

EARTH O DAWN



Tableau Infractus #6

TABLEAU INFRACTUS

"The only difference of a Civil War and a Revolution is who wins. There is nothing civil about this, it is war and we should treat them as though they are the enemy."

•Archived note dated thirty years after the closing•

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Tableau Infractus
An Earthdawn Fanzine

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This is a work by a fan for fans.

In short please don't litigate against me.

Volume #1 Issue #6 Earthdawn Tableau Infractus

AUTHOR'S CORNER

The mid 1990's was a huge time for personal websites with Geocities, Angelfire, and others making it easy for anyone to create a site regardless of HTML literacy. Gamers took to the web in the thousands and pages with the most obscure ideas became a common occurrence. A search for Earthdawn would provide a couple hundred hits for personal pages in English and maybe a quarter of that total in other languages.

FASA's following on the web was quite impressive at this time. Players were sharing ideas with fervor and the website *Strands* was a poster boy for the involved gamer website. Earthdawn may not have hit the sales numbers that FASA was looking for but the web was alive with player content.

Earthdawn's cancellation in 1999 by FASA came as a shock to many game groups, including mine. We had been playing for years and most of us owned all of the books. As far as we were concerned the game was moving forward, stopping had never occurred to us. The day I found out about the cancellation I made electronic copies of every Earthdawn themed page I could find on the 'net.

When the second edition was released in 2000 there was a small resurgence in personal pages for Earthdawn. Some of these pages were kept updated for the duration of Living Room Games run for Earthdawn.

Around 2002 the Web-log became a common replacement for personal websites. These afforded and opportunity to share ideas with others and provided a method of immediate feedback. The web-log format was not conducive to easy file sharing at the time.

Eventually LRG ceased to produce any tangible content for players. When this happened game stores treated the game as

though it were dead. The reaction on the 'net was to stop supporting personal sites for the most part. There were very few exceptions to this; *EDPT*, *Earthdawn.pl* and *The Lore Merchant* come to mind. Classic Earthdawn was available at this time but it was not in stores and that makes a huge difference to public and store owner perceptions.

When Yahoo abandoned the Geocities concept in October of 2009 many fansites were lost. Reocities and Oocities have both made attempts to maintain archives of Geocities believing them to be a cultural treasure. Considering that a generation of web users produced a massive amount of content using that system, it may turn out that Yahoo really did destroy a cultural treasure.

For many years I frequented various sites to mine ideas and inspiration for my own Earthdawn games. Over-time I noticed that many of those sites had begun to disappear. Not all at once mind you, but little bits at a time. A link might fail, or an image would not load, and before long the page would be gone. Back in the first issue I linked to a site that had fifty or so Earthdawn web-links in it. The intent was to highlight the amount of information that had been lost over the last fifteen years. Then the month following my publication the site disappeared.

Now days I find that the Earthdawn webrings are littered with the corpses and dead links of pages gone by. All their content lost. Not because the content wasn't good or useful, but because the people have moved on and the content had not been backed up by others.

Those "Fading Sites" are what prompted me to begin the [Tableau Infractus Internet Archive](#). The archive is to provide a future for content that inspired me.

A FLARE FOR THE DRAMATIC

The history of the Citadel of Iopos is filled with the seeds of many legends. It is convenient then that we live in modern times and can see how these legends have influenced our city.
- S'flint Senior Scribe of the Library of Enlightenment -

AN IOPAN VASSAL

In the years before the scourge Iopos was like much of Barsaive, chafed by the yoke of Thera rule. The lap dogs in Throal relished their duty to extract taxes and tribute from all of the free nations of Barsaive. Should a nation fail to pay the “proper” taxes and tribute, as determined by the accountants in Throal, looting of the nation’s treasury and enslavement of the population would be the result.

In this time a young girl was found living among the wolves of the wilds. It is said she had eyes of differing colors, one piercing grey-blue the other the honey gold of amber. She was brought to Iopos and presented before the City Council as a possible gift to the Throalic ambassador. The Council, so taken aback as they were with her eyes, wisely decided she would not be given to the greedy dwarf.

She would, it was determined, be raised by the members of the council. Each member’s household would care for her and teach her for a period of one year. She was named Jan’eesa (Passion’s Will), and spent thirteen years learning the skills of leadership, patience and understanding.

During her childhood the construction of citadel’s defenses began. Thera diplomats and magicians frequented the city, often taking people and goods with them when they departed. Jan’eesa opposed the idea of forcing the people of her city to move to Thera and become slaves.



It was during her fifth year in the city that she joined the house of Denairastas. While there she selected the discipline of Wizard as her lens for the world. She was an apt pupil and by the time she had reached her majority, and the last house, she was very skilled in her discipline.

Because of her status as a member of every household on the council, Jan’eesa was afforded a special role in the construction of the citadel. Her duty was to oversee the implementation of the Rites of Protection and Passage. She purposed the barrier of enchanted elemental air that protected the city from wall to wall nested like the matryoshka dolls she played with as a child.

Jan’eesa’s legend had grown during her time in Iopos. Thera and Throal both had expressed an interest in having her spend the scourge in their respective cities. Her refusals were polite but not well received.

When the citadel was finally sealed it was done so without any member of Throal or Thera within the city’s walls. Jan’eesa placed the last enchantment on the gates of Iopos from the outside. The two crystalline stones she used as the final seal can still be found today embedded in one of the southern gates of the city, one piercing grey-blue the other the honey gold of amber.

Master Rank Treasure

A Master rank Treasure has abilities beyond the normal scope of thread items. They affect large groups or affect one person in a manner that allows them to influence large groups of name-givers. The uses for these types of treasure are to cause nations to rise or fall. The following is a Master Rank Treasure used for or against Iopos.

