

PLAY / DESIGN / CREATE / DISCUSS ROLEPLAYING GAMES

# ZINE OF WONDROUS POWER



ISSUE 04  
FROM THE PAST INTO THE FUTURE

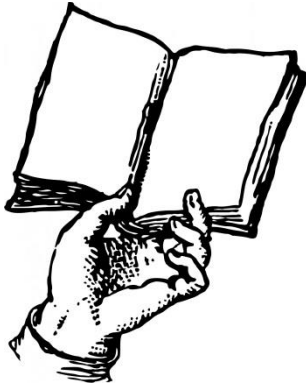
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# Zine OF WONDROUS POWER

**PLAY / DESIGN / CREATE / DISCUSS ROLEPLAYING GAMES**

Issue 04

From the Past into the Future



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# Welcome to Issue 04

Hello, reader, and welcome to the Zine of Wondrous Power. For issue 04 I'm coming back to the more regular format of the zine, after doing something a bit different with issue 03, The Ioun Codex. That was a fun experiment, I will say, and I always envisioned the zine being able to handle the multiple-articles format as well as the occasional deep dive into one theme. I learned a lot from writing and publishing The Ioun Codex, and I look forward to using those lessons to keep making this zine better, regardless of the format of the issue being published.

I don't need to tell you that this year has been a hot mess, and that has affected every creator I know. I had originally planned that by this time of year you'd be reading issue 05, but at this point I'm just happy that I got two issues out to you. There are certainly a multitude of truly important issues going on all over the world right now, some literally of life or death importance, so I thank you for your patronage and support. It means a ton to me.

## FROM THE PAST INTO THE FUTURE

Fall, my favorite season, is here, and I love it. Summer was a bit rough mentally for me, but this cool weather and the autumn colors are restoring my soul. On the gaming front I'm playing in two long-distance games that fit into my ever-changing schedule. As much as I like fantasy, sci-fi has been on my mind lately, both in my fiction reading, as well as in my game playing and design. This issue, you'll see, runs the gamut of my gaming likes.

A Talmudic Bestiary is a collection of creatures from Jewish lore, a project I started working on years ago and finally get to share. Welcome to the Dalelands is a travel essay about my travels in the Midwest and how it tied into my gaming life. The Workman mecha is another project I started years ago back when I was publishing and wanted a futuristic product line. What's the Point of It? is an essay about gaming while the world burns around you, and why I still do it. The Iounmancer, a prestige class about mastery of ioun magic, launches a new series expanding the material originally presented in The Ioun Codex. The Secret of Brook's Mine is a small dungeon crawl with a surprise at the end which could propel the characters to whole new horizons. And lastly, in Games as Essays, I talk about games primarily expressing ideas rather than rules for play.

This issue marks the first time I'm doing design for an existing game in the zine and I'm excited about it. A Talmudic Bestiary and The Iounmancer have rules usable with the excellent Old-School Essentials from Necrotic Gnome. I hope you enjoy the issue.

# A Talmudic Bestiary

Years ago I published a magazine called **Targum**, focused on ancient world roleplaying games, particularly Testament, Green Ronin's biblical setting for d20/3e D&D. At the time, I wrote most of a fantasy bestiary featuring creatures from Jewish lore that I kept running into during my Talmud studies. Given that one of my perennial creative goals in life is finding ways to infuse my spirituality into my work, it made perfect sense to write a supplement for fantasy RPGs. I never finished the article, though, and then stopped writing and publishing games altogether, so the bestiary has sat in my hard drive for close to 10 years. I dug it up recently while organizing my files, and I was pleased to find the game design still held up fairly well. So after some polishing, I'm finally letting these creatures see the light of day. I've used game stats compatible with Necrotic Gnome's Old-School Essentials because they are simple enough to be ported to any other fantasy game.



## Adnei Ha-Sadeh

*A large [creature] of the fields, and a sort of large cord extends from the ground where it grows. It is joined at the navel to the cord that emerges from the ground, and it is formed like a human being, in its face, hands and feet, and no creature may approach it, for it kills and mauls anything that approaches it. When they want to capture it, they shoot arrows at the cord until it breaks, and it cries out in a bitter voice, and dies instantly. (Commentary to Mishnah, Kilayim 8:5)*

The adnei ha-sadeh (master of the field) is a vicious creature that suffers no intruders into its territory. It appears as a feral human covered in foliage and natural detritus, something between an animal and a plant, with a long umbilical cord that stretches from its navel to an anchored point on the ground. Severing the cord is the only way to kill an adnei ha-sadeh. They are ideal guardians, immortal unless killed, generally found protecting important areas such as holy sites or secluded fortresses. Adnei ha-sadeh are always solitary as they kill each other on sight. New

adnei ha-sadeh are generally planted from the stem of a deceased one, or from rare seeds said to come from paradise.

**Armor Class:** 5 [14]

**Hit Dice:** 6+6 (30hp)

**Attack:** Fists (2d6), Slam (see Grapple)

**To-Hit 0/Base Attack:** 13/+6

**Movement:** 40' (see anchored special ability)

**Saves:** As Fighter 6

**Morale:** 10

**Alignment:** Neutral

**XP:** 350

**Number Appearing:** 1

**Treasure:** 2d4gp value

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**Anchored:** Connected to the ground by a 100' umbilical cord. If the cord is severed, the adnei ha-sadeh takes 10 damage per round until the cord is healed or it dies.

**Grapple:** On a successful attack, it has 1-in-6 chance of grappling opponent and immediately performing a slam attack for +1d6 damage.

