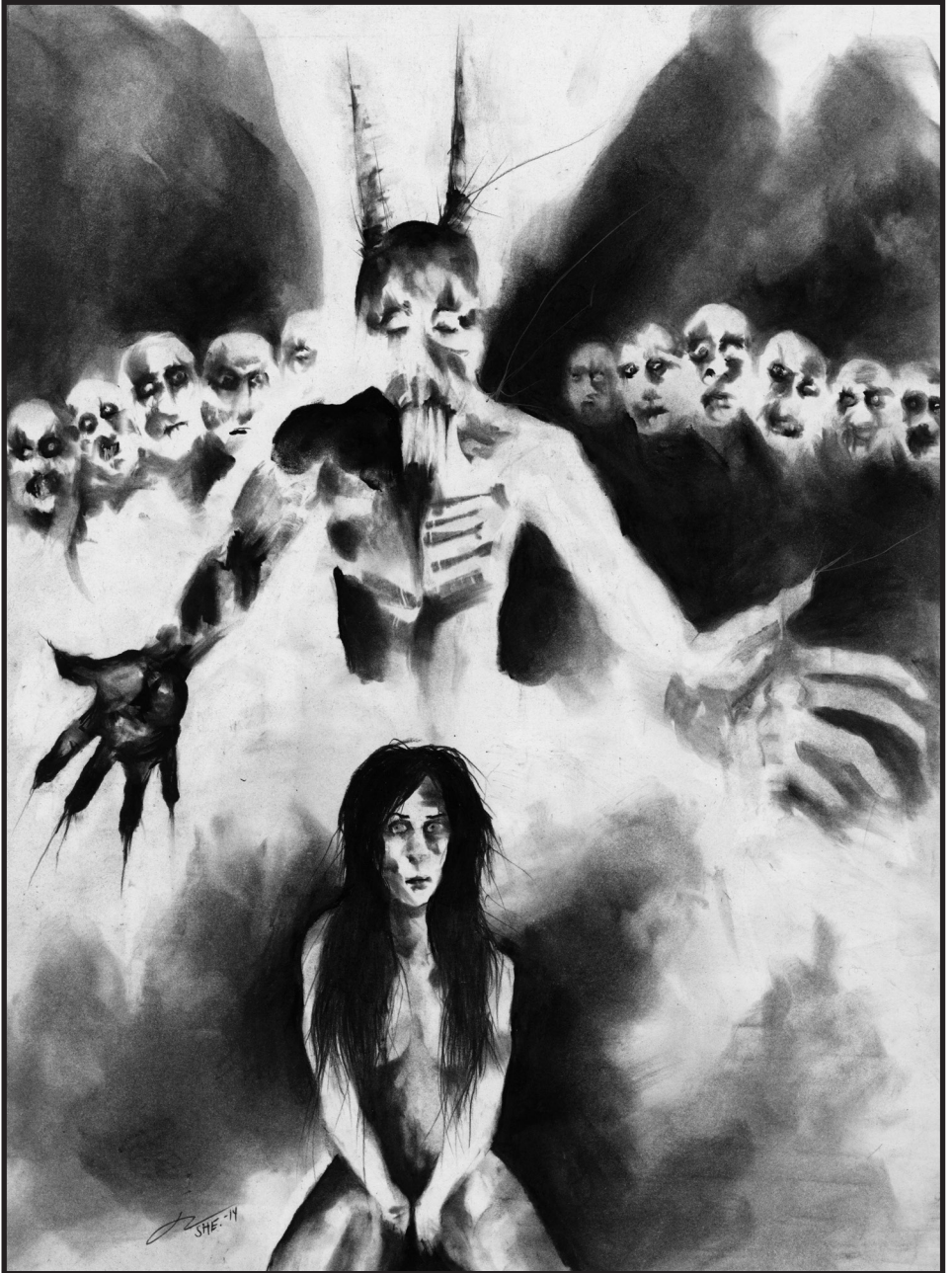


RED MOON MEDICINE SHOW PRESENTS:

VACANT RITUAL ASSEMBLY

AN OSR ZINE - ISSUE #2 - SPRING 2015



INTRODUCING

Okay, here's issue two. Thanks, first of all, for the very positive reaction to issue one and the financial support thereof. We sold out of the first printing and broke even, which was exactly the goal. Some people didn't like the paper cover, and I seriously considered your feedback, but in the end I decided that I like the thing just how it is.

This issue expands our scope a tad by bringing in the talents of my G+ soulmate Anxious P. This creates a precedent for submissions, which is fine, but I think the rule is that I'm not gonna publish anything here that I'm not actively using in my own campaign.

CONTENTS

The **Evangelism** section (pg 2) is back with some more media recommendations.

d66 Name Table (pg 3) This is a name generator that I came up with for a dark fantasy game that I abandoned. I selfishly put it into this issue so I'd have it handy.

Birthsigns (pg 4) I got one of those zodiac dice a while back. Figured I might as well use it.

Dretcher's Bay (pgs 5-6) is a weird coastal village that I made for my campaign. It's a little *Moby Dick*, a little *Fallen Empires*-era *M:TG*

homarid deck, and a little *The Scar* by China Mieville. I haven't had a chance to use this yet.

Carcinology (pgs 7-8) presents some honest-to-god lobstermen and the bell crabs they worship.

The Secrets of Acray (pgs 9-10) is a little one page dungeon-type thing I made in case my players decided to explore the underwater ruins outside Dretcher's Bay.

Oarsmen & Their Woes (pgs 11-13) contains Anxious P's take on some woeful river pilots ready to teleport yer dudes closer to the adventure site (for a price).

With Thine Eye Beheld (pgs 14-16) *The Hills Have Eyes* + the Westboro Baptists + a cyclops cargo cult + a cool magic gem.

Advanced Dolmenry with Greg Gorgonmilk (pgs 18-22) is an interview I conducted with Greg about his *Dolmenwood* project.

CREDITS

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Interviewee
Greg Gorgonmilk

CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Since this zine is more or less directly based on my *LotFP* campaign. It might be useful to know what I've been up to so far: We started on October 1st, 2014. Most of the characters were fresh, but a couple had been through the *Tomb of the Cyclops*, which appears in this issue. Session 1 was *The Sleeping Place of the Feathered Swine* by Logan Knight. Sessions 2-5 were taken up by *The Stygian Garden of Abelia Prem* (recently Kickstarted as of this writing) and *Brahnwick is Dead* (which appeared in VRA#1). Session 6 was a trip into Rafael Chandler's *Narcosa* for a scenario called *The Lotus Eater* (which will probably appear in VRA#4). Session 7 was a delve into *The Long Fall* by Matthew Adams (which appeared in the 2014 one-page dungeon contest). Sessions 8 through 11 brought the characters to Voivodja from *A Red and Pleasant Land* by Zak S, session 12 was a long journey and an introduction to Dretcher's Bay (which appears in this issue) and that brings us up to date.