The Eyes of Jan'eesa

Maximum Threads: 13 **Spell Defense:** 39

Legend Point Cost: Master

The Eyes of Jan'eesa are pattern items for the City of Iopos. The personal sacrifice made by Jan'eesa to help protect Iopos has resulted in a Dying Legacy focused on the Eyes of Jan'eesa. Uhl is aware of this but can not remove them from public view for fear of the consequences to the city and his personal goals. The Holders of Trust have guards posted specifically to prevent people from attempting to remove the Eyes of Jan'eesa from the gates. Uhl has three ranks woven to the eyes.

Thread Rank One

Key Knowledge: The character must learn the family names for each of the council members involved in Jan'eesa's raising.

Effect: All Iopan citizens default to a friendly status (GMs Guide pg 93) when interacting with the character. This will include low ranking Denairastas family members.

Thread Rank Two

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Ritual Jan'eesa performed to remove her eyes, transmute them to crystallized stone and embed them in the gates of the city.

Effect: All Iopan citizens default to a Loyal status (GMs Guide pg 93) when interacting with the character. This will include low ranking Denairastas family members.

Thread Rank Three

Deed: The character must become a member of one of the thirteen families of the pre-scourge council.

Effect: All Iopan citizens default to Awstruck status (GMs Guide pg 93) when interacting with the character. This will include low ranking Denairastas family members.

Thread Rank Four

Deed: The character must best a champion of each of the pre-scourge council's thirteen families.

Effect: No Iopan citizen will stand against the character for any reason. This includes members of the Denairastas family.

Thread Rank Five

Deed: The Eyes of Jan'eesa must be removed from the pattern of Iopos magically and physically.

Effect: This will nullify all previous effects awarded by The Eyes of Jan'eesa for all individuals that have tied threads to The Eyes of Jan'eesa.

Using Master Rank Treasures in Your Game

Master rank treasures are truly grandiose in scope and power. They are created through magically powerful circumstances. A few examples could be the Dying Legacy of a master adept, or the willing sacrifice of a large group of adepts, perhaps even a single event involving a large scale slaughter of non-magical name-givers.

Power accumulation at higher circles can leave a character with the desire to apply the power gained to interesting ends. Attempts to remove Uhl from Iopos, or Alachia from the Bloodwood can provide high circle adventures where master rank treasures are justifiable and fun.

Consider the following when creating a master rank treasure.

- 1) It should never be used by any character who is less than a master in their discipline.
- 2) It should be created in such a manner as to allow any master to find it useful.
- 3) It should be created to be useful for more than one entity (name-giver or horror).
- 4) Last it should be built to have a method of cancellation.

The Gift of Longview given by Icewing to the Throalic royal line could be interpreted as a master rank treasure. A series of adventures could easily develop if it is transferable to any family line.

The volumes of *"The Books of Harrow"* could be a series of separate master rank treasures. Perhaps each volume will provide the master circle adept with more knowledge regarding the third age of the world.

The original transcripts of *"The Seeds of Nation"* by Krathis Gron could also be interpreted as a master rank treasure. If the originals were determined to affect all copies of *"The Seeds of Nation"* then changing the seeds could have a dramatic effect on the fledgling ork nation.

FALLEN MOUNTAIN

This tale predates the building of Iopos. It became a popular bedtime tale to tell to children during the scourge.

- S'flint Senior Scribe of the Library of Enlightenment -

In the time before men and dragons, when the world had shown like a single star in the night sky, a great and terrible being coalesced in the darkness. This being wrenched a name from the universe, Nightslayer. Armed with a thunderous roar, gleaming claws and vicious fangs it fought with the other beings that had also solidified in the night over the world.

The vanquished of these battles rained down on the white hot world, drenching it in



their blood and cooling it with their corpses.

The carnage lasted an age. During this time of death and

creation a crust developed over the world made from the bodies of the defeated.

Bloody oceans and rivers developed on

the surface dissolving the forms that had fallen in them.

After the age of carnage Nightslayer chose to abandon the slaughter and fled to the surface below. There it stood on a pinnacle overlooking a great ocean of gore and was overcome with sorrow at the savagery of the world. Nine tears fell from its eye and became creatures where they splashed upon the ground.

The universe bestowed Nightslayer with title of Mother; which augmented her name and power. Those nine creatures became the source of her strength and tenacity. No longer a being of darkness, she had become a being of enlightenment. With the strength gained from naming her children and the enlightenment of universal understanding she burned a path across the skies of the world.

Her children forged the world into a living place. They tamed the wild natures of the fallen dark by bringing the powers of light and naming. All of the hidden places of darkness were discovered and illuminated. Eventually the darkness was forced to flee to the nether regions of astral space.

Nightslayer, worn and exhausted from her victory, fell as a mountain from the sky to the now verdant and lush Earth. The land trembled and convulsed as she landed on a vast barren plain.

With her dying breath she quoted to her favorite son. "Know that I have created you and you shall preserve all of your brethren during the times when darkness returns. Go forth and fight the darkness in all of its guises. Name it not, for the power of a name will give it form and strength"

As her last breath escaped, her flesh dried to stone, her bones crystallized and her blood became a spring that provided life to the plain on which she had landed. Since that time her children have populated the whole of the world.

Now child, go to sleep in safety knowing that you rest on the mountain that fell from the sky. The spirit of Nightslayer is in this place and you have nothing to fear.

Starsilver

Starsilver is a metal found exclusively in the mountain on which Iopos is built. It maintains a silvery sheen even in its natural unrefined state. All armor and weapons created exclusively for the Holders of Trust use trace amounts of the unusual metal. Starsilver is heavier than normal steel. The cost shown is for Holders of Trust to purchase from their quartermaster. Ranged weapons are never made from Starsilver.

Should a name-giver not of Iopos be recognized with a Starsilver weapon, they will receive an unwanted visit from the Holders of Trust. A visit they will most likely not survive.