**Master of the field:** Each power may be used three times per day lasting 10 minutes. The adnei ha-sadeh is unaffected by the vines or the mist.

- **Concealing mist:** 30' radius around adnei ha-sadeh. All vision is blocked, and all attacks have a 3-in-6 chance of missing.
- **Entangling vines:** 30' radius around the adnei ha-sadeh. Creatures move at half speed, and must save vs petrification each round or become entangled, losing all actions until they escape the area or effect ends.
- **Petrified skin:** +3 bonus to armor class.
- **Summon animals:** 1d4 wolves (or similar 2HD animal), arrive in 1 turn.

## **Kative Demon**

*There is one great demon whose name is Kative, "Arrow" in Hebrew. The Psalmist alludes to this when he says, "The arrow that flies by day" (Psalms 91:5). His power is greatest [...] in the condition betwixt sun and shade. No one beholding him, man or beast, can live, but drops down dead at once. [...] So great indeed is his power for evil [...], that the Rabbis prohibited chastising [people...], lest 'Arrow' should avail himself of his propitious season [...] and the result should prove fatal. (Midrash Bamidbar [Numbers] Rabba 12, Midrash Tehillim [Psalms] Rabbah, Midrash Eicha [Lamentations] Rabbah, and Midrash Shir ha-Shirim [Song of Songs] Rabbah)*

Kative are solitary, elusive, wicked demons that lurk in shadows, sowing discord, attacking from afar, staying hidden lest the trail of dead creatures who beheld them

give them away. In battle, they are wily, vicious, and sadistic, appearing as an amorphous shadowy mass in order to draw out combat and cause as much damage possible, changing into their true form for the killing stroke, or if it needs an advantage.

**Armor Class:** 4 [15]

**Hit Dice:** 7 (32 hp)

**Attack:** Shadow arrow (1d6+1), or claw (1d8)

**To-Hit 0/Base Attack:** 12/+7

**Movement:** 90' (30') / 240' (80') flying

**Saves:** As Fighter 8

**Morale:** 11

**Alignment:** Evil

**XP:** 850

**Number Appearing:** 1

**Treasure:** None

---

**Deathly true form:** Creature 1HD or less that see the true form of the kative instantly die. Creatures 2-7HD must save vs death at +2. Creatures 8HD or more are immune.

**Hide in shadows:** 75% if motionless. While in combat in a shadowy environment, all attacks against the kative suffer a -2 penalty.

**Mundane damage immunity:** Can only be harmed by magical attacks.

**Shadow arrows:** As if shot by a long bow.

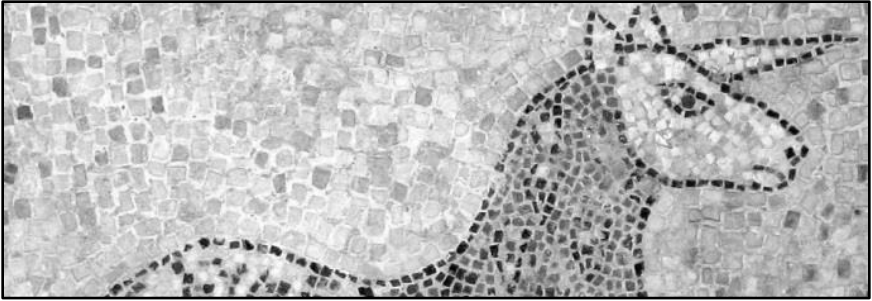
**Sow dissent:** At will, once per round. Save vs spell or roll 1d6: on 1-5, target becomes unfriendly towards all other creatures within 30'; on 6, target becomes hostile and has a 1-in-6 chance of attacking their allies. Constructs, undead and mindless creatures are immune. Effect lasts for 1 hour.

## **Re'em**

*Like a firstling bull in his majesty, He has horns like the horns of the re'em; With them he goes the peoples, The ends of the earth one and all. (Deuteronomy 33:17)*

The re'em is a large land animal resembling a bigger oryx with a long horn on its forehead. Re'em are larger than most grazing herd animals, and can jump extreme distances. They are found usually in pairs or small herds, and can be captured and trained to become mounts. There are tales of two-horned re'em, although the horns grow close together, giving the impression of being a single one.





**Armor Class:** 7 [12]  
**Hit Dice:** 3 (15hp)  
**Attack:** Horn (1d8)  
**To-Hit 0/Base Attack:** 16/+3  
**Movement:** 150' (50')  
**Saves:** As Fighter 1  
**Morale:** 8  
**Alignment:** Neutral  
**XP:** 35  
**Number Appearing:** 1d6+1  
**Treasure:** None

---

**Charge:** Requires 20' running start, inflicts double damage. Cannot be in melee to charge.

**Jump:** Can jump 10' vertically and 30' horizontally from standing (20'/50' with a 20' running start).

**Riding mount:** Can be trained to be mounts. If engaged in melee, both rider and re'em can attack.

## Shamir

*The shamir was made at twilight on the sixth day of creation together with other extraordinary things. It is about as large as a barleycorn, and it possesses the remarkable property of cutting the hardest of diamonds. It was used for the stones in the breastplate worn by the high priest. [... and] the stones from which the Temple was built, because the law prohibited iron tools to be used for the work in the Temple. The shamir was guarded in Paradise until Solomon needed it. With the destruction of the Temple the shamir vanished. (Haggadah, Legends of the Jews Chapter I: The Creation of the World – The Sixth Day)*

The shamir is a diminutive magical creature, the size of a grain of barley, possessed of the remarkable supernatural ability to cut any stone. The shamir has no natural habitat or ecology; it was created and exists solely for its specific purpose. Whenever

the shamir appears in history, it shows up wrapped in woolen cloth stored inside a lead basket filled with barley, the only receptacle capable of keeping the worm safe.

