

Volume 01

No.
02

Silver Swords

A zine for all role playing enthusiasts
by Stronghold Press Games

Thank you to everyone that purchased a digital or physical copy and thanks to our wonderful writers! Without your support we would have never been able to make this second issue a reality!

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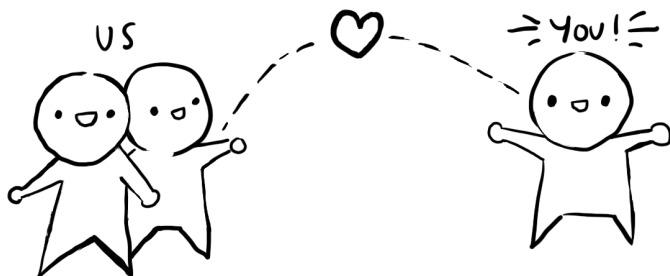


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Enemy of the Moon

Stephen Blanchard

Halfway along the southern edge of the forest of Hancharl there is a small unnamed outpost where merchant trains restock on salted meats, clean water, and a chance to fix up any damage done to their carts during the journey. Here is a man named Larson, well kept, but poor: his light brown hair is kept in a small bun but clearly hasn't seen soap in many weeks; his green cloak has been patched up with what look like random handkerchiefs sewn in; the hammer he carries has clear signs of wear on both the leather grip and the iron head.

Larson, upon seeing others wielding weapons and clearly not being simple traders passing through, seeks out the party to aid him in his endeavours. He wants to go into the forest itself in order to find a beast with a specific property he has heard rumours of existing at its very centre. The forest has a reputation, however, and he dare not enter alone. Of those who enter the forest, very few have been known to leave and those that do are missing chunks of flesh from where some dangerous creature has managed to get its fangs in. Larson can't afford to pay the party but is not looking for charity either. He explains that of the other creatures in the forest he wants nothing. As payment, he will help them determine and scavenge the most valuable items in the forest, which should fill their purses. [Anything they slay, the party can keep the pelts, the organs, the teeth, the claws, to sell or keep for themselves.]

The forest contains two main threats: random encounters with wild creatures and a group of druids who call themselves The Shepherds. The Shepherds tend the forest and are a mixture of races from various backgrounds and some, but not many, of those who disappeared in the forest now make up their ranks. They believe that anyone entering the forest from the outside risk bringing disease, destruction, and death with them and so attempt to drive them out.

Journeying through the forest typically gives 2-3 random encounters from the random encounters table and at least one encounter with The Shepherds. The meeting with The Shepherds can be combative or non-combative and should occur not long after the first encounter. The Shepherds will attempt to ambush the party and use spells to prevent movement rather than deal damage. They do not explain themselves without being persuaded and simply aggressively push for the party to leave. The Shepherds will only fight if truly pushed to it and, even then, will only use non-lethal attacks, using resurrection spells on any member of the party who goes down.

As the party gets closer to the centre of the forest, things start getting strange. The trees become twisted, the colour of leaves turning to purples, blues, and pinks. It is a place closely connected to the Feywild where a creature of neither world resides. It is ethereal, never truly in focus but in this place between worlds it can be partially seen. It looks like a large dragonfly but moves like a snake with wings, made of many shifting colours but streaked with steady silver streams. Upon encountering the party and Larson it is curious but cautious. It flies around the party, tentatively approaching (which can be

encouraged with animal handling checks). Eventually, it hones in on Larson and a stream of silver energy starts pouring out of Larson to the creature. Larson appears to be in pain and to the party it looks like the creature is feeding off him. If the party attacks, the creature attempts to flee into the ethereal plane and disappear. Larson will be very angry about this result, refusing to leave the grove until the creature comes back.

Larson's purpose here has been kept intentionally vague. He is a werewolf seeking a cure. The creature at the centre of the forest when feeding on him is actually taking away his curse. He is hesitant to reveal the truth to the party until after the encounter, as he knows how people treat his kind. It may well come out, however, in the interaction with The Shepherds. They know of the creature and will accept his reason to allow the party to press on. To add extra pressure during the one-shot, you can also have the night of this adventure be a full moon, meaning a party that dawdles risks Larson turning on them.

Random Encounters: Roll d12

- 1-3: 2d4 Insect Swarms feeding on the corpse of a bear
- 4-5: 1d4 Brown Bear family
- 6-7: 2 Owlbears
- 8-9: 1 Treant
- 10: 2 Displacer Beasts
- 11: The Shepherds can be caught stalking the party with a perception check
- 12: A nymph is spotted between the trees





Expanding the GM's Toolbox

Nathan Mehlhorn

I've been GM'ing for years now, and I get asked fairly regularly what tools I use to prep my games and come up with ideas. On top of the usual responses about how I draw inspiration from stories and the game's books, one place I love to point is actually to other systems entirely. While not a unique idea, and perhaps even something that seems obvious when stated, looking to other TRPG's when it comes to running your next game in your system of choice is one way to generate ideas and add a little extra for your group that is sure to pleasantly surprise them.

Today I'll be discussing one such tool that can be found legally, and freely, from the Ryuutama role-playing game. Specifically, the world and town creation sheets. When it comes to creating a game world, I've found that it is easy to get caught up in all the details you've created for yourself as the person running it. As a player, this can feel frustrating if the world lacks things that you are personally invested in, or just doesn't have enough depth for whatever you came into your game for to begin with.

For my examples, I'll be assuming you are playing a game like 5th edition D&D, but you can easily apply these ideas and methods to nearly any system. So what are these world and town sheets I keep mentioning and why would you want to use them? Should you always use them? These are the questions I aim to answer.