Starsilver Melee Weapons

Weapon	Damage Step	STR Min.	Size	Cost	Weight
Battle-Axe	9	13	5	70	7
Broadsword	7	12	3	50	5
Dagger	3	4	1	2	1.5
Hand-Axe	5	8	2	30	4
Knife	2	3	1	1	1
Mace	5	13	3	40	6
Pole Arm	9	14	5	300	10
Pole-Axe	10	16	6	300	10
Short Sword	6	8	2	35	4
Spiked Mace	8	13	4	80	8
Warhammer	9	15	5	190	9

Starsilver Armor

Armor Type	Physical Armor	Mystic Armor	Initiative Penalty	EDN	Cost	Weight
Chain Mail	7	1	2	22	400	40
Plate Mail	9	2	3	26	8,000	60
Ring Mail	6	1	1	21	250	30

Starsilver armor and weapons may be enchanted. When enchanting the items in question elemental kernels are required to be woven into each piece separately. An Elementalist and Weaponsmith must work in tandem to create enchanted Starsilver items. Disasters always occur when a single adept attempts to provide both the stability of the elements and the concentration required to combine them with Starsilver.

Using Starsilver in Your Game

The mountain on which Iopos is built is a very large, very old meteorite. Consider this when introducing Starsilver to your game. It is not originally of the Earth and the luminescent properties are unlike any other known substance. It is not however nearly as powerful a magic component as Orichalcum.

The average citizen of Iopos knows nothing of the Starsilver, though they see the results of its use everyday when Triads pass on the street. There is a black market for the items though. Ownership of a Starsilver item without being of appropriate rank in the Holders of Trust, is a death sentence.

The Starsilver mine is embedded within the heart of the mountain. It was discovered during the Scourge when the Denairastas clan was expanding their facilities under the central spire.

The Eye of Throal has a standing request for a sample of raw Starsilver. Perhaps magicians in the Eye of Throal want some for their experiments. This type of adventure could be several sessions in length covering the infiltration of Iopos, acquisition of the Starsilver and subsequent escape from Iopos.

The Holders of Trust had been unable to retrieve a Starsilver weapon before it was bequeathed to a player character. The resulting adventure could involve the true reason the relative died as well as multiple attempts by the Holders of Trust to retrieve the weapon and silence the player character.

Perhaps the player characters are Iopan Holders of Trust sent out to retrieve the Starsilver weapon previously mentioned. Players with Starsilver items should remain vigilant about their care. The sheen of clean armor and weapons is a sign to the people of Iopos that the Holders of Trust are capable and thorough. Persistent dents, dings, and scrapes on a Starsilver item will be severely addressed by a superior Holder of Trust.

THE BOOK OF TOMORROW

This opinion, stated publicly in an open forum, is indicative of what most Iopans take as fact. Though the people of Iopos maintain no ill will for the people of Throal they will never gain be under Throal's taxing boots.

- S'flint Senior Scribe of the Library of Enlightenment -

It is true the dwarfs of Throal created *The Book of Tomorrow*. In this book they set down their version of the history of Barsaive, Throal and Thera, as though only Thera and Throal were worthy of mentioning in history.

They wrote out the Throalic language in its entirety. They claim it is so that the children in the kaers and citadels could learn to speak, read, and write a common tongue. In fact it was to simplify the assimilation of the populaces of kaers and citadels after the scourge was complete. If the populations were already predisposed to think positively of the dwarfs of Throal, then their conquest at the end of the scourge would look less like conquest and more like an humanitarian effort.



The book maintained instructions on how to build Throalic style dwellings and what crops to plant once the Horrors had left. These crops were of Throalic preference and would be the goods needed by Throal after the scourge had passed. Having a ready supply of goods and food to trade to Throal guaranteed that the dwarfs were thinking far ahead of their post scourge economy.

The book told of how to use arts and crafts as a continuing sign that one was free from the influence of a Horror. This was common knowledge before the scourge and

has been in use since it was discovered by the mages of Thera.

In theory a Horror-tainted name-giver cannot create things of art and beauty. The phrase "Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder" is popular in Throal. One needs only to look at the Throalic art to see that phrase is taken to heart there.

Throal included in *The Book of Tomorrow* instructions on how to determine when the Scourge was over. These instructions were to watch a ball of elemental earth supported by elemental air, drop into a bowl of elemental water. The reduced magic level required for the ball to drop all the way into the water would mean that all magic was gone. Most refuges would know long before the ball dropped and dissolved if that were the case, as their wards and protections would have stopped working long before.

Just as Thera can be seen as opportunistic in creating their empire and building it on the fear of the coming scourge, Throal can be seen as Thera's willing successor, by taking advantage of the situation at the beginning of the Scourge, and planting the seeds of their future empire.

Iopos maintains a copy of this book. It is biased in every way to the Throalic view of the world, its customs, and its values. Is it no wonder then that when shelters opened after the scourge, Throal was there to greet them with open arms?

We maintained our city with the help of the Mighty Denairastas family. It was Uhl himself that finally declared the world safe enough to re-enter not some Throalic propaganda piece.

Local Prejudices

Prejudice is a common occurrence in Barsaive. It is not limited to just race or nation, it may include gender, magical ability, cult affiliation or affluence. Any time a character can claim affiliation with a group that particular group will have someone prejudice against them.

Behaviors displayed by NPCs run the gamut from simply charging more for items and equipment, to verbal abuse, to physical violence. The trick with maintaining the flavor of a village, town or city is by determining what that particular place finds to be an unacceptable condition.

What follows is an example chart I use to keep a consistent feeling in my game world. These are general attitudes and not all members of a location will feel this way. The options are arranged least offensive to the most offensive.

	Throal	
Price Gouge	Non-dwarfs	Non-Throalic
Public Avoidance	Orks	Humans
Obvious Dislike	Opposing Houses	
Vocal Disdain	Blood Elves	
Malicious Intent	Kratas Nationals	
Controlled Hatred	Theran Nationals	
Unreasonable Hatred	Iopos Nationals	

	Iopos		
Price Gouge	Non-Iopos		
Public Avoidance	Orks		
Obvious Dislike	Throalic Allies	Provincials	Non-Iopos Adepts
Vocal Disdain	Blood Elves		
Malicious Intent	Kratas Nationals	Non-sanctioned Cultists	
Controlled Hatred	Theran Nationals	Throalic Nationals	
Unreasonable Hatred			

The options are cumulative, therefore a Bloodelf in Throal or Iopos would not only be vocally abused walking down the street but also avoided and charged much more than even an ork for services.

