the animal. Even the later will involve some delay as they must redistribute people and packs. It also cuts down on their overall transport capacity and if their mounts are expensive then they will feel the financial loss as well.

Basic provisions, if carried by the party can easily spoil along the way or possibly their water container leaks. Either way they will have to stop along the way to replenish them, either by hunting for food or finding clean water. Not going to be of much use if they regularly pass through towns or villages, as they can just buy provisions but if in the wild then it can easily take a few hours out if each days travel.

Depending on the party's abilities to deal with sickness, you might be able to stop them for a few days by having one of the characters come down with some sort of illness. Just giving a character the flu for a few days will mean either trying to transport a sick character, which is not going to be easy, or they will have to stop somewhere while the character gets better. Another option is a stomach upset, with the vomiting and diarrhoea that goes with it. As anyone who has ever suffered from a stomach bug will tell you, you really do not want to be sat on a horse for 10 hours a day with diarrhoea.

Stretches of bad road will slow down a party trying to move fast. Galloping over bad roads is a sure

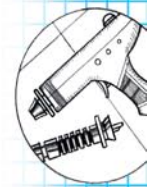
way to a horse breaking a leg and throwing a rider. If off road then dense forest and undergrowth will either slow them down or force them to go around, either way the journey will take longer.

An experienced bunch of players will probably recognise a delay for what it is. This will make some groups determined to bypass it as quickly as possible. However a group of players that include a number of experienced GMs will actually understand the situation and accept the delay, knowing that the ongoing plot is furthered by them being late to the event. This trust should not be abused. Do not throw in delays then do the party over because they did not get there in time. These should be used when the party arriving late will further the plot, not just to make things difficult for the players.

## **Distractions, or “are we nearly there yet”**

Characters travel, often across long distances. Some times you can just cut to the end of the journey with a “three weeks later” moment. For those times where you cannot skip ahead, you might need something to add to the journey to keep the players interested.

Alternatively you might need a distraction if they players have picked a route to their destination that avoids all the interesting places you have already got planned.



## Where is Everybody?

This will work best if set near to a border with a hostile nation of some sort.

Start off with the characters seeing a village in the distance. Get the players to make whatever passes for an awareness roll and whatever they get, just tell them that something seems wrong but they cannot pin it down. If they ask for more details you can say that nobody is out in the surrounding fields and that there are a lot of birds in and around the village.

Now some players may be able to resist the lure and will just walk on by but in my experience most will not be able to resist investigating. As they get closer they might pick up on a charnel house smell of freshly spilt blood from the village. They are likely to approach cautiously, let them, it will keep them busy. As they move through the village they will find the bodies of the inhabitants, killed by sword and axe. Some of the bodies have also been defiled in unspeakable ways, both before and after they were killed. This should be unpleasant enough to trouble the guts of even hardened adventurers.

If the players run at this point, then give them some sign that someone or something is still alive in the village. It might make them stay or just run quicker. If they stick around to hunt the killer, they will have to search the village house to house. If you want the fight, have the killers still around. If not, then they will eventually discover the village is empty but may be able to piece together clues as to what the killers were and what they were doing. This should only be discovered if they take some time to look for clues.

As to what the killers actually are, you are free to do what you want. However the basic concept

is that these are a team of inhuman mercenaries in the pay of the other nation. They have been sent in to commit atrocities in assorted small communities to weaken or break the spirit of the local population. It is important that they are both intelligent and non-human. They are deliberately doing horrific things to scare the locals and are able to do so without being insane because it is not their own species that they are killing. The more inhuman you can make them the better.

## The Horseshoe of Death

This should prove a distraction for the party, whether because there is not much else going on or because you want to side track them away from something or somewhere you are not ready for them to encounter. However this distraction may not be suitable for all games as it has a definite air of humour and whimsy about it.

The players are crossing open country, when they see a figure on a white horse galloping across the fields at some speed. The horse leaps a wall or hedge but stumbles on landing and the figure is thrown. At this point get the players to make observation tests. Whoever gets the best result will notice that something went flying when the horse stumbled. Given that most players are maggies and will pick up anything going, they are likely to go looking for whatever was dropped. The figure will get back on their horse and ride off, looking a little sore.

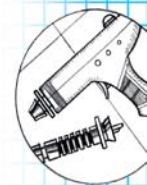
What they will find is just a horse shoe, obviously thrown by the horse when it stumbled or maybe the loss of the shoe caused the stumble. At first glance it is just a horse shoe, although if they examine it closely they will start to notice a few

odd things about it. Firstly it does not appear to be worn at all. There are no scratches on it nor is the underside worn smooth by contact with the stones and paving of roads or cities. The shoe is also much lighter than a normal horseshoe.

That is not the whole story but the other abilities of the shoe will only be discovered through more intensive investigation. If they try and damage the horseshoe they will discover that it appears to be indestructible, at least to anything that they can bring to bear on it. Actually an opportunity to de-kit a player here, if they bring out some magic sword that has caused you problems by being too effective in the past and try and cut the horseshoe with it. Have the troublesome sword snap on contact with the horseshoe. The horseshoe also floats and not just a little. Even with heavy weight on it the shoe will not go under the surface of the water. A horse with four of these could therefore run across water with ease.

Investigating their new toy is going to keep them occupied for a while. However sooner or later someone within the party is going to question who it belonged to before. This is obviously an item of some power, perhaps even divine or otherworldly origins and its owner will probably want it back. Obviously the rider in question, mounted on a pale horse, was death himself (or herself). Many entertaining hours can be had with the players trying to run from death personified but eventually they will get caught and have to explain hanging onto **the horseshoe of death!**

All of the distractions are basically intended to fill what would otherwise be a quiet or dull session. Mostly they should not actually alter the overall direction of the game but just provide a little entertainment for the players and maybe a scare or two.



## Kit Removal

Sometimes it just comes down to the fact that the players are too well prepared and their characters have too much stuff. When faced with this there are some options available, although it is rare that you will need this in an emergency.

Before implementing any of these plans you need to make sure that the players have detailed lists of their gear, including where everything is carried.

## Is it me or is it hot in here?

The party is staying overnight in a village inn on route to their destination. The inn itself is a beautiful old half timbered building, with a thatched roof and a cluster of chimneys. Make sure you describe the interior of the place, featuring the narrow winding stairs, low doors and the heavy bars on the windows for added security.

Characters will eventually sleep and will have had to remove armour to do so, as well as most if not all of their weapons. They wake in the middle of the night to shouts of fire, smoke filling the corridors and a definite sense that the building is burning.

They have little time to get out of the building before the whole place goes up in flames. Given the narrow stairs they will not be able to do multiple trips to their rooms to carry their kit out. Some items can be thrown from the windows but only items that will fit through the bars. They will not have the time to get dressed in full armour and pack up all their gear, those that try should just be burned. Those who make quick decisions about what they grab and what they leave behind should escape easily. It is characters who try and

take too much or take too long thinking that might be in trouble.

For added tension you can give the players only seconds to make their mind up as to what they grab, using a stopwatch on them. This is often a great trick to put the players under pressure and get more realistic reactions.

## Is it me or is it hot in here 2?

This will only work if they have already had a bad fire experience as described previously. This time describe an inn that looks very similar to the first one, tall and narrow building, barred windows, thatched roof and so on. The players may not believe that you would do the same thing to them twice but they might.

