

The Manor

Issue 8



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GM
Games

The Manor

Issue 8

CONTENTS

PAGES

Introduction	2
Grappling Old School by Douglas Cole & Peter V. Dell'Orto	3 - 11
Strange Stars Data File: Ibglibdishpan by Trey Causey	12 - 14
Hirelings by Tim Shorts	15 - 20
Torchbearer by Tim Shorts	21 - 24

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No hirelings were harmed in the making of this issue of The Manor. Except for Phillip who tripped, and impaled himself on a large, invisible spike. And Lorrin, who disappeared when the ground gave way. We are staying positive and believe he is fine. So that doesn't count. No blood. No foul.



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Introduction

This Manor has been a long time coming and mostly due to my own mental constipation. Sometimes I make things harder on myself than I need to. I think that is my second favorite hobby next to RPGs. I write and rewrite an article or adventure, then push it away because I think it sucks. But once in a while I remember why I am doing this zine thing. The Manor is a glance of what looks like behind my GM screen or what I like as a player. After all, this is supposed to fun.

One of the last articles I wrote is *Torchbearer*, an article focused on our favorite neighborhood lackey. But why would I dedicate four pages to a hireling that is only sometimes used and rarely thought of after he is hired. The short answer, because in my game, I do. In this case I've developed a profession around holding a torch. They are no longer pit detectors. Plus, it's the minutia I like to add into my game. I try to present these things with clarity and a little humor. And maybe you, my Good Reader, will find a little something to use in your game.

This issue is filled with kick-ass stuff. Look at that cover by **John Larrey**. He did the art for the feature article, *Grappling Old School*, by **Douglas Cole** and **Peter V. Dell'Orto**. Both are seasoned writers for GURPS and I was pleased to have them included in this issue. And John's art goes so well with it. Wait 'til you get a load of the adventurer tackling the bugbear. Love it!

Trey Causey, another great guy I've gamed with in the past, has penned *Strange Stars Data File: Ibglibdishpan*. He released a science fiction setting supplement titled **Strange Stars**. I have a print copy and it is amazing. His offering gives you a small taste of what you'll find inside, including the incredible art of **David Lewis Johnson**. I've added a link at the end of his article so you can get a copy.

The next piece is by little old me, *Hirelings*. Again, this is a sample of something that you might encounter during one of my games. If the party goes into a town looking to hire a porter or torchbearer, I use an easy way to find out who is available and if the hireling possesses a skill/knack that could assist the party. I've included eight NPC hirelings ready to head out. The best thing about this article is I've found a new art dude, **Denis McCarthy**. He provided the art for my two pieces. I'm looking forward to working with him again.

That's it for me. Thank you for checking out my eighth offering of The Manor. Enjoy!

Tim Shorts 4/26/15

GRAPPLING OLD SCHOOL



BY

DOUGLAS COLE &

PETER V. DELL'ORTO

There must be something about grappling. Despite it being perhaps the oldest form of combat on the planet. Despite it being the primary method for most animals to down and kill prey, from lions to alligators. Despite it being one of the only forms of combat that children and young animals do instinctively and for play . . . it gets the short end of the stick in nearly every game system's rules as presented in whatever "basic" version of the game is published.

But it doesn't have to be that way. It doesn't even have to be that hard. Even in the rules-light OSR, grappling can be done in a way that's entertaining as hell, with as much narrative and fight-ending power as smacking someone with an axe, and hopefully as satisfying (and slightly less messy)!

Most OSR systems lack a rules system for grappling. Others, like AD&D, implement grapples with a complex subsystem. The system in this article tries to leverage the simple concepts core to all OSR systems and use them to support a simple, elegant way to grapple people without whipping out different dice and a set of special tables. These rules are aimed largely at replacing the grappling system in *Swords & Wizardry*. However, they can work equally well replacing the grappling systems in *Labyrinth Lord*, *Basic Fantasy Roleplaying*, and all variations of D&D up to AD&D 1st edition.

WHY NOT USE THE RAW?

It's a valid question. If you're satisfied with the grappling system in the basic rules, stick with it. If you find those systems either a little too complex, too simple, or too swingy (win, lose, or draw, no shades of grey), give these a try.

The basic grappling rules for *S&W* are that everyone rolls to hit, and those that successfully overcome the foe's armor class add as many 1d6 rolls together as they have hit dice or levels. The defender(s) make a similar roll, the rolls are compared, and one of three results happens. Either the victim is completely helpless, the attackers are thrown back and stunned for a certain number of rounds, or in the unlikely event that the rolls are tied, a one-round stalemate occurs.

It's a risky system because - unlike almost any other attack method - the attacker is taking a chance of suffering a severe result for failure. That makes grappling a poor choice unless you're vastly better than your foe - at which point striking is still better.

GRAPPLING DESIGN GOALS

As anyone who has seen a decent wrestling match can tell you, things are a lot more "shades of grey" than that (though hopefully fewer than fifty of those. This is a family game, after all.) So tweakage is in order, but we want to stay true to the spirit of, as Steve Jackson put it, "Roll and shout."