Using Local Prejudices in Your Game

Not all players are comfortable with the concept of prejudice in their games. Playing without them is a completely viable method of enjoying a game. If you do choose to include prejudices however make certain that your players are aware of them.

Create “derogatory” phrases for the various groups. Creative insults can be found through out modern fantasy films. One of my favorites is “Pek” in reference to the dwarf population in the film *Willow*. It is simple and vulgar sounding without being a true insult that players take offense at.

Name-givers of all types use prejudice throughout the Earthdawn world, Bloodelves being the easiest example of this. Few nations like them, even fewer individuals want to interact with them and they suffer tremendously for it.

Adventures can be influenced because of NPC prejudices. For example a group of adepts might have to allow their ork thief to negotiate for them when they come across a band of ork scorchers.

Some businesses might not hire a group because they are not Throalic or some other nationality. This alone could be used to convince players to learn the dialects of a region just to remain viable candidates for wealthy patrons.

Sexism, theology, racism, and nationalism are all major motivators in the real world. Real people believe their prejudices are justified and act on them. NPCs seem more real when they have these character flaws. Care must be taken when using prejudices in your game. Players should never feel as though they or any group they identify with are personally the target of NPC behavior.

Player characters should avoid being prejudice to the other player characters. This will maintain the peace at the gaming table.

PHOENIX RISEN

A local trader's tale that has yet to be proven true, or false for that matter.

- S'flint Senior Scribe of the Library of Enlightenment -

Several hundred years ago an air ship was spotted in the skies of Iopos. With a chestnut brown hull and parchment colored sails bearing a blazing raptor the ship was a stunning beauty of form and function. She flew through the sky as graceful a falcon.

The ship docked at the air harbor and disembarked her one passenger. Lain, the human captain of this wondrous beauty spent exactly one night and one day in Iopos.

During the night and day he spent in Iopos Lain developed an unhealthy interest in the daughter of a trade baron of the time. After the departure of the ship from the air harbor it was learned that the girl had vanished. Not long after, a rumor sprang to life, that Captain Lain had kidnapped her and taken her with him on his air ship.

The girl's father organized a hunt using his ships and the ships of other allied trade barons in an attempt to rescue the girl if she had been kidnapped, or return her home if she were just being a wayward child.

The fleet of four well armed trade merchant ships departed Iopos intent on the

destruction of Captain Lain and his craft. Not long after their departure the blazing raptor sails were seen on the horizon. The order was given to lay chase and overtake the villain.

A letter of demand was written and delivered via an archer's long bow. There was no reply. A battle of four ships to one is lopsided, and once the fire cannons began to sing from the merchant ships there was little question as to the outcome of the fight.

The burning wreckage raced to the ground, a red streaming tail following it. When the wreckage was searched only the remains of one body was found. The trade baron and his allies returned believing that they had slain the daughter and that Captain Lain had escaped his fate.

When the fleet returned to the air harbor the girl was there. She had run off with a suitor. She arrived too late to stop her father and his allies.

There have been reports since that time of an airship with a blazing raptor upon its sails traveling the trade winds of Iopos. It gives all trade ships a very wide berth.

All name-givers that claim to have seen it describe the ship differently except for the blazing raptor on the sails. The ship has never been boarded or captured and most crews believe that if the ship of Captain Lain is sighted ahead of them then disaster cannot be very far behind.



Omens, Signs & Portents

In a world where magic is a very real occurrence, a character should be relatively sensitive to the methods of non-verbal communication provided by the passions, spirits and fate.

I treat the passions, spirits, and fate, as separate entities with a stake in the goings on in the world of name-givers.

Omens

Omens are the method of choice for the passions to speak to characters. It is through omens that they make their opinions and advice known. When using omens the trick is to make an animal or object seem pertinent for a moment. Do not over use omens or they will lose their relevance to the characters. Omens should be physical. Here are a few of my examples.

Positive Omens

Sight a bat at night
(Safety or food in that direction)
Find a coin
(in the direction the characters should travel)
Find a scarab or beetle
(no undead in this place)
A warm wind
(right choice was made)
A sleeping rabbit
(no danger here)

Negative Omens

Clouds of flies
(death or danger is near)
Find a bent Coin
(poor character interaction with an NPC)
A vile smell
(the wrong choice)
Find a white feather
(a trusted ally is a traitor)
A Blue Lantern
(a failure)

Signs

Signs are the method of choice for the spirit world to speak to characters. Spirits are not all ways kind and good. They affect perceptions or things. When using a sign use an action applied to some one or some thing. Signs are more vague than omens and should make the players wonder.

Positive Sign

Birds whistling heard on the wind.
A mildew stain in a familiar shape
Voices coming from a place just out of sight.
A serene quiet
A warm positive feeling

Negative Sign

Repeating sounds or lights just out of sight
The fire continues to sputter out
Animals become twitchy
The parties water sours
A bed catches fire

Portents

Portents are foreshadowing and can be used to help the Game Master control the direction of the game without appearing to be a heavy handed dictator. Portents represent fate and the actions or inactions of the characters will have some result on

future events. Omens and signs can be used in conjunction with portents to create apprehension in the characters, foreshadow the coming of an ally or a nemesis.

If a player says "I have a bad feeling about this." Chances are the portents are all pointing to a negative result and the player has unconsciously determined the possible outcome. Portents are physical occurrences with information that can be deciphered. Portents are neither good nor bad but show the observant player where a choice can be made to influence the game.