If they do then they might keep much of their kit on the wagon, horses or whatever they are using to transport their effects and themselves. Then you just drug whoever they leave guarding the wagon and steal it and everything on it while they sleep peacefully in their beds.

## Now for a cold bath

This can be combined with the Bridge too Gone delay.

Come up with a reason why the characters have to wade through deep and fast flowing water. Make sure the water is cold enough that their skin will be numbed by it.

Then when they are crossing the fastest flowing water have something that will take their footing out from under them. This might be unstable

rocks, weeds, playful water spirits or whatever else fits in with your game style. Each character will get a chance of going over and those that fail the appropriate roll under the game system will be swept off their feet and carried down river.

Now get them to make swimming rolls to avoid drowning, without telling them the targets. Whatever they roll they will only just make it. Then point out that dumping packs, boots or whatever else they are carrying will improve their chances. The trick here is to make them think that you are trying to drown them, when you have no intention of doing so. If they think it is a choice between drowning and losing some kit they will probably take the loss of kit and think that they got off lightly.

Those characters swept away can also lose belt pouches, pockets can get ripped open, straps can snap and so on, so you can leave a trail of destruction through their personal effects. Not to mention the damage that water will do to spell books and the likes.

All of these are based on the concept that players would rather lose kit than lose characters and most will be happy to get out with their characters alive. This way the players will not be too unhappy about the lost kit. Happy players are easier to deal with after all.

## Bar-fluff

We've all been there, the characters are in a bar, tavern or inn, you have told them that there are other people around while trying to set the scene. Then one of the players asks who else is in the bar room and suddenly you have got 20 or 30 people to come up with. If they were all just unimportant background characters it would be bad enough.



# Signs & Portents

What if there is a major Non-Player Character there that you need to hide among the rest? So here is some general bar-fluff to fill a fantasy drinking hole at short notice.

In addition to filling up a bar, these NPCs might actually lead to sub plots of their own if the characters start interacting with them. This might be no more than a little side gaming, but could open up whole new directions to the game.

Races and species have been left out so that they can be adapted to the specific gameworld.

- Group of professional warriors, Viking/barbarian/dwarf types with beards, boisterous manners and a liking for beer, ale, mead and whiskey. Loud singing and boisterous but not massively aggressive. Should be at least twice as many of them as there are characters present.
- Classic hooded figure sitting in the corner of the bar, smoking a long, thin stemmed pipe and watching the room.
- Girl's night out. A dozen or more young and middle aged women out on the town. Not dangerous except to any young men in the party. Probably drunk more wine or mead than they should have.
- Couple, neither of whom are especially attractive, sitting at a table together, conversation and body language is stiff and stilted, forced laughter occasionally. A blind date that is not going well.
- Students from the nearest higher education establishment, out for a night

on the town. Mix of men and women, all young, all know each other well and are more interested in each other than those around them.

- Work gang of construction labourers working on something for the local ruler. Most are exhausted and just want a quiet pint or three. Language will be coarse and offensive and likely to make comments about any pretty girls around that could be unpleasant. However these are just working guys so will not actually get into a fight unless really provoked.
- Large group of fans for whatever sports or games are locally popular. Loud and aggressive, not to mention drunk, are likely to get seriously aggressive if there are any opposing fans about. Group should be three or four times the size of the party.
- Sewer workers, likely to be from an ethnic or racial minority. Dirty and stinking, sat in a corner drinking strong smelling liquor to get the taste of sewers out of their mouths. Half a dozen of them. Most people avoid them because of the smell, however they might actually provide useful information if talked to.
- Three couples, all young and pretty, out for a night on the town. Unlikely to be talking outside the group although glamorous adventurers might attract their attention.
- Pie seller, big round guy with a tray of pies strapped to his chest. Greasy hair

and a greasy baker's jacket. Pies are 'mixed-meat' pies, taste good but you probably do not want to ask what is in them.

- Gaggle of young women or girls, dressed to thrill by whatever the local standards are. All come from rich families and are probably too young to be out on their own. Definitely likely to cause trouble by flirting with the wrong people and just having no idea of the dangers around them.
- The bar bore, old guy, slightly rumped clothing and definite smell of booze about him. Will start talking to anyone who does not manage to get out of the way and will keep going unless forcibly stopped. Unpleasant company but no real threat to anyone.
- The bar leech, middle aged guy, probably handsome when younger but still thinks he is the god's gift to women. Will start talking to any women present who are not obviously spoken for and will be offensively pushy. Guy also has a slightly dangerous air to him, looks like he could get into a fight easily.
- Old couple, man and woman, both grey haired with lined faces. Well dressed in expensive clothing that still allows freedom of movement. Both are actually retired and highly skilled adventurers with vast fortunes, an array of magical hardware and the skills to keep hold of it. Just out for a few drinks to catch up on old times.



# Signs & Portents

- Half a dozen farm hands come in for the beer and the food, poorly educated and likely to have some offensive racial or ethnic views but otherwise good natured working guys.
- Woman in full plate black armour, seriously nasty weapons on her belt and a dangerous steed outside. Actually just come in for a meal and a glass of wine but looks scary.
- Four of the town watch, city guard, night patrol or whatever peace keeping forces are responsible for patrolling the night time streets. Come in to the bar for a couple of pints on their rounds. Not deliberately looking for criminals in the bar but if something obviously criminal is going on they may feel obliged to take an interest.
- Beautiful woman, exotic ethnic group or race, dressed in very expensive dress of high quality. Looking a bit worse for wear, dirty and the dress slightly torn in places. Slightly dazed expression on her face and not entirely coherent. Obviously just been through something unpleasant.
- Hulking barbarian looking guy, broad bare chest, massive loin cloth, huge sword across his back. Actually not a warrior or adventurer at all but a professional artist model for heroic paintings and sculptures but plays on the image to get girls.
- Pretty girl with slightly wild hair sat alone at a table eating, drinking and talking to herself about something totally incomprehensible. Might just be crazy, or maybe she actually knows more about the nature of the universe than everyone else. If playing a Cthulu related game then it is likely to be both.
- Preachers and priestesses from the local religion, come to the tavern seeking converts. Depending on the religion they might be scary or just kind of pathetic, either way they should be persistent and a little annoying.
- Boyfriend or girlfriend of one of the bar staff, sat at the bar chatting with them and generally taking their attention away from paying customers.
- Male and female orc, beastman or other intelligent non-human race that are normally just bad guys. Both are relatively respectably dressed and are actually in the tavern on a date and not looking for trouble.

Obviously these are all just starting points. Often the players will pick out one or two that they are interested in and that interest will dictate later game play.

## Conclusion

I hope that these will prove useful. If nothing else they will hopefully give you some ideas for how to deal with these situations in your own games, even if you never need to use the specific suggestions here. Some of these I have used myself, others are entirely new.

Remember that just because the players are doing something that you do not expect, you should not punish them for it. The beauty of role playing with a live GM in the room is the freedom to do anything you can think of, not just what the writers thought you might do. That freedom should not be curtailed just because you have been caught out.



