

# Three Hexes 'Zine #2

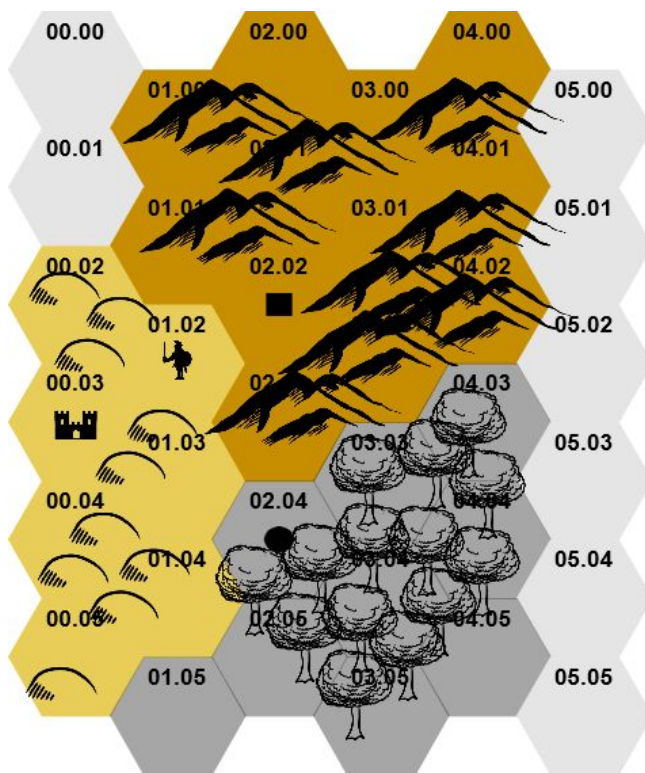
By Michael "Chgowiz" Shorten



# Dragon's Reach

**Campaign:** Dragons are emerging from their mountainous lairs, heralding the ninth Dragon War. Their hellish breath is killing untold numbers of the civilized races, while desperate survivors flee to the fortresses and castles of old for protection. The Dukes and Barons seek heroes willing to reclaim ancient weapons to defeat the beasts.

**Homebase (0003) Angstorum:** The sturdy stone walls of Angstorum hold thousands of refugees and can easily withstand the attacks of dragons and the draco-men while its tunnels and deep chambers, first hollowed out by dwarfs, now serve as an underground city. Traders make the risky trek to the fortress at night, drawn by the lure of recovered treasure in exchange for the needed goods they bring. A war party of draco-men has set up a nearby camp and are threatening the ramparts with vicious attacks.



Hex scale is a day's foot travel – twenty-four miles.

**Location 1 (0102) The Teeth:** Vengeful spirits of fallen defenders alongside cunning dragon-men guard the broken, blasted valleys and sloughs. The skeletons of heroes lie here, clutching weapons of renown. Dragons circle above, looking for anything worthy to do battle with.

**Location 2 (0204) The Winsding Forests:** A lonely handful of crazed Foresters howl in anger as they hold vigil among the blackened and burnt remains of the woodland. Dragon-men and ash-ghouls prowl among the deserted villages and hamlets, looking for survivors to feed from. The tomb of Fair Lady Elsbeth lies hidden amidst the blackened stumps, bearing witness to her heroic sacrifice to free the races from a previous cycle of dragons.

**Location 3 (0202) The Burning Throat:** These mountains hide the dragon aeries of the younger, more aggressive beasts. When they are not fighting each other, the dragons eagerly seek out any foolish enough to venture among the passes. The older dragons brood over vast treasure caches full of loot from their attacks and tributes brought by the dragon-men.

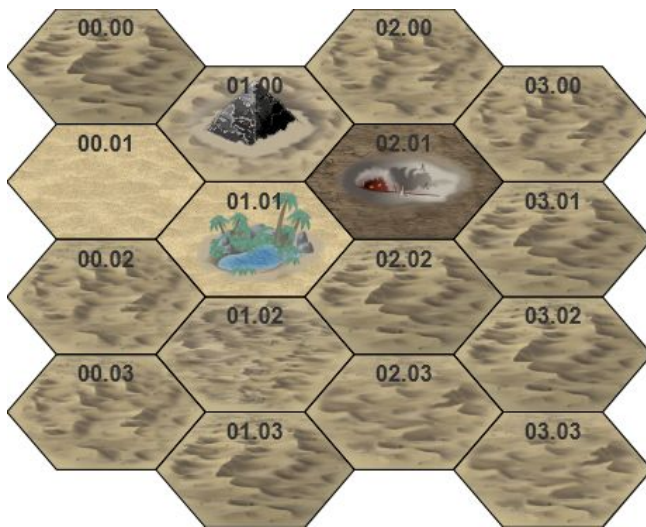
**Magical Item - Dragon-Spite:** The scarred blade of Dragon-spite seeks out the strongest and most fervent dragon slayers to wield it. When those who bear it fall, their knowledge and life force is absorbed by the sword, giving it increased intelligence and abilities! As a result, it can sense the presence of dragons and their nests, by the nature of its location or by sensing the presence of danger, evil or great treasure.