**Armor Class:** 7 [12]

**Hit Dice:** ½ (2hp)

**Attack:** Special, see split stone ability

**To-Hit 0/Base Attack:** N/A

**Movement:** 1'

**Saves:** Special, see immortal ability

**Morale:** 10

**Alignment:** Neutral

**XP:** 50

**Number Appearing:** 1 (Unique)

**Treasure:** None

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**Immortal:** Immune to all forms of damage. Cannot die except by a divine decree.

**Noncombatant:** Cannot attack or defend itself.

**Split stone:** Can split any stone, gem, or crystal it comes in contact with. Against creatures made of these materials, it deals 3d8+6 damage per round of contact. A master stonemason or gem carver may use the shamir as a “tool” of their craft, always resulting in a masterwork piece of art.

## Shedim Demon

*Our Rabbis taught: Six things are said concerning demons: 'In regard to three they are like the ministering angels': they have wings [...]; and they fly from one end of the world to the other [...]; and they know what will happen [...]. 'And in regard to three, they are like human beings': they eat and drink [...]; they propagate [...]; and they die [...]. (Babylonian Talmud Chagigah 16a)*

Shedim are trickster, feral demons, like horned, feral humans in appearance, their legs resembling those of a bird with four talons. Shedim have six wings (either bird- or bat-like) which they keep folded close to their bodies when not in flight. Wilderness shedim tend to not wear clothes, while those in cities adopt their host cultures' style of dress.

Shedim are consummate agents of misfortune, manipulating the environment in order to test a creature's faith, beliefs, and convictions. Their mission in life is to entice and tempt those with free will, though never to force them to make a contrary act. They are also incredibly curious about the world around them, ending up as repositories of lore on a vast variety of subjects. If a shedim mates with a humanoid creature, the offspring is always a shedim tiefling.

**Armor Class:** 5 [14] or by armor  
**Hit Dice:** 7+10 (38hp)  
**Attack:** Claw (1d8) or by weapon, magic

**To-Hit 0/Base Attack:** 12/+7  
**Movement:** 90' (30') / 240' (80') flying

**Saves:** As Fighter 7

**Morale:** 8

**Alignment:** Chaotic

**XP:** 850

**Number Appearing:** 1-4

**Treasure:** By equipment

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**Lore:** 3-in-6 chance of knowing lore about any item, place, person, event, or magic.

**Magic powers:** Each power can be used three times per day lasting 1 hour or until ended.

- **Curse:** One target has 3-in-6 chance of taking no action each turn. Bless negates effect.
- **Illusion:** Range 30', visual and auidal, no concentration required, remains until touched or dispelled.
- **Invisibility:** As the magic-user spell.
- **Misfortune:** All creatures in a 30' radius suffer -2 to all dice rolls.
- **Precognition:** May roll two dice and choose the best result.

## Shedim Tiefling

Shedim tieflings look like their humanoid parent's race, with the horns, wings, and bird-like legs of a shedim. Shedim tieflings share the following traits:

- Your shedim legacy grants you supernatural toughness and innate charm. Your inborn magic stems from your charisma.
- Alignment: Chaotic.
- Size: Medium.
- Movement: Base land speed of 30'.
- Winged: You have bird- or bat-like wings that grant you a flight speed of 30'.
- Shedim Legacy: You can use *misfortune* (as the shedim ability) once with this trait. At 3rd level, you can cast *invisibility* (as the spell) once with this trait. At 5th level, you can create *illusion* (as the shedim ability) once with this trait. You must take an extended rest to regain uses of these trait abilities.



# Welcome to the Dalelands: Travels in the American Midwest

I had always been curious about the Midwest if only because it seemed such a foreign place to me, someone born and raised in the tropics, never more than a few miles away from the ocean. The idea of living in a land-locked area seemed baffling, if not preposterous. However, that same Midwest I couldn't fathom as a place to live was the inspiration for so many of the settings I loved when playing role-playing games. As a teen rolling d20s with my friends, it was the lands of the Known World and the Forgotten Realms that occupied my imagination. In Puerto Rico I had my fill of dense tropical forests, palm-covered beaches, and Spanish colonial buildings and ruins, but I yearned one day to see the rolling hills and endless farmlands, the massive lakes and the deep valleys through which coursed rivers as large as highways, and all the other places that inspired the lands of our collective gaming imagination.

When life presented the opportunity to start a new life, I jumped at the chance, packed everything I owned into my car, and made the nine-hundred-mile trip from Orlando, Florida to Cincinnati, Ohio. Although I had traveled to places along my route before, I had always flown. Driving meant that I got to enjoy the scenic changes as I left the flat marshes and gentle hills of Central and Northern Florida, through the small towns and orchards of Georgia, crossing the rollercoaster-like roads of the Blue Ridge Mountains, into the scenery of the my new home in the Midwest. Goodbye lands of eternal summer, hello lands of changing seasons.

For three years I lived and traveled extensively in the Midwest, from Ohio to Wisconsin to the Dakotas, from Columbus to Indianapolis to Chicago, and countless places in between. In Cincinnati, I crossed the Ohio River almost daily, seeing ships travel its mighty waters either from my car or from a pedestrian bridge. I marveled at ancient Native earthworks like the Serpent Mound in Adams County, Ohio, and thought about the cultures that inhabited these lands thousands of years prior. I drove through miles and miles of undulating corn farmland in Indiana and Illinois, passing small towns full of charm, and enormous crumbling barns standing like silent guardians of a bygone age. I dipped my feet in the cold waters of Lake Michigan, a lake so large I had to constantly remind myself it wasn't the ocean. And like an unabashed fan, I visited Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, the picturesque town where it all started for the roleplaying games hobby, and took pictures in front of all the important places.