So if we're tweaking, we want to keep to some basic goals:

- Monsters have to be able to grapple. Do nothing with the system that can't be easily extrapolated from a basic monster write-up to the more interesting detailed PC character sheets
- Don't invent new mechanics if it can be avoided. There are plenty of existing mechanics already, and they should be mercilessly pillaged to achieve the desired results.
- The basic system should be capable of being run without resorting to table lookups.
- There should not be binary results. The outcome should be more interesting than a choice of instant victory or crushing defeat.
- Grappling should be viable; neither useless nor an "I Win!" button. Grappling should be an interesting strategy with pros and cons. It should not be something only idiots attempt, nor should it be something that anyone can just do.
- Grappling shouldn't come with hidden downsides, such as the "stunned attacker" results in *Swords & Wizardry*, or the free reversal attempts in *Basic Fantasy Role-Playing*.

With that in mind, here are the building blocks.

THE MONSTER WRITE-UP

All OSR-compatible systems provide monsters with AC (either ascending or descending), Hit Dice, and Attacks and Damage. This grappling system uses these – Hit Dice influence if you hit with a grapple, damage to show how effective the grapple is, and AC to determine if you are hit.

THE PC WRITE-UP

Adventurers have a level (0 and up), AC, and a basic "to hit" chance (or Attack Bonus) based on their class and level. They also have attributes, which affect "to hit" and damage (Strength) and AC (Dexterity.)

HOW TO GRAPPLE: THE BASICS

Grappling can be visualized as being as intricate as an aikido-like parry and takedown, or as simple and brutal as a crocodile's inescapable bite. In all cases, however, they are abstracted and resolved with the same mechanics.

OGRE
Hit Dice: 4+1
Armor Class: 5 [14]
Attacks: Weapon (1d10)
Saving Throw: 13
Special: None
Move: 9
Alignment: Chaos
Challenge Level/XP: 4/120

SO, TO RESOLVE A GRAPPLE, FOLLOW THESE STEPS:

ROLL TO HIT

A grapple is an attack, just like any other. Roll 1d20, with the usual STR-based "to hit" modifier. If you hit, you have grappled your opponent. If you are using attack bonuses instead of the class-specific to-hit charts by target AC, definitely add that bonus. Whatever rules are being used, don't double-count: your class and level (or monster HD) bonuses are already figured into the attack tables if you're using that method.

Fighters and Defensive Fighting: A fighter capable of Defensive Fighting (*Swords & Wizardry Complete*, p. 14) may use this normally against grappling. Systems that allow parrying also work normally against grapples - it's just another attack.

Multiple Attacks: Certain classes or creatures may attack multiple times, such as a monk using open hands, a high-level fighter versus low-HD foes, or a troll with claw-claw-bite. In any case, grappling attacks may be substituted for any *appropriate* attack one-for-one. A Medusa can't grapple with her gaze or snake-bite attacks, but certainly may with her melee attack. A minotaur may use his bite and melee (weapon) attack to grapple, but not his head butt. A DM's judgment is required here.

Optionally . . .

Monsters with a clawed, toothed, or other damaging attack might do their full measure of "real" hit point damage, and if they choose to not let go, retain those as Control Points!

If using a cleave-like system, a fighter who fully incapacitates his foes with grappling may cleave normally - a very powerful high level fighter might be able to sweep up a number of foes into his or her grasp!

ROLL DAMAGE

Yes, simply roll damage . . . but *all* grappling damage is tallied in "Control Points" (CP), not actual HP of damage or subdual damage. Control Point damage is recovered *immediately* once the attacker lets go (whether willingly or not), not 1 pt per hour like subdual damage or 1 pt per day like HP.

How much damage: For monsters, a grappling attack does the same damage as the base attack being used. For example, an ogre does 1d10 with his weapon. Unarmed, it can grapple for 1d10 CP.

Optionally . . .

Since the more militant character classes tend to start with more HP, use the character's starting HP dice (1d4 for a magic user, 1d10 for a fighter, 2d8 for a ranger) when rolling for CP. The STR bonuses and ability for Monks to substitute their unarmed damage still apply.

Humans and demi-humans do 1d6 CP, plus or minus the usual STR bonuses for damage. This is much more than the punching damage most systems allow, but humans are natural grapplers and only middling strikers - thumbing hands are great for holding on and only so-so for punching! *Monks* may substitute their unarmed striking damage if it's superior.

Effects of Control Points: The effects that are suffered when grappled depend on the quality of the grapple – how many CP have been inflicted on you relative to your HP.

CONTROL POINTS INFLICTED	TO HIT PENALTY	DAMAGE PENALTY	AC PENALTY	MOVE
Up to half defender's HP	-4	-2 damage	Two levels worse	Half
Up to defender's HP	-8	Half damage	Four levels worse	None
More than defender's HP	May not attack	No damage	Pinned and helpless	None



AFTER THE GRAPPLE

Once you've grabbed a foe, you can develop or discard the grapple.

Attacking: You can attack to try to get *more* CP. Roll to hit normally. If you succeed, roll for CP and add them to the current total. Grappling is cumulative. You can also attack normally with a weapon - at no penalty, unless you're grappled back!

Counter-Grappling: You can always grab a foe back! Attack normally and if you hit, roll for CP – though both the hit roll and the damage roll may be penalized due to the grapple that's on you! You may apply that damage to either put CP on your opponent, or reduce the CP your opponent has on you. If you do the latter, any excess is applied as CP to your opponent.