# Plunder of the Ducks

By Shannon Appelcline

All of the races of Glorantha have magic, mystical and divine items that they call their own, even a lesser race like the Durulz. This article describes many duck-related PLUNDER items that adventurers may find, building upon the background of *Ducks: A Guide to the Durulz*. It is written in the format of *Plunder*, a classic *RuneQuest* book and complements “Plunder of the Elves” found in *Signs & Portents* #63.

Most of the categories used in this article are self-evident but two of them require more explanation.

Cults describes which Gloranthan cults are familiar with the item.

- Associated cults probably made the item and know all about it.
- Friendly cults will have a positive reaction if they recognise the item and may know something about it.
- Enemy cults will usually attack a bearer of the item.
- Hostile cults probably will not like the possessor of the item.

Knowledge describes what the public knows about the item and how to use it.

- Automatic suggests that its use is self-evident.
- Common means that everyone knows about the item and how to use it.
- Cult Secret suggests that the making and/or use of the item is only known to a few.

- Famous notes that the item is quite well known and that its possessor will be viewed in a different light as a result. For Influence tests, take a +20% bonus for associated cults, a +10% bonus for friendly cults, a -10% penalty for hostile cults and a -20% penalty for enemy cults.
- Few means that there are limited numbers of the item.
- One of a Kind means the item is unique.
- Owner Only means that some or all of the item’s powers can only be used by the original owner/creator.

Thanks to Rudy Kraft for creating the idea (and format) of Plunder and to Bryan Steele for the duck background underlying this article.

## Albatross Eye

### Description

A glass eyeball with a black pupil. Communication and fate runes are etched in a band encircling the eye.

### Cults

Associated – The Seaside Brothers.

### Knowledge

Few.

### History

Albatros could not always see the future. Instead, when he was young, he was a joyful bird. Just as



Sunbill was enthralled by the joy of his physicality and Pelican by the joy of his gluttony, Albatross loved the joy of hope and the possibilities of the future.

However in time Albatros grew discontent. He found that his hopes were sometimes dashed, for even in primal Delicate Swamp the future could never stand up to his dreams. Thus Albatros struck out from his home looking for a seer; for he believed that if he could truly know the future then he could once more begin to dream of it.

Albatros travelled far and wide. There are many legends about these journeys: how he met the youngest gos and was chased away from their land;



how he learned that the elves looked far forward but without prophecy; how he mistook Ganderland for a great lake and so never entered that place; and how he searched the dwarf caverns where no duck ever goes. Finally he met a shrouded duck who lived in a web and she agreed to give him the gift of prophecy if one day his descendants would repay the favour to her.

Thus Albatros gained the gift of prophecy and he soon learned that it was not all that he hoped. Worst of all it cost him the very hope he wished to rekindle, for in knowing the future he now could only fear what *would* be rather than praying for what *might* come. So Albatros returned to Delicate Swamp saddened and broken, while his descendants thereafter always awaited the call of She Who Spins the Web.

Some keet never learn from their ancestors' mistakes and so in the First Age after the Dawn, when an entire flock of albatross was born without the sight, a powerful magician from before Time made them eyes that they could look through and see the future as other albatross did. Many of these albatross cast their new eyes away and for several years there were albatross in the world who lost their gray feathers and lived once more in hope and joy – but now that time is gone.

Many of the First Age albatross eyes have since been scattered across the world.

## Procedure

The method for creating these eyes is lost.

## Powers

Any person can hold one of these glass eyes up to their own and through it see the future. This power acts as the keet Seer ability (see *Ducks*,

p.74), except that it may be used no more than three times a day.

## Value

No keet in his right mind would want one of these eyes but other cults (especially cults of knowledge) might pay 5,000 SP for this rare chance to glimpse the future.

## Blue Heron Feather

### Necklace

### Description

A collection of 20-30 blue-silver heron feathers, threaded together by a thin but sturdy silver wire.

### Cults

Associated – Prince Heron.  
 Friendly – Most keet cults.  
 Hostile – Grandfather Flamingo.

### Knowledge

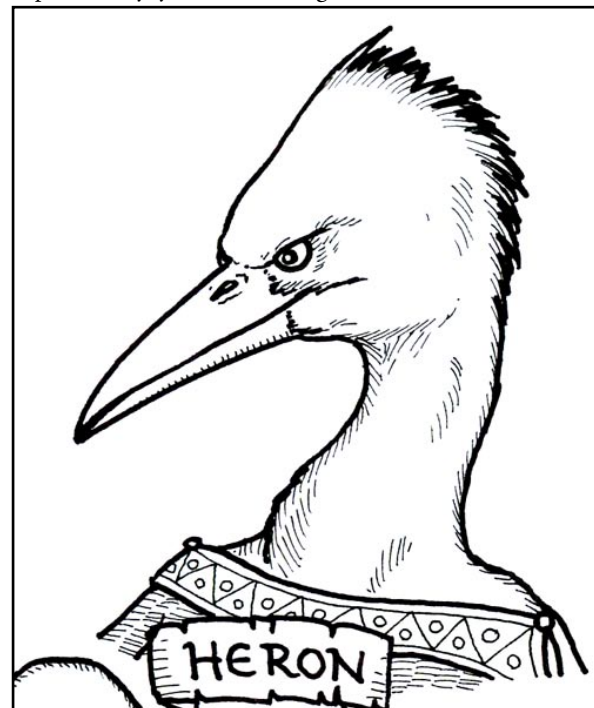
Automatic; Cult Secret.

### History

When Prince Heron was born Grandfather Flamingo was stunned by his child's ugliness: he was much too plain. When Grandfather Flamingo learned that his cast-off son had raised himself to godhood he warred against his child, turning Delicate Swamp into a wasteland. When the ducks came to the swamp Heron tried to join them, hoping to discover a new family but soon he found himself forbidden from Ganderland. Thus Heron is the great exile of the durulz, welcome nowhere.

Heron's first child was pure white like him but his second child was coloured blue-silver. Ducks say that every duckling repeats the mistakes of his drake at least once and such was the case with Heron. When he saw the coloration of his second son Arden he banished him at once. Thus Arden became an exile among exiles.

However there remained more love between Arden and Heron than there had been between Heron and the cold Flamingo. Heron and his son were eventually reconciled but not before Arden had spent many years wandering the world. Forever



after Arden's children have been the wanderers and explorers of the Heron race.

Today the feathers of particularly brave and curious blue-silver herons are sometimes collected together in a ritual to make a necklace. These necklaces are then given to the herons from which the feathers were taken – although they often are afterward traded or given away, dispersing them across the world, just as Arden's children are.

## Procedure

Some priests of Heron know the Longwandering Enchantment (Difficult –20%). The participant must expend 1 POW when the enchantment is created. See *RuneQuest Companion* pp. 38–43 for more information on enchantments.

## Powers

The wearer of the necklace rarely becomes lost when travelling away from his home and is often accepted by the foreigners that he meets. He gains a +20% bonus to any Lore (Regional) Skill Test used to determine directions and a +10% bonus to any Influence Skill Test meant to make foreigners friendlier toward a traveller.

## Value

These blue-feather necklaces are worth 2,000 SP.

## Duru's Reed Boat

### Description

A huge boat made out of ancient reeds tied together with vines. It is big enough to hold about a dozen normal-sized people or about 20 ducks. There is no means of locomotion for the boat other than paddles.

## Cults

Associated – Duru-Orlanth.  
Friendly – Any duck cults.