Portents

A flock of birds takes sudden flight from a glen.
The sound of jingling receding behind a character.
A series of unconformable rumors
An open quiet and empty kaer
An unseasonably long weather condition

Using Omens, Signs & Portents in your game

Authors use foreshadowing in their writings to guide the thought process of their readers. A Game Master can do the same thing if they spend a bit of time to determine what if any omens, signs, and portents they would like to use.

I suggest you build a list of your own omens, signs and portents. Define which is intended to mean what concept. Casually work the concepts into your game's background. Have NPCs mention a notable occurrence to start and expand from there.

Consistency is paramount. Perceptive players will learn these cues and use them to the advantage of the party. It is not only a convenience that they will pick up on these subtleties but it is an excellent tool to keep them focused on the game. Non-perceptive players will unconsciously respond to the patterns if you maintain consistency.

I assume that most role-play games are continuous and the Game Master has plans set in place to provide the players with fun and challenging adventures. Omens, signs and portents are excellent tools for the Game Master to employ to this end.

TIES THAT BIND

Family ties are not the only bindings to which Name-givers willingly submit. Many adventurers, spread throughout Barsaive, allow themselves to become tied to the future or the past.

The following is transcribed from a parchment believed to be written while in a meditative trance.

- S'flint Senior Scribe of the Library of Enlightenment -

I was born as all of my generation, long before the gates of this city were closed for five hundred years. How I came to be here and inhabit this place is a very long story, one I may tell eventually. Though today I wish to tell you of "why you".

Often have I heard the phrase "Why me?". I can tell you very few people really want to know "why them". It's one of the reasons I tell them.

The answer is simply because, because you were there, or because I was board, or my favorite; because I wanted to and the "who" is irrelevant.

For you it is because you are the shining son. Your mother and father see the future in your eyes. They live through you, and they hope you will do great deeds. They toiled and scrimped so that you would be provided a better childhood than theirs. Because to them, you are the hope for the future.

In their youth they adventured, they performed great deeds, and they brought hope to others. I met them in an empty kaer. In that kaer they lost true friends, brothers in arms. Of their original party of six Name-givers only three managed to escape.

The four of us made our way to Iopos. There the third survivor parted ways and, last time I checked, was living comfortably in a small village with a spouse and children. A life very much like your parent's.

The penchant of Name-givers to ignore the most obvious information has always amazed me. For example, when your grandfather fell down a flight of stairs and died from the complications of a broken leg. He spent three weeks bed ridden, fevered, and delirious. He kept screaming about the horror he could see in his son's eyes. Your father kept reassuring him that there was no malice or disgust and that he should rest.

Your father wanted to believe that his father died because of an infection that could not be cured. But here is a little secret, he knows deep down that what his father saw was real. That the horror in his eyes let itself be seen. Your father felt his father was a burden. I know because I spoke to your father about it. In the same way I am speaking to you.

By accepting the gifts of your father you have welcomed me into your heart. I promise you will never be alone, or without a willing ear or a subtle advisor to suggest the correct course of action. You have chosen to take on the responsibility of guiding and providing hope.

Wielding his sword, his shield and the crystal eye he found in that empty kaer, the one where we met, you look quite the hero. Many name-givers will be willing to lay their lives on the line for you.

I too want you to be a great hero. I want you to perform great deeds, legendary acts of courage and bravery. I want you to provide hope to vast masses of name-givers.

I welcome you with joy to the path of the hero, destined to be the mentally tortured sole survivor of horrific circumstances and the focus of disaster.

Sei'mon's Eye

Sei'mon is a crystalline entity horror. During the time when the nations of the Theran Empire were attempting to build their shelters Sei'mon crafted shards of itself into exquisite crystalline thread items. These items took the form of blood charm eyes. It then used an horror marked merchant to sell the eyes to suspecting adepts while traveling across the lands of Barsaive.

When one of the eyes is worn the horror marks the individual. This mark manifests itself slowly over time in subtle ways. As an adept weaves stronger threads to the item the horror becomes harder and harder to detect while growing more influential to the adept.

Sei'mon's Eye

Maximum Threads: 1 **Spell Defense:** 13

Horror Mark Detection: 20

Item Removal: 15

Legend Point Cost: Initiate

Sei'mon's Eye is a pattern item for the horror Sei'mon. Name-givers that wear the eye gain +1 step in the attribute of their choice. Once the item is on the adept they may make a detect horror mark test. Failure means the character is marked and cannot remove the eye. If the mark is perceived the adept may attempt to remove the eye. The removal test is a willpower test made at -1 step in the willpower attribute.

Each time the character weaves a thread to Sei'mon's Eye they have the opportunity to perceive the horror mark though the attempt to remove it is only available on the initial use of the eye.

Horror Mark Detection tests by other adepts use the same mark detection number as the character wearing the eye.

Thread Rank One

Key Knowledge: The adept must learn the name of the eye.

Effect: +1 step to all perception based tests that do not involve scrutiny of the eye.

Increase the difficulty of the horror mark detection to 25.

Thread Rank Two

Key Knowledge: Name of the merchant that sold the eye.

Effect: +1 step to all willpower based tests.

Increase the difficulty of the horror mark detection to 30.

Thread Rank Three

Key Knowledge: The adept must learn who created the item.

Effect: +1 step to all Charisma based tests.

Increase the difficulty of the horror mark detection to 30.

Thread Rank Four

Deed: The character must fail at using an artisan skill.

Effect: The adept may spend +1 Karma on any Perception, Willpower or Charisma tests that do not involve scrutiny of the eye.

Increase the difficulty of the horror mark detection to 35.

Using Sei'mon's Eye in Your Game

No player intends to be horror marked... OK rarely do players intend to be horror marked. Having a treasure that low circle adepts can get their threads into early allows for a long term dependency to develop. This in turn leads to the adepts believing the item is benign and setting them up for an ugly realization later in the campaign. The design of this item serves several purposes.

1) The first is that it provides a very useful tool to the power hungry gamer that has no thought for consequences.