LEGAL CRAP

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EVANGELISM

FICTION

The Lord Came at Twilight by Daniel Mills - Fun collection of New England horror in the vein of Lovecraft, Hawthorne, et al that I read over Christmas. Good stuff.

YOUTUBE

Bluespruce786 - *Bluespruce786's* YouTube videos are some of my favorite things on the entire internet. His stuff is calming, philosophical, and just plain charming in ways I can't fully articulate. Watch, Like, Subscribe.

RPG STUFF

Revelry in Torth by Venger Satanis - A fun sword and sorcery adventure/mini-setting that will likely show up in my campaign down the road.

OTHER THINGS

The Ritual Abuse Tarot by Ryan Sheffield. I was given this awesome tarot deck as a Christmas present and I dug it so much I immediately contacted Ryan to do the cover of this issue. It's a gorgeous deck featuring dark, occultic Stephen Gammell-esque illustrations. Highly recommended. See the ad on the back cover for a VRA reader's discount code. I'm still trying to figure out a cool way to use these in my campaign. If you have any ideas, hit me with an email.

D66 NAME TABLE



Roll	Male Names	Female Names	Family Names
11	Albertus	Abigail	Aguilon
12	Ambrose	Agnes	Albelin
13	Angest	Alianor	Bainard
14	Armand	Alys	Baudry
15	Bovo	Amelia	Bishop
16	Brand	Astraea	Bray
21	Charles	Astrid	Castell
22	Ciolo	Caterina	Chamberlain
23	Cleff	Desdemona	Chase
24	Clement	Edith	Church
25	Frederick	Elizabeth	Courcy
26	Gavin	Ellyn	Cromer
31	Giles	Emma	Darcy
32	Gregory	Fenja	Durandal
33	Grim	Gisela	Finch
34	Hagen	Helena	Flambard
35	Jacobus	Helewys	Frye
36	Johan	Hildegund	Gand
41	John	Inga	Garret
42	Lief	Isabel	Gedding
43	Michael	Jacquelyn	Godart
44	Mord	Leah	Highgate
45	Nicolaus	Maria	Le Pesant
46	Odulf	Mary	Mantaigu
51	Robelard	Mathena	Mercier
52	Sigmund	Mina	Mortemer
53	Sigurd	Muriel	Prophet
54	Snorri	Peneli	Ravenot
55	Thadeus	Rosamund	Reviere
56	Thegan	Rose	Saisset
61	Theodric	Sarah	Thorpe
62	Thrain	Savia	Westbrook
63	Tomas	Thea	Young
64	Vandil	Ulia	d'Aguillon
65	Wilhem	Winifred	d'Angers
66	Wolfrim	Ysmay	d'Auberville

BIRTHSIGNS

Roll a d12 or zodiac die at the end of chargen. Add in the stat bonus. Use the listed personality traits as a baseline for how to portray your character.

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|----|---|---|
| 1 |  | THE RAM
Courageous, Confident
Selfish, Impulsive
--
<i>+1 Strength</i> | 7 |  | THE SCALES
Diplomatic, Easygoing
Indecisive, Gullible
--
<i>+1 Wisdom</i> |
| 2 |  | THE BULL
Determined, Patient
Jealous, Greedy
--
<i>+1 Constitution</i> | 8 |  | THE SCORPION
Passionate, Powerful
Jealous, Secretive
--
<i>+1 Dexterity</i> |
| 3 |  | THE TWINS
Cunning, Eloquent
Nervous, Curious
--
<i>+1 Charisma</i> | 9 |  | THE ARCHER
Honest, Jovial
Careless, Restless
--
<i>+1 Dexterity</i> |
| 4 |  | THE CRAB
Intuitive, Protective
Emotional, Passionate
--
<i>+1 Constitution</i> | 10 |  | THE SEA-GOAT
Ambitious, Prudent
Fatalistic, Miserly
--
<i>+1 Wisdom</i> |
| 5 |  | THE LION
Generous, Loyal
Bossy, Braggart
--
<i>+1 Strength</i> | 11 |  | THE WATER-BEARER
Friendly, Loyal
Detached, Unpredictable
--
<i>+1 Intelligence</i> |
| 6 |  | THE MAIDEN
Focused, Analytical
Conservative, Shy
--
<i>+1 Intelligence</i> | 12 |  | THE FISH
Imaginative, Sensitive
Gullible, Secretive
--
<i>+1 Charisma</i> |

DRETCHER'S BAY


Dretcher's Bay is a forlorn fishing village on the edge of a rocky and mountainous coast amid the fog and salt and hard memories. It's a rough-hewn hamlet settled by simple, self-reliant folk, the type who can repair your boat but will surely judge you for not being able to repair it yourself. They smoke deep-bowled whalebone pipes, they drink strong coffee flavored with flecks of ground seaweed, they tell ghost stories of the seas and the cenotes.

This place has no magistrate, no town council. Everyone knows it's governed by "the captains," three rival crabbers whose operations dictate the ebb and flow of local politics. The captains and their stalwart crews harvest the Bell Crabs which haunt the ancient, submerged ruins of Acray just off the coast, creatures that are sacred to the local Nephropid colony on Morton Island.

OH MY ME, THE CAPTAINS THREE



Captain Gorban: An easily confused old man. Kind hearted and clumsy. Often accompanied by "Leftenant Higgins," a psychic flounder in a fish bowl who serves as Gorban's navigator.



Sir Solomon Kote
Royal naturalist, sent to study the Nephropids.

The Old Lackley House
Keep your distance from this old place. Local kids say it's haunted. Local adults know the truth is much worse.



Morton Island
Home of the Nephropids
and their spawning pools.

The Wharf Market
Bustling center of local
commerce.

The Lighthouse
Run by the Widow
Lockheed.

The Oak and Anchor
Inn build from the
hull of a wrecked ship.

Captain Shaw: The most cruel of the crab captains. As a girl she was scalped by Thundercloud Druids while they murdered her father.