## Knowledge

Automatic; Famous; One of a Kind.

## History

Duru-Orlanth was the most curious of the duck gods and thus it was he who decided that he wanted to know what lay beyond Ganderland. He built a mighty boat out of reeds and magic and used it to sail to lands that only the Hurler had seen before. One of these lands was Delicate Swamp and another was the land of the Orlanthe but these were not the only places that Duru-Orlanth visited.

After the horrors of Hoonra Field, Duru's Reed Boat was used to help evacuate the people of the devastated land and sometime after that it passed out of history. However part of the boat's magic is that it is always appears when it is needed and thus since Time began it has shown up to aid ducks and others alike.

## Powers

Duru's Reed Boat is primarily a vessel of destiny. If sailed idly or in an exploratory manner the Games Master should secretly roll a POW x3 test for the pilot. Whether the test succeeds or not the boat will take its passengers somewhere new that has a connection to them. However the trip will be largely beneficial if the test succeeds while largely detrimental if it fails. Note that the good or bad effects could be very long term, such as Duru's visit with the Orlanthe, which originally seemed good but which eventually led to the destruction

of Ganderland (though perhaps there is still good to come of it in the future, as destiny is a slippery thing).

If Duru's Reed Boat is used as a normal vessel it is slow and obstinate. All Boating tests are made with a –40% penalty.

Each season there is a 5% chance that Duru's Reed Boat disappears while tied up and left alone – though it will usually not do so if the disappearance would noticeably inconvenience its owner.

## Value

As an ancient artefact Duru's Reed Boat has a potential value of 50,000 SP or more, though no one who actually knows its history or power would pay that as it will disappear in just a few years.

As a vehicle of destiny, some might pay 10,000 SP or more for it.

## Flamingo's Fascinating Feather

### Description

A brightly coloured feather that changes colour as one looks at it, shimmering through all the colours of the dawn.

## Cults

Associated – Grandfather Flamingo.

## Knowledge

Automatic; Few.



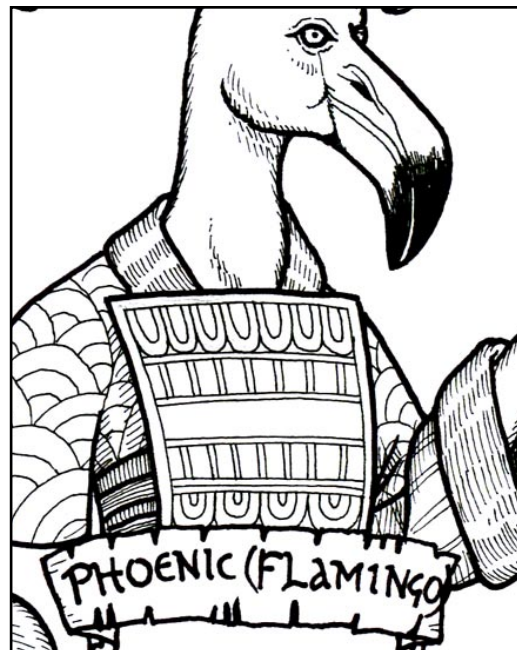


## History

When Vimak embraced Grandmother Duck she gave birth instantly to all the birds in the world. One of the birds flew directly east into the sunrise. Though he was thus denied Ganderland, Flamingo would find a much greater destiny in the east.

At the end of the world Flamingo tried to enter the Gates of Dawn to find what lay beyond but the dawn goddess Theya turned him back. Where Theya placed her hand upon Flamingo's back his feathers changed to become the pinks, yellows and oranges of the dawn and that change soon spread across his whole body. Thus he became the sunrise bird.

Flamingo settled in the Delicate Swamp which abutted the Gates of the Dawn and there fathered many offspring. In that Golden Age his feathers were divine; this is what allowed Heron to pluck



one and become a god himself. There were also many feathers that Flamingo preened away himself which slowly lost their divinity as they were separated from his body. Today these feathers are still magical but they do not hold the deifying power that they once did.

## Procedure

Grandfather Flamingo could make more fascinating feathers by preening them from his coat.

## Powers

Flamingo's feathers are strangely fascinating to everyone but their holder.

If anyone is looking at the holder of a feather he is automatically affected by it. Other people within sight must make a Perception test, with success meaning that they have noticed the feather and are affected. Once someone has been affected by a feather his eyes will be drawn to it every turn until he either leaves the area or the feather is put away.

A viewer of one of Flamingo's Fascinating Feathers must make a Persistence roll each round to take any actions other than staring at the feather. Failure means that the victim stands looking at the feather for the turn.

Note that a feather could affect friends of its holder as easily as his enemies.

## Value

These divine objects are worth at least 5,000 SP to appropriate parties such as God Learners or Phoenixes.

## Old Duck Whistle

### Description

A duck whistle made out of tin with a large Beast and Spirit rune carved into the top.

### Cults

Associated – Swimmer in Shadows.  
 Friendly – Other duck cults.  
 Enemy – Sky cults.

### Knowledge

Automatic; Few.

### History

Some say that there are two sorts of ducks: the ancient ducks who lived before Yelm's Sentence and the new ducks who lived after. For the most part the ancient ducks are gone and lost, with one exception – they can be summoned by an Old Duck Whistle.

The Old Duck Whistles were created by Swimmer in Shadows before the Sentence. They were meant to summon forth the spirits of ducks who had passed on but after the Dawn the nature of the world changed. They could no longer be used to summon the spirits of newly slain ducks but they can still summon forth ancient ducks.

### Powers

An Old Duck Whistle acts as a spirit rune. A user must integrate it in order to be able to use any of the powers of the whistle. When he does so, he also gains the usual advantages of a spirit rune including the Runecasting skill and a spirit rune's normal power.



If a user has already integrated a spirit rune from a separate source, he does not also need to integrate the rune from the whistle in order to use it.

In order to use the whistle the user must succeed at a Play Instrument (Whistle) test. This test may only be attempted once a week as repetitive play of the whistle just upsets the spirit world.

If the whistle playing is successful an ancient duck ghost will appear and remain for 1D6 minutes. It has a POW of 4D6, an INT of 2D6+6 and a CHA of 2D6. It also has Lore (Ancient Duck) at 1D10x10%. Finally, it has a Persistence of 80%. This spirit has three main purposes.

- 1.) It can answer questions about ancient ducks.
- 2.) It will, upon request, possess a target (see *RuneQuest Companion*, pp.46-47).
- 3.) It can lend its wings, gifting a single person with a Flight spell (*Cults of Glorantha: I*, p.84). This is the one known flight magic (see also the 'Scarf of Blind Ignorance' and the 'Sword of Stormbill') that a duck may use without immediate repercussion. This is because the ancient ducks slip by Yelm's Sentence by coming from Before Time.

However, ultimately, all things must be paid for. Sometime in the future a duck that flies with the whistle will be repaid in kind by the sky gods. Vengeance could be very mundane, such as a sky priest attacking the duck and his family. Or it could be much more magical, such as a Sunspear (*RuneQuest Companion*, p.22) suddenly striking the duck at a particularly inopportune time. Any such revenge should have the potential to be devastating – though not definitely so. Once the vengeance is carried out the matter is concluded unless the duck tries to fly again. Others can of course fly without issue using the whistle.