Let's start with the world sheet. In Ryuutama, an emphasis is placed on the narrative, which results in a very collaborative experience between players and the one running the game. If you primarily run 5th edition, this may run counter to how you have approached games in the past. After all, it is not atypical for the game master to create the world entirely and simply let their players explore it. However, while there are certainly merits to this approach, I find that it can lead to some problematic scenarios, namely player investment and focus.

You would use the world sheet during your session zero. Still go over the basic ideas you have for the game, rules, expectations, etc... There is just one key difference, this tool will be used to create the world you'll be playing in. This is done by tasking each person at the table with answering a series of simple questions found on the sheet:

- World Name
- Shape of the World
- World History
- Representative Countries
- World Threats
- World Enigmas



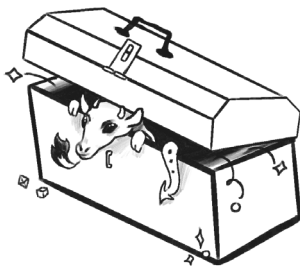
Taking turns, each person adds to the sheet, providing details to each of the questions. Some receiving more responses than others. This leads to several benefits for all parties. The biggest one being player investment. By building a dynamic world that is influenced by each member at the table, the result is everybody having some stake in the events that occur. It's not just one person's baby, it is something everyone can really get into and care about.

All of this is especially true for less experienced players. Though it may seem counter intuitive, this level of creative freedom and collaboration is usually met with open arms. When applied to a more seasoned group, this method should produce even more sturdy results.

Furthermore, this can seed some interesting adventures and endgame content which results in less work for the person running the game. I don't know about you, but I love it when I can save time on prep for my games.

All said and done, this method is not without its faults. If the table does not talk things over as they fill out the world sheet, you can end up with a disjointed and confused world. Some tables just aren't going to want to have this level of involvement when it comes to shaping the story, either. That's why it is important to understand this is just one of many tools that can fit into the GM's toolbox, and should be applied where appropriate.

That's where the town creation sheet can come into play. Similar to the world sheet, this is used to make interesting locations just like you would for the world. Even if you do not use the sheet collaboratively as it is suggested, I've found it is a vital tool for creating towns on my own as well.



Here are the questions posed to you by the town sheet:

- Town Name
- Town Population
- Ruler or Representative
- Environment
- Representative Buildings
- Specialty Goods
- Sights/Sounds/Scents
- Town's Threats

These questions push to form a detailed description of the place you are likely going to be spending some time in. The "town's threats" are an easy way to seed potential adventures as well. Whether done collaboratively in advance (or on the fly in some cases) or alone, this can make even the shortest of detours feel impactful and fleshed out.

Again, this isn't something you should use all of the time, especially collaboratively. In those instances, it can lead players to feel as if the world is lacking in surprise as they are having a larger hand in its creation. It takes a clever narrator to expand on the information listed and go beyond. However, utilized on occasion in this manner will produce dividends.

Let's look at an example from a game where I applied both of these methods. Our session zero lasted several hours but that was due to the amount of discussion we had on each point of the world creation sheet. At the end of the process the world of Tearis was born. A rich world with a lot of history and details that a normal homebrew setting simply would not have had, at least not in a way that everybody would remember with ease.

Tearis consisted of 7 continents formed on a shattered planet. Dragons were believed to have brought salvation to the human race by bringing devoted worshipers from the old world to this new one. Each country had its own themes, ideologies, lore, etc... and even a full year later with that group having dissolved, I still have the members talking about how this was one of the best game worlds they ever experienced, but it wasn't anything I did, it was all them. I just helped guide the experience.

The same can be said of the town where our journey started. Here is how we filled out the sheet:

Town Name: Joshua Tree

Population: ~100 (exclusive community that does not formally take in members often but is open to outsiders passing through)

Ruler: Village Council

Environment: Swampy Everglades

Specialty Goods: Adventuring gear, healers, beer that looks like "bottled sunshine".

Sights/Sounds/Scents: The Joshua Tree - This broad-leafed tree stands in the center of town, and is of great significance to the town's healers. Interestingly, the leaves of the Tree rarely change color with the movement of the seasons. This is a sleepy village. The smell of pungent herbs lingers throughout, mixing well with the brisk Winter air.

Town Threats: Riders who are a threat to the Joshua Tree and surrounding village (vandalism/deconstruction). The Tree has also begun to show signs of dying.

I still get asked what the Joshua Tree was, why it was suddenly dying after centuries of health, and more. I'm sure that as you read this, you got a fairly decent understanding of

what this place looked like and how it might operate.

As I mentioned previously, this group has since splintered off and Tearis is a world we no longer visit in our game of Ryuutama. However, it has been the inspiration for other campaigns in different systems entirely, short stories that people work on, and other works beyond the game itself. A font of inspiration and creativity, all stemming from this simple process.

While I obviously can't promise the same level of experience for you and your games, I am confident that if you try applying either of these methods that it will make for a memorable experience for all involved. Even if your group is playing a game that doesn't have a lot of collaborative elements in the storytelling, or the game focuses on beating the bad guys and taking their loot, give it a try and see for yourself how looking outside your game can result in a bigger experience.

You can find the sheets I mention to try for yourself on the Ryuutama website: <http://kotohi.com/ryuutama/resources/>. As mentioned, they are freely and legally available for all to use. If you try this method, especially if you haven't done something like this before, let us know! Additionally, what are some other tools from other systems you use in your games?



Forgotten Weapons

Davide Quatrini

A long time ago, before gods and their primordial enemies, before the first celestial and diabolical wars, only Essences existed alongside the mortal races. Each Essence embodied primeval concepts and forces of nature, in their purest and mighty forms. Great was their power, their magic capabilities limitless. Drops of that power coalesced into the first magic items, the weapons with which the mortals fought the original battles at the beginning of time.