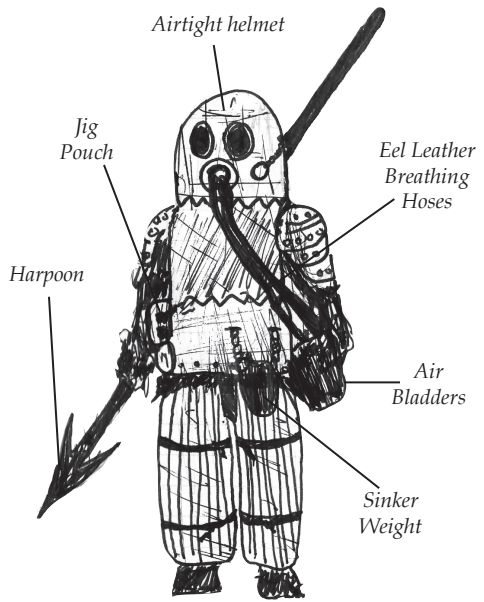
Captain Crow: Crow was once human, but became a mancrow after exposure to a strange curse. Uses his flight capability to scout for bell crabs and rival crews.

CARCINOLOGY

Sir Solomon Kote, the royal naturalist, was sent to Dretcher's Bay to make study of the local Nephropid population and determine whether these creatures were a threat to the crown (or the nobility's well known appetite for Bell Crab). Kote took to this task with great passion and has since become the world's foremost expert on the matter. The following observations are abridged from his as-of-yet unpublished field notes.

BELL CRABS

The Bell Crab is the pride of Dretcher's Bay, a hardy crustacean species apparently unique to this region of the world. Bells are harvested primarily for their plentiful meat, though their shells are also prized among collectors. A typical adult Bell Crab is roughly 10 feet in diameter, easily dwarfing similar arthropod species.



THE SEA COAT

The local crabbers have gone to great lengths to harvest the bells. They have developed a specialized diving suit, known colloquially as a "sea coat," which is designed to provide the wearer enough air to dive to the sea floor, slay a crab, and return to the surface. Coat-clad crabbers generally descend upon their prey in teams of 4 to 6. The ensuing underwater melee is viscious and casualty rates are high.

A Sea Coat costs 1500sp. It protects and encumbers as Plate (AC 18) and provides 1 turn (10 minutes) of breathable air underwater. On land, it is bulky and uncomfortable, reducing the wearer's movement rate by half.

BELL CRAB Armor 18, Move 120' (in water) 60' (on land), HD6, HP36, 2 Claws 1d6/1d8 damage, Morale 10. Meat and shell worth 1000sp.

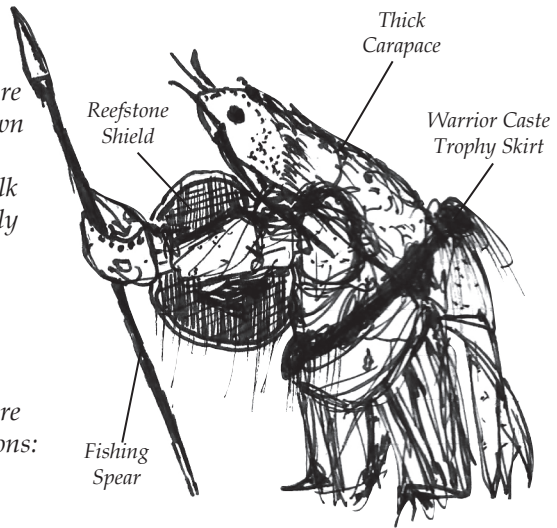
NEPHROPIDS

The Nephropids of Morton Island are a fascinating species. They are known locally as "Mortlobs" (in reference to their lobster-like appearance). Folk in Dretcher's Bay almost universally fear and distrust these creatures.

I must admit, their alien customs are nearly impenetrable even to a dedicated scholar such as myself. Still, certain aspects of their nature can be discerned. The Nephropids are collectively driven by two motivations: to spawn and to protect bell crabs (though the reasoning behind the latter continues to perplex me). I have spent countless days watching the Nephropids herd Bell colonies like shepherds tending a beloved flock. I've seen them ambush and kill crabbers who try to harm the bells. Still, I have scant evidence of their motivation.

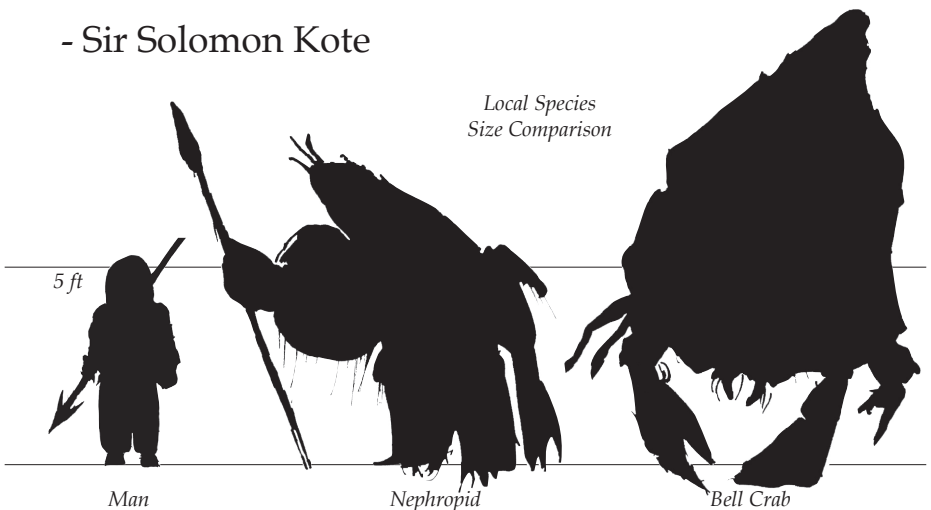
These creatures not only feel pain, they *only* feel pain.

- Sir Solomon Kote



NEPHROPID Armor 19, Move 120' (in water) 100' (on land), HD4, HP24, Claw 1d6 damage, Spear 1d8 damage Morale 9.

