

# d20Zine

Issue 2, October 2002



d20  
system

# Random Rolls and Off Tangent Thoughts

Welcome to the Fall issue of d20Zine! where much has happened since the Summer issue hit the stands in June. Our parent site, the d20 Magazine Rack has experienced some fantastic growth and changes in the last few months including new features and many new friends. On a personal level, my writing career has taken off like a rocket. Not only am I doing work for Bastion Press on a regular basis, but also some writing for Dark Quest Games, contributing to a book by Green Ronin Publishing, and am currently negotiating with another top name d20 publisher to take on a very important role with them.

I also want to plug a couple of upcoming conventions in my hometown. First up is PentaCon, which is held November 1-3 at the Grand Wayne Center here in Fort Wayne, Indiana. This is Indiana's largest and oldest convention, drawing nearly 1000 gamers. I will be giving 3 seminars on game design and publishing along with running the adventure that I wrote for Bastion Press (Where Dark Elves Rule). Following that is the huge RPGA event, Winter Fantasy, January 23-27, also being held at the Grand Wayne Center. The details of this event are still being worked out. I attended last year and had the privilege of meeting several people including Ed Stark, Sean Reynolds, JD Wiker, and Ryan Dancey. I played a game where Sean DM'd and had a blast. Hopefully Sean will be able to make it again this year even though he's no longer with Wizards.

The gaming industry itself has seen many changes in the last few months. The two biggest things are the announcements of a new fantasy world setting search followed by a large number of layoffs both by Wizards of the Coast. The setting search was a phenomenal success in terms of response. No one at Wizards of the Coast could have predicted the volume of submissions that would flood their offices (over 11,000). Equally surprising was the layoffs of several key people at Wizards of the Coast including notable figures as Skip Williams, Stan!, and JD Wiker. Although a strong creative force remains in place there, only time will tell if the quality of future products by Wizards of the Coast will be affected.

There are a large number of exceptionally worthy d20 products on the market today. Here are my suggested buys that everyone should have in their library:

**Oathbound: Domains of the Forge from Bastion Press.** This is quite possibly the new campaign setting on the market, period. It has a feel reminiscent of Planescape with a touch of Dark Sun added in. It's a power gamer's dream world, with the potential to hit epic levels with one supercharged and stacked character. Considering that Bastion Press' CEO is Jim Butler (who was Brand Manager of TSR for seven years), it's no surprise that this book is taking the gaming world by storm.

**Spycraft from Alderac Entertainment Group.** This modern day espionage spy game puts the thrill back into Cold War strategy. Now you can be a James Bond, Ethan Phillips, or Agent X and save the world from the forces of evil. The fact that AEG is heavily supporting this campaign setting with numerous supplements (such as Shadowforce Archer) further strengthens the appeal to this game.

**Monsternomicon from Privateer Press.** Although I haven't written a review of this product yet, I have to say that, hands down, this is the best monster supplement produced. The artwork is top notch, done in pen and ink giving it a darker and sinister feel. If you only buy one monster book this year, make it this one.

**Necropolis by Gary Gyax and published by Sword and Sorcery Studios.** This Egyptian flavored mega-adventure will give your players a good year's worth of adventure, if not more...

**Mercenaries from Alderac Entertainment Group.** This is a good supplement that offers some cool alternatives to the standard classes. The title's a bit misleading. This book's about more than just mercenaries.

So what's in store for you with this issue of d20Zine!? Not only do we have several reviews by both staff and guest reviewers, but we also have the entries for the last two contests that have been held at the d20 Magazine Rack. Additionally, a new selection of spells made available for your enjoyment and use along with a column by our Executive Director, Morgan (TempesT) Grover on tactical combat in d20. So sit back and take in all that we have to offer in this issue. And as always, keep your dice clean and roll those 20's.

Steve Creech

Editor, d20Zine!

Executive Chairman, d20 Magazine Rack

## Raves and Rants

Have something to say about our articles or content in past issues? Drop us an email at [S\\_Creech@d20zines.com](mailto:S_Creech@d20zines.com) with "d20Zine feedback" in the subject header and let us know what you think. Your letters will be posted in this column in the next issue of d20Zine!. There was some very positive feedback and letters concerning our premier issue but I lost them all due to a computer hard drive crash. As of September 28th, d20Zine! has been downloaded 7178 times since it was first published on June 23rd. I want to thank all of you who have downloaded and read it! Now send those letters in and let us know what you thought about this issue, the first issue, or the special Fantasy World edition...

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*"Requires the use of the Dungeons & Dragons(r) Player's Handbook, Third Edition, and the Psionics Handbook, published by Wizards of the Coast(r)*

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# From the Books of Ancient Lore

By James Sutherland with contributions from Aaron Heister, Paul Macias, Craig Dorrrough, Jeff Neuhaus, Steve Miles, Vic Francesci, Celeste Draiser, and James Collins

The following are four new, paraelemental domains. The paraelements are formed by the combination of two prime elements; for example, fire and earth combine to form magma, air and fire form smoke, air and water form ice, and earth and water form ooze. It is strongly recommended that these domains be available only if the character takes an appropriate prestige class that gives access to an extra domain since the spells and granted powers are somewhat more powerful than standard cleric spells of an equivalent level. In addition, some DMs may wish to restrict the paraelemental domains further by requiring the character to have access to both appropriate elemental domains (i.e. to gain access to the Ice domain, the character must have the Air and Water domains).

## NEW DOMAINS:

**Ice** (granted power: rebuke or command creatures with the Cold subtype as an evil cleric rebukes or commands undead)

- 1 Chill Touch
- 2 Sleet Storm
- 3 Ice Storm
- 4 Wall of Ice
- 5 Iceweb
- 6 Blizzard
- 7 Ice Blight
- 8 Bonefreeze
- 9 Frost Aura

**Magma** (granted power: fire resistance 5)

- 1 Heat Metal
- 2 Soften Earth and Stone
- 3 Magma Walk
- 4 Lava Blade
- 5 Transmute Rock to Magma
- 6 Rain of Lava
- 7 Earthquake
- 8 Volcanic Eruption
- 9 Raise Volcano

**Ooze** (granted power: turn oozes as a good cleric turns undead)

- 1 Grease
- 2 Melf's Acid Arrow
- 3 Sinkhole
- 4 Transmute Rock to Mud
- 5 Mudstorm
- 6 Corrosive Touch
- 7 Acid Storm
- 8 Mudform
- 9 Create Swamp

**Smoke** (granted power: +1 to all saves vs. gasses; in addition, the character can see through 15' of even the most impenetrable smoke, fog or gas)

- 1 Sleep
- 2 Pyrotechnics
- 3 Gas Cloud [found in Relics and Rituals, should be OGC material]
- 4 Smoke Claws
- 5 Cloudkill
- 6 Quench
- 7 Smokey Senses
- 8 Dead Air
- 9 Poison Air

## CONTROL SHIP

Transmutation

**Level:** Wiz/Sor 4

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** 1 round

**Range:** Long (400'+40'/level)

**Target:** 1 ship, up to 10' long/level

**Duration:** Concentration, up to 1 minute/level

**Saving Throw:** Will negates (object or pilot)

**Spell Resistance:** Yes (object)

You gain control of the target ship's movement. It moves in the direction and at the speed at which you desire (up to its normal maximum speed) as long as the oars are manned or the sails are unfurled.

## CORROSIVE TOUCH

Transmutation

**Level:** Ooze 6

**Components:** V, S, DF

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Touch

**Target:** 1 creature or object

**Duration:** 1 round/level

**Saving Throw:** None

**Spell Resistance:** No

Your hands exude a corrosive slime. Your touch deals 2d6 acid damage to creatures and 6d6+1/level (max +20) to objects, ignoring the hardness of any object except for glass and similar crystalline substances. On a large object, this damage affects a 3' radius. Constructs suffer damage of 4d6+1/level (max +20). You may not make more than one attack with this spell in a round.

## COUNTERMAGIC

Abjuration

**Level:** Clr 7, Drd 9, Brd 6, Wiz/Sor 7

**Components:** V, S, M, DF

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Personal

**Target:** You

**Duration:** 1 round/level or see text

While you have countermagic active, it makes a free dispel attempt (1d20+your level, maximum of +10) on every spell or spell-like ability that affects you. If any dispel attempt fails, the countermagic spell collapses.

*Material component:* Diamond dust worth at least 20 gp and a miniature steel shield.

## CREATE SWAMP

Transmutation

**Level:** Ooze 9

**Components:** V, S, DF

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Long (400'+40'/level)

**Effect:** Up to four 10' squares/level of ground sinks (S)

**Duration:** Permanent

**Saving Throw:** None (see text)

**Spell Resistance:** No

This spell causes the area you select to sink down a number of feet equal to your paraelementalist level. Water rises up from the ground to a depth equal to half the depth of the swamp, maximum of 5'. Buildings both in and out of the area when the swamp is created suffer 8d8 points of damage, possibly having sections break or collapse. Creatures exposed to the filthy water must make Fortitude saves against the DC of this spell or contract swamp fever (identical to filth fever except that the DC is much higher!)

## DEAD AIR

Transmutation

**Level:** Smoke 8

**Components:** V, S, DF

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Long (400'+40'/level)

**Effect:** 10'/level caster spread of foul air

**Duration:** 1 hour/level

**Saving Throw:** None (see text)

**Spell Resistance:** No

This spell causes a large area of air to fill with an amber haze. All the usable oxygen is destroyed and new breathable air will enter the area (or if it does, it immediately spoils unless sealed in an airtight container). Within the dead air, the following effects occur:

- Creatures must hold their breath or suffocate. Normally, a character can hold her breath for 2 rounds/point of constitution, but in an area of dead air, this is reduced to 1 round/2 points of con.
- Visibility is limited. Up to 15' away from viewer, creatures have 50% concealment; beyond that range, all creatures and objects have 100% concealment.
- Within the dead air, normal fires will extinguish in a single round. Magical fire
- Upon leaving the dead air creatures immediately catch fire, suffering 1d6 hp of fire damage each round until succeeding at a Reflex save (DC15).

Every round spent within the dead air saps the strength of creatures that breathe, doing 1d6 points of temporary strength damage (Fort save negates each round).

## ELASTICITY

Transmutation

**Level:** Wiz/Sor 4, Brd 4

**Components:** V, S, M

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Touch

**Target:** 1 creature

**Duration:** 10 minutes/level

**Saving Throw:** Fortitude negates (harmless)

**Spell Resistance:** Yes (harmless)

The spell's target can stretch her body in whole or in part up to thrice its normal length. The creature's reach expands by 10' and it gets a +3 natural armor bonus in addition to the obvious ability to stretch.

## FOG BANK

**Level:** Wiz/Sor 3, Drd 3

**Range:** Long (400'+40'/level)

**Effect:** 100' emanation, 20' high, centered on an object, creature or point in space

**Saving Throw:** Yes (creature) or no (object)

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

As fog cloud, except the fog emanates from and surrounds a specific object. Cast on an opposing ship, this spell puts it into a perpetual fog until it expires. Additionally, as the target moves, the fog moves with it, remaining centered on the object.

## FROST AURA

Abjuration

**Level:** Ice 9

**Components:** V, S, M

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Personal

**Effect:** Up to a 20' radius emanation centered on you

**Duration:** 1 minute/level (D)

**Saving Throw:** See text

**Spell Resistance:** No

You gain an aura of frost that is shockingly cold. Creatures in the area of effect suffer 4d6 hp cold damage per round within the emanation. You, on the other hand, gain cold immunity. Furthermore, fire spells cast into your frost aura fail to work if you beat their caster

in an opposed level check. Any weapons that strike you (including magic weapons but not including natural weaponry) must make a Fortitude save or shatter, dealing no damage.

You set the size of the emanation when you cast frost aura, but you can contract or expand it within the limits of the effect throughout the duration.

*Material component:* an icicle.

## HUNGRY EARTH

Transmutation

**Level:** Drd 4

**Components:** V, S, M

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Close (25'+5'/2 levels)

**Area:** 10' diameter circle of ground (see text)

**Duration:** 1 round

**Saving Throw:** Reflex negates

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

You cause a patch of ground to open up as a mouth filled with stalactite teeth. It erupts forth, attacking all creatures within a 10' circle in range (and it can even reach creatures up to 10' in the air). Creatures must make reflex saves to avoid the maw; it then retracts into the earth.

Creatures that fail their saving throws suffer 4d4 hp of damage and are buried 2d4' underground. The ground is somewhat disturbed so the victims may make a Str check (DC15+2/foot of depth) to force their way free. A character with ranks in escape artist may make an escape artist check using their strength instead of dexterity modifier instead. Creatures may attempt this as a standard action (this is strenuous activity; the character must hold their breath all the while). A creature with a burrowing speed can move out normally and the creature's allies can, of course, help to dig it out. While buried, a creature cannot take any action requiring free movement.

*Material component:* the tooth of a predatory animal.

## ICE BLIGHT

Transmutation [Cold]

**Level:** Ice 7

**Components:** V, S, DF

**Casting Time:** 10 minutes

**Range:** 0

**Area:** 1 mile/level radius spread

**Duration:** 1 day/level

**Saving Throw:** None

**Spell Resistance:** No

You summon fearsome freezing winds, ice, and snow. Gray scudding clouds gather within minutes and rain begins drizzling down. The temperature falls 40 degrees per day until it is -20 degrees Fahrenheit. Each day conditions worsen. In arctic or wintry conditions, snow begins falling after six hours. Even in tropical conditions, it snows after 48 hours. The snow accumulates at a rate of 1"/hour until it reaches a typical height of 4' with 12' drifts. The winds build 10 mph/day to a maximum of 30 mph (DMG pg. 87).