Four were the mightiest objects among them: Bijalgan, the Lightning Blade, the first sword being forged, a sharply pointed rapier with a zigzag blade; Ulawiti, the First Harvest, the sickle used by the first holy champion sent by the Essences to teach agriculture to mortal beings; Hazokhen, the first tree branch to be turned into a magical weapon; and Yllwa, the truly first implement of war to be forged in the depths of Hell.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN: the scope of the present article is twofold. First of all, it provides descriptions and stats related to weapons for which magical versions do not exist in the 5E core rules; moreover, it tries to favor the adoption of unusual combinations by the players (e.g. barbarian-rapier, paladin-sickle, etc.). Both the concepts can be useful to foster originality in the GM's home campaign, especially in the first two tiers of play.

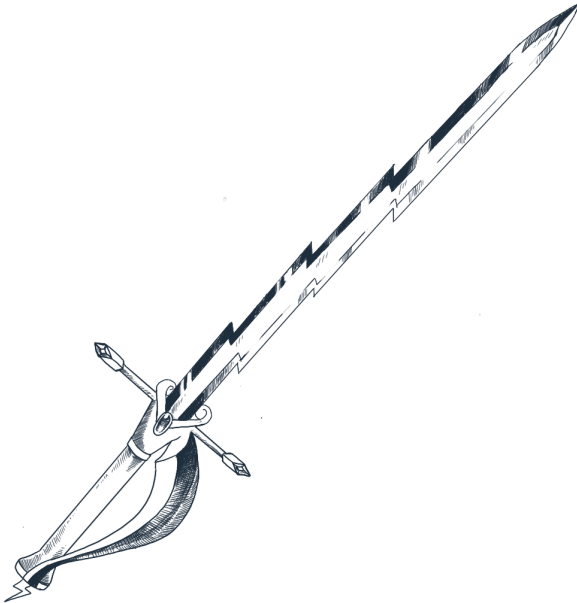
Bijalgan, the Lightning Blade

Weapon (rapier), rare (requires attunement by a barbarian)

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this weapon, and when you hit with an attack using this magic rapier, the target takes an extra 1d4 lightning damage. In addition, you gain the following features.

Flashing parry: The incredible, raw energy within this weapon confers lightning reflexes. While you wield the blade in combat and you are not wearing any armor, you can parry enemies' blows with incredible speed, thus gaining a +1 bonus to AC.

Whispering sparks: Electrical charges harmlessly flow from the blade to your body and vice versa, conveying useful information. While wielding this weapon, you can use the Danger Sense Barbarian class feature also when blinded or deafened.



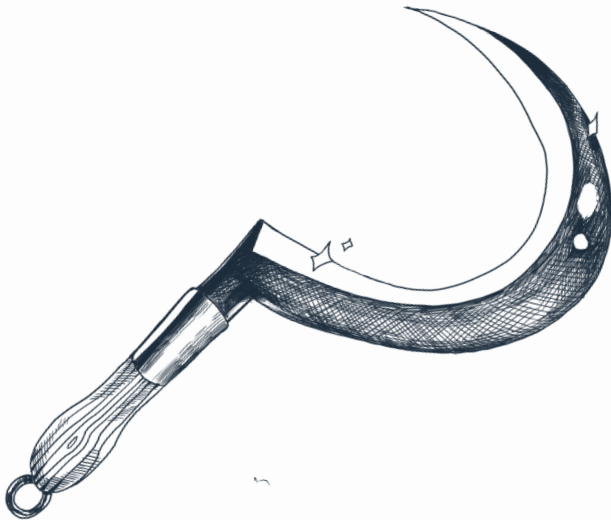
Ulawiti, the First Harvest

Weapon (sickle), rare (requires attunement by a paladin)

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this weapon, and you can use it as a spellcasting focus for your paladin spells. In addition, you gain the following features.

Reaping Strike: This magical sickle is the physical manifestation of the pristine concept of abundance harvesting but can be also used to extract energy from your foes. When you inflict radiant damage to a creature while using your Divine Smite class features, you regain an expended Hit Die.

Natural Communion: Ulawiti allows you to communicate telepathically with nearby Good farmers and to detect malignant monsters in fields. While wielding this weapon, you can use the Divine Sense Paladin class feature also on plant creatures.





Hazokhen, the Ancient Branch

Weapon (club), rare (requires attunement by an elf)

You gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this weapon. In addition, you gain the following feature.

Deep knowledge of the land: This club was fashioned from the main bough of Okhen, the first tree, and it maintains the same connection to the natural world of its 'father'. While attuned to this item, you can cast the commune with nature spell once per day. Moreover, you gain proficiency

in the Nature skill.

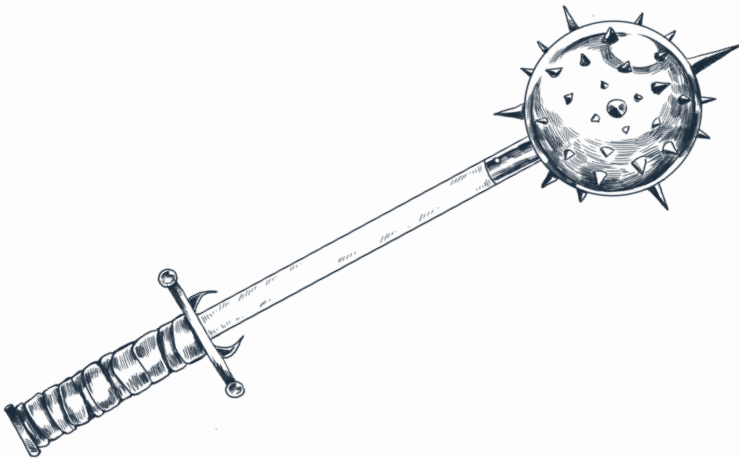
Yllwa, the Hellish Star

Weapon (morningstar), rare (requires attunement by a tiefling)

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this weapon, and you can use it as a spellcasting focus for any spell you are able to cast. In addition, you gain the following features.