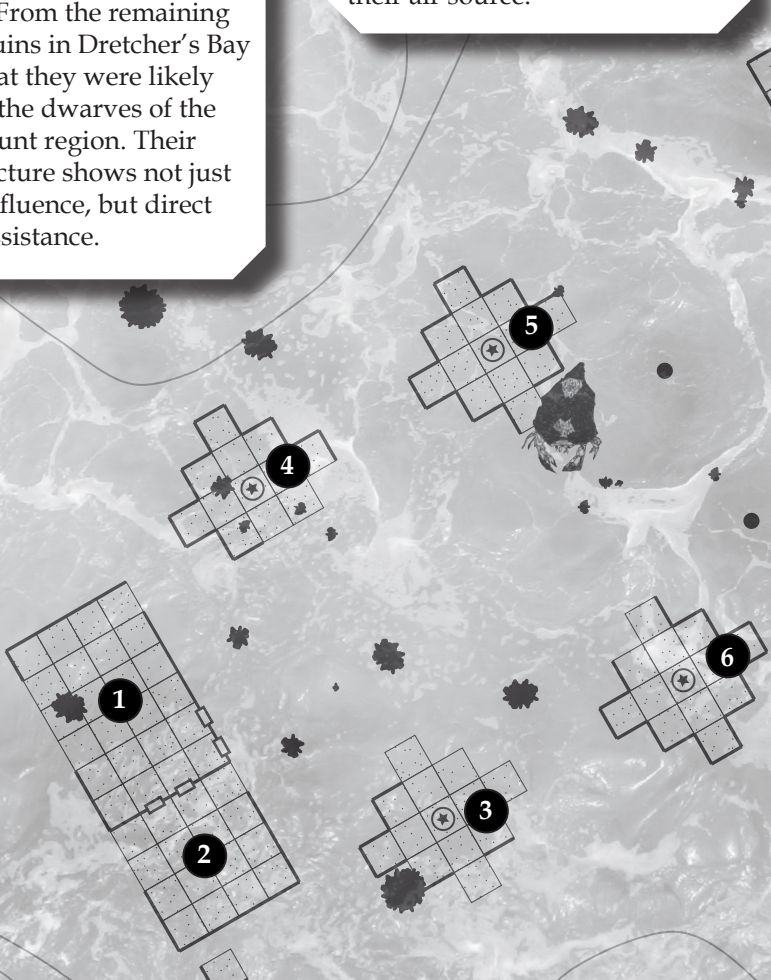
Agony: Each time a Nephropid suffers damage it gains a permanent +1 damage bonus on all of its attacks. When a Nephropid is first encountered, roll a d10 to determine a it's current damage bonus.



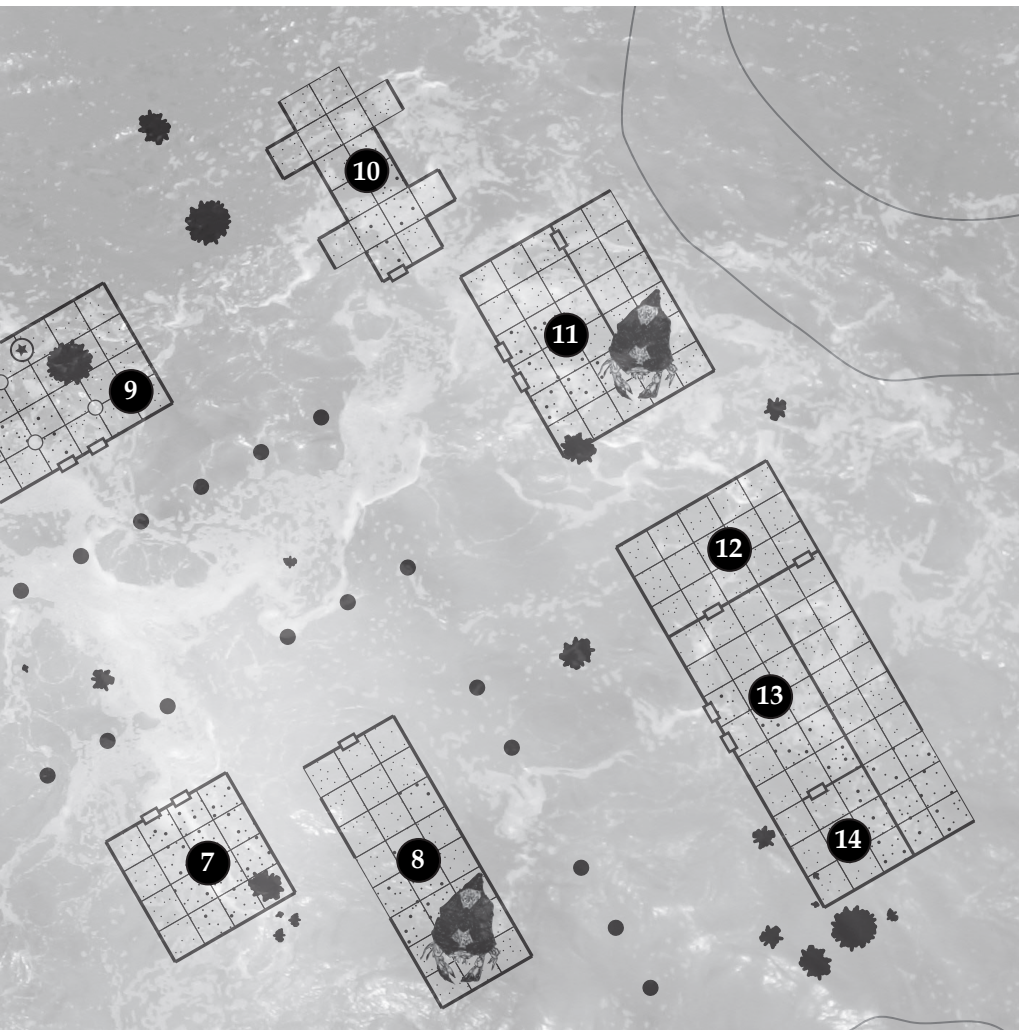
THE SECRETS OF ACRAY

Little is known of the Acrayans. Their way of life was swallowed by the sea. From the remaining stretch of ruins in Dretcher's Bay we learn that they were likely allied with the dwarves of the Brackenmount region. Their fine architecture shows not just dwarven influence, but direct dwarven assistance.

The water here is 40' - 50' deep. Base chance of drowning is 10% per minute of diving. Characters with Sea Coats or other means of breathing underwater don't have to concern themselves with this unless they exceed the limits of their air source.



BELL CRAB Armor 18, Move 120' (in water) 60' (on land), HD6, HP36, 2 Claws 1d6/1d8 damage, Morale 10. Meat and shell worth 1000sp.



1. Lair of Ghyllena, a dolphin sorceress.

2. Two clumps of gold coins each worth 50gp

3. Statue of an angry ape god.

4. Statue of a laughing ape god.

5. Statue of a wise ape god. **Bell crab**.

6. Statue of a heroic ape god.

7. Empty Ruin

8. **Bell Crab**

9. Statue of an ape god's head. Three clumps of gold worth 50gp each.

10. Ancient dwarven shield (+2AC) half buried in sand.

11. **Bell Crab**. Four clumps of gold coins worth 50 each. Human skeleton inside a Sea Coat.