Injury: You can attempt to convert your CP to damage. Roll to hit normally for grappling. Instead of inflicting more CP, you may convert your CP to damage: 2 CP turn into 1 HP of "real" damage. However, once you use them for damage, they're gone.

Let Go: You can always let go as a free action on your turn. You don't need to hold on.

Pinning: Once your CP exceeds the victims *current* HP, he, she, or it is pinned and helpless. It can't do any physical actions - or even talk, if you can cover its mouth(s).

Optionally . . .

You may spend CP by turning them into dice! Spend 4 CP to roll 1d4 real HP of damage. If you have 20 CP, you may spend all of them to roll 5d4 injury, 8 of them to roll 2d4, etc.

OPTIONAL RULES FOR GRAPPLING

While the simple system presented above is exactly that, players may chafe a bit that even a 1 HP grapple causes as much of a penalty on a high-HP monster as half the foe's HP. They may also want to take actions that have high awesomeness value, but don't appear in the basic rules at all – like disarming or throwing a foe.

ARMOR AND GRAPPLING

In the most abstracted system, armor affects grappling normally. A little more realistically, however, how resistant your armor is to strikes doesn't affect how hard it is to grapple you. In other words, throwing on mail doesn't make it harder to grapple you.

A GM might apply all grapples against AC 10, plus any AC modifier for DEX and for a shield (which can get in the way of a grab). Cloaks or rings of protection and bracers of defense work normally against grapples.

For example: Rolf has plate armor +1 (AC 2 [+7]), a shield (-1 [+1]), DX 15 (-1 [+1]), and a Ring of Protection +1 (-1 [+1]). His AC versus most attacks is -1 [20], but versus grapples it is only 7 [13].

Note that monsters generally only have a single AC stat, making this change lopsidedly against armored humans and human-like races!

HIGHER RESOLUTION GRAPPLING

Instead of only two states, the GM may select any of the following quality levels in addition to the basic states. They need not be evenly distributed, as they are phrased as “up to HP divided by X.”

CONTROL POINTS INFLICTED UP TO ...	TO HIT PENALTY	DAMAGE PENALTY	AC PENALTY	MOVE
1/4 Defender's HP or HP = HD of monster	-2	-1 damage	One level worse	Full
1/2 Defender's HP	-4	-2 damage	Two levels worse	Half
3/4 Defenders HP	-6	-3 damage	Three levels worse	Quarter
Up to Defender's HP	-8	-4 damage	Four levels worse	None
More than Defender's HP	May not attack	No damage	Pinned and helpless	Helpless

OTHER ACTIONS AFTER A GRAPPLE

There are other things you can do after a grapple.

Stunning Throw: If you have amassed at least half of your foe's HP in CP, you may spend attempt to throw your foe into the ground in an attempt to stun him. First “spend” half your foe's HP (round up), subtracting them from your current total to attempt the move. Then roll to hit normally, using the *new* AC penalty, not the old one. If successful, your foe is stunned for 1d4 turns. If using the rules for Conditions (below), he is also prone.

Takedown: If you have at least grappled your foe, you may attack him by first spending ¼ of your foe's current HP in Control Points, and then making a hit roll. If successful, your foe gains the Prone condition (see below).

Optionally . . .

The GM is free to assign to-hit penalties for the size of the object (often a weapon) to be wrested. Rings, jewels, and other tiny objects at -8, 1d4 weapons and potions at -6, 1d6 weapons and wands at -4, 1d8 and 2d4 at -2, and 1d10 weapons at no penalty; an additional -2 for a two-handed weapon) if he's feeling ornery.

Wrestling for an Item: You can always specify if you want to grab an item. If you manage to amass more CP than 1/2 of the wielder's current HP, you can attempt to wrest it away. This takes a full turn. Roll to hit vs. the foe's armor class as usual. If you succeed, you take it from them.

CONDITION-BASED GRAPPLING

The basic Control Point rules above provide a method for resolving grapples using something that feels like “rolling for damage” using HP, by design. What it gains in mechanical symmetry, though, it loses in bookkeeping. Returning to the Swords and Wizardry Complete edition, one of the issues is that the grappled condition is both an “I win!” button (the victorious grappler renders the foe pinned and helpless) as well as providing a downside for the grappler in the form of being thrown off and stunned if he loses the contest. In short, the Condition being invoked is either lame or over-strong, and no one would choose it.

That being said, there's a lot of merit to a condition-based approach from the standpoint of GM sanity. It's far easier to tick a box on a GM control sheet that says “this NPC is now screwed” than to first note how many CP he has on him, differentiate them from HP loss, and compare those totals to each other to drive an effect.

With that in mind, below is a set of conditions of escalating inconvenience. Each successful grappling attack moves the victim to a more serious condition. A successful attack to break free lowers your own condition level, *or* grapples the foe and increases his condition level. The conditions are as follows:

CONDITION	ATTACKER			DEFENDER	
	HIT BONUS	MOVEMENT ALLOWED	UNARMED DAMAGE	HIT AND DEX SAVE PENALTY	MOVEMENT
GRAPPLED	0	Half	1 point	0	None
RESTRAINED	+3	Quarter	1d4	-3	None
PINNED	+3	None	1d6	No attacks	None
INCAPACITATED	Auto-hit	None	1d6	No actions	None
PRONE	0	None	+1 Category, max 1d6	+1 category	None

Any defender that has a Condition of grappled or worse is immobile. If for some reason you're stacking conditions (you have your foe restrained, but he has you grappled), use the worst case for everything but damage. The restrained foe above is at -3 to hit and for saving throws that involve DEX, may not move, and only does 1 point of unarmed damage. The grappled combatant above attacks at no bonus or penalty, also may not move, but can inflict 1d4 unarmed damage on his grappled opponent.