Black iron of hell: This is the first metal weapon to be ever fashioned, and the devilish forges of Hell were used to build it; traces of that diabolic fire still linger in the object. While you are attuned to this item, the targets of your hellish rebuke spells have disadvantage on the related Dexterity saving throws.

Master of hellish forges: If you target yourself with a protection from energy spell and you choose the fire damage type, you gain immunity instead of resistance to said damage.





Luther Gutekunst

Moonfall is a fantasy setting with a time limit - the world is not static. A war looms on the horizon and the dead Moon is falling towards the world, prepared to wipe the slate clean.

The Sun

The Sun, who Shattered the Hateful Moon, stretches across the sky in triumph, lighting the world with its burning crown. With the Moon dead, it burns the world through its sheer presence. Yet, the Sun has no interest in the world beneath it - its thousand thousand eyes are trained outwards, on the void. It hungers to light it, to subsume it, to devour everything into its fire.

The Moon

The Moon lies curled and dead in the sky, bleeding silver ichor from the wounds that killed it. It was a messenger from the void, come to speak to the world. Even dead, the Moon's soul hungers to return to its blood, and it pulls itself down to the world. But this soul-desire is blind and unaware of the Sun above, who will simply reach down and pull the Moon apart, leaving it dead forever.

The Stars

The crystallized blood of the dead Moon shines silver in the void, hanging around the earth in hundreds of droplets. Their wandering paths bring them down to the world below, where they writhe with the Moon's breath, hiding from the light of the Sun.

The largest of them stay semi-solid, stalking across the surface of the world on tall, amorphous stilts. The Moon's frozen breath is channeled through their own, and its dead, soul-eating light shines from their bodies. Smaller droplets sink down into the ground, fleeing the Sun. These places are blighted - the blood will flee from the soil into the body, causing illnesses. To cure them, stay under the sunlight until it pierces you and drives them out.

The World

Under the Sun and Moon lies the world - blighted and poisoned by the blood of the moon, and scorched by the triumphant Sun. Most of the terrain is harsh, dry grasslands, with only tall stone columns and poisoned areas as landmarks. In those poisoned lands grow strange, alien creatures, fed by the blood of the Moon. Plants lose their color and curl inwards in spirals or explode outwards in fractals. Animals become pale and thin, losing their eyes.

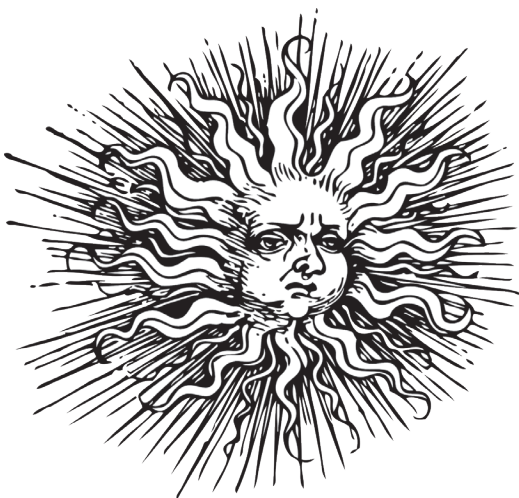


The Nations

On the sunburnt wastes lies Carphira, a hulking nation of stone citadels and iron cannons. Their walls stand high and imperial against the moonblood, and within, the Carphirans prepare for war.

Technology advances quickly - magical flying machines soar above the savannas, armed with lens weapons that focus the burning light of the Sun. They are renowned for their cannons, firing thin cylindrical shells filled with rune-covered shrapnel.

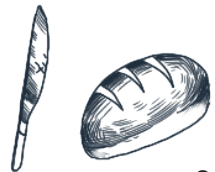
Even from within, the cities of Carphira are far from invincible. Their City-Kings dance with the moonblood, drawing it into themselves to prolong their reigns. Soon, the poison will consume them, and the cities will fall in flames. As the leader's minds are warped by moonblood, their thoughts change - the moonblood whispers warnings into their ears: that city is preparing for war, your advisors are lying to you, that diplomat is a spy. Crush the city, execute the advisors, imprison the diplomat.



While they still keep good relations and a defensive pact with Sescesh, the nation to their west, the City-Kings of Carphira hunger for war, fueled by paranoia.

To Carphira's south lies the Silence, a land untouched by the Sun. Under eternal night live the Udrya. Their world is one of darkness and ice, where food is rare and life is hard. However, the Udrya have one advantage over the rest of the world - the Silence is as hostile to moonblood as it is to life. Moonblood that crashes in the Silence stays frozen, unable to take the agile, complex forms it has in the rest of the world. The stumbling, solid moonblood that survives is easily struck down through simple force of arms.

Carphira's eastern border is with Hirot, a new nation retaking the territory of an ancient, fallen empire. Hirot has been reclaiming the advanced technology of that ancient nation, replacing their complex batteries and reactors with moonblood-powered pneumatics. Even if kept in it's base form, moonblood hungers for blood - it crawls towards it, dragging itself forwards with pseudopods. Using this unnatural attraction, it can be used to push pistons and force machines. These moonblood machines are everywhere in Hirot - horses have been replaced with low, 4-legged walking machines. Boats are powered by spinning wheels, and some rudimentary aircraft have been invented. Hirot keeps itself away from other nations - it can see the war growing, and has no interest in it.



To Carphira's north is a grand ocean, stretching far past the horizon. Once, an archipelago stood there, and its people were great adventurers, venturing to the edges of the world and returning with strange treasures and incredible tales. But as the moon died, its blood rained down and washed it all away. Nothing is left of that nation, except its people. Now, they are the Far Wanderers - a nomad-fleet of titanic red sailing ships, slowly spreading through the world's oceans. They are at war with Sescesh, landing their blood-red ships on its shores and disgorging armies of scale-plated raiders who burn everything to the ground as they march ever-closer to the capital.