Exposed characters must make Fort saves every ten minutes (DC15+1/previous check) or suffer 1d6 points of subdual damage and be frostbitten (can't run or charge, -2 Str and Dex). The snow gives a -4 circumstance penalty to spot, search, and ranged attack rolls, as well as halving ground-based movement. With the winds providing a -2 circumstance penalty to ranged attacks and listen checks, the ranged attack penalty is -6 while the ice blight is at its height.

Casting this spell deals 2d6 temporary Con damage to you due to strain (strain resistance applies). You must be outside to cast it.

## IMPEDING PERMISSION

Enchantment (Compulsion)

[Mind-Affecting, Lawful, Language-Dependent]

**Level:** Clr 5

**Components:** V, S, DF

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Medium (100'+10'/level)

**Target:** 1 creature  
**Duration:** 10 minutes/level  
**Saving Throw:** Will negates  
**Spell Resistance:** Yes

This spell forces the target to ask your permission before doing anything other than talking and involuntary actions (such as breathing). Asking permission for one thing is a free action; for two things is a move-equivalent; for three things is a standard action; and for four things is a full round action.

Giving or denying permission is a free action. Doing neither gives consent.

### IVY SIEGE

Transmutation  
**Level:** Drd 6  
**Components:** V, S, M  
**Casting Time:** 1 action  
**Range:** Medium (100'+10'/level)  
**Effect:** See text  
**Duration:** 10 minutes/level  
**Saving Throw:** None  
**Spell Resistance:** No

When you cast this spell, you cause vines of ivy to curl up out of the ground and grip a building (up to ten 10' cubes per level) that rests upon the earth. After ten minutes the ivy begins crushing the building, dealing 1d10 hp/10 minutes ignoring the building's hardness.

*Material component:* an ivy leaf.

### KNOW AGE

Divination  
**Level:** Wiz/Sor 1, Clr 1  
**Components:** V, S, DF  
**Casting Time:** 1 action  
**Range:** Close (25'+5'/2 levels)  
**Target:** 1 creature, object or effect  
**Duration:** Instantaneous  
**Saving Throw:** Will negates  
**Spell Resistance:** Yes

You instantly learn the target's age (to the year).

### LAVA BLADE

Evocation [Fire, Earth]  
**Level:** Magma 4

As *flame blade*, except the blade is yellow-hot molten rock that functions as a melee weapon. The lava blade deals 2d6 damage plus 2d6 fire damage as a melee attack or 2d6 fire damage as a melee touch attack at your option as you attack. Strength bonus applies to normal attacks only. Any creature or object struck must make a Ref save or catch on fire, burning for 2d6 hp/round until extinguished. The *lava blade* has an enhancement bonus of +1/5 caster levels (+5 maximum).

### LAMENTABLE BELABORMENT

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-Affecting]  
**Level:** Wiz/Sor 5, Brd 5  
**Components:** V  
**Casting Time:** 1 action  
**Range:** Short (25'+5'/2 levels)  
**Targets:** All creatures in a 10' spread  
**Duration:** See text  
**Saving Throw:** See text  
**Spell Resistance:** Yes

This devious spell distracts the targets by drawing them into polite conversation on topics of interest to them. Upon casting the spell you begin a discussion of some subject germane to the spell's targets. Those making an initial Will save are unaffected. Those affected immediately begin to converse with you, agreeing or disagreeing, all most politely. You can maintain the spell by talking with the subjects for up to seven rounds. If you're attacked or otherwise distracted, the subjects don't notice. You can leave at any time after the casting and the subjects continue on as if you were still present. As long as they aren't attacked, they ignore all else going on around them,

spending their time talking and arguing. However, when you leave, each subject completes only the stage of the spell it is currently in.

If you maintain the spell for four rounds, each target must make another Will save. Failure means they wander off in confusion for 1d10+2 rounds, with the provision that they will ignore you. Success indicates that they continue to chat.

If you maintain the spell for seven rounds each target must make another Will save or fly into a rage (as a barbarian) and attacking all other subjects of the spell with intent to kill. This rage lasts 1d4+1 rounds and excludes you. Those that save against the rage realize they have been duped and collapse onto the ground, lamenting their foolishness, for 1d4 rounds unless attacked or otherwise disturbed.

### MAGMA WALK

Transmutation  
**Level:** Magma 3  
**Components:** V, S, DF  
**Casting Time:** 1 action  
**Range:** Touch  
**Target:** 1 creature/3 levels  
**Duration:** 1 minute/level  
**Saving Throw:** Will negates (harmless)  
**Spell Resistance:** Yes (harmless)

Creatures touched can walk on molten lava with no ill effects. It both supports their weight and deals no heat damage. (Lava-based attacks deal only subdual damage while this spell is in effect.) The subjects can also walk on other liquids but has no protection against any ill effects they may cause.

### MUDFORM

Transmutation  
**Level:** Ooze 8  
**Components:** V, S, DF  
**Casting Time:** 1 action  
**Range:** Personal  
**Duration:** 10 minutes/level

This spell allows you to assume an oozy, muddy form. While in this form you gain the following properties:

- DR30/+2
- Immunity to critical hits, ability score damage or drain, disease, drowning, poison, acid, subdual damage, stunning, and attacks that affect your respiration
- Fire resistance 30
- You are liquid and can slip through cracks, under doors, etc. You can even pass slowly through porous material such as a portcullis, a sieve, etc. at a speed of 5'.
- You gain a slam attack with a 10' reach that deals 1d6 hp of acidic damage

### MUDSTORM

Conjuration (Creation)  
**Level:** Ooze 5  
**Components:** V, S, DF  
**Casting Time:** 1 action  
**Range:** Medium (100'+10'/level)  
**Effect:** 60' spread 30' high  
**Duration:** 1 round/level (D)  
**Saving Throw:** See text  
**Spell Resistance:** No

A huge storm of mud and water furiously splashes throughout the area. Any creature within the mudstorm has 100% concealment beyond 5' and 50% concealment within 5'. Additionally, the sounds of the mudstorm are so loud that all creatures within are effectively deafened. Creatures within the mudstorm suffer 3d6 points of subdual damage per round from impact and buffeting; elemental resistance against water will aid against this effect. Creatures attempting to move more than half their normal movement rate must make a balance check (DC15) each round or fall. A successful Fort save allows the victim to avoid the need for a balance check, the subdual

damage and the deafness, but a save must be made each round a creature is within the mudstorm.

## NAP

Transmutation

**Level:** Clr 3

**Components:** V, S, DF

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Touch

**Targets:** Up to one willing creature/level

**Duration:** 1 hour

You put willing creatures into a deep, restful sleep. After the nap the creatures are as refreshed as if they'd slept for 8 hours, recovering hit points and ability points, spells (if an arcane caster), power points, etc. Nap will only work on a given creature once per day.

## OMNIVORE

Transmutation

**Level:** Wiz/Sor 7

**Components:** V, S, M

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Personal

**Target:** You

**Duration:** 10 minutes/level

Your mouth, throat, and digestive system become empowered to eat, literally, anything. This means that you can eat or drink acid, poison, broken glass, etc. without harm. Because your stomach, mouth and throat toughen so much you gain a +2 natural armor bonus and damage reduction 5/-. You can also use a bite attack (treat as an armed attack) that inflicts 2d8 hp of damage, ignoring all hardness.

If not in combat, you can eat one cubic foot of material per round as a standard action, or twice that as a full-round action.

*Material component:* the tongue of a xorn.

## POISON AIR

Transmutation

**Level:** Smoke 9

**Components:** V, S, DF

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Long (400'+40'/level)

**Effect:** Cloud spreads 60', 40' high

**Duration:** 1 minute/level

**Saving Throw:** See text

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

This spell makes the air in the area of effect turn a dirty orange. Creatures within find it tastes metallic and burns their lungs. Each round within the cloud of poison air all creatures must make a Fortitude save or suffer 1d6 points of temporary constitution damage. One minute after exiting the cloud, creatures must make a follow-up save.

## PROGRAMMED AMNESIA

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-Affecting]

**Level:** Wiz/Sor 9, Clr 9

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** See text

**Range:** Touch

**Target:** 1 creature

**Duration:** Permanent (D) (see text)

**Saving Throw:** Will negates

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

You can selectively delete, edit, or add memories to the target. You can perform simple or complex changes and can even program in behavior. The more extreme the changes, the longer it takes to cast this spell.

You can delete any or all memories possessed by the target, including all memory of a specific person, place, or event. This is considered a simple change. Conversely, you can add false memories of things as you desire. Imaginary friends, events that never happened, betrayals by friends, or the friendship of an enemy can be implanted. Implanting memories is a moderately complex change.

You can attempt to cut off access to the character's skill ranks. This is moderately complex. You can affect any or all skills you desire. You can also choose to cut off access to specific feats (but not all feats; the creature must always be left with one, two if human), spellcasting ability or supernatural or exceptional class features. This can never affect racial abilities.

Combining the ability to delete and implant memories, you can attempt to perform highly complex mental operations, replacing the current persona completely with a new one, changing him into a new 1st-level character and choosing his class and alignment.

Another highly complex operation is to program a target to undergo a preprogrammed amnesia effect when a certain event takes place. You can also program a target's memories to return when a trigger event happens.

The casting time is one minute for simple operations, one hour for moderately complex operations, or one day for highly complex operations.

## RAIN OF LAVA

Conjuration (Creation)

**Level:** Magma 6

**Components:** V, S, DF

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Long (400'+40'/level)

**Area:** 30' radius burst 20' high

**Duration:** 1 round

**Saving Throw:** Reflex half

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

This spell conjures a rain of molten lava in the area, dealing 6d8 impact damage and 6d8 fire damage to all creatures within the area. A saving throw halves the damage from both sources.

## SINKHOLE

Transmutation

**Level:** Ooze 3

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Close (25'+5'/2 levels)

**Area:** 10' radius of ground (see text)

**Duration:** Permanent

**Saving Throw:** Fortitude negates (magical area only); see text

**Spell Resistance:** Yes (area only)

A sinkhole causes the area affected to suddenly settle downwards. Structures in the area suffer 3d6 hp of damage (ignoring nonmagical hardness). Creatures in the area must make Reflex saves or be thrown from their feet. At the center the sinkhole is 6" deep/caster level, sloping upward to the level of the surrounding floor. A sinkhole is filled to a height of 6" with mud at the bottom; creatures within suffer a -2 circumstance penalty to AC and Reflex saves. The sinkhole can be climbed out of normally (DC varies with type of floor).

You need have line of sight and effect only to the center of the sinkhole.

## SMOKE CLAWS

Transmutation

**Level:** Smoke 4

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Personal

**Target:** You

**Duration:** 1 minute/level

This spell allows you to change your hands to transform your hands into smoke (and back to normal) as a free action throughout its duration. While your hands are smoke, they have vicious claws allowing you to make touch attacks that deal 2d4+str bonus damage. While your smoke claws cannot hold weapons or cast spells, you can change your hands to smoke while holding the charge on a touch spell if you have already cast smoke claws. The *smoke claws* deal slashing damage.

## SMOKEY SENSES

Divination

**Level:** Smoke 7

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Touch

**Targets:** Up to 1 willing creature/level

**Duration:** 10 minutes/level

All the spell recipients can see through smoke, fog, or mist without difficulty. They can identify the exact properties of any gas simply by looking at it (including how much damage it deals, save DCs, whether it will penetrate skin or must be breathed, etc.) Recipients also gain blindsight by virtue of their combined senses of smell and touch to a radius of 30'.

## SPEAK WITH PLANAR TRAVELLER

Divination [Language-Dependent]

**Level:** Clr 2, Wiz/Sor 3

**Components:** V, S, DF

**Casting Time:** 1 round

**Range:** Special (see text)

**Target:** See text

**Duration:** 1 round/level

**Saving Throw:** Will negates

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

This spell empowers you to speak to a creature currently on another plane. You must be able to perceive the plane traveler in some fashion, whether it is seeing the physical body of an astral traveler, scrying out an ethereal wizard, a planar window, etc.

## SPEED SHIP

Transmutation

**Level:** Wiz/Sor 4

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Long (400'+40'/level)

**Target:** 1 ship, up to 10' long/level

**Duration:** 10 minutes/level

**Saving Throw:** None

**Spell Resistance:** Yes (object, harmless)

The target ship's speed increases by 30'/round. This spell only affects those vessels moving through water or some other liquid.

## TELEPORT WARD

Abjuration

**Level:** Wiz/Sor 3, Clr 3, Drd 4

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Close (25'+5'/2 levels)

**Area:** 10'/level burst

**Duration:** 10 minutes/level

**Saving Throw:** None

**Spell Resistance:** No

The affected area cannot be entered or exited by means of teleportation effects.

## THORNY STAFF

Transmutation

**Level:** Wiz/Sor 4, Drd 3

**Components:** V, S, M, F

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Touch

**Target:** 1 staff

**Duration:** 1 round/level

**Saving Throw:** Fortitude negates (object, harmless)

**Spell Resistance:** Yes (object, harmless)

You cause a staff to sprout two-inch-long thorns all along its length. These spines will never harm you (though someone else could use the staff itself against you, taking thorn damage in the process). They give the staff a +2 damage bonus (circumstance bonus). Any creature struck must make a Fort save (DC10+ ½ your level) or suffer 1d4 points of dexterity damage. (There is no secondary damage.)

This spell is from the savage wild elves of Gorel but has spread far and wide.

*Material component:* a thorn. Focus: a staff.

## THOUGHT BIND

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-Affecting]

**Level:** Clr 8

**Components:** V, S, DF

**Casting Time:** 1 minute

**Range:** Long (400'+40'/level)

**Targets:** Up to 1 creature/level, no two of whom can be more than 60' apart

**Duration:** 1 day/level

**Saving Throw:** Will negates (see text)

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

You can use thought bind in one of two ways: to stop affected creatures from thinking about a specific subject or to force a specific thought on them. If used to prohibit a thought, victims will not think about it for the duration. The subject must be very specific (one individual, action, institution, object, etc). If the subject is something that the victim deals with every day (his child, work, etc) he gains a +4 circumstance bonus to his saving throw.