My time in the Midwest changed me profoundly. I learned to slow down, to enjoy the different seasons, to appreciate small-town life, to like country music and ranch dressing. I learned to love nature in ways I didn't know I could, to revel in the stillness of falling snow, to appreciate the incredibly cold water of the lakes and

rivers, so different from the warm waters of the Caribbean. I learned about seasonality, about being outdoors when the sun was out, and cuddling up with a hot chocolate when it was snowing outside. I learned a bit about football, and State Fairs, and butterburgers, coney dogs with Cincinnati chili, Door County cherries, and cheese curds. I fell in love with the Midwest, plain and simple.

In thinking back to those fantasy worlds of my roleplaying games, I could see perfectly how they were shaped by imaginations that had this wonderful scenery as their backyard, how the countryside roamed by my D&D adventurers had been born from a combination of the legendary lands of Tolkien, Lewis, and the rest of the fantasy literature canon, but also by the stunning and diverse beauty of the North American Midwest.



Travels in the Midwest: (L to R, Top to Bottom) Lake Geneva Horticultural Hall, site of first Gen Con, former Gygax house, Lake Geneva, Wisconsin; Cincinnati, Ohio; Mt Rushmore, Keystone, South Dakota; Lake Michigan, Milwaukee, Wisconsin; open road in South Dakota; Halway to the North Pole marker, Door County, Wisconsin.



## WRK400 WORKMAN MODULAR MECHA

When the terraforming of Mars began in the early 22nd century, the three homesteading corporations involved quickly realized that the tried-and-true methods that worked on Luna would not be so easily translated to the red planet. The fleet of modular rovers they had all depended on to turn moon craters into verdant domed jungles were old, and not as resistant to the planetary conditions in Mars. Less than a year into the endeavor, both EnviroDyne and Tesla Atmospheric found themselves in dire need of new equipment, more workers, and better solutions. Gaia Inc, the largest and oldest terraforming corporation, was able to continue operating, but nevertheless recognized the need in order to successfully tame the Martian landscape. Enter DaVinci Labs.

A small, independent technology outfit operating out of the United Caribbean Republic with investment funding provided by Venetian magnate Filippo Leonardo Ferrara, DaVinci Labs found themselves in the enviable position to be small and well-funded enough to bring a solution to the table faster than any of the larger industrial conglomerates. In just four months, DaVinci Labs was able to present a working prototype of their solution: the Workman Modular Mecha.

Using the same principles that made the existing rover fleet so versatile, DaVinci Labs created a heavy-duty terraforming mechanized suit that was highly configurable and adaptable to a variety of jobs thanks to a suite of specialized modules that were easy to change, upkeep, and customize. The prototype Workman utilized the venerable Axis 4XF frame as the skeleton upon which the DaVinci Labs designers bolted their ideas, a bold move that lent reliability and brand-recognition to their new and imaginative project. The change from power suit to encasing the pilot entirely within the frame's chest cavity allowed the designers to maximize the modularity of their new mecha with only a small sacrifice in maneuverability, resulting in a frame with an unprecedented nine modular hardpoints: head, right and left arms, right and left shoulders, right and left legs, waist, and back.

Less than a year later DaVinci Labs delivered their first fleet of WRK 400 Workman mecha to the newly-merged TeslaDyne Corporation. Since then, the Workman has become synonymous with the Martian terraforming operation, with hundreds of thousands of the modular mecha scattered across the face of the red planet.

# CONFIGURATIONS

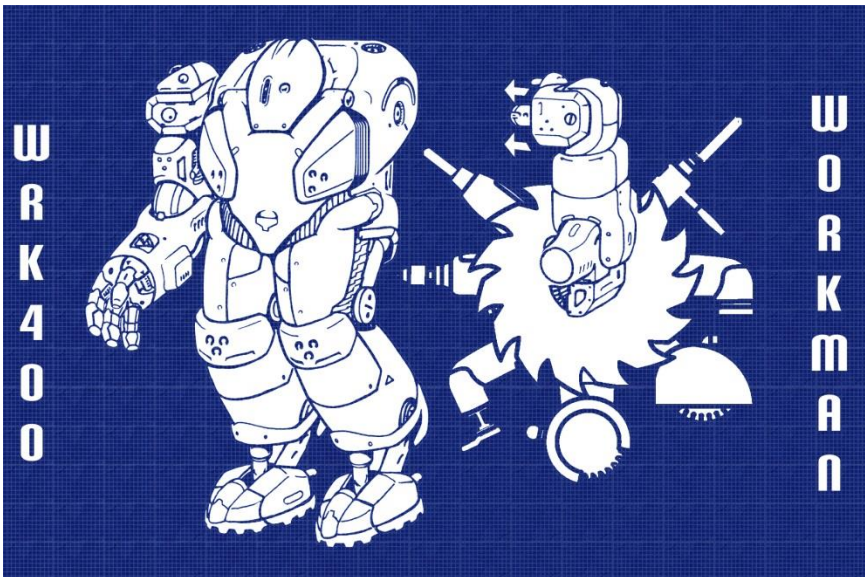
At launch, DaVinci Labs released the Workman with three basic configuration packages meant to handle the widest array of needs possible: the Loader, the Demo, and the Porter.