2) It has a very low Legend point cost. This allows it to be used very early on in a campaign and the players can develop an attachment to the abilities it provides. They will most likely not want to get rid of the item once they determine it is marked.

3) The regular opportunity of discovery of the horror mark provides the Game Master with a ready adventure hook if the mark is discovered. Of course some players might want to lynch the Game Master for incorporating this type of item into the game.

4) The ability of the horror to tap into the marked adept's Karma, and hide itself from outside inspection makes it a campaign worthy adversary. This is especially true if all of the adepts in a group have found or decided to use an Eye of Sei'mon.

5) It allows for the possibility that any blood-charm might be tainted and even an unknowing innocent merchant can be guilty of selling one.

6) It reinforces the idea that Horrors use devious and sneaky methods to create suffering and pain.

The game statistics for the horror Sei'mon will be forth coming and a future issue of Tableau Infractus.

ROLE-PLAY VS ROLL-PLAY

*A warrior walks in to a bar. Upon seeing an old friend he says...
"So what's your Physical Defense?"*

Games by their nature require rules. Historically the rules for Role-playing games are intricate, detailed and reflect a philosophy of play. These rule systems are designed to represent ideas in the game world but should those rule mechanics be referenced in the fiction of the game world?

For my first example I shall draw from any edition of the Dungeons & Dragons RPG. Alignment is a functional rule designed to facilitate decision making. Yet many in game spells are designed to target this decision making mechanic without providing any sort of in world flavor as to why. A player may cast "Detect Evil". That player can then determine if there is "evil" in the general vicinity. Since very few characters would feel themselves to be "Evil" you end up with a rule blaringly piercing the flavor of the fiction.

In Earthdawn there are a couple examples of this. Half-magic and Talent Crisis, both are rules mechanics created to allow particular actions in the game world. Both are to provide modifiers to actions made by the characters. Both were introduced in the first edition of the game as rule mechanics. Each is mentioned in the third edition flavor fiction.

Most Roll-players do not find issue with this "rules in flavor" concept. The opening quote is from such a player. That anyone would not want to min/max their gaming experience by taking advantage of all the rules is seen as a failure of character. When the functionality of the rules ends up in the fiction of the game, the Roll-player takes it as an example to treat the game as just a game.



Role-players on the other hand can become very irritated when the mechanics of a rules system bleed over in to the flavor of the game world. By revealing the mechanics of the system in the flavor of the game world Role-players feel as though the world is diminished. Role-players tend to want to keep the rules separate from the feel of the fiction.

As a Game Master I find the mention of rules in game fiction to cause a third issue. The popular "at the table argument", is often initiated by a rules layer that feels it is justified because the rules are part of the fiction. "See its right there on page 7 of the Player's Compendium." is a quote from one of these arguments.

I understand that describing a game mechanic in a fictional manner without using the actual mechanic name is difficult. But by including the game rules in a fictional world description writers are just re-enforcing the divide between Role-players and Roll-players.

These are the descriptions I use to pigeon-hole players.

- **Role-play:** Character driven, possible in character interaction, stats are there to support the concepts of the game.
- **Roll-play:** Stat driven, limited in character interaction, stats are there as a means to character advancement in game mechanics.

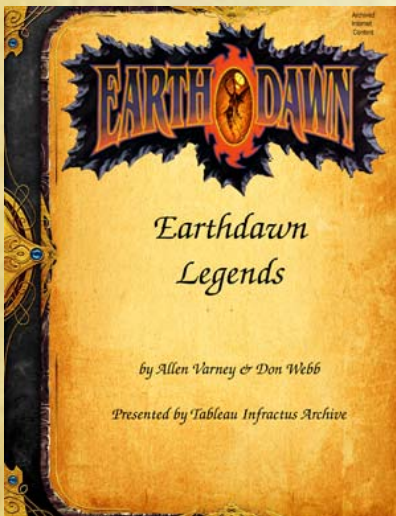
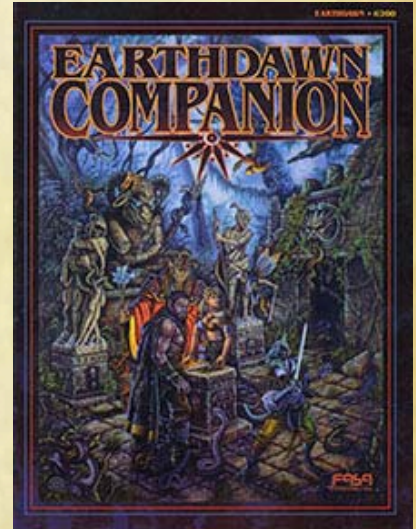
WORDS THAT STAY

This issue Allen Varney has agreed to be interviewed and share with us some of his story as it intersects with Earthdawn. The Interview was conducted over several e-mail correspondences.

TI) Having read your website, <http://www.allenvarney.com/>. I know that your writing talents have been in multiple games that I have enjoyed in the last 25 years. “[Earthdawn](#)”, “[Magic the Gathering](#)” and “[PARANOIA](#)” all hold a special place in my heart and my bookcase. Your site is very informative about the work you have created and the FAQ is just brilliant. So on to the interrogation.

How did you get involved in Earthdawn?