If you use thought bind to force a thought on the victims it will recur to them frequently. After the first week, it takes on the force of a suggestion. The thought must be a short sentence (twelve words or less) or a single image.

## THOUGHT CAPTURE

Divination

**Level:** Clr 1

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Personal

**Target:** Self

**Duration:** Instantaneous

One of the more bizarre contentions held by priests of the school of thought is that once a thought has existed in someone's brain it exists as a "freestanding mental object." This thought object generally remains inside the brain that created it, but sometimes it escapes (this explains why people forget things). When this happens the thought object stays in the area in which it was lost. Any receptive brain, usually the one that initially created it, can pick it up again simply by passing through it. This spell makes your mind something of a magnet for these thought objects, and any in close proximity will be drawn to you.

You can sense strong thoughts and emotions, sometimes even getting a glimpse of creatures who died or suffered some powerful emotion in the immediate vicinity. The strongest thought objects are those which were spawned from powerful emotions; those are the ones that will provide you with the most information. Most thought objects are momentary flashes; you gain insight from (at most) one thought object plus one per three levels, though there may not be so many present.

## THUNDER

Evocation [Sonic]

**Level:** Wiz/Sor 3, Drd 3

**Components:** V, S, M

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Medium (100'+10'/level)

**Area:** 20' burst

**Duration:** 1 round and see text

**Saving Throw:** Fort partial

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

Thunder rolls in the area for a round. Creatures that save are deafened for 1d4 rounds. Creatures failing their saving throws are stunned for 1d4 rounds, then deafened for 1d10 rounds.

*Material component:* a bit of amber.



## TRANSMUTE ROCK TO MAGMA

Transmutation [Fire]

**Level:** Magma 5, Wiz/Sor 6, Drd 6

**Area:** Up to two 5' cubes/level (S)

As *transmute rock to mud*, except the stone turns molten. This magma is extremely hot, and creatures caught within the area affected receive Reflex saves to dodge out of the area (if possible) as the stone melts. Creatures caught in it, however, suffer 8d6 hp of fire damage per round within the magma. Creatures in the magma move at half their normal speed. A creature escaping the magma is still covered in chunks of sticky molten rock and suffers 5d6 hp of fire damage the first round, 4d6 the second, etc. until the rock cools enough to stop doing damage. A clever character may be able to artificially aid the cooling process in some manner.

If you use this spell on a ceiling, the effects are as detailed in *transmute rock to mud* except that the damage caused by the cave-in is 5d6 impact and 5d6 fire.

The magma cools slowly, losing one die of damage potential every ten minutes.

*Arcane material component:* a piece of basalt.

## ULTIMATE CONCENTRATION

Abjuration

**Level:** Wiz/Sor 5, Clr 5, Drd 5, Brd 5

**Components:** V, S, DF

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Touch

**Target:** 1 creature

**Duration:** 10 minutes/level

**Saving Throw:** Will negates (harmless)

**Spell Resistance:** Yes (harmless)

This spell gives the recipient a +20 enhancement bonus to all concentration checks, as well as a +2 enhancement bonus to all Will saves. Ultimate concentration allows the recipient to concentrate on multiple things at once, such as illusions, reading a book while simultaneously casting spells, etc. She can do a number of things at once equal to 4+int bonus, though she can't initiate more actions than normal in a round. For example, she can't cast a spell and take a double move. The recipient must be physically able to perform all the actions normally.

Ultimate concentration gives immunity to fear effects. Charm and confusion affect the recipient normally, except that they will not break her concentration.

## VERTIGO

Illusion (Pattern) [Mind-Affecting]

**Level:** Wiz/Sor 2, Brd 2

**Range:** Medium (100'+10'/level)

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Targets:** Up to one creature/level, no two of whom can be more than 20' apart

**Duration:** 1 round/level

**Saving Throw:** Will negates

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

The targets become dizzy and vertiginous. You can target a total HD equal to your level (maximum of one per level). Victims suffer the loss of 1d6+1/2 levels points of dexterity for the duration. They must also make a Concentration check to cast a spell (DC17). Each round at the start of its turn each victim must also make a Balance check (DC10) or fall to the ground for the round.

## VOLCANIC ERUPTION

Transmutation [Fire, Earth]

**Level:** Magma 8, Drd 9

**Components:** V, S, M, DF

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Long (400'+40'/level)

**Effect:** Geyser of lava, up to one 10' square/level, rises 60'

**Duration:** 1d4+2 rounds

**Saving Throw:** Reflex half (see text)

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

You cause a sudden volcanic eruption to occur, spewing a rain of lava at all creatures above it. Any creature caught in the area of effect suffers 10d6 hp of fire damage each round, and all creatures within 30' of the eruption suffer 2d6 heat damage each round (no saving throw allowed).

*Material component:* a chunk of obsidian.

## WALL OF SUNLIGHT

Evocation [Light]

**Level:** Clr 4

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Medium (100'+10'/level)

**Effect:** Plane of light, up to one 10' square/level

**Duration:** 1 minute/level

**Saving Throw:** None

**Spell Resistance:** See text

A wall of sunlight must be formed vertically, but it need not be anchored. It stops vision from penetrating it, but can be easily passed through by most creatures. A wall of sunlight illuminates a 60' radius as bright as full daylight. Invisible creatures' shadows are revealed (they still have 100% concealment but their exact location is obvious with a Spot check, DC10). Creatures vulnerable to daylight suffer their full normal penalties. Undead in the area illuminated suffer 1d6 hp/round (spell resistance applies) and cannot physically pass through the wall. All effects with the darkness descriptor are dispelled within 60' of the wall. Finally, you and all your allies get a +1 morale bonus on all saving throws made within the radius of the light.

## ARMOR OF LIGHT

Evocation [Light]

**Level:** Clr 4

**Components:** V, S, DF

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Personal

**Target:** You

**Duration:** 1 round/level plus see text

**Saving Throw:** See text

**Spell Resistance:** No

You suffuse yourself with a radiant armor that your enemies find difficult to keep in their view. Any hostile creatures looking at you must make a Fort save or be blinded for as long as they look at you and for 1d4 rounds thereafter. Furthermore, the victim is dazzled (-1 to attack rolls) for one day. Attackers not looking directly at you give you 50% concealment (20% miss chance) but avoid being blinded or dazzled.

## BECALM

Transmutation

**Level:** Drd 3, Wiz/Sor 3

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** 1 round

**Range:** Long (400'+40'/level)

**Target:** 1 ship

**Duration:** 1 round/level

**Saving Throw:** Will negates (object; the ship uses the pilot as its "bearer")

**Spell Resistance:** Yes (object)

You becalm a ship, taking the wind out of its sails, and negating its movement or turning for the duration. If it can move under oars, it can still move, but if it depends on its sails, it is in trouble.

## BEND PATH

Transmutation

**Level:** Wiz/Sor 4

**Components:** V, S, M

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Medium (100'+10'/level)

**Target:** 1 creature

**Duration:** 1 round/level

**Saving Throw:** Will negates

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

You cause space to warp around your target. If she fails a saving throw she finds that she can walk only in a circle and only in one direction. The path the victim inevitably walks is a circle within the following parameters:

- It has a minimum diameter of 15' minus your level
- It has a maximum diameter of 60'
- It has a distinct direction

These parameters are set by you as you cast the spell.

If obstructions stop the character's progress along the circular path, she will be able to move only along the edge of the obstruction to where she can resume her path.

*Material components:* a stick and glue model of a hyperspatial object. Constructing such a figure requires four hours and a successful knowledge (mathematics) check, DC15.

### BLACK MANTLE

Necromancy [Evil]

**Level:** Wiz/Sor 6, Clr 7

**Components:** V, S, M, DF

**Casting Time:** 1 full round

**Range:** Medium (100'+10'/level)

**Area:** 30' radius emanation

**Duration:** 10 minutes/level

**Saving Throw:** None

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

Black mantle creates a shimmering dark haze in the air that negates all healing and regeneration within its area. Spells that heal hit points, subdual damage, or ability damage are cast normally but have no effect. Creatures may check their spell resistance against it upon first entering its area; if you fail to overcome a creature's SR, it can be the subject of healing or regeneration.

Additionally, an area under a black mantle effect grants one-quarter concealment to all creatures within it (miss chance 10%), even against darkvision.

Black mantle counters and dispels, and is countered and dispelled by, circle of healing.

### BLIZZARD

Evocation [Cold]

**Level:** Ice 6

**Components:** V, S, DF

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Long (400'+40'/level)

**Area:** Snow spreads 60', 40' high

**Duration:** 1 minute/level

**Saving Throw:** See text

**Spell Resistance:** No

You summon thick snow, swirling winds, and freezing temperatures. Creatures caught within the blizzard suffer 1d10 points of subdual damage each round (this rolls over to real damage on a subdued creature). The falling snow gives 50% concealment to things up to 10' away and 100% concealment beyond ten feet. It also inflicts a -4 penalty to Spot and Search checks and to ranged attack rolls. Characters within the blizzard that move more than half their normal speed must make Reflex saves to avoid falling prone. All fires in the area are extinguished in one round (Reflex save avoids if borne by a creature).

### BONEFREEZE

Transmutation [Cold]

**Level:** Ice 8

**Components:** V, S, DF

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Touch

**Target:** One creature

**Duration:** Instantaneous

**Saving Throw:** Fortitude partial

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

With a touch you freeze a creature solid. It dies instantly unless totally immune to cold damage, but even then it is immobilized until

it thaws in 1d4 minutes. If the creature is dead it can be shattered with a single blow.

A creature that makes its saving throw suffers 8d8 points of cold damage and are numbed (suffering a -4 circumstance penalty to strength and dexterity for 1d4 minutes).

### BRIGHTFIRE

Transmutation [Fire]

**Level:** Wiz/Sor 4, Drd 3

**Components:** V, S, M

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Medium (100'+10'/level)

**Target:** 1 fire (up to 100' on a side)

**Duration:** 1 minute/level

**Saving Throw:** None

**Spell Resistance:** No

You cause a fire (normal or magical) to burn with a silvery-white blaze, intensifying its heat. If it already is hot enough to damage creatures near it, the range(s) at which it does double(s), any save DCs increase by 2, and damage is increased by +2. If the fire deals variable amounts of damage at different distances, all receive the +2 bonus.

If the fire was not hot enough to deal damage previously, it deals 1d6+2 hp to all creatures within 10' of it while under the influence of *brightfire*.

*Material component:* an alchemical powder called Blackburn.

### CINDERSPELL

Abjuration

**Level:** Wiz/Sor 4

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Close (25'+5'/2 levels)

**Target:** One spell caster

**Duration:** 10 minutes/level or until triggered

**Saving Throw:** Will negates

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

A *cinderspell* works by sapping the magical energy that transports the next spell the target casts. The spell takes effect normally but with its effect centered on its own caster. Though this is fine if the spell is *stoneskin* it is problematical if the next spell cast is *disintegrate* or something similar.

### DEATH STATE

Necromancy

**Level:** Wiz/Sor 1

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Personal

**Target:** You

**Duration:** 1 round/level

You take on the special qualities of an undead for the duration, and can be turned, rebuked, commanded or destroyed by a cleric. While in a *death state*, you are immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, and necromantic effects that target living creatures. You are not subject to subdual damage, ability damage or drain, or energy drain. You are still vulnerable to mind-affecting effects, death from massive damage and critical hits. While in the *death state* you are healed by negative energy and harmed by positive energy. Any effects that are specific to undead will harm you, and spells and abilities that affect undead differently than other creature types will affect you as if you were undead (such as *searing light*).

### DIMENSIONAL BLADE

Transmutation

**Level:** Wiz/Sor 5

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Touch

**Target:** One slashing weapon up to 3 lbs/level

**Duration:** 1 round/level

**Saving Throw:** None

**Spell Resistance:** No

This spell makes a weapon incredibly sharp by making it form a two-dimensional edge. The dimensional blade makes touch attacks and gains a +2 enhancement bonus. Its threat range increases by 3 (19-20 becomes 16-20) and any critical hits that are confirmed on a natural 20 require the target to make a Fort save against the DC of this spell or die. A dimensional blade ignores hardness and can deal double damage against unmovable objects.

**DISPEL EXHAUSTION**

Illusion (Phantasm) [Mind-Affecting]

**Level:** Wiz/Sor 4

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Touch

**Targets:** Up to four creatures touched

**Duration:** 10 minutes/level

**Saving Throw:** Will negates (harmless)

**Spell Resistance:** Yes (harmless)

The recipients of this spell feel refreshed and rested, effectively gaining 2 hp/level in their minds (as if they'd had a day of full rest). However, these are phantasmal hit points and are all lost at the spell's expiration. *Dispel exhaustion* does not stack with itself.

While the spell is in effect, each recipient can move at double normal speed for one round out of ten. When it expires, anyone who chose to do so is fatigued for the next hour (-2 effective penalty to strength and dexterity).

**DISTANCE DISTORTION**

Transmutation

**Level:** Wiz/Sor 5

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Long (400'+40'/level)

**Effect:** See text

**Duration:** 10 minutes/level (D)

**Saving Throw:** None

**Spell Resistance:** No

This spell allows you to manipulate and distort distances within range, making them either shorter or longer. All distances are effectively either half as long or twice as long as they really are (for movement purposes only). You can change the distortion throughout the spell's duration (from shorter to longer or back to normal) as a standard action.