## LOADER

Meant to be the primary construction configuration, the Loader has an array of modules capable of filling every niche in the terraforming operation. It ships with humanoid appendages complete with fine-motor-capable hand components, as well as all-terrain self-stabilizing legs. Hand modules can be replaced with a variety of power tool components, including saws, hammers, drills, trimmers, welders, and more. Heavy construction machinery modules include shoulder-mounted crane (with wide stabilization leg attachments), forklift, and backloader components.

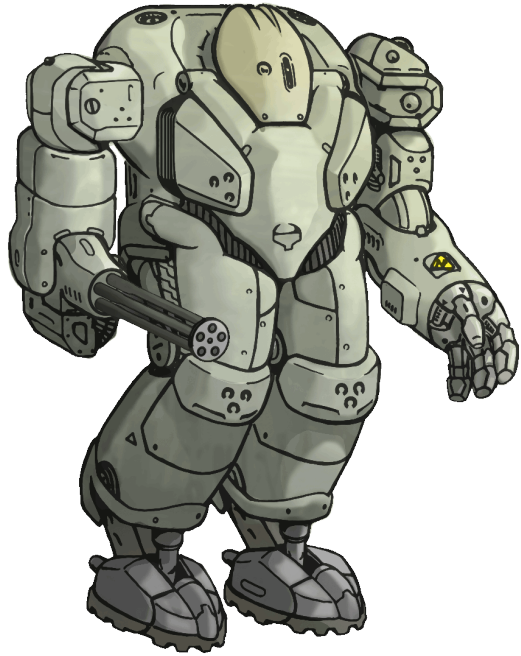
## DEMO

The Demo configuration focuses on demolition operations. While it ships with the humanoid appendages, hand components are replaced with a host of demolition tools, such as hydraulic hammers, diamond-tipped bores, and powered cutters, as well as an arm-mounted high-velocity air blaster capable of producing up to 50mph/80kph-winds. The Demo configuration trades its shoulder hardpoints for reinforced torso armor, allowing Demo Workman operators to safely conduct demolitions at close range.



## PORTER

The Porter configuration is all about transportation and mass-moving operations. In lieu of humanoid legs, the model ships with torso-mounted, blast-resistant tank tracks. Shoulder-mounted components include front- and back-loaders, diggers, winches, and rollers. The tracks component comes equipped with a hardpoint allowing the use of wagons, carts, mixers, fluid tanks, and more.



## GUARDIAN

An unofficial fourth configuration that emerged in Mars not even a year after the Workman's release, the Guardian weaponized the Workman's modularity and field adaptability to create a soldier mecha that can be deployed along with construction crews. Although DaVinci Labs refused to be involved in the creation of military components for their product, their patented interlocking designs were leaked to the wire, with Gaia Inc wasting no time in manufacturing a full array of weapon components for their fleet of Martian Workman mechas (the Gaia Inc MX250 Minigun arm component being the most ubiquitous).

## PROJECTIONS

DaVinci Labs has pledged exclusive support for the Workman model for at least another five years, stating no new models will be released during that period. Unofficial reports abound that a major OS upgrade in the works will enhance the mecha's systems, operability, and energy consumption, with new hardware upgrades sure to follow soon after, including a rumored new configuration for deep space operations, as well as rumors of a DaVinci Labs-made military configuration.



# WHAT'S THE POINT OF IT?

## HOBBY GAMING WHILE THE WORLD BURNS

Doing anything creative this year has been a monumental task, and I know I'm not alone in this. Back in January, when we were innocent and naïve, I had great plans for my creative work: The Ioun Codex for ZineQuest, two more issues of the zine, and maybe two or three small games that I had been working on. Then it all happened—COVID, quarantine, protests, fires, USPS, etc—and the world went to shit. I did write and publish The Ioun Codex with only a month delay, which was fantastic, but when that was done, I had to walk away and do nothing. I couldn't find a way to write games in the middle of everything going on. I kept asking myself, what's the point of it?

This was right at the start of summer, and thankfully I managed to find ways to keep my sanity by turning to backyard farming and doing outdoorsy stuff. I switched my attention to learning about various social issues that are of importance to me, and finding ways to have effect immediate and long-term change. I even found myself two games to play in that fit in my ever-shifting work schedule, but try as I might I still couldn't get around to doing any creative work of my own. I'd try, and would end up upset after a while, once again asking myself, what's the point of it?

Obviously I found ways to start doing creative work again, given that you're reading this zine. I even dusted off one of the games I was working on earlier this year because I want to work on it to finish it. My drive to do creative work has returned, but I gotta tell you, I still sometimes ask myself, what's the point of it? The most polarizing presidential election in our history is just over a month away, police continue to brutalize people exercising their first amendment rights, we're still shouting to anyone who'll hear that Black Lives Matter, and have recently found out that our government has blatantly engaged in forced sterilizations of women detained at at least one ICE center, much like they did to Puerto Rican women back in the 50s and to many other ethnic groups since. And of course, there's COVID-19, still going over 200,000-deaths strong with no signs of stopping.

So, what is the point of it? What's the point of hobby gaming, of game writing, of creative work, at this time in history? I don't know I have an answer, but I know that right now it is imperative that I do this. I got back to this zine and my game writing because in the chaos all around me, I needed something good to nurture, to make something exciting with my hands, to see a ray of sunlight within me. My wife and daughters give me that energy, that hope, but my work—this zine, the games I'm making, the games I'm playing—my work gives me sanity, and much

like my tomato plants during the summer, it gives me something tangible that I can look at and say, in the midst of this shitshow, I made this happen.