*OERPG[1] mechanics: +1, +3 vs. Dragons, lawful, Ability to use Languages and read Magic, uses Speech, speaks Human and Draconic, detects sloping passages (find dragon nests), detect traps, detect evil/gold, Int 11, Ego 8.*

# The Shifting Sands of Tantalla

**Campaign:** The hot sun above Tantalla beats down on islands of unforgiving rocky terrain among a sea of constantly shifting, blowing sand. The nomadic “civilized” races seek out life-giving water, precious metal resources or once-hidden secrets. Fortunes are made by those who can survive and seize the moments when the sands part to reveal riches and resources, provided they can avoid the hostile creatures that hunt them mercilessly.

**Homebase (0101) – Fenjalli’s Oasis:** This collection of tents, yurts and stone huts is built on a large rocky outcrop rich with water springs, date trees and even a rare methellen (healing berries) bush. The Three Tribes’ Chieftains maintain a strict control over the marketplace where the great water caravans gather to trade in the precious resource. The unforgiving sands have begun their relentless reclamation of the oasis, forcing the tribes to start a great search for a new home.



Hex scale is a day's foot travel – twenty-four miles.

**Location 1 (0001) Duskward Desert** - Hunters scour the constantly moving dunes for rare creatures to sell at market, risking becoming prey to the wily ash goblins. Scavengers and the desperate make their homes in the sands, seeking nuggets of silver and gems before the shifting sand dunes reclaim them. A bandit queen has set up a base in scoured ruins, holding a caravan for a high ransom, ignorant that she’s awakened an evil deep underneath.

**Location 2 (0100) The Black Ziggurat** - Scouts from the Oasis have stumbled upon a floating, glossy black ziggurat. Strangely robed figures line its steps, chanting evil spells, only to vanish within upon approach. The scouts whisper the rumor that the Death Cults have summoned their god here to claim the area for a necropolis and they seek bodies to add to an unliving army.

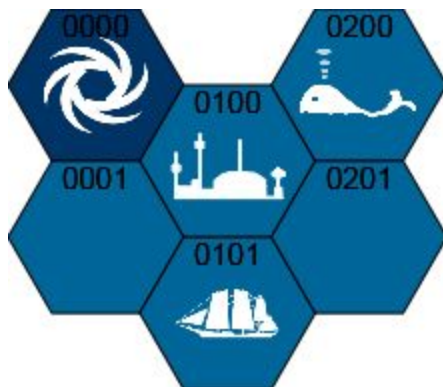
**Location 3 (0201) Rintik Hive** - The insectoid Rintiks have established a colony below the sands, digging their myriad of tunnels to hold their egg chambers and food stores. Their increasingly violent raids on Fenjalli's Oasis are forcing the chieftains to pay bounties for Rintik heads as retaliation. The chieftains offer great rewards for any brave enough to delve the tunnels in search of the Queen’s chamber and the riches that are hoarded there.

**The Cult of Puterus** has summoned the Black Ziggurat to raise an army for the God of Death. The High Priestess, Tanash, is sending out Dark Prophets to teach the unholy scriptures and collect sacrifices. She wields a relic of the God’s avatar, a wizened finger, whose touch brings an ecstatic undeath to fawning worshipers.

# The Endless Seas

**Campaign:** Seas cover nearly all the surface of this world; although small islands do exist here and there, most will never see these legendary dry lands. Life on the water is a mix of beauty and bounty from the deep and horrors from fearsome creatures and rapacious pirates. The floating cities and fleets of the world face growing onslaughts from coordinated attacks from these enemies.

**Homebase (0100) - Asmelion:** Fifty aging Great Vessels are the core of this floating city, one of five in the Sea Kingdom of Octimas. Castes and religious clans have carved out their own neighborhoods in the above and below decks quarters, while the great superstructures and masts form the “free markets” zones. The city is recovering from food riots during a recent becalming, while tensions are still simmering between several captains who are jockeying for the position of City Admiral.



Hex scale is a day's travel by ship - forty miles by sail.