**DISTILL DARKNESS**

Transmutation [Evil]

**Level:** Clr 4

**Components:** V, S, M

**Casting Time:** 8 hours

**Range:** Special

**Effect:** See text

**Duration:** Permanent

**Saving Throw:** None

**Spell Resistance:** No

This spell allows you to *distill darkness* into an inky liquid. It is a long and exhausting ritual that requires the casting of deeper darkness, from which is distilled essence of darkness. One vial is made per two caster levels. This stuff is pitch black. If a vial is thrown and breaks, the essence of darkness inside spills violently and bursts into a zone of darkness 10' in radius. This darkness is as deep as deeper darkness; the zone lasts for 1 hour/level.

A vial of essence of darkness thrown at any spell with the light descriptor will automatically dispel it (no roll required) if it directly hits it. A vial of essence of darkness will deal 2d4 hp to a cleric of good alignment, an outsider with the Good subtype or a paladin.

*Material component:* sacrifices worth at least 250 gp.

**DISTILL SUNLIGHT**

Transmutation [Good]

**Level:** Cleric 4

**Components:** V, S, DF, M

**Casting Time:** 3 hours

**Range:** Special

**Effect:** See text

**Duration:** Permanent

**Saving Throw:** None

**Spell Resistance:** No

This ritual allows you to distill sunlight into a thin volatile fluid. One flask is created per two caster levels. This spell must be cast under the sun in a cloudless sky, making it hard to cast in many places and seasons. Further, distilled sunlight evaporates within 2d4 hours unless sealed (in which case it lasts up to the caster's level in days).

The spell distills the sunlight into previously prepared holy water. As a liquid, sunlight has the following properties:

- It radiates a 60' glow akin to daylight;
- It is warm to the touch. Drinking a flask of sunlight will heal 1d8 points of cold damage taken in the last hour. Also, it will dry up to 4 square feet of wet surface per flask.
- It acts as double-strength holy water.
- It is extremely flammable. If lit it will burn in only a single round but a vial will cause 3d4 damage.

*Material components:* in addition to the required holy water, this spell requires 200 gp in incense and herbs plus 50 gp/vial to be distilled.

**DOOR TO ITSELF**

Transmutation

**Level:** Wiz/Sor 5

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** 1 round

**Range:** Touch

**Target:** One doorway or portal, up to 20 square feet/level

**Duration:** 1 hour/level (D)

**Saving Throw:** Will negates (object)

**Spell Resistance:** Yes (object)

*Door to itself* can be cast on any doorway or portal, including ones that cross planes. Any creature passing through it emerges from the same side that they just entered. If any extradimensional spaces are carried through it, both the door to itself and the space have a 50% chance of the spell or space collapsing and spilling its contents onto the astral plane.

**INKY ATTACKER**

Conjuration (Creation) [Darkness, Cold]

**Level:** Clr 3

**Components:** V, S, DF

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Close (25'+5'/2 levels)

**Effect:** See text

**Duration:** 1 round/level

**Saving Throw:** Reflex negates (see text)

**Spell Resistance:** Yes (see text)

By this spell you create an inky blob of darkness that rushes to attack a single designated target. If the target is initially in range they must make their save immediately; otherwise the inky attacker will move at a rate of 60'/round until it reaches the target (who must save then). If the saving throw is successful the inky attacker fades away; if it fails, the attacker engulfs the victim's head, blinding the victim and inflicting 1d6 hp of cold damage each round.

A daylight spell cast directly upon an inky attacker will destroy it.

**LIGHTSNUFFER**

Enchantment [Mind-Affecting]

**Level:** Clr 2

**Components:** V, S, DF

**Casting Time:** 1 full round

**Range:** Close (25'+5'/2 levels)

**Target:** One cleric of the Light or celestial devoted to Galador

**Duration:** 1 minute/level

**Saving Throw:** Will negates

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

You castigate the target about the weakness of his or her deity or religion for a full round. Unless the victim saves, he is denied the use of

all his granted powers (domain, turning, and spontaneous casting) if a cleric. If a celestial, the subject is denied the use of all clerical spell-like abilities, but the celestial may choose to make another will save as a full round action (struggling with its faith).

### PHASE STRIKE

Evocation

**Level:** Wiz/Sor 5

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Medium (100'+10'/levels)

**Area:** 30' radius burst

**Duration:** Instantaneous

**Saving Throw:** Reflex half

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

This spell is designed to attack creatures that phase in and out (such as phase spiders, ghosts, ethereal filchers, etc.) All creatures out of phase, incorporeal, or on the border ethereal in the burst suffer 2d8 hp/level (maximum 10d8). This damage is a special disrupting energy completely harmless to fully material creatures. All out of phase creatures that fail their saving throws are also outlined in a ghostly blue faerie fire that reveals them on the material plane (as long as they would be within sight anyway). This faerie fire lasts only 1d4+1 rounds.

### RAIN OF LEECHES

Conjuration (Summoning)

**Level:** Wiz/Sor 6, Drd 6

**Components:** V, S, M

**Casting Time:** 1 round

**Range:** Long (400'+40'/level)

**Area:** Cylinder up to 10'/level in diameter, 100' high

**Duration:** 1 round/level

**Saving Throw:** None

**Spell Resistance:** No

A rain of fist sized leeches pours down for one round. All creatures within are attacked by 2d4 leeches. Every round thereafter on your turn each creature on the ground in the area of effect is attacked by 1d4 more leeches. The leeches use your base attack bonus, getting a +2 size bonus and suffering a -4 strength penalty; their attacks are touch attacks as they can easily get under armor and the like. Each hit inflicts one hit point of damage and the leech attaches, draining 1 hp/round thereafter in virtually limitless numbers. Each leech is AC8 (+2 size, -4 dex) and has 1 hp. A leech will only leave the area if carried out by another creature. An opposed grapple check will dislodge a leech (figure its grapple check as above).

*Material component:* a vial of three drops of water mixed with swamp water.

### RAISE VOLCANO

Transmutation

**Level:** Magma 9

**Components:** V, S, M

**Casting Time:** 1 round

**Range:** Long (400'+40'/level)

**Effect:** Circle of ground rises 20'/round

**Duration:** 1 round/level

**Saving Throw:** None

**Spell Resistance:** No

This spell causes the targeted area to swell with internal violence, trembling and rising like a huge blister at a frightening rate. The initial area affected is a circle 30' in diameter, but each round that the volcano continues to rise the circle's diameter expands 30', sloping upward fairly abruptly (slope of 2/3). Each round after the first there is a 50% chance the volcano's top will burst in an eruption. All creatures on the volcano when it erupts are subject to an effect identical to a rain of lava spell, except the DC is that of your ninth level spells. All creatures within a distance equal to three times the height of the volcano suffer a blast of pyroclastic rock and hot smoke that deals 3d6 impact and 3d6 fire damage (Reflex save avoids); and all

creatures up to that same distance must make Balance checks when the volcano erupts (DC equal to 15+1/10' in height of the volcano) or be thrown from their feet. The eruption lasts for the remainder of the duration of the spell.

The volcano remains after the spell expires, but it ceases to erupt. The potential for it to erupt again remains, as it is now considered an active volcano. Exactly how active depends on the local geology.

*Material component:* a piece of obsidian.

### SEARING ORB

Evocation

**Level:** Clr 6

**Components:** V, S, M

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Medium (100'+10'/level)

**Effect:** 30' burst

**Duration:** Instantaneous

**Saving Throw:** See text

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

This spell changes the material component into a glowing orb of brilliant hot energy, which you throw as part of the casting. Make a touch attack at your target, and if you miss use the rules for grenade-like missiles to determine where the searing orb hits. When it hits the orb bursts with a brilliant searing flash. Any creature actually struck by the orb suffers 1d6 hp/level fire damage (maximum of 20d6) and is blinded for 1 day (Fort save halves the damage and negates the blindness). All other creatures in the burst suffer 10d6 hp of fire damage and are dazzled for 1d4 hours (Ref save for half damage and no dazzling; for evasion purposes treat this as a Reflex half save).

*Material component:* a topaz worth at least 500 gp.

### SPELL CLOCK

Transmutation

**Level:** Wiz/Sor 6

**Components:** V, S, M

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Medium (100'+10'/level)

**Area:** 20' burst

**Duration:** Instantaneous

**Saving Throw:** See text

**Spell Resistance:** No

This spell uses a blast of temporal energy to age magical effects in place in the area of effect, using up a chunk of their duration. You make an opposed level check against the spell level of each spell or spell-like effect with a running duration in the area of effect; if you succeed, the energy of the *Spell Clock* blasts away 1d6/level minutes of duration from that spell (likely ending spells with shorter durations instantly). Spells without a temporal duration (for example, *Glyph of Warding* or *Mage Hand*) are not affected.

*Material Component:* a handful of sand.

### THE LIGHT OF TRUTH

Divination [Light]

**Level:** Clr 6

**Components:** V, S, M, DF

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Close (25'+5'/2 levels)

**Target:** 1 creature

**Duration:** 1 round/level

**Saving Throw:** Will negates

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

This spell, a variant of detect lie, causes an angry red light to shine from your eyes onto a creature you're interrogating. If it lies to you, it begins bleeding from its eyes, nose, mouth and ears, suffering 1d6 hp/round until it tells the truth about its lies.

*Material component:* the tongue of a liar. 🗨️

# Tactical Combat:

## Arcane Casters

By Morgan {TempesT} Grover

Welcome to the first installment of Tactical Combat: Arcane Casters. This column is designed to get the weaker combat classes, specifically the wizard and the sorcerer, right into the battle rather than have them hiding in the back of the party shooting off a spell now and then.

Each month I will look at different possible solutions to help your wizard or sorcerer become more proficient in combat. These suggestions may involve keeping the basic single class, or multiclassing to provide additional combat enhancements. This month, we are going to look at the Spell Archer. This character template combines fighting prowess, ranged combat spells, and Arcane Archer abilities.

### Spell Archer

As everybody knows, a single-classed Wizard or Sorcerer is not much use in melee combat. Sure, they can pack quite a punch with their magic, but their selection of spells cannot cover every potential combat situation. Everyone has seen the following situation: at the worst possible moment (when your wizard has no more useful spells), your party gets attacked by a horde of ogres. Due to circumstances like these, many wizards and sorcerers choose to take a second class to help them get through tough times.

The Wizard class works best with the Spell Archer combination, allowing the character access to many different spells. This enables you to use both long range missile-type spells, such as acid arrow, magic missile, and lightning bolt, which all complement the “feeling” of the class. Taking the wizard class also allows you to choose area-effect spells which combine well with the Imbue Arrow ability of the Arcane Archer.

If the Sorcerer class is chosen, then you must first decide what spells you should choose, as well as if you would rather use long range missile-type spells, or area effect spells. Due to the limited supply of spells a sorcerer can cast, and the fact that they cannot be changed once learned, spells must be chosen wisely.

### Spell Archer (wizard)

High Int & Dex  
Average Con & Wis  
Low Str & Cha

*(Note: If the Sorcerer class is taken, then Cha should be put in place of Int, Int in place of Wis, and Wis in place of Cha.)*

To further benefit a Wizard class, you may choose to take a specialty class, such as an Evoker. Because many useful spells for this class come from the Evocation school, the bonuses stack very well with the overall goals of the Spell Archer.

If this path is taken, then both the Enchantment and Illusion schools should be the top two schools to ban. Neither school has spells that fit well with the abilities of this class combination. In addition, most of the spells do not essentially help the Spell Archer fulfill objectives.

As the class name suggests, long range weapons are the base of this class combination. With the Arcane Archer included in this combination, a bow type weapon must be chosen. Whether it be the shortbow, longbow, or the composite version of either, the choice needs to be made early.

In order to become an Arcane Archer, you must be either a Half-Elf or full blooded Elf. Depending on your playing style, both races have their advantages. Elves gain Int bonus, and several other racial advantages. However, because the Wizard is the preferred class, you

### Level Advancement Table

\*F= fighter      W= wizard      AA= arcane archer

Character Level	Class Level	Base Attack	Fort / Ref / Will	Suggested Feats	Abilities Gained
1	F1	+1	+2 / +0 / +0	Point Blank Shot, Weapon Focus (select bow)	Feat, Bonus Fighter Feat
2	F2	+2	+3 / +0 / +0	Precise Shot	Bonus Fighter Feat
3	F2 / W1	+2	+3 / +0 / +2	Spell Focus (Evocation)	Feat, Summon Familiar, Scribe Scroll, 0-1st level spells
4	F3 / W1	+3	+3 / +1 / +3	Rapid Shot	Ability Bonus
5	F3 / W2	+4	+3 / +1 / +4		-----
6	F4 / W2	+5	+4 / +1 / +4	Far Shot, Dodge	Feat, Bonus Fighter Feat
7	F4 / W3	+5	+5 / +2 / +4		2nd level spells
8	F4 / W3 / AA1	+6 / +1	+7 / +4 / +4		Ability Bonus, Enchant Arrow +1
9	F4 / W3 / AA2	+7 / +2	+8 / +5 / +4	Mobility	Feat, Imbue Arrow
10	F4 / W3 / AA3	+8 / +3	+8 / +5 / +5		Enchant Arrow +2
11	F4 / W4 / AA3	+9 / +4	+8 / +5 / +6		-----
12	F4 / W4 / AA4	+10 / +5	+9 / +6 / +6	Spell Focus (Conjuration)	Feat, Ability Bonus, Seeker Arrow
13	F4 / W4 / AA5	+11 / +6 / +1	+9 / +6 / +6		Enchant Arrow +3
14	F4 / W4 / AA6	+12 / +7 / +2	+10 / +7 / +7		Phase Arrow
15	F4 / W4 / AA7	+13 / +8 / +3	+10 / +7 / +7	Shot on the Run	Feat, Enchant Arrow +4
16	F4 / W4 / AA8	+14 / +9 / +4	+11 / +8 / +7		Ability Bonus, Hail of Arrows
17	F4 / W5 / AA8	+14 / +9 / +4	+11 / +8 / +7	Empower Spell	3rd Level Spells, Bonus Wizard Feat
18	F5 / W5 / AA8	+15 / +10 / +5	+11 / +8 / +7	Enlarge Spell	Feat
19	F5 / W6 / AA8	+16 / +11 / +6 / +1	+12 / +9 / +8		-----
20	F5 / W6 / AA9	+17 / +12 / +7 / +2	+13 / +10 / +9		Ability Bonus, Enchant Arrow +5

will suffer XP penalties more often. The preferred class for a Half-Elf character is always the highest level class. Because of this, the only time in which you would incur a XP penalty is at levels 4, 6, 8, and 9. An Elf, on the other hand, would suffer them at levels 4, 6, 8, and 14-20.