12. Empty ruin

13. Chamber full of brightly glowing seahorses.

14. Locked stone vault. 129gp inside.

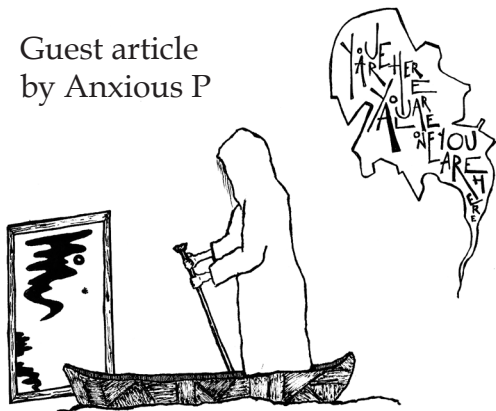
OARSMEN & THEIR WOES

"Oh sure, I knew him since we was just boys. It was that secret he held. Horrible thing he did, for certain. But he held it far too deep, in that bad place. Mind would go a-runnin' from him. Days at a time if I remember. Strange things during those stretches. But it came to pass, that is, after many years of slowly fading from us... that he just stopped talkin'. Took to fashioning himself a small boat. A row boat. Light load. Then he made himself an oar and walked off into the forest, towards the river. Hear he takes passengers in the deep wood, those brooks that ain't moved since time began. I dunno... odd thing, insanity. Yeah, he won't be takin' me anywhere in this lifetime."

- Anonymous and Previously Long-term Relation to a hereby unnamed Oarsman.

Anywhere. That's where an Oarsman will take you. If you let them and only if you require them. Specifically, an Oarsman will take you Anywhere Else. Whilst in a moment of dire need for abandon, to slip the bounds of a situation/environment completely, this is when an individual (or group of) may successfully seek out these queerest of navigators. And by way of this desperation, one must find their way towards the heartbeat of a wooded lot of nearly any size.

Guest article
by Anxious P



Follow the pulse and though you may not know as to what it is you are trailing, it will not be necessary to locate the Oarsman's creek. It will find you. A trickling which grows almost imperceptibly louder with each step. The sound accompanied by a, contrastingly, noticeable presence of decay within the surrounding foliage and landscape. And there will be a great dimming of all things, a slow decline of hope and motivation, desire and courage-through-belief. You are now in the Land of Brooks and Streams, where the shared concept of will and spirit belong only to the sleeping fey and might be found buried deep within the falsely recalled memories of childhood.

But it is, of course, a great calling that brought you to this place. So, the Oarsman will wait for you to come to the waterway. By which point, you will see nothing but an endless expanse of dead-nature interlaced with the innumerable connections of small creeks, ranging in various widths.

Yet, it stands true that these creeks all share a single feature, in that to travel upon them would seem obviously impossible. In fact, most individuals find the initial sight of an Oarsman, rowboat-ferry resting motionlessly in a floor of pebbles beneath four inches of water, rather ridiculous. If not for the inexpressible, amorphous phantom looming just above the boat. The Oarsman's Woe.

Once having been viewed upon, this 'Woe' will begin to whisper. Spitting pitched words of the worst manner of content, briefly filling your mind with an abysmal memory or feeling of a memory before instilling a manic longing for expedition. At which point, the Oarsman will ask if you would like to be somewhere else. And if so, climb aboard.

An Oarsman's boat is capable of accommodating any number of individuals and/or items for travel. Though, this ferry will never be made available to those wishing to return precious items/valuables to a safer, more lucrative, environment. The offer is presented for those who are to be considered thoroughly displaced in relation to their existing situation/environment. Saying, there is no single reason as to why they should be where they are and/or to be in said place would mean certain death. The Oarsmen exist to fundamentally alter one's current conditions. (i.e. to change the game, as it stands, in the event that it sucks.) could not overcome

themselves, or their situation, forcing them to row impossible channels, which bend space and time at the will of sadness, until their death.

A Woe is hereby understood to be the literal manifestation of the source of a person's sorrow, namely an Oarsman. Best described as a large, gelatinous puff of black smoke, the Woe will whisper a thorough recollection of that which drove the Oarsman to such a lobotomized state of grief. It is disturbing to hear. They define their existence by puppeteering this individual, who could not overcome themselves, or their situation, forcing them to row impossible channels, which bend space and time at the will of sadness, until their death.

Once the adventuring party has boarded the Oarsman's boat it is the Referee's duty to randomly select a player. This will reflect as to which character will be required to pay the Fare.

OARSMAN'S FARE (d10)

1-4: d10 years' worth of memories
(Save vs Temporary Level Drain)

5-6: d10 fingernails (1 HP Damage per every two fingernails)

7-8: Vial of sweat, blood or ejaculate
(acquired prior to trip)

9-10: Vitality (Switch worst ability score with Strength for d4 days. If Strength is already the lowest ability score, switch with Constitution)

HIS EYES FELL AS HE SPOKE HIS WOE . . . (D66)

- 11 Participated in the fatal stoning of a childhood friend.
- 12 Failed to save spouse from home fire.
- 13 Born with weakness of bone to a family of soldiers.
- 14 Beaten by father in the evenings throughout childhood.
- 15 Rejected by lifelong love for being a mute.
- 16 Consistently made to feel ignorant by family and friends.
- 21 Beaten and robbed by bandits in front of daughter.
- 22 Participated in the flogging of a mentally retarded child during adolescence.
- 23 Masturbated for most of life to thoughts of a sibling.
- 24 Adopted son left home to be with his birth parents and never returned.
- 25 Ignored the rape of a woman.
- 26 Verbally abused spouse to the point of insanity.
- 31 In a blind rage, kicked beloved dog with such force that it died.
- 32 Mutilated a man's genitals for being a homosexual.
- 33 Mutilated own genitals for being homosexual.
- 34 Enjoyed seeing own daughter cry.
- 35 Left frightened little boy in a tree as a child. The child fell.
- 36 Murdered a doctor for not saving spouses life.
- 41 Forced into prostitution at the age of 10.
- 42 Dismembered lover under the influence of drugs. Tried to correct it.
- 43 Found father post-suicide.
- 44 Excommunicated from religious community for fornication.
- 45 Couldn't stop being thankful for nephew's death.
- 46 Too financially poor to obtain a spouse.
- 51 Witnessed the disemboweling of a demon possessed child.
- 52 Caught self-mutilating in the nude, for arousal purposes.
- 53 Spouse died two years into marriage.
- 54 Fed clumps of dirt to child until it died.
- 55 Continued to make love to spouse long after their being deceased.
- 56 Fed accursed potion to friend causing them to gain 200 pounds.
- 61 Failed to intervene in close friend's suicide.
- 62 Carried a deep and unspoken love for spousal sibling.
- 63 Drunkenly murdered a homeless man for the sheer fact that he was unclean.
- 64 Suffers from mild mental retardation, but enough to be socially ostracized.
- 65 Participated in a child-killing ritual due to peer pressure.
- 66 Never mustered the constitution for suicide.