## Value

Worth 5,000-10,000 SP to an interested buyer. Any sky god worshipper would want to destroy it without question if he realised what exactly the whistle was and what it did.

## Portable Pond

### Description

A large, bright blue roll of kidney-shaped velvet-like material. When unrolled onto earthen ground it becomes a small pond.

### Cults

Associated – Grandmother Duck, The Hurler.  
Friendly – Any other duck cult; any water cult.

### Knowledge

Automatic; Few.

### History

When the Hurler began to travel once more following the loss of her wings she sometimes became homesick, particularly for the pleasant waters of ponds near her home. Thus Grandmother Duck sewed a portable pond which she could take wherever she went and so always have the waters of home nearby.

### Powers

The portable pond offers an effectively limitless source of water. It never dries out and it cannot be tipped or otherwise spilled. The water also always stays clean and drinkable, no matter what is placed in it.

### Value

There are less than a half-dozen Portable Ponds in existence. Each is worth 10,000-25,000 SP.

## Silver Tomia

### Description

A set of silver tomia (duck teeth), which slip over a duck's own tomia.

### Cults

Associated – The Death Drake.  
Friendly – Any duck cult.  
Enemy – Any troll cult.

### Knowledge

Automatic; Cult Secret.

### History

Sharpbill was a Death Drake hero of the Darkness. One of his greatest adventures occurred when he disguised himself as one of the Hungry Folk and resided with them for 101 days. While there he learned many of their fighting techniques, particularly how to bite and gnaw his foes.

When he left the Hungry Folks' dark, smelly caverns Sharpbill made himself a set of war tomia to slip over his own teeth. To declare that he was not one of the Hungry Folk he made them of silver instead of lead. Later Sharpbill met the Hungry Folk once again in the Dark Valley of Slime and when they saw his glittering smile they knew that he had stolen and defiled their secrets. Ever after the Hungry Folk have particularly hated the followers of Sharpbill – which just makes them eat those ducks with more gusto than usual.

### Procedure

Only the runedrales of Death Drake know the procedure to create the Silver Tomia. Although



the tomia are not magic the process to create them is long and tedious – and death drakes deal poorly with tedium.

## Powers

The Silver Tomia fit any duck that tries them on – though not keets. A duck wearing the tomia may use their Unarmed skill to make a close combat attack that inflicts 1D4+2 damage to the target.

## Value

Because of their rarity Silver Tomia may be sold for 300–400 SP each to ducks – though there might be some questions about how the seller acquired them.

## Soil of Ganderland

### Description

A handful of rich, red-brown soil usually kept in a sturdy pouch marked with the runes of the duck gods.

### Cults

Associated—Any duck cult.  
Friendly—Any keet cult.

### Knowledge

Few.

### History

Ganderland was the beautiful homeland of the ducks during the Golden Age. It was destroyed at the battle of Hoonra Field. Some of the fleeing ducks and keets took with them soil from their lost homeland and now it brings fertility and safety to those nests where this ancient loam is preserved.

### Powers

The Soil of Ganderland is usually buried under a duck nest. Its prime effect is to increase the fertility of the ducks therein – increasing both

the likelihood of pregnancy and the likelihood of multiple births. It also gives any ducks or keets in the nest a general feeling of well-being that *almost* offsets their natural cynicism.

All reasonable Influence tests against ducks or keets in a nest warded by Ganderland Soil have a +20% bonus.

## Value

Ducks have been known to pay 2,000+ SP for Ganderland Soil – but woe to those who would try and cheat them. Ducks have also been known to kill for Ganderland Soil if a death drake was involved in the dealings.

## Scarf of Blind

### Ignorance

### Description

A black scarf made from a rough, heavy material. Woven into it, in black thread, are runes of disorder and illusion.

### Cults

Associated – The Hurler.  
Hostile – Any sky cults.

### Knowledge

Few.

### History

Loonus Ditty, a duck who lived during the First Age, was not a particularly good follower of the Hurler. Rather than going out and exploring on his own he invented things that might (or might not) make exploration simpler for other ducks. Some of his inventions were purely mechanical while others depending upon careful weavings of magic. Some worked but a lot more did not.

One of Loonus' most daring inventions was the Scarf of Blind Ignorance. It was intended to slide by Yelm's Sentence via a loophole. It does not exactly allow ducks to fly, it just allows them not to fall and even then only when the duck does not realise he is doing so. Unfortunately Loonus' success was quite limited; gods are not that fond of loop holes. However the scarves have proven quite useful to other races.

## Procedure

Loonus' secrets were lost when he died in a laboratory accident following a lightning strike – nor would any sane duck try to repeat his creation of the scarves anyway. The sky gods are not to be meddled with!

## Powers

To activate a scarf it must be tied around the wearer's eyes, blinding him. This results in the typical –60% penalty to combat (and to other visual skills) as if the wearer were blind. If the scarf ever slips or the wearer in some other way sees under or over it then the spell of the scarf is abruptly disrupted (and cannot be reactivated for the duration of the current situation).

While the scarf is activated a wearer can step straight out onto air as if it were a hard surface. He cannot climb upward or in any other way ascend but he can continue to walk across a level plane. This can be useful for walking across broken bridges, out over cliffs or in other similar circumstances.

If the wearer is a duck there is a 5% chance each round that the scarf will slip – no matter what precautions are taken – causing him to see his current location and thus immediately begin to fall.



## Value

A scarf might bring prices up to 5,000 SP, though more frequently from non-ducks than durulz.

## Sword of Stormbill

### Description

A short sword with beast, motion and death runes scribed along its blade. The grip is covered with very smooth, old rhino leather. The blade itself glitters and shines when drawn.

### Cults

Associated – Stormbill.

Friendly – Stormbull, other duck cults.

Enemy – Any chaos cults.

### Knowledge

Automatic; Famous; One of a Kind.

### History

In the Golden Age of Ganderland, Duru-Orlanth brought the storm gods back to his home. This was how the duck Stormbill met the Orlanthi Stormbull. When that occurred Stormbill exchanged his axe for Stormbull's greatsword and they each carried the other's weapon throughout the rest of the mythic age (although many Stormbulls scoff at the idea of such a trade ever having occurred).

During the Darkness Stormbill's Sword disappeared for a while but it reappeared in the First Age in the hands of the Stormbill Arkati Chaosfoe, who stormed Dorastor and slew many chaos creatures there (although many Stormbill wonder whether this was actually the same sword or not).

Since then Stormbill's sword has appeared and disappeared over the years but it frequently finds

its way into the hands of a chaos fighter when he needs it most.

### Powers

Though a shortsword for purposes of being wielded, Stormbill's Sword acts as a greatsword for the purposes of combat:

Weapon	Skill	Damage Dice	STR/DEX	ENC	AP/HP
Stormbill's Sword	1H Sword	2D8	5/7	1	4/50

It also has several special powers, related to the three runes shown on the blade.

*Beast.* The blade acts as a spell matrix for the common rune spells Strength and Vigour. The wielder can cast them as if he knew them, up to magnitude 6. Though the blade does not offer a beast rune to integrate the wielder can cast the spells without having such a rune as if he had Runecasting (Beast) at 95%.