### Spells

Many spells help out a Spell Archer, and the list below is far from complete; however, these are some spells that few Spell Archers stand without.

#### 0 Level Spells

*Ray of Frost, Flare*

#### 1st Level Spells

*Magic Missile, Ray of Enfeeblement, True Strike, Magic Weapon, Cause Fear, Expeditious Retreat*

#### 2nd Level Spells

*Acid Arrow, Cat's Grace, Protection from Arrows, Glitterdust, Flaming Sphere, Scare*

#### 3rd Level Spells

*Dispel Magic, Lightning Bolt, Flame Arrow, Fireball, Greater Magic Weapon, Haste, Keen Edge, Fly*

### Playing Notes

A Spell Archer knows that getting into the heat of the battle may not be a smart idea. Since very few Spell Archers wear armor (to minimize potential spell failure) they stand back and use ranged attacks. Most of the time, melee attackers are not able to make it to the

spell archer before being attacked and possibly killed. Opponents attacking from range will cause a problem though. Protection from Arrows is an excellent response to this danger, as well as Cat's Grace. Several magical items offer additional protection from ranged attacks. Characters should try to acquire Rings of Protection, Bracers of Armor, and other AC-enhancing items that do not interfere with spell casting. Gloves of Arrow Snaring can add an incredible amount of defense for the Spell Archer as well. On the offensive side, wands with the spells listed above are useful, as well as always maintaining a supply of different scrolls.

You may not be able to get into the thick of battle, but your usefulness to the adventuring party will never waver. The spell archer is able to kill enemies quick with spells, drop foes with her arrows, and even provide a few extra arcane tricks when needed. ☛

### Advantage / Disadvantage Table

\*Compared to Single Class Wizard

Advantages	Disadvantages
Powerful ranged combat	Slow spell progression
More combat proficiency	Cannot cast mid- to high-level spells
More Hit Points	Few wizard bonus feats
Better saves	Weak familiar
Better Base Attack	Less damaging offensive spells
Additional Feats (from Fighter class)	Shorter spell durations
Prestige Class abilities	Limited race choice

# The Critic's Corner

D20Zine! Guest Review

By Steven Palmer Peterson

I've been working and talking with Steve Creech for a while so I cannot promise an impartial review. I wouldn't even want to do an impartial review; human relations are too important to sacrifice on the altar of objectivity. Particularly in game reviewing. However, I'll tell you what I think of these various products, where I think they have issues and where they do particularly well. Then, at the end, I'll have a short paragraph summing up my opinion. No grade though; I do enough grading elsewhere.

Since Steve Creech runs the d20 Magazine Rack he looked to an outsider to do reviews of products he wrote or co-wrote; I get a guest-shot that way.

## Egyptian Gods, The Lore of the Gods

Published by Bastion Press

Written by Steven Creech and Kevin Ruesch

Egyptian Gods is a pdf coming in at 64 pages when you include the OGL. Bastion has been listening to its fans and shipped this one with two versions, one with border art and one without. The table of contents is clickable, it's got bookmarks that mirror the ToC, and thumbnail images. I always like those for some reason even though I never use them. As with all the Bastion products I have so far, Bastion designated all text in the book as Open Content. I suspect Bastion is approaching WotC in quantity of open content released (quite possibly even surpassed). This makes both Egyptian Gods and its sister products, Lore of the Gods – Olympians, and Norse Gods, pretty valuable if you want to produce some open content of your

own (even just formalizing your home-grown campaign and posting it to the web). This also means that the material will never be buried under copyright law. It's out there now and people can use it as they see fit, even if Bastion disappears in some freak space-time vortex.

### The Gods:

Each god has a short list of details that covers domains, favored worshippers, favored avatar forms and symbols, and so on. Each god also grants certain worshippers a special benefit; this can help motivate players to get involved in the spiritual aspect of your game world. I would have liked to see a brief description of the costs or requirements involved in worshipping a god. Perhaps some commentary regarding what kind of sacrifices one has to make or restrictions on action. The description sections work well; many are fairly short but still touch on the role the god played in the mythology. Set and Thoth have particularly good description sections; one thing the authors do is discuss variations of the god's stories. This is nice to have since different sects and cults had different beliefs about their god's role in the universe. A gamemaster can combine these different pictures offered to customize his own campaign. I also particularly liked Amon's description section; it included a few well-chosen quotes. I'd be interested to know where they came from; perhaps later books could include a bibliography.

Each god write-up also includes a sample avatar and an artifact. The artifacts felt sort of old-school, like the original Deities and Demigods; I won't justify that claim, perhaps it had something to do with the powers lists. All the avatars are written up as 20th level characters with pretty good stats. They primarily use the core classes

but have their divine artifact and a good package of magic items to boost them; I'm not exactly sure how well they'll stand up against the typical twinked out 20th level player character. Regardless, I generally like my gods to have stats unless they're actually transcendent beings and most of the old myths had all-too-untranscendent gods. The avatars wound up feeling a bit too much like a player character with good stats and an artifact for me though; it's okay to break the rules with a god and I think doing something like that would have spiced them up a bit. Adding something like aspects from Zelazny's Lord of Light or Domains from Nobilis or the avatar channels powers from Unknown Armies would be a good way to make the gods feel like they transcend the normal rules.

The writers include spell-lists for the magic using types but don't have a sample set of prepared spells. This defeats the purpose in my opinion. Generally even for the deities with wizard classes I'd assume they all have access to all the arcane spells commonly known in my world so I don't need the known spells (especially for cleric casters). What I want as a gamemaster is someone else to have done the tedious work of picking out all the prepared spells; I'll then go in and tweak to my taste.

### **The Domains:**

This is a particularly strong part of the book; a game can always use more domains and the ones included here are both appealing and appropriate. One or two seem a bit better than average (time grants a +1 attack and AC bonus) but even that's not bad.

### **The Spells:**

I liked a number of the spells in this book; the moon based ones were pretty cool. For instance Lunar Veil makes the moon appear eclipsed in a certain area and this removes the powers of lycanthropes within the region. Some of the spells (and some of the benefits granted elsewhere) give somewhat vague descriptions of their effects. One feature of Third Edition is that the authors went to a lot of trouble to make the effects of spells and other powers as explicit as possible; they did this with descriptors, tightly defined categories, and extensive details on how to use difficult to adjudicate spells such as polymorph other. Some of the spells in Egyptian Gods use vaguer terms like creature-type or require a bit more adjudication on the gamemaster's part; this does allow you to model a wider range of effects though.

### **Magic Items:**

Just a couple in here; the Book of Thoth has a good Mummy/Mummy 2 feel.

### **Monsters:**

They include a good selection of desert and Egyptian monsters in this section; lots of scarabs and ever since "The Mummy" I've loved those things. They include a creature that eats names; I love that concept though I would have liked a bit more spectacular result.

### **Prestige Classes:**

The Moon Knight scores high on the coolness scale; now if they could just get Bill Sienkiewicz to do the art... Seriously, the Moon Knight is a very cool prestige class, very resilient and flexible, perhaps even a bit powerful, but not all of it is too combat oriented so probably okay. The book also has a few 5 level PrC's; I like the 5-levelers. It's just enough to add some flavor to a character without feeling like the PrC takes over completely. A couple classes also help flesh out NPCs. One area of confusion though is that a number of the PrC's get bonus feats and they don't make explicit what feats you can choose; I contacted the author and the bonus feats act just like general feats (i.e. take anything). That's a pretty strong benefit but probably acceptable for the weaker PrC's. You might want to place some in-game restrictions on access to the classes if you think they wound up too strong.

### **Summary:**

As a gods sourcebook Egyptian Gods gives some nice background info and convenient avatars just in case you need some stats. I liked the parts other than the god write-ups the best though; the domains are nice to have, the spells bring an Egyptian feel, and the monsters will be handy when I run my players through a desert. And someone somewhere is going up against a Moon Knight! I like Egyptian mythology in general too; it works well as a core mythology for your world or as an alien mythology for when your group goes exploring the sands.

## **Lore of the Gods – Olympians (also called Greek Gods)**

*Published by Bastion Press*

*Written by Steven Creech and Kevin Ruesch*

The Olympians marked the first book in the Lore of the Gods series published electronically by Bastion Press. Unlike the Egyptians, this one has a few less pages (46 total) and is mostly devoted to writeups of the gods. It also includes 18 pages of new domains, spells, monsters, one template, prestige classes, and mythic Greek heroes. Since the god write-ups take up the majority of the book in this one you'll probably get the best use of it if you actually use the avatars in your game. For the Greek gods this works a bit better I think. 20th level avatars feel okay for the Greek gods; after all, Xena could hold her own fairly well against Ares and Aphrodite on a good day. The spells and domains get a fair amount of reprinting between the books; that doesn't strike me as bad in the case of Egyptian gods because 64 pages for \$5.99 is a good deal anyway but if you're getting the Olympians afterward you'll be a bit less satisfied. The descriptions of the gods include accounts from different sources. Homer and Hesiod say different things about Aphrodite for example (perhaps she told them different lies...) Again, I like this because it helps you both customize your campaign and keep it relatively historical at the same time. Each god also includes a personalized artifact or two.

The spells section includes some more nautical magic, tying in well for clerics of Poseidon and gamemasters who might want to run an Odyssey themed game. The monsters section includes stats for a few creatures, Cyclops and Cerebus amongst them. Cerebus might have a typo since he seems a bit weak for a CR 20 encounter. The half-god template gives you the chance to play Heracles or someone like him. This is a cool idea and I'd like to see it expanded a bit; perhaps a menu of special abilities that depend on who your particular father or mother happens to be. The DR 5/- is awfully good but these guys also get good stats so you'll likely be using them in a fairly high powered game anyway.

The Hunter of Hera is the only prestige class in the book and looks like something more suitable to NPCs than players due to its focus. My take on it is that you allow all your players to take the Half-God template then liberally populate your world with the Hunters. Players can't complain; the template is awfully good after all and power has its price. There are some minor issues with the write-up itself; the class abilities lack the EX/SU/SP designators and its not clear what kind of action one needs to use the True Strike ability at 7th level (however, lots of d20 products neglect both of these). It also has a non-standard save progression chart; this doesn't bother me a bit but I could understand if the programmers over at PCGEN got frustrated by these sorts of things.

My take on this product is that it would be very useful for a certain style of game. If you'd like to run something along the lines of Heracles and Xena this approach to the god write-ups works well. The gods are tough but heroic humans can beat them. This allows you to actually use the gods themselves as the villains in a game. Since the players only kill avatars you can even use Ares or Aphrodite as a recurring opponent, something hard to accomplish with normal villains in d20. This also promotes more interaction with the gods

themselves and I think that could make for a fun change of pace. I probably wouldn't do this with another mythos but since Xena paved the way it somehow feels okay. I'd probably let the PC's be half-gods too in such a game.

## **Lore of the Gods Book Two: The Asgardians (also called Norse Gods)**

*Published by Bastion Press*

*Written by Steven Creech and Kevin Ruesch*

So as to retain no sense of order in this sequence of reviews I'll talk about book two in the series now. This e-book focuses on Norse mythology and comes in at 51 pages.

Unlike the others this one starts out with a short overview of the Norse mythic structure itself; a short bit discussing the origins and a longer bit talking about Ragnarok. I've got a fair bit of Norwegian in me but I gotta say those guys had a pretty bleak outlook. And what's with all the prophecies?!? Thor will pimp-slap the Midgard Serpent then step back nine paces and collapse from the poison. Whoever's doing the prophecy must have some pretty good reception on his crystal ball to get the nine paces part right. I liked the inclusion of this section and think the other books might have benefited from something similar. It helps one get in the mood; of course, after getting in the Norse mood one probably ought to have a drink and lighten up a bit. Like I said, I enjoyed this section and the background info but you do start to feel the lack of editing here; unlike the other books in the series this one has a few more typos and awkward sentences. It's not bad and it is a free download after all but it could have used another pass through the editor's mill.

The section describing the gods uses the same model as the others; block of stats good for clerics; textual description of the god and some of the stuff he does; then a 20th level avatar. Given that the book also includes stats for the Fenris Wolf and the Midgard Serpent with challenge ratings 28 and 60 respectively the avatars feel a bit out of place. Still, it'd be a nightmare trying to stat out the gods such that you could make the Midgard Serpent an even match with Thor \*and\* get all the other gods and monsters' stats right. I haven't even seen the new Deities and Demigods yet but I'm certain WoTC couldn't get that kind of internal consistency going either, not when you've got challenge ratings floating in the 40's. Regardless, I'd be less inclined to use avatars for Norse gods; for some reason they always struck me as the kinds of guys who like to show up in person. But you get the avatar stats if you want them and they include typically one artifact per god as well as nice sections describing some of the mythic history of the god.

The domains and spells again have some cross-over with the other books. This one includes more winter and weather oriented spells. I've always had a fondness for glaciers and snow (from a distance that is) so these appealed to me.