To the west of Carphira is Sescesh, another nation clinging to life in the savanna. Since the Far Wanderers invaded, the Sesceshi people have been scattered, moving constantly to flee from them. The Sesceshi capital, Aum-Sescesh, has been fortified, bristling with cannons and blades. As refugees flood into Aum-Sescesh, the city's infrastructure begins to crumble. There's not enough food, not enough space, not enough time. Many refugees live in tent cities outside the walls, unprotected from the predations of the Far Wanderers. Sescesh is desperate for assistance, hoping to use its defensive pact with Carphira to force them to bring aid. They do not know of the affliction the Carphiran City-Kings labor under.

The Future

As Sescesh defends itself from invasion, it begs Carphira to assist it. Soon, the armies of Carphira will march into Sescesh, taking this opportunity to wage war against them. Hirot will draw further into itself, exiling Carphirans and Sesceshis out of fear that they are foreign

agents trying to sabotage their neutrality. Refugees from the war flood into the Silence, just as the Moon's corpse reaches a critical point, and the Silence begins to seethe with spiked horrors.

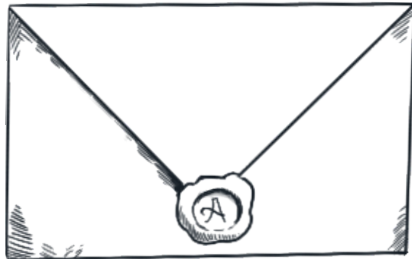


As the Moon's corpse closes with the world, its blood grows restless. They combine with each other, growing larger and more desperate to return to the Moon. Soon, they become pillars, hundreds of stories tall, stretching upwards to meet the descending Moon. After that, only days before impact, gravity is broken by the Moon - objects begin to rise up towards it, coming detached from the world below. Then, impact.

The world is wiped clean, and the Moon's blood soaks back into its corpse, returning it to life for a second before the Sun reaches down its arms and tears it apart again, leaving the Sun's reign over the universe unchallenged.

An Escape

To save the world, you must reach the Moon. Its descent is guided, however slightly, by its spirit, hoping to return to its blood. The magic and technology of Carphira and Hirot could be used to invent a flying machine that could propel you to the Moon, but how will you get the technology you need during the war? Once you reach the Moon, you must persuade its dead soul - force it to think of all the lives that would be lost to save it, force it to remember the Sun that lies overhead, ready to kill it again, force it to realize that none of this will help. Force it to stop.

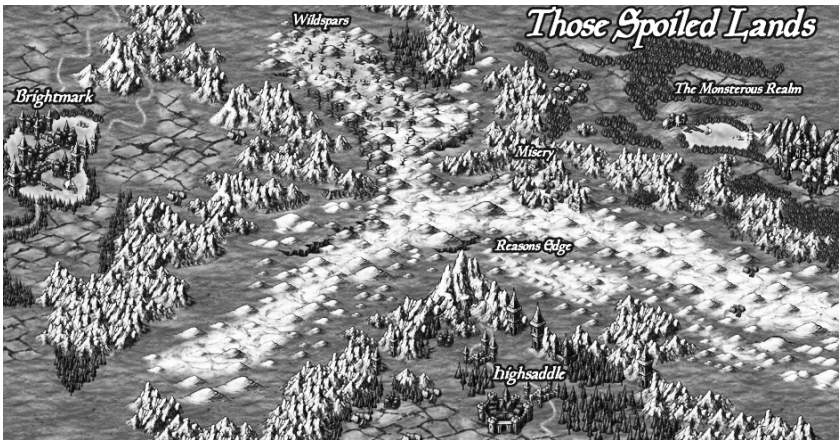


Those Spoiled Lands

Allen Farr

"Welcome to the Spoiled Lands! Is it riches you seek with a shovel, or fame with a blade? Perhaps I can offer assistance? I have shovels aplenty, capable of moving earth or ore for a pittance. If its fame you seek, I can sell you the Lost Map of Shahydra Longstride, a priceless tool that warns of imminent danger. Yes, ignore that, it's perfectly safe right here."

- The Last Words of Bergalval Rotwelt, Merchant and Claim Broker



The Spoiled Lands have a long and bloody history. Their creation not only shaped the Three Kingdoms, but was the downfall of nations that preceded them. They are more than a strip of land demarcating borders on a map, they are a festering sore that refuses to heal. The spoiled lands are a curse that feeds the flames of avarice and draws in those who desire riches and fame.

Factions

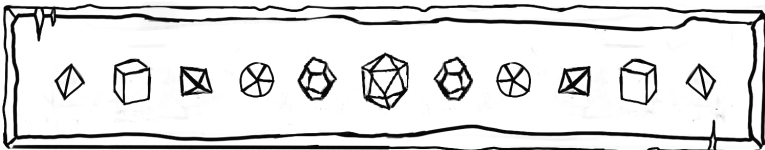
The Kingdom of Hightsaddle - Ruled by the newly crowned King Krasian III, the King is detested by the nobility. He is young and impetuous, something his enemies are currently using to further their own agenda.

The Kingdom of Brightmark - Administered by Regent Tyan Redkarl. Brightmark has so many nobles, it is referred to as the 'Baron Lands', something considered a grave insult. In a land where allegiances can shift with the tide, the people of Brightmark hold their collective breath, for the young Prince Andras is almost of age to reclaim the throne.

The Monstrous Realms - Power in this wild land is held by an unlikely confederacy. The ruling council is currently under the direction of Irok Denk, a semi civilized ogre from the free city of Haspen. With problems in the north, the council have thus far ignored the encroachment of explorers and prospectors on to their lands, but that's about to change.