If you're asking yourself what's the point of it as well, I know your struggle. If you can't find an answer to your question, I know your despair. If you're not able to create or game right now, I know your frustration. And if you've somehow found a way to keep trying, to keep writing or drawing or painting, to keep rolling dice, I know your effort.

The best unsolicited advice I can give you is to find something that makes you happy and hold on to it. It doesn't pay to ignore the world around us, but it also doesn't pay to ignore your own well-being. Write your game, play your character, run that dungeon, paint those minis, roll some dice, and replenish yourself. Maybe, if you're up for it, find ways to make sense of the chaos in the world through your game. I'm playing a cyberpunk game where my character is a nurse, and as much as it is fun escapism, it's also giving me a chance to tackle some issues about my job as a real-world nurse, about our healthcare system, about inequality and human rights, in a context where I have a degree of agency I don't in real life. I'm not looking to solve the real world problems in my make-believe game, but I will say it is cathartic to have at least one story, one narrative, where I can make a change, where I do make a change, and maybe even one where good decisively wins over evil.

It's okay to ask yourself what's the point of this thing we do. Know you're not alone. You may hear many answers to that question, but ultimately, answer it for yourself. Because there is a point to it, but you gotta find what it is for you.

I wish you well.



# THE IOUNMANCER

## A MAGIC-USER PRESTIGE CLASS FOR OLD-SCHOOL ESSENTIALS

I always loved prestige classes from 3e/3.5 D&D. Even if in practice they became a terribly bloated subsystem, the idea of specialized, and prestigious, class variants for player characters was an excellent one, allowing for the variety and uniqueness you'd surely find in a campaign world. This version has requirements as the 3e/3.5 version did, it treats the class as an alternate progression for magic-users that picks up at 4th level, rather than as brand new class starting from 1st level.

Iounmancers are first introduced in **The Ioun Codex** (Zine of Wondrous Power #3). The class as presented here is intended to be more generic in nature, and can be used with or without the options and rules included in **The Ioun Codex**.

### IOUNMANCER

**Requirements:** Magic-user 3rd level, Iounmancer mentor

**Prime requisite:** INT

**Hit Dice:** 1d4

**Maximum level:** 12

**Armor:** None

**Weapons:** Dagger, Staff

**Languages:** Alignment, Common

Iounmancers are magic-users who specialize in ioun magic and lore. They study the inner workings of ioun crystals, learn to create ioun stones, and develop mastery over the wondrous items and the forces tied to their origins. Iounmancy is always taught from mentor to apprentice, balancing iounmancy lessons with general magical learning and field adventuring.

### IOUNMANCER PROGRESSION

| Level | XP      | HD     | THAC0   | Saving Throws |    |    |    |    | Spells |   |   |   |   |   |
|-------|---------|--------|---------|---------------|----|----|----|----|--------|---|---|---|---|---|
|       |         |        |         | D             | W  | P  | B  | S  | 1      | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 4     | 10,000  | 4d4    | 19 [0]  | 13            | 14 | 13 | 16 | 15 | 2      | 2 | - | - | - | - |
| 5     | 20,000  | 5d4    | 19 [0]  | 13            | 14 | 13 | 16 | 15 | 2      | 2 | 1 | - | - | - |
| 6     | 40,000  | 6d4    | 17 [+2] | 11            | 12 | 11 | 14 | 12 | 3      | 2 | 1 | - | - | - |
| 7     | 80,000  | 7d4    | 17 [+2] | 11            | 12 | 11 | 14 | 12 | 3      | 2 | 2 | - | - | - |
| 8     | 150,000 | 8d4    | 17 [+2] | 11            | 12 | 11 | 14 | 12 | 3      | 3 | 2 | 1 | - | - |
| 9     | 300,000 | 9d4    | 17 [+2] | 11            | 12 | 11 | 14 | 12 | 3      | 3 | 3 | 1 | - | - |
| 10    | 450,000 | 9d4+1* | 17 [+2] | 11            | 12 | 11 | 14 | 12 | 3      | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | - |
| 11    | 600,000 | 9d4+2* | 14 [+5] | 8             | 9  | 8  | 11 | 8  | 4      | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | - |
| 12    | 750,000 | 9d4+3* | 14 [+5] | 8             | 9  | 8  | 11 | 8  | 4      | 4 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

\* Modifiers from CON no longer apply.



## PRESTIGE CLASS

Once this class is chosen, a magic-user advances using the iounmancer progression instead.

## ARCANE MAGIC

As a magic-user, although an iounmancer's spell progression is slightly slower due to their focused concentration on iounmancy.

## COMBAT

Iounmancers can use daggers and staves, but are unable to wear any kind of armor or use shields.

## IOUN PROFICIENCY

An iounmancer may have two ioun stones active at any time. They also gain a +1 bonus to any roll involving ioun stones or ioun lore.

## CREATE IOUN STONE

An iounmancer is able to create ioun stones starting at 5th level.

## IOUN EXPERTISE

At 8th level, an iounmancer may have three ioun stones active at any time. They also gain a +3 bonus to any roll involving ioun stones or ioun lore. The minimum chance of failure when creating ioun stones falls to 10%.

## IOUN MASTERY

At 12th level, an iounmancer may have five ioun stones active at any time. They also gain a +5 bonus to any roll involving ioun stones or ioun lore.

## AFTER REACHING 9TH LEVEL







An iounmancer may build a stronghold or school. 1d4 apprentices of levels 1–3 will then arrive to study under the iounmancer in their quest to learn iounmancy.