The monsters section turned out nicely; the Norse mythos has a good collection of monsters adaptable to many types of campaigns so it's nice to have these. I always like the really tough critters too; perhaps that's because I'm sort of a Monty Haul GM and I need tough monsters to challenge my players. The table of contents and bookmarks needed proofing here; they don't list the name but instead give the creature type. Makes it kind of fun though trying to figure out what the types refer to. These are bad news creatures; a few have CR's above 40 so you can use them to help test-drive the Epic Level Handbook.

The book also includes 4 prestige classes with an appropriately Norse theme. The berserker acts a lot like a barbarian but going berserk makes you really tough and leaves you in much worse condition afterwards. There's also a giant hunter, and a good class focused around Midgard Serpent worshipping for gamemasters. The most potent of the bunch is the Valkyrie; she has truly awesome powers for a fighter-type, like a boosted paladin. She's too tough to just let

players pick up at will but if you treat access to the class like a special reward (ala a magic item or reward for a major quest) I think she'll work and capture the majesty of what a valkyrie should feel like. Moreover, she'll properly impress your players. But you do need to place some kind of additional requirement on entry to the class otherwise you'll have a lot of players with female fighters for their next character...

## **Where Dark Elves Rule**

*Published by Bastion Press*

*Written by Steven Creech*

I purchase a fair number of pdf products but I've mostly avoided scenarios. One thing this module convinced me of was that pdf makes a pretty good resource for adventures so I might try out a few more. Five dollars for a 48 page pdf, then about 50 cents for the paper and perhaps 75 cents to \$1.50 for ink (depending on your ink cost) amounts to between \$6 and \$7 for the module. It doesn't look as nice as a regular module but you do get some added conveniences such as being able to print the parts you want, play with the map in Photoshop, and you can store the file indefinitely for later use (even possibly edit it for a different campaign). I think one could increase the market for this kind of product by adding in more electronic features and doing a good job tailoring it to the way people will use it. E-books for games are still practically in their pre-natal stage so it will be interesting to see what they look like coming down the line.

On to this particular book. This felt like an old-school module to me. Boss gives you mission; you run through a dungeon overcoming traps and slapping around monsters. You get lots of encounters in this module, over 80 rooms. Keeping with the old-school feel, these encounters often get fairly brief descriptions; look at Glacial Rift of the Frost Giant Jarl (or whatever the name was) and you'll see the same style of description. That works for me; I'm not a big fan of tell-it-to-em-straight sections. In fact, the module works best when it gets away from the boxed text since the boxed text sections fall into the trap of telling the players what they do and feel a bit too often. I liked the general background for the scenario; the players travel to another world where the sun has been shrouded (giving the place a purplish tint, nice use of color I think) and dark elves have taken over. Unfortunately you don't get much chance to explore the background in this quick, in & out mission, but later editions in the series will give you a chance to explore more of the world.

The scenario hook involves signing a contract with a powerful sorcerer for an extended tour of duty. This will work for some groups but I think the module should have included some alternatives to help gamemasters who want to use it in other ways. In order to keep the module tough you need to keep in mind the time-constraints in the scenario. Many of the encounters are fairly low in challenge rating and meant more to wear down resources than pose a significant threat. Since I haven't playtested the scenario I can't say how well this works in practice but you can always loosen or tighten the time constraints based on how twinkled out your particular group is. A cool iron-man version might allow just one rest period during the adventure.

You get lots of traps, lots of monster encounters, and a big dungeon crawl out of this scenario. Moreover, it's one of those rare modules designed for high-level play; this can make it a worthwhile resource to mine for constructing your own scenario as well as running it as written. Right now it feels a bit dry but I think that could be solved when the sequels come out since the dark elf world sounds interesting.

### **Overview**

I noticed that I didn't talk about the art at all in the above sections. Apparently some people are visual and some aren't; I suppose you can guess what camp I fall in. Overall the art was adequate. I liked the couple of illustrations in Where Dark Elves Rule; the Norse and



Egyptian books had adequate Photoshop tweaked photographs. Those actually reminded me a bit of the images in *Immortal: the Invisible War* so I sort of liked them. They didn't inspire me particularly but served to break up the text and make the books feel a bit less intimidating (which is one of the purposes of filler art). The border art has to go though; it looks nice in the store when the publisher pays for the ink but not only do I have to use extra ink for that but some printers choke on the graphics (I still can't get *Demon God's Fane* to print out). The *Egyptians* book comes packaged with a borderless version (woo+!!) so it's a lot less painful.

I liked the *Egyptians* book the best; I thought it had the widest range of possible applications. However, the *Norse* book is free... I'm not sure how sold I am on the avatars. In many cases I probably wouldn't use them (except the possible Xena-style game using the Greek pantheon) but you could also file the names off the avatars and simply make them champions of their deity or just extra high-powered NPCs for your game world. The idea of deity's chosen champion sounds pretty acceptable and would get you some extra utility from the Egyptian and Norse write-ups; moreover, you wouldn't have to feel so bad about them getting whacked.

## **Pocket Grimoire: Divine and Arcane (Green Ronin Press)**

*Reviewed by Bruce Boughner, Guest Reviewer and Co-host of Mortality Radio*

The *Pocket Grimoires*, *Arcane* and *Divine*, pick up where the *Complete Spell Compendiums* of TSR and *Wizards of the Coast* left off in 2nd Edition *Dungeons & Dragons*. That is to say they compile the respective spells of priests and wizards from a number of sources. Previously this was any spells in an official D&D product, like modules, *Dragon* or *Dungeon* Magazines, etc. These books are a welcome addition to any player's or DM's library. Obviously, the serious collector would already own the original publications of the 11 publishers and 15 publications listed in the credits after the d20 License obligatory printing, but having all of this information in 2 easy-to-carry books are a tremendous plus. Chris Pramas of Green Ronin Publishing makes mention of this fact in the Introduction page of both books, when he cites the dozens of d20 publications released each month and the enormous task of collecting and collating the hundreds, perhaps thousands of spells that are cast upon players and judges alike. Mr. Pramas also thanks those publishers who came together and supplied both the sources and the rights to put the *Grimoires* together.

In much the same fashion as the *Players Handbook 3rd Ed*, the spells are sorted by class and level and then presented alphabetically in description. Bringing together the assorted spell lists of the *Players Handbook*; *Sword and Sorcery's Relic* and *Rituals*, *Divine and Defeated*; *Paradigm Concepts Codex Arcana* and *Blood Reign* of Nishanpur; *Aldercac's Dungeons and Evil*; *Fantasy Flight's Traps & Treachery*; *Thunderhead Games Brief Expedition to Bluffside*; and *Monte Cooke's Book of Eldritch Might* among several independent publishers. The books are also printed 8 1/2 by 5 1/2 inches, so the 2 books take up the space of 1 full size hardback in your briefcase or backpack. This gathering of spells overlooks several other publishers, or perhaps was unable to acquire, such as *Bastion Press* or *Kenzer & Co*. The lack of these publishers is a loss, but it is more than made up for in the size of the *Grimoires* in terms of how many books would need to be hauled to a game session.

For example, a *Sorcerer*, employing spells from the *Players Handbook*, *Relics & Rituals* and the *Codex Arcane* are carrying a good bit of unnecessary weight, especially if you are traveling by plane to Gen Con or a similar function. These books make this quick and convenient. I look forward to Green Ronin printing more of these little books, gathering from a wish list that would include *Aldercac's Rogukan*, any of *Bastion's* or *Mystic Eye's* books and any of

*Privateer's* publications. While the freedom of the OGL is a wonder of creativity and opportunity, the market itself can only suffer if the publishers decide to stay aloof from one another. We, the fans and source market, can only profit by encouraging the gaming industry to remain creatively competitive, while coming together on similar shared publications such as these source books. I welcome such camaraderie among the publishers; it exists among the players who buy across the gamut.

**Amount of Open Content:** 3

**d20 Compliance:** 5

**Originality:** 3

**Playability:** 5

**Value for the Dollar:** 5

**Overall Rating:** 4.2

**Final Grade:** B+

## **Psionics Handbook (Wizards of the Coast)**

*By Brad Mix, Staff Reviewer, d20 Magazine Rack*

This review is for the *Psionics Handbook* by Bruce R. Cordell and published by *Wizards of the Coast* and retails for \$26.95. This 159-page handbook deals with psionic characters and prestige classes, skills and feats, psionic combat, and new powers and items. If you are like me when you first heard about psionics you wanted to have your character start frying minds like an egg on a hot sidewalk. But the only person's head to explode was the GM when she looked at all of the confusing 1st edition rules. This new supplement takes away that "throbbing brain" feeling for the GM by using existing skills and abilities and is not an add-on game mechanic. It works within the game framework.

Chapter One starts off with a description of psionic classes and progression tables. The first thing you will notice that is different from the good old days, is that psionics have classes to choose from. Gone are the days where any character could potentially have psionics. The first class is called *Psion* and the other is *Psychic Warrior*. The *Psion* is an introspective mind warrior and tends to be Lawful, but it is not a requirement. Psions are actually divided into 6 sub-categories. Depending on which Discipline they chose to specialize in. The six are *Egoist*, *Nomad*, *Savant*, *Shaper*, *Seer* and *Telepath*. Once the choice is made it cannot be changed. The *Psion* adventures to gain personal insight and to challenge her mind. "Know thyself" is not just an expression but the road to power for the *Psion*. Psions also have the ability to create *Psicrystals* at first level. *Psicrystals* are created to have a personality trait imbued into it by the creator. These splinter personalities are often magnified and offer bonuses to the creator. The *Hero* personality grants a +2 on *Fortitude* checks, while the *Coward* offers +2 to *Hide* checks. There are 14 distinct personality traits that can be imbued. (*Artist*, *Bully*, *Coward*, *Friendly*, *Hero*, *Liar*, *Meticulous*, *Observant*, *Poised*, *Resolve*, *Sage*, *Single-minded*, *Sneak* and *Sympathetic*.)

The *Psychic Warrior* turns the mind's potential into the warrior art. *Psychic Warriors* know that only through conflict will their powers grow. *Psychic Warriors* make great adventuring companions. They seek to show off their abilities, accumulate treasure to upgrade weapons and armor and proclaim themselves as fearless. A combination of personal strength, training and psionic powers can make a *Psychic Warrior* more powerful than a regular *Warrior* of equal level. A *Psychic Warrior* usually grows up around Psions or is the child of a *Psion* and has rebelled at the Lawful lifestyle. *Psychic Warriors* tend to be Chaotic, although not a requirement. Both classes gain new psionic abilities as they advance. The *Psion* has more flexibility but the warrior is a little more focused but cannot access the highest-level abilities.

Chapter 2 goes into detail about the skills that a psionic character can get. New Skills include, *Autohypnosis*, *Concentration-* a slightly different version than found in the PHB, *Knowledge-Psionics*, *Remote View*, *Stabilize Self* and *Use Psionic Device*.

Chapter 3 lists new feats for the character. A couple of highlights include Craft Crystal Capacitor a power point storage device. More on the power points later. Maximize power allows the character do a variable effect for maximum damage and range. Up the Walls allows the user to travel at their normal distance along a wall as long as you start and stop on a horizontal surface.

Chapter 4 goes into how the powers are manifested or brought into being. Once the Psion has chosen to use a power she has to spend power points to manifest it. She gains points based on level and high ability scores. Points are assigned according to the level of the power being used. If a first level power is being used then one point is spent. This goes up to level 9 powers for 17 points each. This streamlines the process and makes it easy to remember. There are 2 ways to run psionics in a campaign setting. The first is to set psionics are the same as spells. If a creature is immune to Charm, then it is immune to Charm from a spell cast at it or a psionic manifesting it on the creature. This applies to saving throws and magic immunity as well. The other option is psionics are different. The same creature as before that was immune to Charm is not immune to the psionic version. The psionics is different option allows for some interesting new spells like Detect Psionics, Dispel Psionics and psionic versions of Dispel Magic and Negate Magic. The old favorites have returned for the psionic combat section. Ego Whip, Mind Thrust, Id Insinuation, Mind Blast, and Psychic Crush are the 5 attack modes. Empty Mind, Thought Shield, Mental Barrier, Intellect Fortress and Tower of Iron Will are the defense modes. Psychic combat is determined by the attack mode crossed referenced with the Defense mode. The DC is set by a d20 roll + the DC modifier from the table + the attackers appropriate ability modifier. A successful attack deals temporary ability damage to the victim. If this sounds confusing it isn't. After a couple of rounds of psychic combat it becomes easy. The chapter then goes on to detail the different attack and defense modes.

Chapter 5 goes into detail of the psionic powers that can be manifested. With over 250 different powers it is quite complete. Some of the highlights include Matter Manipulation (Psion 8) that allows for weakening of an objects hardness. This allows for a thick stone door to become very thin and easily breakable or a glass tube to become incredibly hard to break. Fate Link (Psion 3) allows two creatures to share the same effect. If one takes damage so does the other. Fission (Psion 7) allows a duplicate of your self to be made and will follow your orders. Although it will not do anything that you would not do. So much for getting the dishes washed. Dissolution will disintegrate a creature or object. That's one way to get rid of those dishes. Breath of the Dragon (Psion/Psychic Warrior 6) belches out flame dealing 11d4 damage.