*Motion.* The wielder may use the Orlanth cult spell Flight (*Cults of Glorantha: Volume I*, p.84) three times a day. However this power is a joke to ducks, which have not been able to use it correctly since the Dawn. If any duck tries to fly with it he must make a POWx3 roll each turn to avoid being thrown to the ground, doing 3d6 damage.

*Death.* The death rune controls the anti-chaos powers of Stormbill's Sword. The wielder may cast Face Chaos (*Cults of Glorantha: Volume I*, p.83) seven times a day and Impede Chaos (*Cults of Glorantha: Volume I*, p. 87) once a day.

Stormbill's Sword also acts as a permanent True Sword against chaos, adding +2D8 to any damage done to chaos. This does not stack with actual castings of the True Sword divine spell.

### Value

Whatever its origin Stormbill's Sword is a priceless artefact for chaos fighters. It could easily sell for 100,000 SP or more.



TRAVELLER

# Ship's Locker: Non-Lethal Weapons

TRAVELLER

for Traveller and Mercenary

by Alex Greene

## Designed To Subdue, Not to Kill

Combat in *Traveller* is usually lethal. It requires little effort to terminate a life; and some of the weapons available from a disturbingly low technological level, can terminate thousands, even millions, of lives in an instant. However, sometimes, characters need to take their targets down and keep them alive for some reason.

A bounty contract might stipulate no collateral casualties; a criminal may need to be brought back to life to face justice. Security personnel on a ship or space station might be outfitted with low-impact stun rounds to avoid puncturing hull walls or viewports.

Criminal abductors might need to subdue their victims; a corrupt government might equip its riot control forces to subdue rioting crowds, putting down insurrections while keeping dissenters alive for "trial and exile" (for which read "torture and secret execution away from the media gaze").

Of course hunters, conservationists, scholars and zookeepers need rounds designed to incapacitate

fretful or fugitive animals harmlessly, for capture, rescue, or for tagging, measurement and study.

Whatever the reason, the following non-lethal devices are available to Travellers, the Law and criminals alike.

## Using Mercenary

The *Mercenary* sourcebook lists heavy artillery and support weapons, as well as other weapons more suited for heavy deployment in a military context. Referees are likely to need *Mercenary* as a reference for some of the weapons listed here.

## Incapacitants and Restraints

### Manner of

### Incapacitation

A non-lethal weapon may subdue a target or targets in a number of ways.

**Sedation:** Exposure to a chemical agent induces a state of sedation or unconsciousness.

**Paralysis:** Exposure to the agent induces immobilisation, or a state of muscular relaxation in which physical actions are no longer possible.

**Shock:** A current flows through the target's tissues or a sudden release of energy in some form jars the subject (e.g. an intense burst of sound or light or release of kinetic energy). The target is immediately sent into a state of shock and may lose consciousness – but will certainly be stunned and at a disadvantage to all physical actions whilst in shock.

**Restraint:** The target is physically restrained, as if grappled by an overwhelming force.

**Knockback:** The target suffers a physical impact which knocks him down.

### Means of

### Incapacitation

**Chemical Restraint:** The weapon exposes the target to a chemical agent that induces sedation, paralysis or even shock. A chemical agent takes time to act upon the subject's metabolism but it is thorough and hard to resist. Chemical restraints cannot induce knockback.



**Binder:** An agent which physically restrains the target in a mass of strands of some kind of material, often adhesive, most often a synthetic polymer but sometimes a natural product such as a discharge of silk-like threads.

**Electrical:** The weapon discharges an electrical current, inducing shock and unconsciousness.

**Sonic:** The weapon discharges a combination of an ultrasound burst and a plasma discharge. The target exposed to this weapon will be stunned and may also be knocked back.

## The Stun Effect

### Stun Rating

A non-lethal weapon's damage rating is its stun rating. A weapon whose rounds inflict 2d6 damage can deploy non-lethal rounds that inflict 2d6 + Effect stun damage instead. Some weapons inflict minor physical damage as well, usually if deployment of a non-lethal chemical agent requires piercing the target's skin.

The round usually takes  $1d3 + \text{End DM}$  (minimum 1) rounds to begin working on the target, unless stated otherwise. If a chemical stun round's damage exceeds the target's Endurance DM (if positive), the target must roll End each round to avoid losing consciousness. Sometimes a chemical stun round's damage does not exceed the Endurance DM; the target is often not knocked out but remains fatigued for  $2d6 - \text{Endurance hours}$  (minimum 1 hour); the target is at a  $-2DM$  to resist further similar attacks, as well as other actions.

## Mercy Rounds

Chemical stun rounds are available for a range of slug throwers. Non-lethal sedative rounds for slug throwers are known as *mercy rounds*. In some circles, they are also known as *street sleepers*, *goodnight specials*, *jelly babies*, *hush bullets* and other similar nicknames.

**Action:** A mercy round inflicts no more than  $1d3-2$  (minimum 1) physical damage when it strikes (this is not part of its stun rating). It must bypass armour and penetrate bare flesh, which requires that the wielder of the weapon must take an aiming action against an armoured opponent. Armour that fully encloses the target cannot be bypassed.

The mercy round takes effect  $1d3 + \text{End DM}$  (minimum 1 round) rounds after striking the target. Targets roll End each round for the next hour or fall unconscious. Unconsciousness lasts  $2d6 - \text{the target's Endurance in hours}$ , minimum 1 hour.

**Availability and Cost:** Mercy rounds for each type of slug thrower are available at a +2 DM to the availability roll and mercy rounds cost 10% – 60% less than standard, lethal, rounds.

**Technological Level:** Mercy rounds become available for each weapon at the technological level at which the weapon becomes available. At the same technological level, the mercy round comprises a hollow metal hypodermic flechette that pierces the skin and injects the chemical payload.

At two technological levels above the weapon's level, mercy rounds take the form of flechettes of a water-soluble gelatine laced with the sedative agent. The tiny needles enter the body and leave a tiny, quickly healed mark on the skin. When they dissolve, the round releases the payload.

**Mercy Shot:** Available for shotgun rounds, a mercy shot round contains, not regular shot pellets but tiny pellets of semi-rigid gelatine laced with an agent such as DMSO (dimethyl sulphoxide) and a metabolic rate-controlled anaesthetic. The DMSO allows the anaesthetic round to penetrate the skin without piercing it; thus, mercy rounds only inflict 1d6 physical damage, halved, in addition to its full stun rating.

A mercy shot round affects all targets in the weapon's cone of fire, exactly the same as for regular shot. However, the mercy shot rounds automatically bypass any armour that offers only partial cover, such as flak jackets, cloth or jack armour. Mercy shot grenades are grenades filled with the same mercy shot pellets and affect all targets within the blast radius.

## Paralysis Rounds

Similar to mercy rounds, a paralysis round works on the central nervous system and muscles. The target must exceed the weapon's stun rating with Dexterity instead; failure means that the character remains conscious but paralysed and incapable of taking any action, even to defend himself. The character becomes fatigued if the Effect is less than or equal to the target's current Endurance DM, if positive. Paralysis lasts for the same duration as for mercy rounds. Availability, costs and technological levels are as for mercy rounds.



## Other Sedation

### Techniques

**Spiked Drinks and Food:** A character can surreptitiously spike the target's food or drinks with a sedative. Lacing the drug requires a successful Dexterity characteristic check: the target can detect the presence of the adulterant on a successful Intelligence check against the rating of the drug.