**Location 1 (0000) - The Wailing Whirlpool:** This permanent vortex has been spinning it's slow, dangerous dance as long as anyone remembers, dooming ships and smaller floating towns that drift into its embrace. Those brave enough to salvage abandoned vessels on the edge of it can find great riches, but they run the risk of becoming trapped, or killed by other salvagers. The mer-folk regard the whirlpool as a sacred place and are hostile to any who approach.

**Location 2 (0101) - Kolignar's Folly:** The tangled wrecks of the final fleet of Kolignar, the Goblin Prince, have been floating here since his defeat by the combined navies of Octimas ten years earlier. Scavengers and small-time pirates risk their lives to scour the wrecks for hidden treasure and weapons. The goblin tribe have recovered from the defeat and are secretly rebuilding the ships to begin raiding again.

**Location 3 (0200) - Feeding Frenzy:** Turtle dragons, kraken and great whales battle over the rich schools of bait fish that migrate here every High Sun Season. Harvesting the bodies of the great predators will provide an immense bounty for those brave enough to venture into the bloody waters. Several trading ships have been waylaid by a lost turtle dragonling, seeking its mother.

**Kolignar's Goblin Tribe:** The Kolignar goblins are vicious pirates, slavers and respected traders all at the same time. They honor a strict code of conduct between each and those that they come upon, given to them by Kolignar. Their adherence to 'Prince's Law' juxtaposed with their violent pastimes reflects their true nature as champions of the cruel ocean god, Striatu; a fact that they hide zealously.

# The Shattered Islands of Ronark'a

**Campaign:** Myth-tellers tell the tale of how Ronark'a was once a single land, but The Great Cataclysm sundered heaven and earth and created the shattered islands. To ease the suffering of the survivors, They-Who-Watch gave each island a "heart": a manifestation of power particular to a god/goddess or an affinity to some specific way of life. Great evil awakens beneath the waters, threatening the balance of life that the islands have fought to preserve.

**Homebase (0101) - Ashnana:** Steep mountains dotted with gold mines surround a rich valley filled with great merchant tents and booths of all types of traders, while residential platforms hang precariously on the sides of the huge cliffs that face the surrounding waters. The island is open to many different races, castes and classes who mingle in relative peace, watched carefully by the Merchants' Army. Deep in the mines, a recently opened tunnel has allowed horrible creatures to stream forth, driving the miners away and requiring the Army to send a detachment of hired swords to investigate.



Hex scale is a twenty-four miles.

**Location 1 (0002) - Nareshta:** Protective druids and clerics guard the forests here, sworn to the fickle goddess whom the island is named after. They reluctantly permit the annual harvest and export of the Great Tree seeds, hoping that the spread of trees elsewhere strengthens their own power. A blight is affecting several of the Great Trees, brought on by an evil nymph who seeks to pervert the forest to serve her.

**Location 2 (0100) - Herefax:** A lava-spitting volcano dominates the landscape of this hellish island, home to Orcs and their bitter enemies, the equally vicious Dwarfs. The small towns and harbors that ring around the edge of the island are dangerous places to visit, yet they are the source of the finest weapons and armor anywhere. A band of cultists has established a new temple in a cavern on the side of the volcano, summoning Orc and Dwarf alike to come worship, and never leave.

**Location 3 (0202) - Zyx:** Secretive elven lore-mages live within the deep mists of this island and they grant entry only to those few who have the gift of sorcery. The port of Qij is the one place on the island where non-mages may live and work, serving the mages. The Dragons of Zyx roam the skies over neighboring islands, bringing back their treasure to their weirs within deep sinkholes.

**The Great Evil Within:** A long time ago, an alien being attacked this world, seeking to harvest all living creatures and their psychic energy. It was defeated by the guardian spirits of dead gods, but it was not completely destroyed. Several generations ago, those who were affected by its dreams created a cult, allowing it to feed and grow on their suffering. The cult will ally with creatures springing from the power of its nightmares, their goal is a great harvest to awaken the creature!

## Juicing up your Three Hexes

If you're like me, those first thoughts put down on paper (digital or pulp) are usually rough draft quality, the initial pouring forth of the ideas. I've always seen my writing as a work-in-progress, the sketching out of the rough edges, refining until I can see that what I've written gets my point across.

That's all well and good, for blogging or things that I'm going to use privately. When it comes to producing content that others are going to use, I want it to be useful as well as good enough that it kickstarts thoughts in other people headpans.