Spoiled Places

A desolate, forlorn place, the Spoiled Lands run the length of an ancient valley. Once lush and verdant, the valley is now pocked by the spoil of a thousand mines, their poisoned remains leaching from fetid swamps filled with twisted creatures. Despite the extent of the excavation, riches continue to be discovered. The Spoiled Lands are not totally devoid of life. Many have been born there and know no other home. As seams run





dry, the Spoiled Lands and its inhabitants are forgotten, yet each time new riches are discovered a flood of prospectors, criminals, thugs, merchants, murderers and mercenaries follow in its wake.

The Wildspars - Once a swampland that stretched as far as the eye could see, The Wildspars is now a shallow expanse of mine tailings and rotting trees. Little lives there, but that which does is best avoided.

The Wailing River - The rivers that once fed the Wildspars are no more, their sediments long since looted of their riches, their stony beds riddled with abandoned mines and blocked by mountains of spoil. These deepened channels easily flood, their

raging waters often plunging into ancient shafts, forcing out the air with such violence they create a series of blowholes - like giant whistles, their keening can be heard for many miles.

Dragon's Gullet - Perhaps one of the most dangerous features of the spoil is a dragon's gullet, sinkholes that open without warning in the most heavily mined areas. Such events are announced by the shaking of the earth, followed by a thunderous roar and a pall of dust that can be seen for great distances.

Reason's Edge - Believed to be the deepest recorded mine, Reason's Edge is noted for the waterfall that plunges into its depths. The mine is so deep that the falling water turns to a fine mist long before it hits the bottom, filling much of the tunnels with perpetual fog. Exploration of this mine has become a rite of passage and a grave.

Misery - The largest settlement in the Spoil Lands, Misery is mostly a ghost town, a consequence of its growth before the last gold fields dried up. Situated in a canyon, the only entrance is via the balance, a large set of scales that acts as the town's gate.

Gamemaster Advice

When using 'Those Spoiled Lands', the gamemaster should consider the impact of a resource rush and everything that goes with it - rapid population expansion, lawlessness, encroachment into sovereign territory, environmental destruction and its consequences. Many of these themes can be useful on their own, but when mixed with traditional fantasy tropes, the combinations are limitless.

Adventure Hooks

Seeds of Discord - New wealth has been discovered close to the borders of the Monstrous Realm. Some of King Krasian's enemies have taken advantage of this, seeding caves and rivers inside the borders of the rival kingdom with gold. They intend to spark a border conflict, keeping the King's attention beyond his realm, while they plot his downfall within.

Infestation - Rock worms have been introduced to ferret out gold, which is harvested from their deposits. There are reasons why so many Giants call the Monstrous Realms home, there is something in the soil and the next generation of worms have just hatched. When prospectors begin to vanish the PCs are hired to investigate.

Mine-at-arms - An abandoned mine is being used to covertly produce large numbers of weapons. When one of the weapons gets sold at market, its new owner is found dead, as is the merchant who sold it. Following a trail of clues, the PCs discover the existence of a secret society known as the Vanished Houses, and what appears to be the body of Prince Andras. Have the Vanished Houses already implemented some nefarious plan against Brightmark, or has their plan already failed and they are trying to cover their tracks?



The Secret Safe of Shar'Almana.

Eric-christian Alexander

The sorceress Shar'Almana built a vault long ago to hide some magical items that her Lord had no use for, intending to sell them once her service was no longer needed. However, for unknown reasons, she disappeared and her Vault laid unclaimed for centuries. Recently, a group of goblins have occupied the vault. They have made use of the few items that were unsecured, but the Shaman suspects that there is something else hidden in the vault and is trying to figure out how to get to it.

Room Descriptions



1- Entry Room: A talking brazier is here that will answer questions about level 2 if given 5 pounds of food. Otherwise it is chatty and completely inoffensive.

2,3,5- Treasure Room: Has 1d4 chests. Unlocked chests are filled with mundane items, locked chests are at least 1 magical consumable item.

4- Goblin Warren: 4 Goblins 3 HP: Leather Armor and Clubs, 1 is equipped with a wand of magic missiles with 1d6+2 charges.

6- Secret door: easily detected by the sudden breeze felt. 2 Bugbears, playing dice. Will gamble with players unless an Elf is present, otherwise hostile. 8 HP, Chainmail, 6 Javelins, shortsword.

7- Stairway room which can be secured to be used as a resting area.

8- 4 transparent slimes are here in the dark and ambush the party unless they have more than 1 light source. 6HP, Armor equivalent to Leather + Shield, D6 damage, Roll a d20 when Equipment comes into contact with slimes. On a 1, it is dissolved.

9- Sorceresses study, which may have 1 or 2 magical scrolls and a single very large mirror.

10- The Community Area of the Goblins:

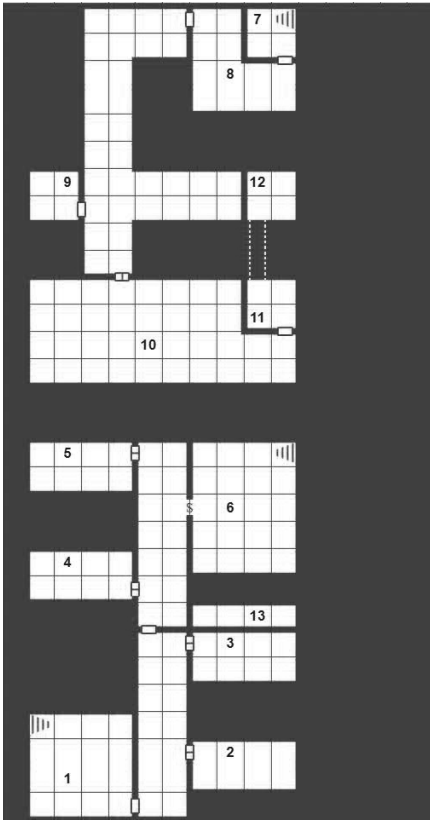
Shaman + 7 Goblins + 1 Orc.