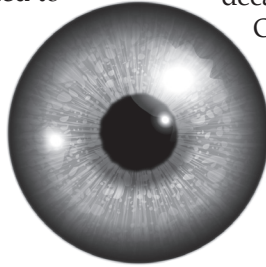
WITH THINE EYE BEHELD

This adventure was inspired by the illustration on page 41 of *LotFP Rules and Magic* hardcover. One night I needed a quick one-shot and this is what I came up with. It ended up being pretty cool. The players recovered the Eye of the Cyclops and installed it in one of their pet dogs. It's had a pretty big impact on my campaign. Another player got married to Scrapegrace Behelden on a whim, so that was a thing.

BACKGROUND

Long ago, a cyclops roamed the world. He eventually died and was buried by his devout followers, those who viewed him as a god. This pitiable creature was no deity. He was a mortal man who was forced to receive the Eye of the Cyclops and roam the world as a monster as punishment for his treasons against a mad king.

The Eye of the Cyclops - Any living creature who replaces one of their eyes with this gem grows 15' tall, doubles their Hit Dice, and receives +4 STR and -4 CHA. In addition, the bearer is totally immune to blinding effects and can cast *True Seeing* at will. Once the eye is implanted, removing it will result in the death of the host. If sold, the gem is worth 3,000sp.



THE BEHELDEN CLAN

"Behelden" isn't even a word, but Poppa One-Eye doesn't know or care about wordplay. That's what he calls his severely disturbed family, "The Behelden," those who the Godclops has looked upon with favor. The Behelden are a cargo cult of sorts. Poppa One-Eye found this tomb years ago and developed an entire crazy mythology based on its cyclopean motifs. He eventually took a wife, Charity, who birthed a brood of followers for the madman to exploit and brainwash. After decades of lunacy, Poppa One-Eye has instilled his clan with a deep fear of the wrathful Godclops, who watches constantly from its cave, and demands each family member sacrifice an eye.

Poppa One-eye
(Father, Cult Leader)

Charity Behelden
(Mother, a real mess)

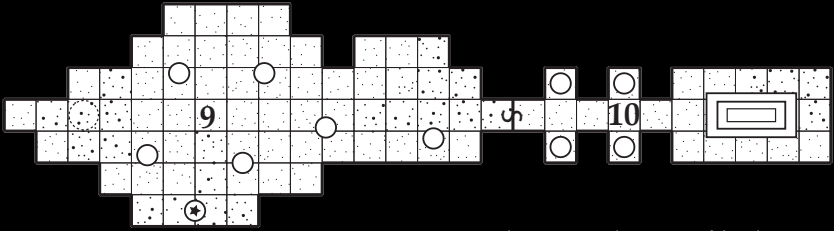
Scrapegrace Behelden
(Mixed-up daughter, 17 years old)

Stonekill Behelden
(Weirdly distant son, 22 years old)

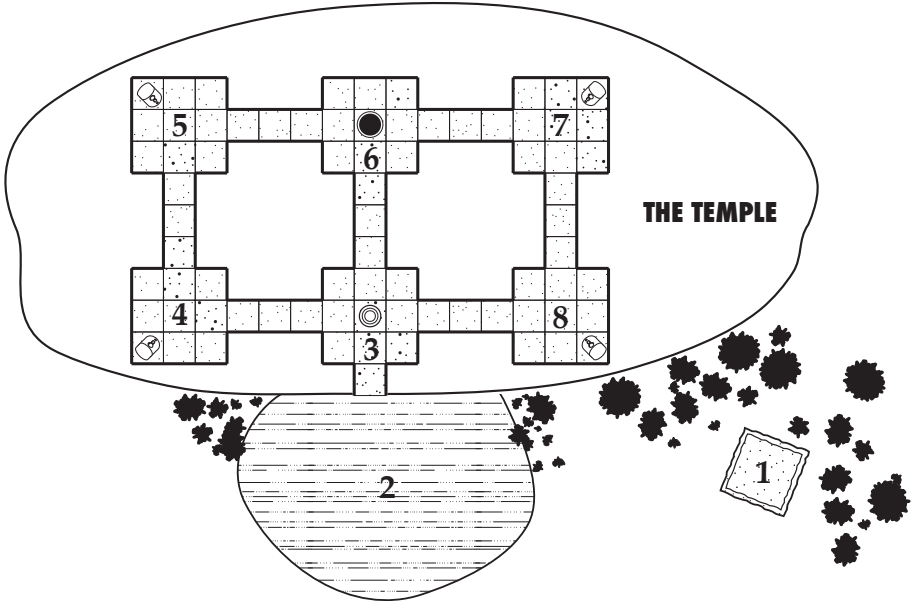
Truffle Behelden
(Psychotic son, 16 years old)

Hunter Behelden*
(Poppa One-Eye's lunatic brother)
*Armed with *Longbow +1*

THE TOMB



Natural cave. Ceiling is 20' high.



WANDERING FUCKERS

Check for wandering monsters once every turn (10 minutes). Roll a d6. On a 1 or 2, roll on the wandering monster table below:

Wandering Monsters (1d6):

- 1: Poppa One-eye
- 2: Scrapegrace Behelden
- 3: Stonekill Behelden
- 4: Truffle Behelden
- 5: Hunter Behelden
- 6: Roll Twice

BEHELDEN KINFOLK Armor 12, Movement 120', HD2, HP6 (cept Poppa One-eye who's HP12), Crude Bludgeon or Knife 1d4 damage, Morale 8.

TOMB SLIME Armor 16, Movement 90', HD5, HP15, Caustic Splash 1d8 damage, if maximum damage is rolled the victim is covered in slime and takes 1d4 per round until the slime is removed, Morale 12.

MAP KEY

1. The Cabin

This is the horrible, rickety cabin where the Behelden family beds down at night. During the day, **Charity Behelden** will be here doing chores and praying to the Godclops. A freshly severed pig's head is placed atop a 7' wooden pillar out front.

2. Waterfall Pool

There's a 20% chance that a random member of the Behelden family is bathing here.