Allen) *In 1992-93 I took a solo backpacking trip around the world, visiting a dozen countries in seven months. After I landed in San Francisco in April 1993, I crashed overnight on couches offered by a couple of kindly local game designers. It might have been at Sam Shirley's place that I got to page through an early draft of Earthdawn. The setting intrigued me because it offered plausible in-world rationales for everything I'd always found clunky in [Dungeons & Dragons](#): levels, spell memorization, and the dungeons themselves. When I returned to my longtime home of Austin, Texas, I contacted FASA's Sam Lewis and asked to get involved.*



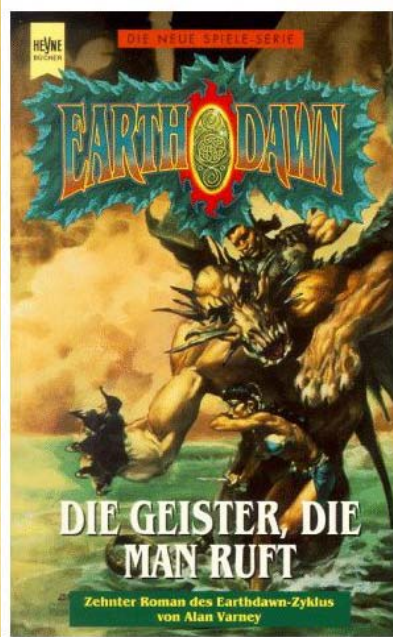
Earthdawn wound up preoccupying me for much of 1993 and early 1994. My first work was the "Rituals of Advancement" section of FASA's Earthdawn Companion, which has been incorporated in every edition of the basic rulebook ever since. I also co-wrote with Don Webb the "[Earthdawn Legends](#)" book you have so stylishly packaged; I contributed an adventure to Parlainth Adventures, "Desire Box," and a monster to the first Horrors book, "Nebis"; and I wrote an entire Earthdawn novel, "Piercing a Veil," which unfortunately never saw publication (at least in English).

TI) Have you played Earthdawn from the perspective of a player and not as a Game Master, if so what was your preferred discipline?

Allen) *I always liked the Warrior discipline, with its strong monastic flavor reminiscent of Hong Kong kung fu movies. I made a Warrior the central character of my novel, and I enjoyed creating a Buddhist-inspired philosophy for him.*

TI) You have written several sections for the first and second editions of Earthdawn. Are you considering new additions to the game system now that it is in its third incarnation??

Allen) The RedBrick editions of Earthdawn have impressed me, and I wish them well. It's good to see so much good gaming material holding its own in today's tough market. I find it extremely difficult to write RPG text nowadays -- call it burnout, I guess -- and I'm not well acquainted with the current licensees, so I doubt anything is likely to happen there.



TI) I have read your novel "[Piercing a Veil](#)" and found some very interesting concepts in it. I like that you use the idea of talent crisis without ever saying the words "talent crisis" in the story. Do you have any plans to write another for RedBrick, the new publishers of Earthdawn?

Allen) The term "talent crisis" didn't exist in Earthdawn when I wrote "Piercing a Veil," and in fact I had to look it up when you asked! The concept first appears in the 1993 supplement "The Adept's Way."

I enjoyed writing "Piercing a Veil." It was my best work up to that time, and I got to explore some of the Buddhist philosophy I had encountered during my 1992-93 world trip. But FASA cancelled its English-language Earthdawn novel line before my book saw print (though they did license my novel for German translation). I haven't contacted RedBrick about that novel or others. If they'd like to publish the existing novel, that would be wonderful. (As a side note this [may](#) have changed since the interview took place. TI)

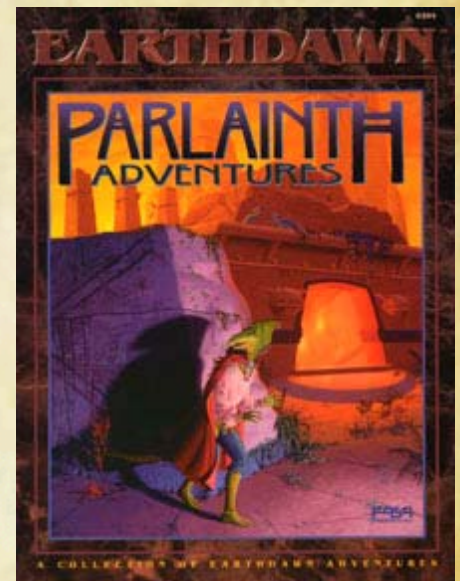
TI) Out of the works you have produced for Earthdawn what would be your favorite?

Allen) My favorites of the pieces I contributed to Earthdawn are the Rituals of Advancement, which help improve each discipline's individual flavor, and the short adventure "[Desire Box](#)" in "Parlaint Adventures". "Desire Box" is about an ancient Theran artifact, a small magical box that makes you and everyone around you believe you can achieve your fondest desire. The twist is, it doesn't actually help you achieve anything, and bystanders aren't any better disposed toward you! Sure, they believe you'll inevitably become Emperor of Barsaive or whatever, but maybe they'd hate to live under your rule, so they resolve to attack you and go out in a blaze of glory.

With this device I got to explore a key tenet of Buddhist philosophy, a subject much on my mind in the '90s. The philosophy holds that each of our material desires, once satisfied, inevitably gives way to another desire, leaving us perpetually unsatisfied. The characters who hold the Theran box demonstrate this; through their own psychology (as opposed to a magical effect), their desires inevitably grow to a ridiculous scope. The box hints at the futility of this endless cycle -- the Theran inscription on it reads "This box is empty."

I've seldom had a chance to deal with a substantive theme like this in a roleplaying scenario. It delighted me that Barsaive offers opportunities like this.

TI) You have been designing games for quite a long time, what would you consider to be the strongest portion of the Earthdawn system and conversely the weakest?



Allen) Earthdawn's original rules system was the work of talented designer [Greg Gorden](#), whose other great RPGs include "[Torg](#)" and Mayfair's 1985 "[DC Heroes](#)" RPG. I like Greg's games for the clever ways they unify many aspects of play under one universal mechanic.

In FASA's heyday the Earthdawn mechanics worked perfectly well. Judged in terms of today's fashions in roleplaying design, Earthdawn looks, understandably, a bit dowdy, even backward. Today either you're into a neoclassical Old-School Revival philosophy where everything should work like your favorite D&D retro-clone, or you want rules that explicitly support stories and relationships, like "[Spirit of the Century](#)" or "[Smallville](#)".