I've been reading the amazingly insightful reviews of RPG products by Bryce Lynch over at [Ten Foot Pole](#) for years now. If you haven't had the pleasure, I highly recommend clicking that link and giving his "My Favorite" posts a read. Bryce says a lot of what I think when I look at content - how well does it help me immediately? Is it geared towards giving me what I need, when I need it? Do I have to read through pages of fluff? Is the writing good enough that it raises images in my head that I can play with?

This was one of the things that has kept me from writing and publishing a large module I wrote in 2010 called *Hultep Koah*. It was to be a Sumerian/Mesopotamian tomb. The idea was good, but the execution wasn't. To me, it read like "yet another 10'x10' room with an orc eating pie" and that's not what I wanted.

Writing RPG content is a skill and art. There are plenty of books, guides and assistance, like Bryce's reviews that can help, so I try to keep that in mind.

Now, what the frak does that have to do with writing Three Hexes?

When I wrote the initial Three Hex posts in my blog, they were written either in a wild creative burst or under duress of the strain/expectation of a post a week. I set that goal, and I found it extremely difficult to keep. The writing wasn't all that great.

When I set out to write the manuscript for my Three Hex book, I began to rewrite each and every post, with one goal in mind:

**With each sentence, have something to do or experience at the table.**

That meant only meat, no fluff. That was hard, because as I found, I had written a LOT of fluff into the blog posts. This revision stuff was hard!

But, I think, the end results will be worth it.

In addition to Bryce's posts, I've also found this book to be invaluable:

*Writing With Style - An Editor's Advice for RPG Writers* by Ray Vallese

This book has more than 30 topics on things to keep in mind to improve your RPG writing. Some of these might be used in Three Hexes, some are not.



So what do those improvements and focus look like?

An example is the lead sentence I wrote for the [Kingdom of Smazah](#).

*“The Kingdom of Smazah is a small Kingdom, one not worthy of much notice.”*

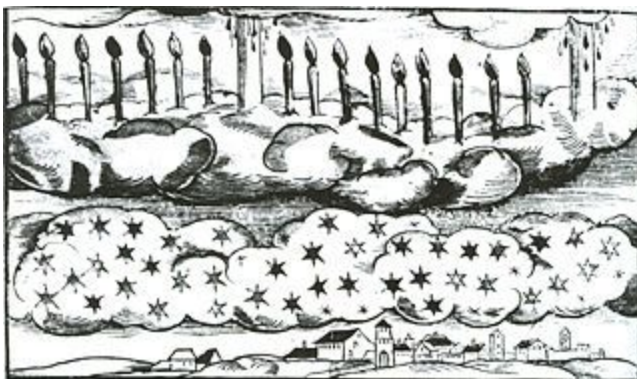
Not much going on there, huh? While there’s a bit of descriptive wording, it’s not evocative. As someone at the table, I’d have to put a lot of extra effort to expand on “small” and “not worthy of much notice.”

So let’s try again, thinking about “have(ing) something to do or experience at the table.”

*“The Kingdom of Smazah is a backwater stop, mainly for thieves, liars and conniving folks offering risky work for the promise of riches.”*

There’s a lot more going on, words that you can build on here!

- “backwater stop” - flavor and setting you can build scenes with.
- “thieves, liars and conniving folks offering risky work” - opportunities for your players, as well as ideas on the type of NPCs you’ll have



You might have to think about it and rewrite it a few times until it “feels” right to you. When I write something and I get excited about what I’ve written, the ideas start flowing, I know I have something I can work with!

Here’s another example, with a leading sentence from a homebase description, from [Kingdom of Smazah](#).

*“Lions Gate is a peaceful trader’s town in the rural center of the Kingdom.”*

Well, there’s a bit there that gives some flavor: “peaceful”, “traders”, “rural” - but let’s drop in a bit more...

*“Lions Gate is the central rural trading hub for the Kingdom; it’s claim to fame is a daily, dawn-to-dusk farmer’s market that attracts many visitors year-round.”*

Now there’s more to work with! A daily farmer’s market, and a bit more about the city. If it’s the central hub, there’s bound to be some sort of council overseeing things - perhaps a contingent of King’s Guard since this is a strategic hub. All stuff that helps at the table immediately!

I’ve found that as I play with these more, it starts to come more naturally - getting away from fluff and getting to meat, especially since I’m limiting myself to three sentences per topic (campaign overview, homebase, location 1 - 3). Obviously, as I start to fill these out, the fluff will come, but that is when I want it to happen, once I’ve created the skeleton to build off of.

Good luck!

# Three Hexes Zine #2 – Nov 20th, 2019

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[1] OERPG - refers to the original edition role playing game - a reference to the editions of Dungeons & Dragons published before 1980.