Once ingested, the drug takes effect in 1d6 minutes. The target suffers fatigue and makes Endurance checks each minute or fall unconscious for 2d6 – Endurance hours, minimum of 1 hour.

TL	Rating	Detection DM	Availability	Cost (Cr.)
2	1d6	-2	10	15
6	1d6	+0	8	10
8	2d6	+0	10	15
8	2d6	+2	8	10
14	3d6	-2	10	50

**Gas:** Tranquiliser gases become available at TL 4 with the invention of nitrous oxide, laughing gas. Gas release systems take time to disperse a volume of gas within the atmosphere of an enclosed space: enough to fill a single stateroom with an effective concentration of gas within 10–60 seconds or a larger enclosed space such as an office block or hospital complex within 10–60 minutes.

The effect of the gas is as for tranquilisers in drinks or food but onset is within 1–6 seconds

and all affected targets must roll Endurance each round to stay awake.

Gas	TL	Rating	Availability	Mass (kg)	Cost (Cr.)
Nitrous Oxide	4	2d6	6	4kg bottle	250
Halothane	8	3d6	8	4kg bottle	600
Petrizine	10	4d6	10	1 kg bottle	800

**Drug-Soaked Pad:** The character soaks a volatile chemical such as chloroform onto a pad and then applies it over the victim's mouth and nose. This requires a successful surprise attack and a successful melee grapple attack. The drug's rating is 2d6 and onset is in 10–60 seconds, with fatigue if the target wins the Endurance roll against the rating but with an Effect less than her Endurance DM if positive. Unconsciousness lasts for 2d6 – Endurance hours, minimum of 1 hour.

**Injection:** This requires a successful surprise attack and a straightforward Melee attack to deliver the chemical payload, either through a hypodermic syringe (delivering 1 point of damage and requiring that the attacker bypass any armour the target is wearing) or through a slap patch. Onset begins in the next combat round, with effects as for mercy rounds.

## Physical Incapacitation Stunners, Stunsticks and Shock Rounds

These are the weapons listed in the Equipment section of *Traveller*. At the technological levels

at which these weapons are introduced, stunners (also known as tasers) use compressed air to shoot two tiny metal darts at short range. Thin copper wires connect these darts to the taser weapon: when discharged, the stunner delivers an electrical current to the target.

The target must roll the weapon's stun rating or greater on Endurance for each round the taser continues to discharge into him; if the target succeeds, the taser has no effect on the target.

Stunsticks, another form of stunner wielded like a melee weapon and known as stun guns, inflict the same damage but are wielded as melee weapons.

Shock rounds become available for slug throwers at the same technological level as the level at which the weapons become available.

**Sonic Weapons:** At TL 12, sonic stunners become available in pistol, carbine and rifle form. These weapons have the same statistics, including availability and costs, as laser pistols, carbines and rifles but have a maximum range of Medium. These energy weapons discharge a bolt of superheated plasma and ultrasound designed



to knock down and disorient the target; these weapons' damage rating (which is the same as for laser pistols, carbines and rifles) is their stun rating.

If the target succeeds with the Endurance roll against the rolled stun damage of the weapon, he still must roll against the same stun damage with his Dexterity or be knocked down: a target knocked down ends all actions for the current combat round and begins the next round prone.

TL 12 stunsticks operate under the same principles as TL 12 stunners but are still melee weapons.

## Beanbags and Binders

### Beanbag Rounds

Available for the police combat shotgun, a beanbag delivers stunning and knockback damage as for TL 15 sonic stunner weapons. These rounds have no effect on targets armoured with any armour stronger than jack.

### Binder Rounds

Binder rounds envelop the target in a fine cloud of nanofibres. These fibres cling together in a binding cocoon, immobilising the target for 1d6 hours. The target can attempt to break free by exceeding the rolled rating of the round with his Strength; he may attempt this once a minute.

Binder grenades have the characteristics of frag grenades (p. 101, *Traveller*) but roll the listed damage ratings to provide the effective grappling

Strength rating of the binder agent. TL 9, Availability 10+, Cost 200 Cr.

Binder rounds and grenades come with a spray which dissolves the fibres. Cost Cr. 50; mass 0.5 kg. The spray dissolves the fibres within 1–6 seconds.

## Weapons

**Blowgun:** A long tube for launching darts at targets up to Medium range, blowguns are powered by breath and are surprisingly accurate. Darts must bypass armour; against a target wearing armour, the character must aim the attack. Blowguns use the Athletics (archery) skill described in *Mercenary*.

**Police Combat Shotgun:** These are short (95 cm), smoothbore specialised shotguns used by police forces. Available as single – shot, breech-loading shotguns at TL 7 and as automatic shotguns with a 10 round clip from TL 8, the police combat shotgun is a larger version of the cartridge pistol that takes a large calibre shot shell which is incompatible with standard shotgun shells. With a simple bead sight, the police combat shotgun has a flip-up sight for ranged shots. Round types include beanbag rounds, shock and stun rounds, mercy shot and binder spray, flashbang and gas grenades of various types (smoke, aerosol, knockout, tear, irritant and incapacitant). Bulky 3 kg drums are available containing 30 rounds.

Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Recoil	Auto	Mass (kg)	Maga- zine	Availa- bility	Cost (Cr.)	Ammo Cost (Cr.)
Blowgun	0	Ranged (thrown)	1d6	0	No	1	0	8 +	0	Negligible
Police Combat Shotgun	7	Ranged (shotgun)	2d6	4	No	0.9	0	8 +	800	Special
Police Combat Shotgun	9	Ranged (shotgun)	3d6	4	2	0.9 /3.9 with drum	01/10 /30	8 +	850	Special





## Mercy and Paralysis

### Rounds

Weapon	Stun Rating
Revolver	3d6-3
Cartridge Pistol Mercy Shot	2d6+3
Autopistol	3d6-3
Flechette Pistol	3d6-2
Snub Pistol	3d6-3
Body Pistol	3d6-3
Gauss Pistol	3d6
Carbine	3d6-2
Autocarbine	3d6-2
Flechette Carbine	3d6
Gauss Carbine	3d6
Rifle	3d6
Autorifle	3d6
Sniper Rifle (TL 4)	2d6+6
Sniper Rifle (TL 8)	3d6+3
Flechette Rifle	3d6
Gauss Rifle	4d6
Assault Rifle	3d6

ACR	3d6
Gauss Rifle	4d6
Shotgun	4d6
Police Combat Shotgun	4d6
Shotgun Slug	4d6
Police Combat Shotgun Slug	4d6
LMG	4d6
LAG (TL 5)	6d6
LAG (TL 8)	8d6

### Heavy Weapons

Law enforcement forces with access to large scale incapacitating shells can subdue whole areas at a time. Frequently, law enforcement officers deploy tear gas grenades and beanbag rounds with police combat shotguns.

Tear gas grenades and mercy shot grenades for police combat shotgun rounds inflict their stated stun rating on all exposed targets within a 1d6 metre blast radius of the point of impact.

Police forces engaging in riot control have access to heavier weapons, such as water cannon, shot grenade and gas mortar shells and, at TL 15, mounted stun cannon.