Prone: If you can somehow manage to get your foe to the ground, you can improve your leverage and punish your foe as if he were one condition worse for damage and his penalties when defending. So if you manage to grapple an opponent while rendering him prone, you get no hit bonus, you may not move, but you may try and injure him for 1d4 HP of real damage. On his side, he's prone, cannot move, and suffers -3 to hit.



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STRANGE STARS DATA FILE: IBGLIBDISHPAN



by Trey Causey

From the far future of STRANGE STARS, here's the description of a playable humanoid clade with stats for STARS WITHOUT NUMBER:

APPEARANCE AND BIOLOGY: Ibglibdishpan are spindly humanoids with yellow skins. Their skulls are large, hairless, and somewhat ovoid, but this appearance is accentuated by a shield-shaped “mask” of osteoderm covering their face above the jaw. They do not have external ears or noses. Ibglibdishpan exhibit very little sexual dimorphism. In fact, discussion of any gender is considered rude in their culture.

HISTORY: The ibglibdishpan are subjects of the Vokun Empire. Their natural cognitive traits have been enhanced by a Vokun eugenics program to make them “humanoid computers” capable of computational tasks far beyond most unenhanced humanoids.

PSYCHOLOGY: Ibglibdishpan tend to be restrained in their emotional responses compared to other humanoids. They also tend to lack empathy and are sometimes at a loss as to why sentimentality so influences other humanoids, causing them not to take the most obvious, logical action. They are often viewed as pedantic and overly precise. They tend to avoid violence and make poor warriors. Due to their neuronal structure, they are prone to the development of obsessions and compulsions, or perseveration of certain behaviors.

GAME STATISTICS: Intelligence of at least 14. Charisma and Strength no higher than 10.

Humanoid Computer: Ibglibdishpan gain an additional +1 to Skill checks based on Intelligence. They also have the power of Hypercognition. Once per session, the PC can ask the GM for a useful conclusion regarding a topic, and the GM will tell them what he or she considers the most useful fact the character could have concluded from analysis of the available data.

Mental Breakdown: Ibglibdishpan mental structure always has a chance of a cognitive glitch or breakdown. Any time an ibgliddishpan has to make an Intelligence related skill check of difficult of 11 or 13, fails an Intelligence related check of any difficulty, or uses the Hypercognition ability, a save vs. Mental Effects must be made. On a failed roll, a negative effect occurs. The following table offers some examples:

- 1 Catatonic state, repeating the last statement made for d100 minutes. Hypercognition ability (if unused) is not available the rest of the session.
- 2 Screams for d100 seconds, then returns to previous activity as if nothing happened. Intelligence-related skill checks are at -1 for 24 hours.
- 3 Develops a severe phobia which lasts for 2d12 weeks. Every week, the character may make another Mental Effects save. 3 successful saves in a

row means the phobia abates early.

4 Develops a reaction akin to Stendhal Syndrome (dizziness, confusion, possible fainting) for d4/2 hours. -2 to Dexterity, Intelligence, and Wisdom for the duration.

5 Suffers a seizure lasting 1d4 min. -1 to all rolls until a period of rest of at least 8 hours.

6 Lose 1-2 points of intelligence for 2d10 days. Every 2 days, another Mental Effects save can be attempted. 3 successes means the return of the lost points early. Each failure adds an extra day.



<http://www.rpgnow.com/product/142933/Strange-Stars?term=strange+stars+>

Hirelings

*He flees because he is a hired hand
and cares nothing for the sheep.*

- John 10:13

That's right, hirelings have been running away since before biblical times. Don't expect that to change. Hirelings are the characters' temporary employees. Three things are discussed upon the agreement of employment. What the task is, how long it will take and how much it pays. Hirelings are usually short-term, a day up to a week is the average time. They do not risk their lives. And they do not expect a share of any treasure found (but it wouldn't be turned down either).

This article focuses on the adventuring hirelings. The skilled hirelings such as smiths and sages are a completely different category. We're going to focus on the porters, lantern bearers and the lackeys: generally unskilled labor. Unlike the skilled hirelings, they can be found in the smallest of settlements. Even a tiny thorp in the middle of nowhere may have someone willing to carry a torch for the party.

This is a general table I use if the party is looking for a few folks to assist them in their dungeon delving career. The number of available hirelings depends on the population size. If the party treats their hirelings well (as in not using them as a pit detector or a ogre snack) these hirelings could eventually become henchmen.

POPULATION	# OF HIRELINGS
Thorp	d2-1
Hamlet	d2
Village	d6
Town	3d6
City	6d6

Here is a short list of potential hirelings to go adventuring:

Animal Handler: can take care of the horses, mules and other animals.

Bearer/Porter: someone has to carry out all that treasure.

Footman: a little extra muscle. Mostly untrained and strong hoping to learn.

Lackey: takes care of and works specifically with one character.

Linkboy: is your torch or lantern bearer.