Chapter 6 provides information about the 4 new Prestige classes. The four are Metamind, Pyrokineticist, Slayer and Soulnife. The Metamind is all about power points. She gains points more rapidly and is capable of storing excess points in a Psicrystal. At 8th level the Metamind gains the Psychic Vampire ability to draw power from others. The Pyrokineticist likes fire. A lot. The character learns how to create and shape fire to do his bidding. At first level the mere touch of a "pyro" sets items or foes on fire. At tenth level the "pyro" gains the ability to become a Fire Elemental once per day. The Slayer is actually a Mind Flayer Slayer. The Mind Flayers or Illithids are hunted and killed by the slayers. At first level the Slayer gains Favored Enemy status against the Illithid. At 10th level the Blast Feedback ability attempts to use the Illithids own mind attack against itself. The Soulnife recognizes her mind as the most beautiful and deadly thing in creation. She learns to manifest her power in the form of a shimmering blade of psychic energy. At first level she gains the ability to form the Mind Blade and gains sneak attack. At 10th level she gains the dreaded Knife to the Soul. This only deals temporary Con damage but half of that damage becomes permanent. So only 3 or 4 hits will kill even the heartiest of adventurers.

Chapter 7 describes psionic items. One interesting item is the Psionic Tattoo. These tattoos are designed to hold a different low level power and once activated it disappears. Up to 17 tattoos can be worn at once. They are fairly cheap to make as well.

Chapter 8 is all about psionic monsters. Everything from the lowly Brain Mole to the Psion Killer is listed. Old foes return as well with the Githyanki and Githzerai. Just the mention of a Githyanki raiding party should send a smart party looking for cover.

The book ends with a blank character sheet made especially for psionic classes. The only thing missing on the front is that it does not list skills that can be used without assigning any ranks. Other than that it is well set up and can be copied for personal use.

I am pleased with the entire book. If you are looking to add psionics to your campaign this book will allow you do to it in easy manner. If you are looking for some unique monsters or items then this has it as well.

#### **The Critic's Rating: (maximum 5 pts for each category)**

**-Amount of Open Game Content:** 2.0 (There is some content of this book available in the SRD but it is limited.)

**-d20 Compliance:** 5.0

**-Originality:** 5.0

**-Playability:** 3.5 (Psionics specific)

**-Value for the dollar:** 4.0 (\$26.95 for this book vs. \$19.95 for the DMG)

**Overall Rating:** 3.9 The Open Game Content grade is what hurt the overall score.

**Final Grade:** B+ 🍷

# d20 Magazine Rack/Pinnacle

## Hostile Climes Contest Entries

Our contest during the month of July was a cooperative effort with Pinnacle Entertainment Group in which the winner would receive a copy of *Hostile Climes: Depths of Despair*. The premise of the contest was to design a new monster suitable to be used as a part of the setting described in that book. Pinnacle had posted a .pdf preview for everyone to get just enough information to fire the imagination. I am happy to say that Christopher Campbell was selected with his entry of the Shard Fish.

### Shard Fish (Submitted by Christopher Campbell)

Small Elemental (Air, Cold)

**Hit Dice:** 1d8+1 (5 hp)

**Initiative:** +3 (+3 Dex)

**Speed:** fly 60 ft. (perfect), swim 30 ft.

**AC:** 18 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +4 natural)

**Attacks:** Touch +3 melee or shard +3 ranged

**Damage:** Touch 1d6 cold subdual; shard 1d4

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Explode

**Special Qualities:** Cold subtype, phase, vacuum

**Saves:** Fort +1, Ref +5, Will +1

**Abilities:** Str 4, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 5, Wis 13, Cha 10

**Skills:** Hide +11\*, Move Silently +7, Spot +3

**Feats:** Weapon Finesse (touch)

**Climate/Terrain:** Any cold or temperate and underground

**Organization:** Solitary, pair, or school (3-10)

**Challenge Rating:** 1

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Always neutral

**Advancement:** 2-4 HD (Small), 5-7 HD (Medium), 8-10 HD (Large)

Comprised of frozen water and air, shard fish are elemental creatures of exquisite beauty. While relatively placid, their very nature makes them an annoyance to most communities at best, and a serious threat at worst. They favor both air and water environments, as long as the ambient temperature does not present a danger to them.

A shard fish resembles a large minnow sculpted from ice. Extremely fast when moving through the air, a shard fish darts back and forth, pausing briefly to scan its surroundings before zooming off again. A whole school is a sight to behold, zipping to and fro like a glittering banner waving in the breeze. Water resistance slows a shard fish's speed to only 30 feet, but it is no less maneuverable, and does not mind water as it does not need to breathe.

### Combat

A shard fish darts forward in combat, touching its opponent and delivering cold subdual damage. This is sufficient to incapacitate most creatures small enough to be a food source. Larger prey, or something posing a threat, is targeted with a shard of ice spit in its direction. The ice shard has a range increment of 10 feet.

Anything attacking a shard fish in return is in for a bit of a surprise. When killed, a shard fish explodes in a sphere of needle-sharp ice slivers that deliver 1d6 points of damage to all creatures within 5 feet.

**Explode (Ex):** When dealt enough damage to reduce it below 0 hp, a shard fish explodes for 1d6 points of damage to all creatures within 5 feet.

**Cold subtype (Ex):** Shard fish are completely immune to cold, but suffer double damage from fire or heat, except on a successful save.

**Phase (Su):** As a move-equivalent action, a shard fish can turn incorporeal for one round. While used primarily as a defensive measure, a shard fish's touch attack is still effective. When incorporeal, the shard fish's speed increases to its flying speed. A shard fish can phase once every 1d4 rounds.

**Vacuum (Ex):** A shard fish does not breathe and is immune to inhaled poisons, drowning, and suffocation.

### \*Skills

Because they are translucent, shard fish gain a +4 racial bonus to Hide checks; this increases to +8 when unmoving.

### In the Depths of Despair

Shard fish are a nuisance around the *Big Draw* and the *Depths of Despair*, mainly because they can phase to pass through the whirlpool. They can appear in any area, at any time, without warning. Experiments have been performed on the few shard fish that have been captured (no small feat, given their tendency to explode) to try and produce a magic item that can duplicate their phasing ability, but there has been no success to date.

Our Runner-Up in this contest was a monster created by Chris Sims. Chris was kind enough to provide a picture of what this creature looks like, which is visible below his entry.

### Haechoshag

Large Aberration

**Hit Dice:** 5d8+5 (28 hp)

**Initiative:** +2 (Dex)

**Speed:** 20 ft., swim 30 ft.

**AC:** 16 (+2 Dex, +4 natural)

**Attacks:** 6 tentacles +6 melee, bite +1 melee

**Damage:** Tentacles poison, bite 1d8+3

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Improved grab, constrict, poison, time stop

**Special Qualities:** Camouflage, jet

**Saves:** Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +5

**Abilities:** Str 16, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 8

**Skills:** Hide +17, Listen +6, Move Silently +7, Search +1, Spot +6

**Feats:** Blind-Fight, Great Fortitude

**Climate/Terrain:** Aquatic

**Organization:** Solitary

**Challenge Rating:** 7

**Treasure:** Standard

**Alignment:** Usually neutral evil

**Advancement:** 6-12 HD (Large)

Haechoshags (HAY-uh-CHOE-shags) are hideous and wicked hybrids of a cephalopod, jellyfish, and a shark. They hunt the seas for food and sport, enjoying the struggles of intelligent creatures most of all. Sages assert that haechoshags gain sustenance from intense emotions as well as meat, but whether this is actually true or not is a mystery. Their origins are lost, though the learned believe they are creations of ancient sahuagin sorceries.

Naturally translucent, haechoshags' viscera are visible through their skin. With their camouflage ability, however, they may be encountered in a variety of hues, and many maintain one that suits them when not hunting. Their misshapen, squid-like bodies have long fins on the side and a smaller dorsal fin. The body ends in six, slender tentacles, each 10 feet long. Beak-like teeth surround haechoshags' mouths, and rows of them proceed back to the creatures' throats. Two large eyes lie just above the tentacles.

These beasts lair near grottos, shoals, or reefs. They claim a small cave as their domain, and guard this territory fiercely from all interlopers, especially another of their own kind. Only mating urges stay such attacks on other haechoshags. Like some sharks, these tentacled horrors carry their young instead of laying eggs, and are as likely to eat their offspring as not. Thankfully, this keeps the number of adult creatures low.

They do not speak, but do make a noise that sounds like whispering voices that can be heard above the surface of the water, if it's less than 20 ft. deep. Haechoshags understand Aquan, and are also responsive to sahuagin telepathy, and have been known to make deals with the shark men.

### Combat

Haechoshags attack from hiding, often floating their camouflaged tentacles in the current like seaweed. They bite unfortunates they've grappled and pulled close. When faced with serious resistance, haechoshags attempt to escape using their time stop and jet abilities.

**Improved Grab (Ex):** To use this ability, a haechoshag must hit a Medium-size or smaller opponent with a tentacle attack. If it gets a hold it continues to grapple and may constrict, delivering poison attacks each round. A tentacle can take 8 hit points of damage before it's severed or rendered useless.

**Constrict (Ex):** A haechoshag deals 1d8+3 points of damage with a successful grapple check against a Medium-size or smaller opponent.

**Poison (Ex):** The contact poison on a haechoshag's tentacles is paralytic and very painful. The stinging pain caused by the poison causes a -1 circumstance penalty to all attacks and skill checks while a victim is touched by a tentacle and for 2d6 - Constitution modifier rounds after contact ends. The poison also requires a Fortitude save (DC 15) against 1d4 initial and secondary temporary Strength damage. Grappled creatures must make this saving throw each round they are entangled at a cumulative +1 DC per previous round held. Each tentacle can deliver one dose of poison each round.

**Time Stop (Sp):** The haechoshag's most frightening power is the ability to cast time stop once per day as a 20th-level sorcerer. The duration of this power is limited to 1 round, but otherwise functions as the spell. Haechoshags often use this ability to ensnare a victim, jetting away when the effect ends.

**Camouflage (Ex):** Haechoshags can change their color to match their surroundings much better than its octopi precursors. This grants them a +10 racial bonus to Hide checks. However, when the haechoshag's tentacles are adrift, an observer gains a +5 circumstance bonus to Spot checks to see the creature. Even then it may be mistaken for a strange plant (Knowledge (nature) DC 20) though druids can't be fooled thus.

**Jet (Ex):** A haechoshag can jet backward once per round, as a double move action, at a speed of 200 feet.



### Variations

Haechoshags are adaptable mutants. Some have stronger venom, varying the initial and secondary damage by one die, moving the die type to d6, or both. Others have no venom at all (lowering the CR by 2). The time stop ability also varies, and some haechoshags can use the ability for 1d4+1 rounds, while others lack it altogether. Many of these abominations have more tentacles, allowing more attacks. Commonly referred to as river horrors, haechoshags can also be found in deep rivers where they attack small boats and swimmers. River horrors seldom have the time stop ability or strong poison, but have many more tentacles and a higher Strength.

### Valuables

Haechoshag poison can be distilled and concentrated to produce venom good for weapon coating. A typical dose has requires a Fortitude saving throw (DC 17) and does 1d6 initial and 2d6 secondary Strength damage. Even if the saving throw is made, the pain induced by the poison causes a -1 circumstance penalty to all attacks and skill checks for (10 + 3d10 - the victim's Constitution score) minutes. The poison costs 750gp per dose due to rarity and difficulty of acquisition and production.

### Skray (Submitted by C. Wesley Clough)

Medium-Size Monstrous Humanoid (Aquatic)

**Hit Dice:** 5d8+5 (27 hp)

**Initiative:** +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Init)

**Speed:** 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

**AC:** 17 (+2 Dex, +5 natural)

**Attacks:** 2 claws +6 melee

**Damage:** Claw 1d4+1

**Face/Reach:** 5 feet by 5 feet/ 5 feet

**Special Attacks:** Illusions, improved grab, vitality drain

**Special Qualities:** Amphibious, darkvision 120', illusions

**Saves:** Fort: +2, Reflex: +6, Will: +6

**Abilities:** Str: 12, Dex: 15, Con: 13, Int: 15, Wis: 10, Cha: 12

**Skills:** Bluff +10, Concentration +10, Disguise +10, Sense Motive +9, Craft or knowledge (any one) +6

**Feats:** Combat Casting, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Spell Focus (illusion)

**Climate/Terrain:** Temperate to warm aquatic and coastal areas

**Organization:** Solitary

**Challenge Rating:** 3

**Treasure:** Standard

**Alignment:** Usually chaotic evil

**Advancement Range:** By character class

Skray are horrid monstrosities that hide among coastal and aquatic societies and prey upon the unsuspecting populace. In its true form, rarely seen except in death, a skray has a humanoid form 5-6 feet tall. The creatures smooth, hairless hide ranges in color from olive green to fiery orange, and its large oval head has large watery blue eyes above a thick lipped sucker like mouth. A skray's gills capable of breathing both air and water are found behind its large feather like ears. A skray's clawed fingers and toes are shorter and thicker than a humans, and webbed to the second knuckle. Skray's feed by sucking the life force out of their victims, leaving behind nothing but withered husks. Skray speak Aquan, Common, and usually one other language of use to them.

### COMBAT

Skray do not normally engage in combat unless forced. They prefer to trick relatively helpless foes into areas where they can be alone, then overpowering the hapless victim to feed. A skray will attempt to use its illusion creating abilities to its best effect if forced into combat.

**Amphibious (EX):** Skray are able to breathe both air and water for an indefinite period of time, and are equally at ease in either environment.

**Illusions (SP):** Skray are able to use the changeself spell at will, and can create a major image 3/day. These effects are as if created by a 6th level sorcerer (Save DC = 13 plus spell level).

**Improved Grab (EX):** To use this ability a skray must hit with both claw attacks, if it gets a hold it can use its Vitality Drain attack.

**Vitality Drain (SU):** By pressing its sucker-like mouth to a victim for a full round a skray can literally start sucking the life out the victim. This vitality drain results in the permanent loss of 1d4 points of constitution per round. This attack must be used on a victim that the skray is holding, and the skray can do nothing else in the round that it uses this attack other then seek to maintain the hold.