**Water Cannon:** Vehicle mounted, a water cannon delivers a spray of high-pressure water at the same range as a flamethrower. Targets resist the rolled stun rating with Dexterity to avoid knockback from the water. A water tank inside the vehicle

supplies the water: the vehicle can fire continuous bursts for 10 minutes before the tank needs to be refuelled.

### Sample NPCs

#### Marion Bolivar, The

#### Huntress

Agent, Age 36, 4 terms

Str8 Dex11 End8 Int10 Edu9 Soc 9

Admin-1, Advocate-2, Deception-3, Diplomat-2, Gun Combat (snub pistol) -3, Stealth-2.

Snub pistol with two full clips of mercy rounds, Allies (her two partners), 3x tranq spray, several doses of liquid chemical restraint (knockout drops, chloroform pad), petrizine bottle and dispersal mechanism, van, 1 low passage ticket per character, 3 medium passage tickets - one for herself, one for her partners

**Appearance:** Marion looks like a typical harassed stay-at-home mother. Her hair and makeup are slightly dishevelled and her clothes a little behind current fashion trends. To all intents and purposes, she looks like someone out to do the shopping.

She is, however, a ruthless man hunter.

**Encounter:** At some point in the characters' career, they will get on the wrong side of some powerful and influential person or other. That person will be very determined to see that the characters suffer for their presumption: however, he is a hands-on sadist and he will want to torment the characters in person.



Weapon	TL	Stun Rating	Recoil	Mass	Magazine	Availability	Cost (Cr.)
Water Cannon	7	3d6+6	3	25	water tank	10+	2,500

**Mortar Mercy Shot Rounds:** These shells spray bursts of mercy shot across a wide area. Used in standard mortar launchers. Mortar launchers' minimum range, effective range, rates of fire and operating crews are listed in *Mercenary*.

Weapon	TL	Stun Rating	Radius	Availability	Cost (Cr.)
Mortar Mercy Shot Shell	11	5d6	9 metres	8	1,250

**Vehicle-Mounted Sonic Stunner:** At TL 8, a vehicle-mounted heavy sonic stunner is available. The effect is the same as for the TL 12 sonic cannon, with a maximum range of Medium. Too large to be carried by hand, the vehicle's power source also powers the device.

The field of fire of the vehicle mounted sonic stunner is the same as that of a shotgun, affecting a cone spreading out from the point of fire and affecting all targets within that area.

Weapon	TL	Range	Stun Rating	Auto	Mass	Magazine	Availability	Cost (Cr.)
Heavy Stunner	8	Medium	3d6 + knockback	Yes	-	Vehicle	10+	5,000
Heavy Stunner	10	Medium	4d6 + knockback	Yes	-	Vehicle	10+	8,000
Heavy Stunner	12	Medium	5d6 + knockback	Yes	-	Vehicle	10+	10,000

This is the kind of person who hires Marion Bolivar.

**Referee:** Use Marion as your quick and dirty railroading agent. If the players are bored with the current adventure, have an old enemy of theirs hire Marion. She will track them down and, one by one or all at once, incapacitate the characters, hauling them all off before her Patron.

Marion charges a hefty fee for her services. As a Patron, she could approach the characters asking if they can aid her to pull off an elaborate scheme she is running to bring in an elusive target: a banker whose incompetence brought a major sector Corporation to its knees two sectors away. She stands to gain Cr. 500,000 from the banker's capture.

Marion is ... (roll 1d6):-

- 1-2: True to her word. The banker is physically harmless but he has been extremely lucky. Marion suspects he may be a psion.
- 3-4: Honourable and generous. She has to be. The banker has already managed to kill both of her regular boys.
- 5-6: Actually planning on subduing the characters: they are her *real* prey. And with a bounty of Cr. 100,000 apiece, she is not going to give up the pursuit, even if her true plot is revealed.



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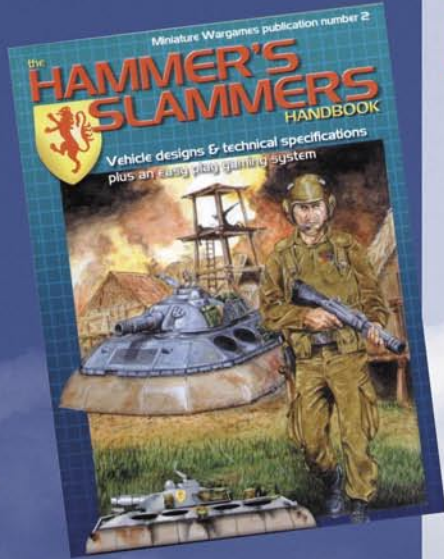
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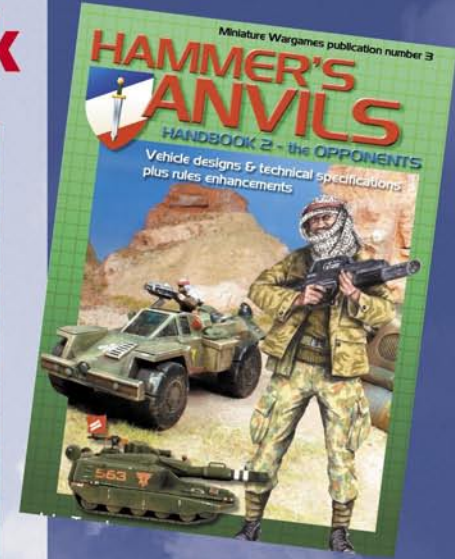
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Supply articles via email or on disc. We can read most formats, although MS Word is always a safe bet.

You will be provided with a style guide when we commission your article. Make sure you read it!

Please ensure that final submissions are no longer than around 5'000 words. We have had several recent submissions that have had to be broken down into many sections and we are not comfortable doing this too often.

## Subject Matter

First and foremost, the article has to be based on any one of our product lines, whether it is any of our miniature wargaming systems or our roleplaying games., ranging from A Call to Arms right through to Conan. If you have ideas for any of our games we want to hear them.

So, you have chosen your game, but what do you actually write about? Scenarios are good. In fact, we love them. Give me a scenario to edit and I am a happy camper. Perhaps you want to discuss the philosophy of a game. That's good. We encourage intellectual thought process around here. If you have something meaningful to say, then try us out. If we don't like it, we *will* tell you. Think hard before you try humour though. With guys like Jonny Nexus about, you will need to be sharp if you want to break in. If you think you have what it takes, though, then feel free to try your hand. Just be prepared to be told you may not be as funny as you think you are.

If you want to write new rules for a game, then be our guest. We cannot promise that we will like what you have done, but you will get constructive criticism in return, and not just a terse one-line rebuff.

## Editing

It is a painful fact that whatever you write, it will get edited. That is why editors exist, after all. Even this passage will have been edited. If you can get over this hurdle you are well on your way to attaining the mentality needed to be a writer. It will help if you can handle criticism as well. Take it from us – writing is a tough business. Just ask any author doing the rounds looking for a friendly publisher.

We have various house styles that we use and you do not need to know them. As long as your submission is literate and tidy, we will do the rest.

## Little Details

If you are not sure how long your article is, assume around 800 words fit on one page. Do not use the word processor's page counter as a guide. By the time it has been edited, laid out and had artwork added, it will look nothing like that screen of text in front of you.

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