OCCUPATION	DAILY COST
Animal Handler	2sp
Bearer/Porter	2sp
Footman	3sp
Lackey	2sp
Linkboy	1sp

Just because hirelings are ordinary folk doesn't mean they don't have something to offer. Lots of folks have a skill or a knack at something that the party may find useful. Not every hireling has that *special something*. The following table is an example of a group of helpful skills and knacks a hireling may have.

D20	SKILL/KNACK	BENEFIT
1-7	None	None
8	Good with Animals	Can control pack, riding and other domesticated animals.
9	Can Build Fires	Is able to build fires in difficult conditions.
10	Cooking	Allows the party members to recover and additional hit point during a night's rest.
11	Contact	Is friends with a criminal, guard, acolyte or noble servant. All contacts would be of low standing within their organization.
12	Guide	Knows the local area exceptionally well.
13	Strong Back	Can carry or lift as if his strength were one point higher.
14	Herbalist	Can create a healing poultice that stabilizes normal wounds.
15	Minor Expertise	Has extra knowledge about certain things such as swords, furniture, paintings or statues.
16	Dual Lingual	Understands and speaks a secondary language.
17	Iron Gut	Gets +1 to saves vs. poison and can drink a lot before getting drunk.
18	Extraordinary Sense	One of the hireling's senses is better than the normal person. He or she can see, hear or smell more than normal.
19	Cartographer	Has a talent for drawing accurate maps.
20	Experienced	Is a 1st level NPC.

This is not an exhaustive list, but provides a sample of the kind of skills hirelings could bring to the party.

I've created six hirelings. I use a simple format. These can easily fit on a 3" x 5" note card.

JAMES

Str:	10 (no modifiers)	HP: 3
Dex:	18 (+1 to hit with missiles, -1 [+1] AC)	LV: 0
Con:	11 (no modifiers)	CL: Hireling, lackey
Int:	12 (3 max. languages, 6 th max. spell level)	RA: Human
Wis:	6 (no modifiers)	SV: 16
Cha:	10 (4 max. hirelings)	AC: 6 [13]

Equipment: leather armor (-2 [+2] AC), dagger 1d4)

James is an extremely talented boy with no common sense. He was recruited by the thieves guild, but he proved to be unreliable and constantly put others in danger so he was released. The thieves sliced James's hands to remind him never to speak of what he knows. If there is a thief in the party, James will be more terrified of the thief than a hulking fighter.

James decided to learn the ways of an adventurer. If the party members aren't specific with their instruction for James he will wander off to see what is around the next corner or what is through the next door.