3. Entry Chamber

The entrance to the tomb consists of massive stone statue of a cyclopean head set into the side of a steep, wooded hill. The statue's mouth is carved out to serve as an entryway. A stream of water pours from the mouth into a pool 20' below. Inside there's a 3' stone pillar in the center of the chamber. Atop the pillar is a stone bowl containing 7 decomposed eyeballs. The water streaming from statue's mouth comes from a grate in the base of the pillar.

4. Statue Chamber

In the corner there's a stone statue of a great cyclopean head. The statue's eye is a gem of pure Fire Opal worth 500sp.

5. Statue Chamber

In the corner there's a stone statue of a great cyclopean head. The statue's eye is a large emerald worth 500sp.

6. The Dark Place

A circular shaft in the center of this chamber descends 30' before opening into area 9.

7. Defiled Statue

In the corner there's a partially shattered stone statue of a great cyclopean head. The statue's eye is missing. A **Tomb Slime** is in the corner waiting for victims.

8. Statue Chamber

In the corner there's a stone statue of a great cyclopean head. The statue's eye is a large diamond worth 500sp.

9. Offertory Cave

An 8' tall statue of a cyclops presides over this natural cave, overlooking 6 earthen pots, each filled to the brim with quartz crystals (worth 250sp per pot). If either the pots or the crystals are disturbed, water will begin to pour from the statue's mouth, slowly filling the chamber. The water level rises 1' per minute until the complex is completely flooded.

10. Tomb of the Cyclops

This chamber contains 4 pots of quartz crystals (250sp per pot) and a 15' long sarcophagus containing the skeletal remains of the cyclops. **The Eye of the Cyclops** (pg 14) is set in one of the skeleton's eye sockets.



Advanced Dolmenry With Greg Gorgonmilk

Last summer I was working on a folkloric fantasy RPG called *The Dolmen Road*. I almost threw a fit when I discovered Greg Gorgonmilk and Gavin Norman's *Dolmenwood* project which shared both a similar aesthetic and a dolmen-based title. Greg and Gavin's stuff also seemed way more refined than my own ideas, to the extent that I eventually abandoned my own dolmenry and started hounding Greg for details.

CK: Can you summarize your *Dolmenwood* project in a nutshell?

GG: The *Dolmenwood* project is comprised of several books that describe an out-of-the-way tract of wilderness where pagan and prehuman powers lurk. It's co-written with Gavin Norman, who shares my enthusiasm for moss-covered stones and half-collapsed cottages. The first book we're putting out is called *Dolmenwood Character Archaics* (a nod to the 1975 *Wee Warriors* publication) which will introduce eight different player character classes for use with the setting. *Archaics* will feature artwork by Andrew Walter and Matthew Adams.

After that is the *Dolmenwood* book proper, a numbered hexcrawl in the tradition of Judges Guild that will detail every nook and cranny of the Wood. I am a fan of RPG books that entertain both at and away from the gaming table, so that is one of the goals here. I want an object that will inspire creative fits in the reader.

CK: The thing that drew me to your *Dolmenwood* stuff was an unspoken aesthetic, which I immediately recognized but always struggle to articulate. How would you describe the "feel" of *Dolmenwood*?

GG: Yes, it's difficult to put a name to the ghost we're channeling. One of the things that should be obvious from the get-go is that we've tried to avoid the Tolkien Influence that pervades most pseudo-Medieval fantasy settings. Not to knock Tolkien -- I am a huge fan -- but our focus has been on the folklore figures and imagery that predate the rise of modern fantasy literature. Up until the 19th Century, Western civilization as a whole viewed the wilderness as threatening, uninviting and horrible. A place where godless things dwell. Those are the old fears that we'd like to awaken. Or reference, at the very least.

CK: What's the "Appendix N" for the project? Books/films/music that you'd point to as inspirational.

GG: There are a few non-fiction works that I find myself returning to: A book called *The Forest in Folklore and Mythology* (1928) by Alexander Porteous, Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase & Fable and Alfred Watkins' *The Old Straight Track* (1925), which introduced the concept of ley lines. Gavin and I have similar tastes in odd electronic music. For Dolmenwood in particular I find that Current 93's *Thunder Perfect Mind* seems to touch the right creative nodes. Also Lustmord's *The Monstrous Soul* has a 25-minute track called "Primordial Atom" that is about as close to setting foot in Dolmenwood as we're likely to get. Still gives me chills.

CK: How much of the setting comes from your own campaign(s)? Are you running a Dolmenwood game currently?

GG: The last game I ran was set in Dolmenwood, and I hope to get back there after the Holidays. Gavin has refereed a short campaign at his home in Berlin too. From a meta perspective Dolmenwood is really the product of every dank, monster-haunted forest I've ever dropped hapless PCs into. Ygraine the Sorceress (whose manse is located on the eastern end of Dolmenwood) is the latest manifestation of a cruel and self-obsessed female magic-user who has been showing up in my campaigns regularly since I was a teen. I think most DMs are in the habit of recycling specific archetypes that are meaningful

to them. Whether they're doing it consciously or intuitively probably depends on the individual.

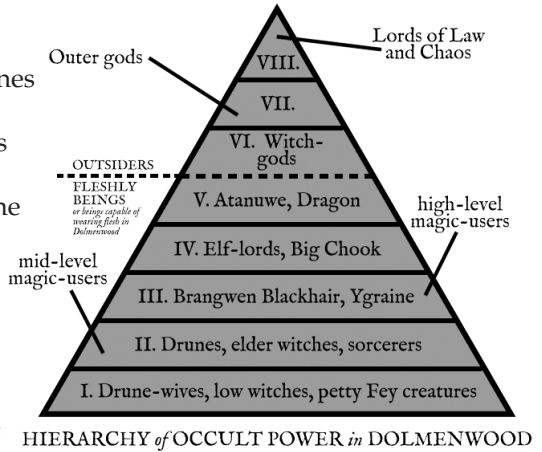
CK: You mentioned ley lines before, what role do these play in Dolmenwood? Do ley line energies have a mechanical effect?

GG: The ley line idea came about while I was in the early stages of the Dolmenwood map. At that point I knew that standing stones were going to be an element, and it seemed necessary that these plinths would be connected in some invisible, occult way. So ley lines (or dragon lines in Asia) were a natural fit. There are three such lines passing through the Wood -- not including the Ring of Chell, which draws from the power of the Ywyr line. Like rivers, leys have a definite lifespan and wane in strength over time. If you look at the map, you can see that the lines are drawn in varying thicknesses. Hoard and Lamm are thinner than Ywyr because they are significantly more ancient and are entering into their senescence. Ontologically, ley lines are the world's arteries, permeating both its material and aetheric aspects.