Goblins 4HP: Spear, No armor

Orc 10 HP: Chainmail + Shield, Long Swords

Goblin Shaman 4HP: Staff, Curse, Cure Light

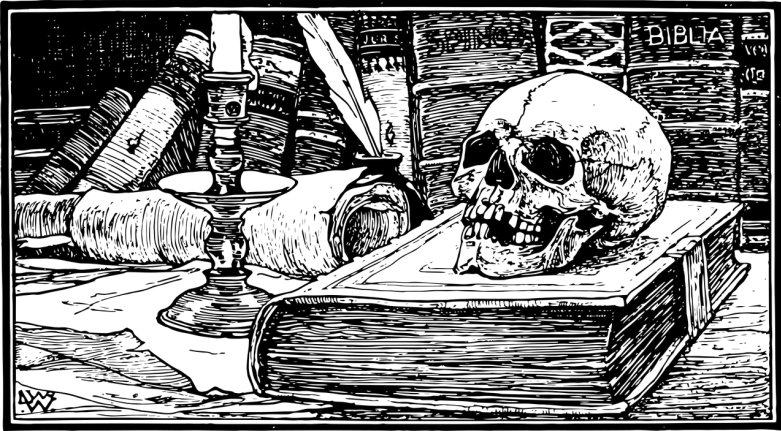
Wounds, Cause Blindness



11- Empty room full of pools of water and shards of broken mirror. If the big mirror from the Study is brought here, it shows a passage way behind the north wall.

12- The secret safe: Give rewards appropriate for 2 levels higher.

13- The Portal of Shar'Almana, which takes the traveller to unknown lands, which was the fate of the sorceress.



All sources of non-magical light last half as long on the first level and a quarter as long on level 2. Hunger and thirst are increased as well overall in the dungeon.

All traps, roll 1D6

1-4 = Dart Trap +1 Attack 1D4+1 Damage

5-6 = Poison Dart Trap. Same as above but also Save vs Death.

Chests have 1 in 6 chance to be locked

Doors have 2 in 6 chance to be stuck and require some forcing.



Shaman Class

A spiritual agent of the Old Gods.

While Clerics serve the gods of established, organized religions which are likely to have many believers, followers, and supporters, Shamans instead serve the ancient gods of the Land and Sea. Gods who are all but forgotten by the general populace. Who's devout may number a mere dozen people, hiding in a forest den.



These Old Gods may not be as pronounced as their more popular counterparts, but their boons and influence are still strong. At character creation, Shamans pick an Old God to follow. They will be either Lawful, Neutral, or Chaotic. This choice will affect their abilities when adventuring. The unique twist of Shamans is that they may pick different Old Gods on different adventures. It requires one month to attune to a new God, changing their ability set.

Optionally, DMs may only allow players to move one step away from their original God's alignment. With Chaotic Gods only allowing Shaman's to attune to Neutral Gods, and the same for Lawful Gods. If a player chooses to follow a Neutral God, they may only change their God to either Chaotic or Lawful, a choice that is made by whichever alignment they re-attune to first.

Shamans use Cleric spell list.



Shaman Progression Chart

Level	Exp	HD	1	2	3	4	5
1	1,800	1d6	1	-	-	-	-
2	3,600	2d6	1	-	-	-	-
3	5,400	3d6	2	-	-	-	-
4	10,800	4d6	2	2	-	-	-
5	16,000	5d6	3	2	1	-	-
6	28,000	6d6	3	3	1	1	-
7	60,000	7d6	4	3	2	1	1
8	120,000	8d6	4	3	2	2	1
9	160,000	9d6	4	3	3	2	1

Regardless of God, all Shamans follow the standard progression chart. Different Godly alignments each come with their own perks. All boons apply only when attuned to a specific alignment.

Lawful

Lawful Old Gods inspire their agents to support and defend their allies, offering them spells and abilities to assist to that end.

1st level

Otherworldly Defense - Grants the target -1 AC. May be used once per long rest. Does not consume Spell Slot.

5th level

Cure Light Wounds - Grants one additional cast per long rest. Does not consume spell slot.

9th level

Additional charge of both Otherworldly Defense and Cure Light Wounds.

Neutral

Neutral Old Gods encourage their agents to look out for themselves above all else, and grant them abilities to assist in this goal.

1st level

Hasty Retreat - Allows player to double their movement speed for one round per long rest. Does not consume Spell Slot.

5th level

Exceptional Luck - Allows player to reroll a natural 1 once per long rest. Does not consume Spell Slot.

9th level

Thievery - Grants player access to Thief abilities as though he were a level 5 Thief.

Chaotic

Chaotic Old Gods desire for their disciples to sow discord throughout the realms, and thus give boons which allow them to do so.

1st level

Combat Knowledge - Allows player to wield Heavy armor and bladed weapons.

5th level

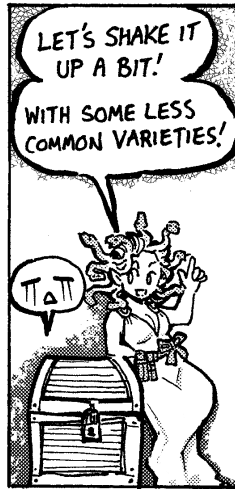
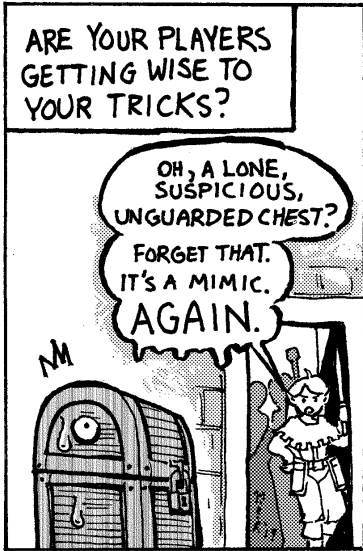
Natural Fortitude - Shaman gains +1 HP per level, works retroactively.