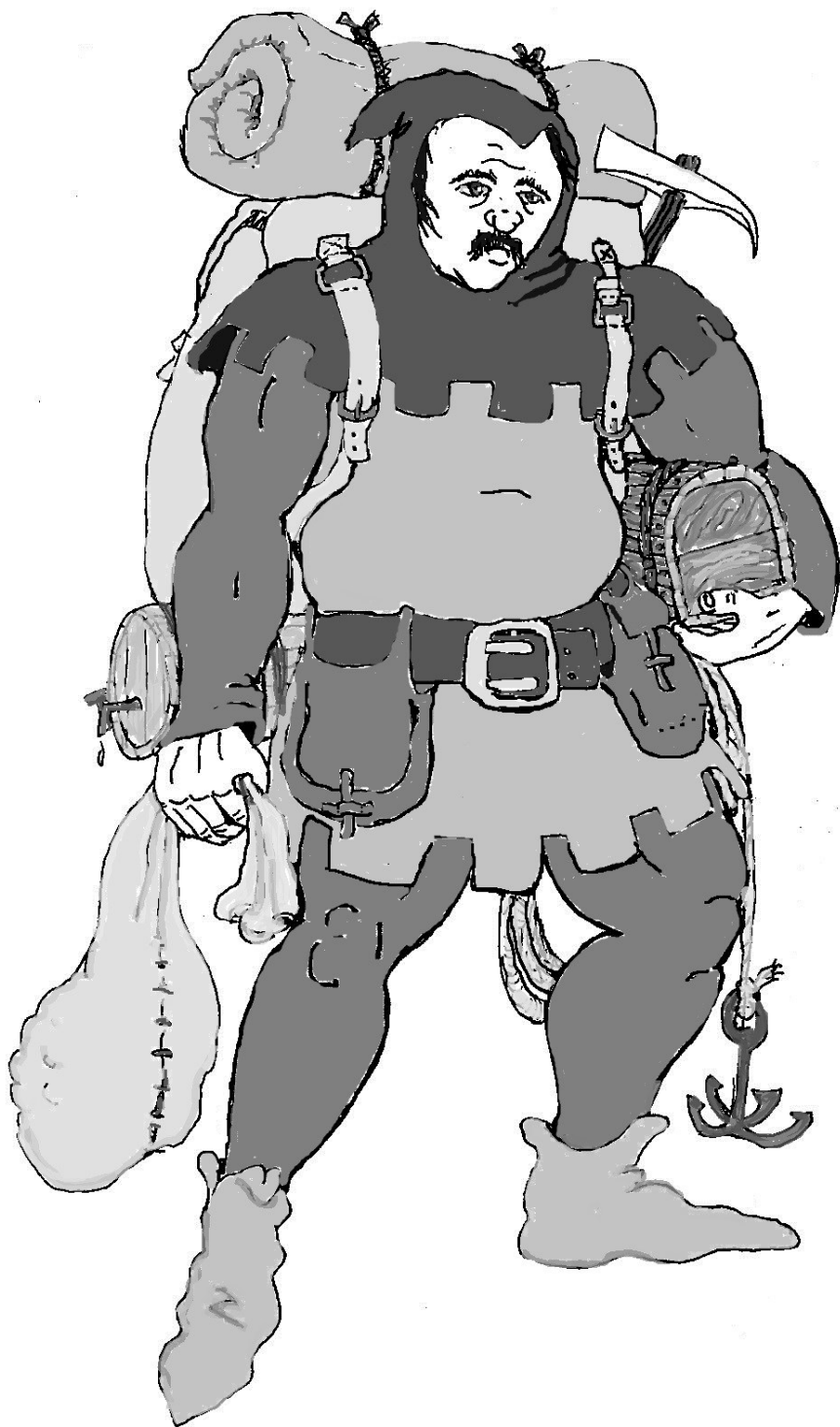
MANNY

Str:	10 (no modifiers)	HP: 4
Dex:	13 (+1 to hit with missiles, -1 [+1] AC)	LV: 0
Con:	11 (no modifiers)	CL: Hireling, porter
Int:	13 (3 max. languages, 7 th max. spell level)	RA: Human
Wis:	9 (no modifier)	SV: 16
Cha:	12 (4 max. hirelings)	AC: 8 [11]

Equipment: sling, 10 bullets 1d4, backpack, shovel, chalk

Manny is small man with large buckteeth. He looks slow, but he is quite intelligence, but has no confidence in what he says so he is usually quiet. He has been a porter for the past seven years. He has several scars from attacks. He only goes out with a party once, twice at the most. He has no friends or family and no one seems to know much about him.

Manny was once an apprentice to a mage who terrorized him constantly. After a drunken rage the mage cast a spell and something went critically wrong. Manny had the healing potions, but instead, watched his master die.



AVARON

Str:	9 (no modifiers)	HP: 4
Dex:	12 (no modifiers)	LV: 0
Con:	11 (no modifiers)	CL: Hireling, animal handler
Int:	14 (4 max. languages, 7 th max spell level)	RA: Human
Wis:	9 (no modifiers)	SV: 16
Cha:	8 (3 max. hirelings)	AC: 9 [10]

Equipment: dagger 1d4, large sack, 2 torches, small mirror

Avaron belonged to a outlaw gang before he betrayed them to the city guard. His father is a merchant who paid the right people so Avaron would not hang with those they caught. Avaron is paranoid and fears the members of the gang that escaped are hunting him.

Avaron is looking for long-term employment, hoping to gain the friendship of an adventuring group. He knows the importance of having allies. Avaron is good with animals.

LORRIN

Str:	9 (no modifiers)	HP: 5
Dex:	9 (no modifiers)	LV: 0
Con:	16 (+1 to hit points/HD)	CL: Hireling, lackey
Int:	10 (2 max. languages, 5 th max spell level)	RA: Human
Wis:	9 (no modifiers)	SV: 16
Cha:	8 (3 max. hirelings)	AC: 9 [10]

Equipment: dagger 1d4, small sack, 2 torches, 2 iron spikes, waterskin

Lorrin is thin, but can run for days. He was a messenger before deciding to hire himself out. He figured adventurers get hurt and if they need someone to run to the temple to get help he could do it better than anyone.

During the last few months he has been collecting small pieces of equipment for his new employer. He is very proud of his iron spikes and is anxious to see them used. He dreams of having his pockets stuffed with gold coins and being weighed down by jewelry.

PHILLIP

Str:	14 (+1 to hit and damage)	HP: 18
Dex:	14 (+1 to hit with missiles, -1 [+1] AC)	LV: 2
Con:	16 (+1 hit point/HD)	CL: Cleric, linkboy
Int:	10 (2 max. languages, 5 th max. spell level)	RA: Human
Wis:	15 (no modifier)	SV:
Cha:	10 (4 max. hirelings)	AC: 6 [13]

Equipment: poor quality chain mail (-3 [+3]AC), heavy mace 1d6+1, 6 torches

Phillip was killed several months ago during a dungeon delve with his friends. He was raised after several days. When he *awoke* he remembered nothing. He did not see his god or feel the presence of his god. Phillip is a cleric who lost his faith and can no longer cast spells.

Phillip hires himself out as a torchbearer to other parties and does not tell them of his past. He proves himself valuable because he can fight fairly well. He keeps a journal and writes down everything he experiences. He hopes to one day find his way back to his god.