Stones and other objects erected on a line are a means of access for magic-users. The relationship between line and stone is mutually beneficial -- such monuments extend the lifespan of leys, concentrating their flow and preventing them from wandering off their ancient pathways to possibly split and thereby lose

potency, slowly fading into nothingness. Places where ley lines are found are typically verdant with plant life -- when such belts of forest begin to show signs of decline one can be certain that the death of the line is nearing.

In Dolmenwood, many of the stones have been altered by an order of proto-druidic sorcerers called the Drune. Each plinth possesses both a temporal script (the runes and sigils cut into its surface) and a corresponding aetheric script (visible through the use of *Analyze Codex*, a local variant of *Read Magic*. There's also *Lock Codex* and *Alter Codex*. The Drones use their knowledge of these spells (and associated symbologies) to route the ley's high-octane magical essence into various magical effects. Believing themselves to be stewards of the stones of Dolmenwood, the Drones primarily use the stones as a means of defense from prying outsiders. Certain stones have been further altered to function as entryways into the line's aetheric flow, allowing the Drones (and any others who manage to dispel the stone's protective wards) delayed teleportational passage to another point on the line. (This delay is temporal and relates to lunar cycles -- you exit the line when the opposing lunar phase appears or when the next Full Moon is at its apex. While no time appears to elapse on your end, weeks will have passed in the Wood.) Last, specific stones have been used as gates between



this world and a place called the Otherwold, a place corresponding to the Fey Kingdoms of world folklore, Dolmenwood in its aetheric aspect.

CK: I've been jonesing for pagan-style clerics in my LotFP campaign (as an alternate to the typical Judeo-Christian/Hammer film variety). It sounds like Dolmenwood drunes might cover that territory a bit? What can you say about the Witch Gods?

GG: The Drones are part of a tapestry of minor groups operating in the Wood. They have a touch of the pagan about them, and are known to sacrifice non-Drones for quasi-religious purposes. Essentially they're egoists in the same way that James Raggi's cultists of Duvan'ku are -- all of their acquired occult knowledge is bent to the task of fortifying their own power. They revere no gods, no nature spirits. In fact they view such beings as tools that -- with the proper artifice -- can be entrapped to serve their own ends.

They're also male chauvinists. You won't find any female members among them, but they do have wives and families. The women of their little culture are called Drune-wives and devote themselves to child-rearing and domestic pursuits. Their sons are expected to become Drones -- those who turn away from that path are cast out as pariahs. Daughters of the Drune are called braithmaids. Many choose to stay among their people and eventually marry up with the young men. A minority of braithmaids choose the path of celibacy and take up with the Witches of Dolmenwood.

Sex and archaic gender roles are something of a theme in the Wood. In the real world I'm very much an advocate of "do whatever the hell makes you feel alive." I don't advertise it often, but I have lived with a gay black man for years. It's very uncomplicated -- I'm not into dudes, we're good friends, we nerd out together all the time. I use that as a disclaimer to show that I'm not a total asshole, because the social environment we've confabulated in Dolmenwood is anything but egalitarian and ideal. You can't play a male witch, nor can you be a female Drune. This is intentional. Drones represent a kind of male magic, while Witches are wrapped up in the Female Mystery. It's part of the socio-occult reality of the setting. Why? Because I think it's interesting and it creates conflict and that in itself is interesting. Folks who want to run games in a world where our

modern ideas about gender roles are reinforced are totally welcome to do so. Dolmenwood is not that. It's backward and weird and uninviting. It cares nothing for you and your ideas about social justice. It's a giant, leafy monster that would have you dead and putrefying at its rooted feet.

Witches are women who have made blood-pacts with one of the Witch-gods. I suppose you could call these beings intermediate spirits -- a class of petty godlings that have merged to some degree with the Wood itself. There are many such entities -- (make more up!) -- but in Dolmenwood only a few hold sway. The eldest is sleepy Erttu, the Devouring Mother. She takes shape in dreams, for the most part, and is not particularly communicative. Very slow to anger, but if certain conditions are met she can become a kind of psychic conflagration. Her servants are few. Hasturiel Thrice-Crowned, Hater of Men, is her sister. Her servants are many. Currently there is an unspoken treaty between the Drones and the Witches, but it is a very fragile peace.

CK: What's a typical writing session like for this project?

GG: I can't say a lot about Gavin's methods. We have yet to meet in person. There's a large body of water and some obtrusive hunks of land that have been separating Binghamton and Berlin since the Pangaea days.

We share many Google documents, though, and we update them when the creative fits come. Some of these docs are related to *Dolmenwood*, some are other top secret projects. We've done some real-time collaborating through this medium. Some of our best stuff has come about this way. It's weird to think that humanity has reached the point where two writers on different continents can write on the same page simultaneously. I love the future.

Speaking for myself -- Gorgonmilk's imagination mojo is wildly unpredictable. I wish I was that type of creative who can just sit down and produce whenever and wherever I like, but over the years I've come to accept that my muse is fickle. She needs to be coaxed out. At night. With good weed and a lot of caffeine. Never booze. I often play music when I'm getting into the proper headspace. Usually something rhythmic -- anything too mild or gentle just doesn't keep the synapses firing. Aphex Twin's *I Care Because You Do* is a perennial favorite. Lately I've been digging on a lot of "Witch House" artists -- Ritualz, Balam Acab, CRIM3S -- among others.

CK: Is *Dolmenwood* tied to a specific system?

GG: It is. We've written everything in the key of *LotFP* and plan to float the manuscript to James Raggi for consideration when it's suitably polished. In the meantime,

an introductory *LotFP*-compatible supplement called *Dolmenwood Character Archaics* will appear on *RPGNow* at some point this year. *Archaics* will showcase several new character classes peculiar to the Wood. Some of these fall into the category of the "race-class" -- the bat-faced Woodgrue, earthy Moss Dwarfs, cervine and sinister Deorlings, and catty Grimalkin for instance, or various sentient beast types that have taken to walking upright like characters from a Grimm Brothers fairy story. Others are magical specialists like the Drune and the Witches (the latter divided into Sisterhood sub-types). I'm very happy to report that we have the art skills of Matthew Adams and Andrew Walter at work in this first offering -- two of my favorite illustrators involved in the OSR.

CK: Any estimate on when these books are coming out?

GG: I can say with confidence that *Character Archaics* will appear sometime around August. The setting book might be out by the ending of 2015 provided there are no major setbacks.

CK: Thanks so much for the interview. I can't wait to take my group a'hunting down in *Dolmenwood*.

GG: My pleasure!

For more Dolmenwood news, check out Greg's blog over at gorgonmilk.blogspot.com

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