Earthdawn does get at some of that, in a 1990s kind of way, with its rules for researching magic items using Key Knowledges and for rising in Circle by building your legend. Today, though, a similarly ambitious fantasy RPG would try for a complete reimagining of the approach -- perhaps through something like a "Legend Matrix" that tracks every player Adept's standing in Barsaive's various societies, and quantifies adventuring results as adjustments to values in the Legend Matrix. Then the Adept's abilities in different locations and situations would vary based on his Matrix values. Something like that.

TI) Do you find accessories; maps, miniatures, and the like help or hinder your roleplay experience in a game?

Allen) Accessories and props are useful in highly tactical games where players try to puzzle out optimal actions; Earthdawn is a good example. For more abstract effects, maps and miniatures can get in the way.

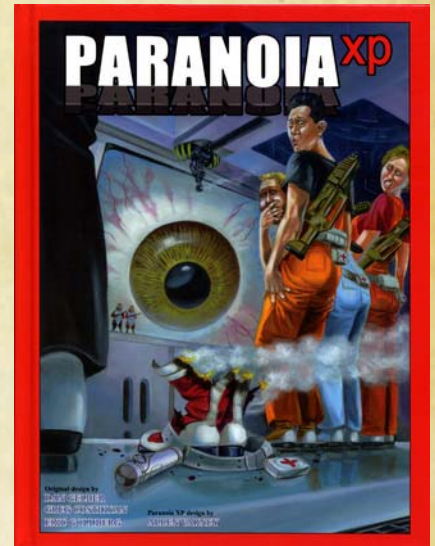
I designed the 2004 edition of the classic satiric science fiction game "PARANOIA", which encourages the Gamemaster to exercise total authority over the validity of every player action. In that situation, you don't want the players to have a map; it gives them too much control, which is undesirable for PARANOIA's particular effects.

TI) As a game designer have you noticed the "power creep" trend in more current games?

Allen) Of course D&D has highlighted Epic play since 3e, and I know (for instance) the [Hero System's](#) 6th edition adjusts point totals for beginning characters, due to tweaks in the cost of characteristics and powers. This kind of inflation is probably inevitable in the course of giving players ever more options and abilities. You've let them do more kinds of things, so you have to give them the power to do it all!

But in recent years I've been more interested in [Forge-style](#) indie RPGs, from the fine progenitors ([Sorcerer](#), [My Life with Master](#), [Dogs in the Vineyard](#)) onward through the [FATE](#)-based systems down to today's [Fiasco](#) and [Cortex-based](#) systems. These generally avoid power creep by making accumulation of power irrelevant to the story. You let players do more kinds of things, true, but they don't need power to make it all happen; the story takes care of that for them. The new indie designs fascinate me, and I look forward to seeing them evolve.

TI) With the advent of online gaming, have you noticed a drop in interest in paper and dice games in favor of online RPGs?



Allen) Definitely. Tabletop roleplayers always argue that a massively multiplayer online game can't offer the same rich experience as a human GM. But these players overlook the whole range of online pastimes that complement and support the MMOs: the fanfic, roleplaying forums, wikis, blogs, and more. Together these outlets collectively scratch the same itches as face-to-face paper-and-dice RPG sessions.

This trend will only strengthen going forward. Tabletop roleplaying is already a graying hobby, and will continue to subside toward a small niche of devout grognards like historical board wargaming or model trains. I wrote about this for the online gaming magazine The Escapist in my article "[Internet Killed the Tabletop Star](#)".

TI) My ISP blocks the Ninjalistics link from your website, care to elaborate on just what this ominous sounding concept might be??

Allen) After I stopped packaging the PARANOIA support line for Mongoose Publishing in 2006, I still wanted to work with the many talented designers who had written its supplements. With several of them I started a website, Ninjalistics ("your leading provider of ISO-9000 compliant assassination services"). The site hit the same satirical notes as PARANOIA, with corporate ninja assassins having to fill out requisitions for shuriken and so on. But no sooner had I started the site than everyone else involved left for other projects.

I tried keeping it going alone for seven months, but gave up for lack of the camaraderie I had enjoyed with the PARANOIA writers. The site stayed up until late 2010, when hackers brought it down. I don't know if I'll ever do anything else with the idea.

Thank you Mr. Varney for taking what I know to be valuable time to share your comments with the readers and I. Allen Varney's contributions to Earthdawn appear throughout all the editions of Earthdawn. The novel "Piercing a Veil", "Desire Box" and "Earthdawn Legends" are available currently on his [website](#). Even though the novel "Piercing a Veil" refers to the city of Merron, the observant player will realize that it is geographically in the same location as Travar in the game world.



ORK MINIATURES GALLERY

Orks for the Earthdawn line are visually different than most orks from other role-play games or table top games. The sculpts were from Heartbreaker and lacked the blank flat face popular for orks at that time. As can be seen these were more human in appearance and less like monsters. After spending a great deal of time trying to find available alternatives to the out of print figures I settled on the *Chronopia* Blackblood Orks produced by target games and the *Crucible* Orks produced by Ral-Partha Europe. Both of these lines lacked the lower tusks of Earthdawn orks but they looked far better than the other lines available at the time.

During the time that Redbrick was producing miniatures many of the Orks were re-released. The Original Three pack was available as single miniatures. All of the Ork Scorchers were available without a Thundra beast. The Thundra beast was available by its self.



Orks 3 Pack
Heartbreaker ED-308



Female Ork Beastmaster
Heartbreaker ED-323



Garlthik One-eye & Ork Elementalist
Heartbreaker ED-351





Ork Scorcher w/spear
packed with a Thundra beast
Heartbreaker ED-312



Ork Scorcher w/mace
packed with a Thundra beast
Heartbreaker ED-318



Scorcher w/ Ceremonial Axe
packed with a Thundra beast
Heartbreaker ED-327



Thundra Beast consists of 3 parts
The Body, 1 Front leg and 1 back leg
Readbrick HB-25



Example of a Scorcher and Thundra beast Assembled