HAWTHORN

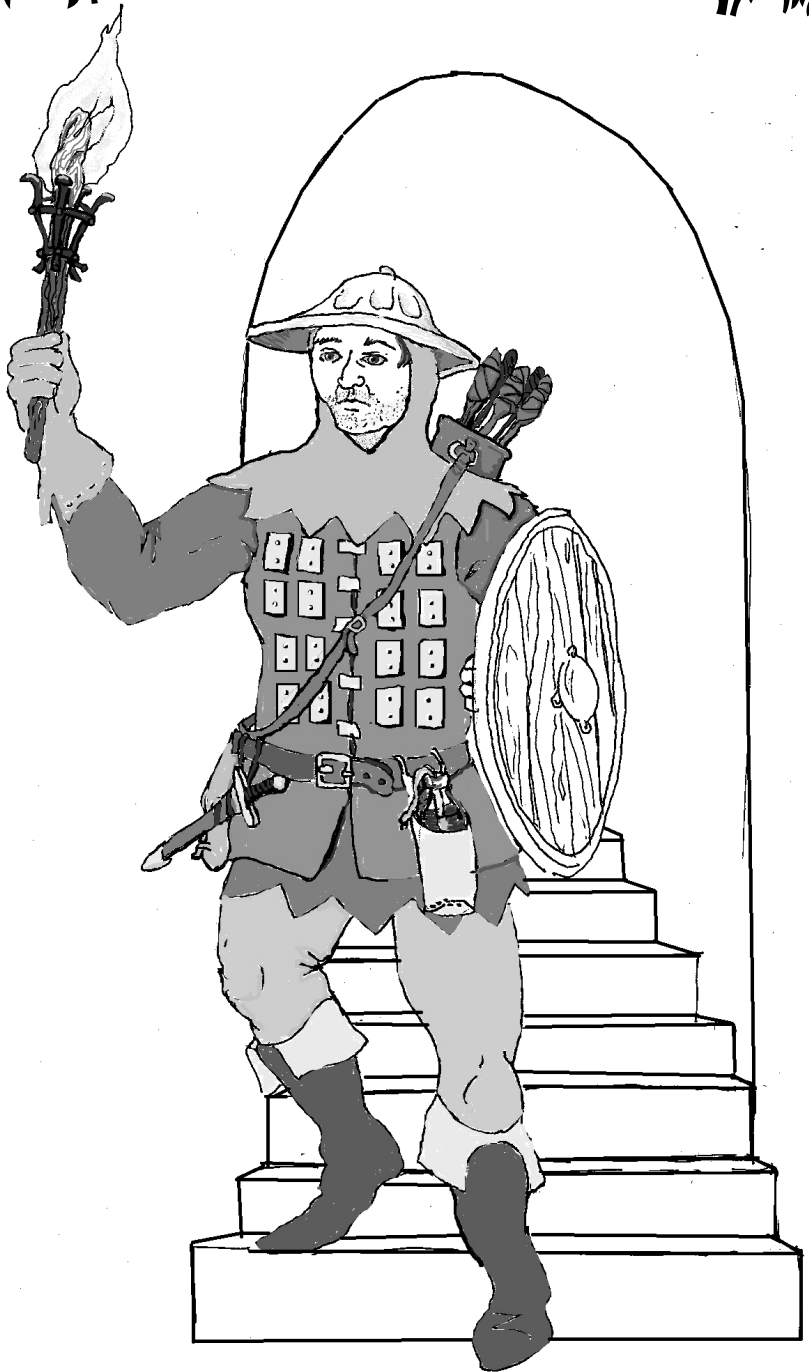
Str:	13 (+1 to hit and damage)	HP: 5
Dex:	13 (+1 to hit with missiles, -1 [+1] AC)	LV: 0
Con:	12 (no modifiers)	CL: Hireling, porter
Int:	12 (3 max. languages, 6 th max. spell level)	RA: Human
Wis:	17 (no modifier)	SV: 16
Cha:	11 (4 max. hirelings)	AC: 8 [11]

Equipment: 50' rope, 2 iron spikes, tinder box, hand axe 1d6

Hawthorn is an energetic young man who isn't sure what he wants to do, but figures he can earn some quick coin by hiring himself out to adventurers. He has been on two expeditions. Both parties were killed, save for Hawthorn. Now others believe he is bad luck and won't touch him.

Hawthorn has a knack for being able to build a fire in almost any condition with minimal material.

TORCHBEARER



LETS TURN UP THE TORCHBEARER TO 11

As in the previous article, hirelings are temporary employees that work for a short time and then move on. But not all adventuring parties are made up of six to eight highly trained individuals. When I run my home game, I often play one-on-one with a player or I've only had a couple of players at a time. This is where hirelings can come in handy. In bigger parties they get lost and often forgotten about. When you have a single player or a very small adventuring group, a hireling can play a role during the adventure. This article gives the torchbearer more options than just holding a light. Kinda like we all did when our dad was working on the car.

Here's not what I'm going to do, make the torchbearer a class. But, to be a professional torchbearer, training is required and skill development is critical to become a helpful member of the party. These specialized skills add depth to their role within the party.

THERE IS MORE THAN ONE KIND OF TORCH

There are several types of torches available to a torchbearer. For the purposes of this article, a standard torch last for 6 turns or 1 hour. It will illuminate a 30' radius. All the torches mentioned will have these same properties unless otherwise stated.

Balanced Torch

These torches are balanced for throwing. This allows a person to use a torch as a missile weapon without a penalty. They are often used to ignite flammable things from a distance. These are also the raiders' favorite kind of torch to throw on a peasant's hut.

Everlasting Torch

This torch burns up to 3 hours. However, it also only illuminates a 20' radius. These are often used in an encampment to illuminate the perimeter. And sometimes they are used to mark the party's trail in an underground maze.

Flare Torch

This torch burns bright and hot for 1 turn. It illuminates out to a 50' radius. If used as a weapon the target suffers club damage and an additional 1d2 points of fire damage. These are often used as distant signals. The disadvantage to a flare torch is it causes temporary blindness (save negates) to anyone looking at it within a 20' radius.