9th level

Devilish Grin - Grants player an additional +2 Charisma.

To add to a world's verisimilitude, it is recommended that Dungeon Masters consider either editing these templates or create their own to more accurately reflect the ideas and desires of their setting's own Old Gods.

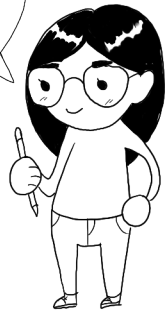




DRAWING MONSTERS

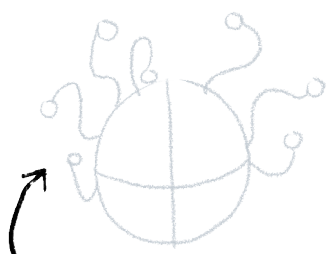
with Ari

→ Beholder



ARIANA VS

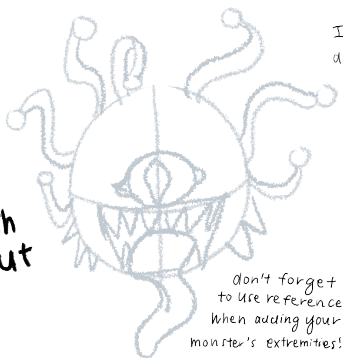
① use Basic Shapes to Block out its pose



Use odd numbers for its eyestalks



② flesh it out

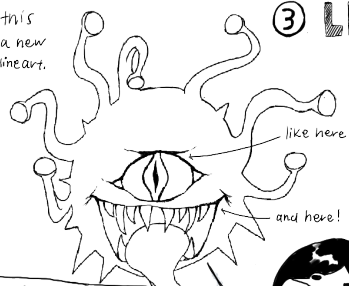


Don't forget to use references when adding your monster's extremities!

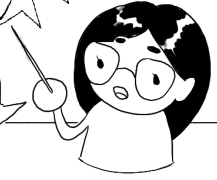
If you're doing this digitally, create a new layer for your lineart.



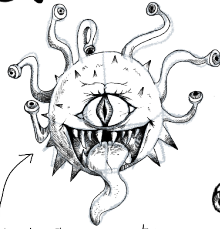
③ LINE ART



to Bring depth into your lineart, add more weight where lines touch!

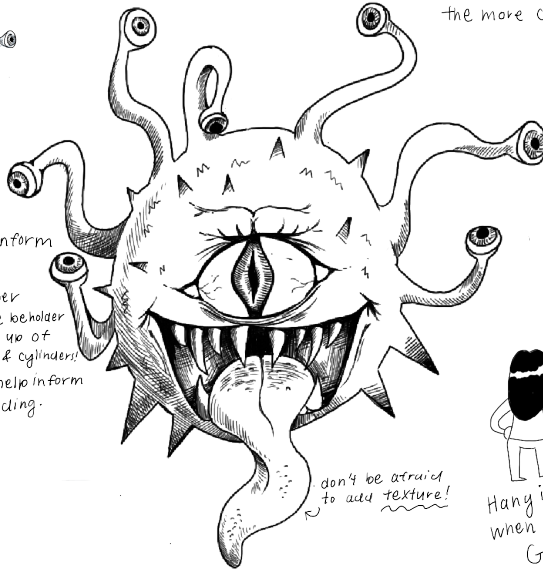
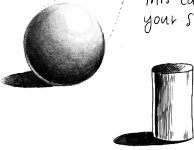


④ SHADING & DETAILS



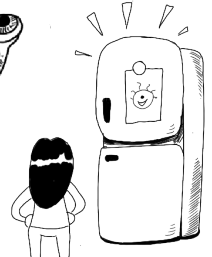
I like to shade on top of my sketch layer to help inform my shading.

Remember that the beholder is made up of spheres & cylinders! This can help inform your shading.

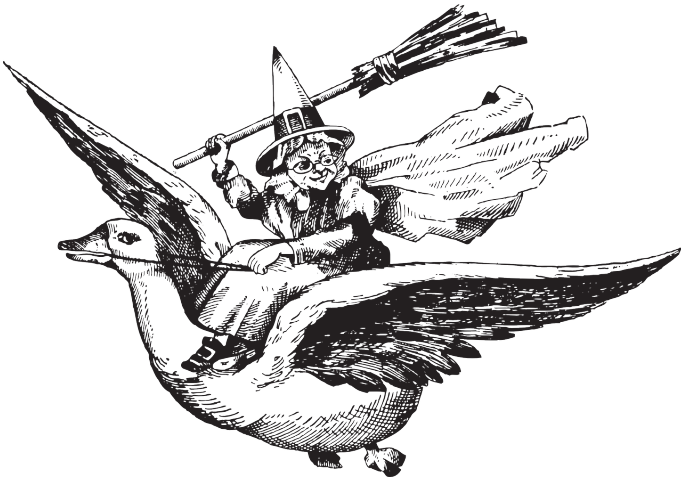


don't be afraid to add texture!

the more wrinkles you add, the more creepy it will look!



Hang it on the fridge when you're done!
Good Work!



We hope you enjoy this second issue
of Silver Swords! It was made with
love, care, and more than a few late
nights. If you like
what you see be sure to
check out our other work at
strongholdpress.blogspot.com