# The Secret of Brook's Mine

I originally wrote this as a one-page dungeon that I sent out by mail to subscribers of my newsletter. It was an exercise in using available free design tools, concise writing and information delivery using icons, and trying my hand out at the format. I converted it to a more traditional format for the zine, although I didn't add too much new text from the original version, keeping it as a small dungeon crawl with all the necessary information, and room for a GM to add their own flourish.

## Adventure Icons

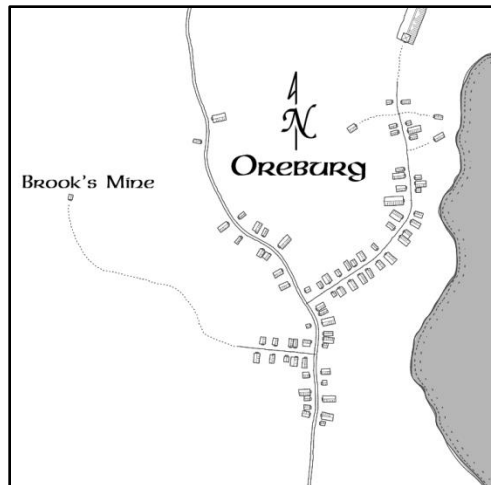
Icons denote obstacles, hazards, challenges, or rewards. Qualifiers in parentheses denote the difficulty of a skill roll or combat challenge.

|   |                 |   |                 |
|---|-----------------|---|-----------------|
|  | Pick/Open Locks |  | Lore or History |
|  | Monsters        |  | Idea!           |
|  | Search          |  | Treasure        |

Oreburg is a small mining village hanging on to the dregs of a golden past. The large mine north of town has dried up, trade has moved elsewhere, and no one knows what will happen next. A small mine west of town, once dismissed as a mere showcase for visitors, is Oreburg's only hope. Alas, it was not to be. No sooner had the locals tried to open up a new shaft, something deep in the earth awoke, sending flames and fumes, and a mighty bulette to scare off the intruders. Oreburg is desperate for help. Will you find out the secret of Brook's Mine?


## Oreburg

Small dilapidated town living on old glories. The principal mine shaft to the north is now closed and covered with a barn-like structure housing rusting mining equipment. Brook's Mine lies half-a-day's walk to the west of town, generally forgotten until recently.











# Brook's Mine

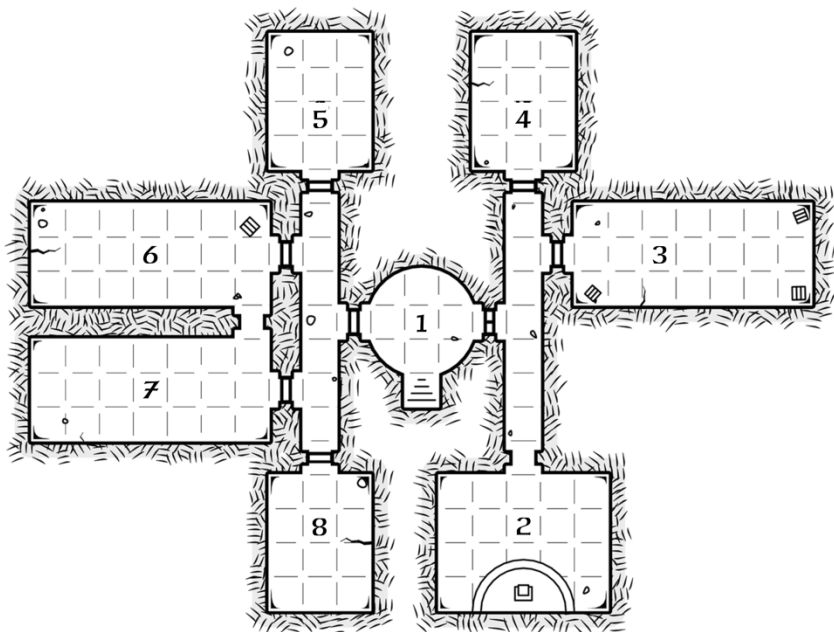


A makeshift gate blocks access, and keeps unwanted things inside.  (Medium): lock pick, (Easy) brute force, although the noise echoes down the mine. Main shaft is 100ft long, ending at a metal ramp into area 1.

All rooms look like archetypical dungeon rooms with stone walls, torches, chains, musty smell, scurrying rats, etc.

 (Roaming): A juvenile bulette roams the interior rooms. There is a 2-in-6 chance of encountering the bulette in areas 2-8.

1. Circular room 15' across. The air is surprisingly clean, and a low hum can be heard. Two torches light up when anyone enters. A skeleton sits on a throne-like chair in the middle of the room, a headband with a broken gem on its skull.  (Easy): Find a small, smooth metal rectangle with undecipherable runes clutched in the skeleton's hand.
2. Pipes of various sizes run across the ceiling and down the walls into the floor. Three box-like structures are stacked on a circular dais-like area on the far wall. The air smells of burnt wood, and the hum is significantly louder near the stack. Occasionally, lights travel from the stack through the various pipes in the room. Five skeletons huddle in the far right corner.  (Medium): Large beastly tracks are noticed all over the room, especially near the skeletons. Drag marks are visible going from the huddled skeletons to the door.  (Hard): These are Bulette tracks, a juvenile specimen by the looks of it.
3. Long room with three beds along each wall, and chairs in each corner, a huge mess of broken wood panels and destroyed trunks all around.  (Medium): Pristine set of clothes under a pile of debris: a matched set of shirt and pants in black with gold motifs and insignias made of soft, stretchy material. It fits anyone who wears it.  (Hard): The uniform motifs and insignias don't match any known heraldry.
4. Mid-sized room filled with torn barrels and broken crates, their contents long gone.  (Easy): Notice the boxes were ripped by large claws.  (Hard): These are bulette claw marks, clearly an adult specimen.