Hanging Torch

These torches have hooks on the side to hang on a wall. Hanging torches can have one large hook or several smaller hooks. Dungeon-delvers find these useful for scaling walls or instead of dropping a torch and hoping it doesn't extinguish, it can be hung on the wall conveniently while you focus on the business of decapitating orcs.

Long Torch

Instead of the standard torch length, a long torch is built to 6' and 9' lengths. Any longer than this and the torch becomes unwieldy. These torches extend the range of

visibility, to see just a bit farther ahead. They also prove useful to check the ceilings for danger.

Reinforced Torch

This torch is reinforced with metal bands and is an effective weapon. Any type of torch can be reinforced, adding +1 to damage, or +2 if the bands are spiked. This triples the weight of the torch.

Spiked Torch

These torches have a 2' long spike at the end to drive into the ground or wall. Like the reinforced torch, this feature can be added to any type of torch. It provides another option to keep the torch off the ground and to keep the area lit. It can also be used as an impaling weapon, doing 1d3 damage.

Waxed Torches

Waxed torches were created to float on the water and continue to burn. Some ship captains use these types of torches at sea to see what is ahead or to leave a trail for their fellow ships to follow.

THIS TORCHBEARER HAS GOT SOME SKILLS

A torchbearer must learn how to survive in a dungeon-type atmosphere. While it may seem like a simple job, a torchbearer often does things a party may overlook.

Battle Torchbearer

Some torchbearers know the adventurers they work with very well and can anticipate their needs. Once per battle a torchbearer can use his torch to blind an enemy for one round. A successful hit must be made. If the torchbearer succeeds the enemy is at -4 to hit for one round.

Scavenger

A torchbearer can create a torch out of found items. While it may not be the best, he can make it work. Scavenged torches don't last as long and are not as bright.

Stay Out of the Way

This is a skill all long-term torchbearers have learned: stay out of the way of the fight. They can easily get caught up in the battle since they light the area. A good torchbearer will slip to the side or into the back ranks and assist the party by making sure all the enemies are visible. An unskilled torchbearer can cause confusion, equating to a -1 penalty to hit for any party member standing adjacent to him. On a critical failure the torchbearer is often the victim of a backswing.



Smelling the Flammable Stuff

Being a bearer of fire the torchbearers unofficial second job is usually setting things on fire, or in some cases, *not* setting things on fire. Some torchbearers are versed in the look and smell of flammable things. They do not want to walk into a room with an oil-soaked floor and roast the entire party with an errant spark. A good torchbearer is able to make an intelligence roll to identify if a substance is flammable.

Torch Crafter

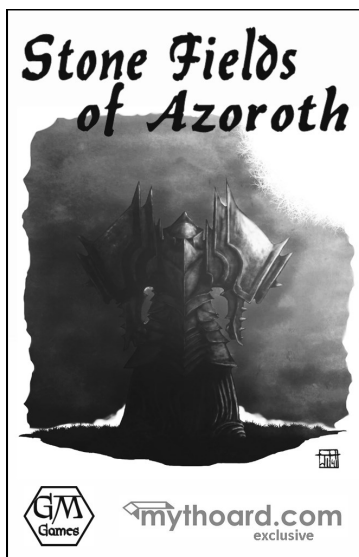
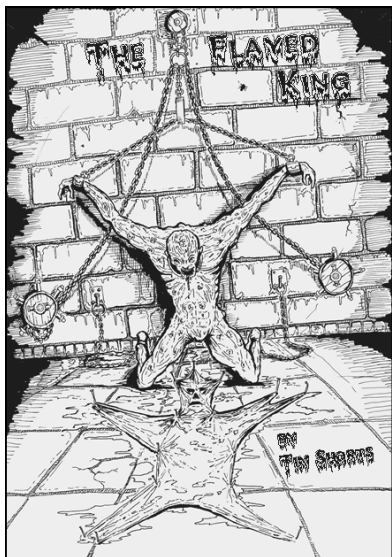
There are some torchbearers who refuse to use a torch made by someone else. They have studied their craft and create their own torches. These torches cost twice the usual amount, but torch crafters can add one of the following.

- the torch burns 1 turn longer
- the torch illuminates a 40' radius
- the torch burns with a different colored flame

CONCLUSION

This may be a lot of detail for a NPC that is often just an afterthought. Like any part of an RPG you can take or leave as much as you like. Developing a hireling, like a torchbearer, can become a valuable asset to the party.

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In this Issue...

Grappling, Swords & Wizardry Style

Douglas Cole (GamingBallistic.blogspot.com) and Peter V. Dell'Orto (DungeonFantastic.blogspot.com) have taken their GURPS backgrounds and developed a comprehensive grappling system for the OSR.

Strange Stars Data File: Ibglibdishpan

Trey Causey (SorcerersSkull.blogspot.com) presents a taste from his amazing *Strange Stars*, a setting supplement for science fiction campaign.

Hirelings

Hirelings is an article to add some depth to a the hireling experience. You could just go into town a rent your next porter or linkboy, but with a couple of simple rolls, the hirelings become more than cardboard cutouts.

Torchbearer

To delve even deeper into the hireling experience, this article gives a simple torchbearer some skills and a eight specialty torches to use during your next adventure.

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