5. Locked wooden door with multiple claw scratches. Inside are 10 closed but unlocked trunks. 🗝️ (Hard): Locking mechanism is wall right of the door; 💡 (Hard): Item from area 1 opens the door. 🔍 (Medium): Find an ioun stone in a lead box. 📦 (Trunks): 200gp worth of common equipment.
6. Rectangular room filled with tables of smooth polished metal. Hundreds of glass vials lie broken all around, strange, small specimens, now desiccated, scattered over the room. A strong smell of pure, distilled alcohol fills the air. A door to area 7 lies broken off its hinges. 🔍 (Medium): Two sets of beastly tracks go into the next room. 📖 (Hard): These are bulette tracks, both an adult and a juvenile.
7. A large broken cage-like area takes up the far left corner. Bones, torn skeletons, and shards of glass litter the room. Three large circles of bright light in the ceiling flicker intermittently. 🏠 (Lair): Adult bulette lairs here, next to the bones of another adult bulette. 🔍 (Medium): Find small black rod with red button that, when pressed, paralyzes the adult bulette for one round.
8. A kind of covered, wheel-less wagon sits in the center of the room. Inside are two crates full of gold bars. A skeleton sits in the “driver” seat of the wagon, another lies scattered about. The wagon hums and a soft glow can be seen under it. 💡 (Hard): Item from area 1 activates the floating wagon. 📦 (Crates): 300gp in assorted coins and gems.

# The Secret

Brook's Mine sits on top of a spacefaring ship which crashed some two hundred years ago when the mated bulette pair on board broke free and wreaked havoc. With the crew dead, the AI put the ship into stasis, until Oreburg miners found the entrance to the control room (area 1). The ship used holograms to disguise the interior based on a mental scan of the miners' expectations for underground ruins. The ship is damaged but still operational and space worthy. It is controlled by the headband in area 1; the broken gem can be replaced with the ioun stone in area 5. The star shuttle in area 8 is not operational, its engine damaged by the bulettes.





# Games as Essays

## (OR, NOT ALL GAMES ARE MEANT TO BE PLAYED)

Last year I wrote a short game for a game jam based on a concept that had been kicking around in my head for years. The game was *Do You Remember Rock?*, a Robotech/Macross-inspired game of love triangles, cool mecha, and rock & roll which used songs as aids in conflict resolution. I then made a more generic version of the game called *The Playlist*. It's four pages long, very much a scaffolding of concepts around which you can build your own game, still using a set of songs as the main aid in conflict resolution. In over a year and a half, however, I've sold only ten copies, and given out about the same. I'm willing to bet good money that no one has played it, because not even I have played it. Here's the thing: it doesn't matter because I never had delusions that anyone would play it. It's a weird little game, and I love it like I love all my creations, but it was never meant to be played.

One of the big elephants in the roleplaying games room that few people address is that most games made will never be played. Most people buy games for their collections, with only a smaller fraction of the total customer base taking said game to the table. I don't have numbers for this, sorry; it's all very anecdotal, but I know I'm right, and so do you, because we all have quite a few games we bought knowing full well we'd never get to play them. And that's fine, collecting is a perfectly legit way to engage with the hobby as a consumer. What I'm saying that same mentality, having a game you know won't get played, is just as valid an approach to game design and publishing.

*The Playlist* is how it is because it was written to say some things about game design, play styles, and independent publishing. *The Playlist* is as much an essay about thoughts I had at the time about the industry as it is a roleplaying game. I went with a musical playlist as the way to solve conflicts because I wanted to emulate the use of soundtracks in film and TV, where the right background song at the right moment brings energy, atmosphere, and theme reinforcement (especially in the source material for the original iteration of the engine). I leaned into the free-form/build-your-own approach for the rules because I wanted to target and engage the tinkerer gamer, the one who revels in guidelines rather than rules, white space on the page rather than blocks of text. *The Playlist* was written as a response and in direct opposition to brick-thick, rules-dense, high-production manuals, which informed the simple, no-frills, no-art layout and graphic design of the book, as well as its size (eight pages plus covers).

I had written a few essays on my blog about game design and publication as a small, independent creator, even put together a writing and publishing manifesto, but *The Playlist* is where I put it all into practice. It wasn't made to be played; it was made to voice some specific thoughts, and it did that well, even if sales have

been dismal. I mean, don't get me wrong, I'd love it if someone actually played the game and enjoyed it. Heck, I wanna play it and see how it does at the table, but I'm okay if that never happens.

I think all games, to a certain extent, carry a message from their creator(s), but I'd like to see more games that exist primarily, if not solely, as an essay from the designer. I'd like to see more games that are proofs of concept for some game design theories or practices, games that show rather than tell what the writer thinks. If we can acknowledge that not all games are going to get played, we can take it a step further and stipulate that not all games are meant to be played, and then we can have some fun with the format.

I have begun work on a new game that is being written primarily as an essay on what I think old-school fantasy roleplaying is. I could write a long blog post on what I like and don't like about the old-school roleplaying movement, but that would be boring and, frankly, just a big invitation for online vitriol. I'd rather show you. The joke goes that every game designer has a fantasy heartbreaker game in them, and this one will be mine. I'm just going into it with open eyes, and milking the whole heartbreaker thing for all its worth so I can have my say about what I think is cool about old-school fantasy roleplaying, what isn't, and what I'd do with those building blocks. I'll let you know when it's ready to be published so maybe you can help it have more sales than *The Playlist*.





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