### Tauzin (Submitted by Sean Mead)

Huge Magical Beast (Aquatic)

**Hit Dice:** 12d10+36 (102 hp)

**Initiative:** +8 (+4 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

**Speed:** Swim 70 ft.

**AC:** 20 (-2 size, +4 Dex, +8 natural)

**Attacks:** 4 stings +20 melee, bite +10 melee

**Damage:** Sting 1d6+8 and poison, bite 1d8+4

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 25 ft./10 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Poison, side quills

**Special Qualities:** Scent, underwater sense

**Saves:** Fort +11, Ref +12, Will +5

**Abilities:** Str 22, Dex 18, Con 16, Int 5, Wis 12, Cha 2

**Skills:** Listen +6, Search +2, Spot +11

**Feats:** Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Swim-by Attack

**Climate/Terrain:** Any aquatic

**Organization:** Solitary or school (2-20)

**Challenge Rating:** 7

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Always neutral

**Advancement:** 13-20 HD (Huge)

Tauzin resemble a cross between a giant barracuda and a cichlid with the addition of many 8 ft. long quills sprouting from its head and down its sides. It has broad red, blue and green stripes running from nose to tail over its olive hued body. Upon maturity they reach the size of 25 ft. in length, 2 ft. in width, and 9 ft. in height. Their long, thin silhouette speeds through the water racing down prey and territorial invaders alike. Designed by the wizard Trosius to guard the water approaches to his seaside tower, tauzin bred faster and spread further than their creator intended. True to original intent,

tauzin aggressively defend their territory against any intruders that the tauzin do not instinctually recognize as prey animals.

### COMBAT

Tauzin typically attack directly with four quills whipping forward to sting and poison the frontal target, followed by a bite. They take side quill attacks as such attacks present themselves, but prefer a head-on engagement. Schooling attacks are chaotic and not organized. Tauzin are not known to attack other tauzin.

**Poison (Ex):** Sting, Fortitude save (DC 18); initial damage 1d6 Con, secondary damage 2d6 Con.

**Side quills (Ex):** Along each side of the tauzin are numerous quills that the creature may use against lateral targets. In each 5 ft. length of the tauzin's side, four quills may attack at +8 melee those targets within a 5 ft. reach of that side's length. If they strike, they have the same damage and poison as the frontal quills.

**Swim-by Attack:** Tauzin can take a move action and another partial action at any point during the move. The tauzin cannot take a second move action during a round when it makes a swim-by attack.

**Underwater sense (Ex):** They can locate creatures underwater within a 40-foot radius. This ability negates the effects of invisibility and poor visibility. ☞

# Design an Artifact Contest

In August, the d20 Magazine Rack partnered with MonkeyGod Enterprises to offer the biggest prize package in the history of the website. Up for grabs were four books from Bastion Press and a whole bunch of adventures from MonkeyGod. The rules were to design an artifact that did not use preexisting magical qualities from the DMG or other open content sources. The entries showed exactly how imaginative folks were. And declaring a winner was no easy task. Ultimately, the winner was Scott Moore with “Long Night At The North Pole”. However, something very interesting came out of the contest. MonkeyGod has commissioned one of the entries to be developed into a full-scale adventure. Watch for “Mirage Illumination” by Chris Sims sometime next year. Now, here are the submissions starting with the winner...

## Long Night At The North Pole

“Long Night At The North Pole” is an adventure for four characters of 6th level. It can be modified as the GM sees fit to allow more or less characters of practically any level.

This adventure is set in the arctic and can be adapted to any campaign world.

### Adventure Summary:

After getting lost at sea and surviving a shipwreck, the party stumbles across a small, human settlement somewhere in the frozen arctic. While there, the party encounters a group of recuperating elves who claim to be guardians of an ancient powerful artifact that controls the very operation of the planet itself. It was stolen from them, however, and they need the party’s aid to get back the artifact, as well as its sister piece, which may also be in jeopardy.

Besides the blinding snow and the difficulty in pinpointing the direction of travel, it just so happens that this far North, due to the time of year, the sun isn’t expected to peak over the horizon for another 120 days or so. The party has landed smack dab in the middle of the longest night on the world.

### Adventure Background:

Untold ages ago, when deities first created the planets, a set of artifacts were placed on each world that they planned on populating with life. These artifacts, known as the Rods of Planetary Alignment (see “Rod of Planetary Alignment”, below), control the rotation of the planet (and therefore day and night) as well as the planet’s magnetic field. Without these in place, the world would simply be a chunk of rock, incapable of supporting intelligent life for any extended period.

Many years after their creation, a party of elvish adventurers discovered one of the Rods. Realizing it’s significance, they eventually sought out the remaining three Rods and charged themselves with protecting them, and therefore, the continued operation of the world as the player character’s know it. This guardianship has been passed down from generation to generation for ages.

Nearly a month ago, the elvish keep protecting the northernmost Rod of Magnetic Alignment received a visit from a bat – an extremely rare creature within the arctic circle. In fact however, this was not a normal bat. It was a vampire. The elves managed to eventually destroy the creature, but only after losing several family members to it. Initially unfamiliar with vampires, the elves did not realize at first that the creature and those it had slain would rise again. Sev-

eral days and another battle later, the elves managed to incapacitate and burn most of the horrid creatures, but three of their own now undead brethren managed to escape...taking the artifact the family had sworn to protect with them.

Knowing that they could use the stolen Rod to locate the stronghold of the elves guarding the other northern Rod, the elvish vampires set off in hopes of finding a new food source that would sustain them and hopefully be somewhat easier to surprise. Eri and Tra, the remaining elves, saw no other option but to try and track down the last three vampires, their own undead siblings, in an attempt to reclaim their artifact, destroy any monstrous spawn they create, and try to warn as many of the local native peoples as possible about the new predators.

Eri and Tra caught up with the remaining vampires at a small human settlement. During the ensuing battle, an earthquake shook the settlement, breaking apart the ice and tundra that served as its foundation. Two of the vampires and many of the settlers were killed between the effects of the battle and the earthquake. When it was all over, the elves had reclaimed the Rod and the remaining vampire, Fahil, fled. The elves believed Fahil had already learned the location of the second northern Rod, but were too weak to immediately follow. They instead decided to stay, heal, and help rebuild and fortify the thorp against a possible future attack by Fahil and whatever spawn he creates. Temporary shelters are scattered about the settlement area which is now surrounded by oddly shaped placards, constructed from animal skins. Each of these are hand-painted with holy symbols from several different human and elvish belief systems – a first line of defense against any returning undead.

Meanwhile, Fahil has discovered the stronghold of the second northern Rod nearly by accident...the earthquake, which recently shook the area, has caved in a section of crevice adjoining part of the stronghold, granting Fahil much easier access to the inner sanctum of the stronghold than would have originally been possible.

### For The Players:

There are a couple of ways for the players to begin this adventure. The GM can use any of the following suggestions (or a combination of them) as a starting point for customizing a segue from the player’s previous adventure, or make up his own.

- The characters, after their last adventure far from home, book passage on a sailing ship headed in the direction of their home area or base of operations. The price was inexpensive, and the ship wasn’t too crowded with other passengers. A little too late, the character’s realize this might be due to the inexperience of the crew.
- Learning from a newly returned traveler of a recently located ruin in the northern lands, the party has an opportunity to explore it before every other party in the world gets there and strips it bare. The characters hastily charter passage to the north, with wild dreams of ancient lost treasure in their heads.
- A high-level Wizard engaged in spell research has hired the characters to bring back samples of a rare, gray lichen that grows only in the far north. The wizard wants the lichen for use as a spell component in some of his research and offers the characters 1000gp each for returning with as much of the stuff as they can carry.
- Captured by slave traders after their last, unsuccessful, foray

into the unknown, the players are drugged, relieved of their equipment and weapons, and loaded aboard a ship headed for who knows where.

Due to huge rolling waves caused by the recent earthquake (im-perceptible to the characters when aboard ship many miles from shore), and the changing position of the Rod of Magnetic Alignment, the ship has become hopelessly lost while at sea and drifted far north from where it's crew expected her to be. Due to the difficulty navigating in the darkness at this latitude, at this time of the year, not to mention the overall low experience of the crew, the ship scrapes a chunk of ice floating just below the surface of the water. Water gushes into the ship and most of the crew grabs what they can and rush to the lifeboats. The player characters, sleeping at the time of impact, are at a disadvantage. Read the following to the players:

**You awake in the darkness to a loud crash and a fierce jolt, followed by the sound of straining timber. Something is happening to the ship, but you are not sure what at first. Seconds later, you can make out the thundering sound of water rushing somewhere nearby and the excited voices and movements of the crew on the decks above you. After quickly waking your fellow party members and searching around for your equipment in the dark, you realize that icy cold water is starting to squeeze in between the creaking floorboards at your feet. The ship is sinking – fast. You've got to get above deck and get off the ship - now.**

After several precious rounds of scrambling around, allow the players to gather their equipment and secure a lifeboat or two (each generally seats about 6 people). If the players scramble and try to obtain other supplies before leaving the rapidly sinking ship, allow each character who passes a Spot check (DC 17) to roll a d12 only once and inform them of what they've discovered off the following table. Every two of the following items brought on board a lifeboat will reduce the number of supported passengers by one.

1d12 Roll	Item Spotted
1	Barrel of fresh water
2	Barrel of wine
3	Crate of tanned furs
4	Crate of assorted tools (GM's choice)
5	Barrel of salted meat
6	Crate of blankets
7	Barrel of oil/tar
8	Crate of cooking utensils
9	Crate of formal clothing
10	Crate of camping equipment (1d4 two-men tents, 1d6 tinderboxes, 24 iron spikes)
11	Barrel of pickles
12	Barrel of grain

Once the players have gathered their equipment, located the lifeboats, and are ready to abandon the ship, continue with the following:

**It must be the middle of the night. The sky is cloudy and black and the only dim light you can see is reflected off the glimmering snow and ice floating around the wrecked, sinking hulk you are standing on. The air is numbingly cold. Your skin burns and your lungs chill with every breath. You pack the last remaining lifeboat(s) with your supplies and climb onboard. Between this dim light and the large chunks of floating ice drifting by, you can't see any of the other lifeboats. There are two sets of oars in each lifeboat. Even though you have no idea where to go, you can at least steer...**

Any spell casters that require meditative or study time to cast spells haven't had it (they just woke up a few minutes ago) and due to the relative proximity of the Rods (only a few miles away), the characters cannot successfully Intuit Direction. They are, for all intents and purposes, lost at sea. And it's freezing. And dark. Be sure to play this up to the players so they understand the severity of the situation.

After ten minutes afloat in their lifeboat(s), each character that has not taken some sort of protective measures against the weather must make a Fortitude save versus DC 15 or take 1d6 points of subdual damage from the extreme cold. Around the same time, the characters see a bright red light come flickering into existence at ground level some distance away. Since there really isn't anything else of interest and they are essentially adrift at sea, the characters are likely to check it out. If they don't do so after a reasonable amount of time, the GM may want to require a second round of Fortitude saves for those that aren't protected against the elements. Eventually, the players will get it! When they start heading towards the reddish glow, read the following aloud:

**After another ten minutes of rowing towards the light, your lifeboat beaches in shallow water and you can make out what seems to be solid land, as opposed to floating ice, in front of you. It's pretty obvious to you now that the red glow you've been pursuing is actually a sizable bonfire not too far off from where you've come ashore. You can see the vague silhouettes of creatures moving back and forth around the bonfire, apparently fuelling it. At this point, you aren't overly concerned if they are fellow survivors of your shipwreck, local natives, or hungry orcs – the opportunity to warm yourself by that fire seems to be your overpowering instinct at this point.**

When the characters approach close enough to be seen, the humans and elves (Eri and Tra) around the fire scramble for weapons and shields – each shield is painted with the same holy symbols that the players will eventually see on the signs surrounding the settlement. After a couple rounds of threatening the PCs with holy symbols and at least two attempts by Clerics to turn them, the native peoples are willing to believe they are not undead. Apologies are made and it is suggested that the party return with the natives to the nearby thorp as it is "dangerous to be outside the camp". If the players ask, or if a character makes a Spot check against DC 12, they realize the bonfire is actually a crematory pyre.

There are currently twenty-five people in the thorp: twenty-three native humans, and two of the Rod-guarding elves. Several of the humans and both elves were severely injured during the battle against Fahil and the subsequent earthquake. The settlers and the elves have just finished recovering and burning all the dead, for fear of them returning as vampires. The settlers can offer the characters dry, warm clothes, temporary shelter, food, and healing (equivalent to one potion or spell of cure light wounds at an effective Cleric level of 1, per character, only if they have sustained more than 1 point of damage, not including subdual damage).

The two elves, Eri and Tra, are both suffering from wounds, exhaustion, and exposure to cold. They require several days rest and natural healing before they will be able to travel. They have refused treatment from the thorp Clerics instructing them, instead, to treat the other wounded settlers first.

Once the pcs' immediate needs have been tended to, the settlers will take them to meet Eri and Tra, hoping that these newly arrived adventurers may be able to aid the elves in their quest. Once the players are ready to meet with the elves, read the following text aloud:

Setical, one of the male human settlers you met at the bonfire meets you at your new shelter. “There are some people here I think you should meet. Please, come with me, I would like you to hear the story they have to tell.” Setical continues as he leads you through the settlement: “There was an earthquake just yesterday and many of our homes were destroyed. You can see spots in the ground where the earth fell away leaving these open holes behind. Many people were caught in the collapsing holes as the ground shook. After the monsters attacked us and were driven off, the elvish visitors told us to burn the bodies of our deceased, or else they would become monsters as well.” There are still many people up and walking around – more than you would expect for this time of night. There are many small fires burning throughout the area, serving desperately needed dual purposes not only as sources of warmth, but of light as well.

Setical can answer any of the character’s questions about who the elves are, how they got here, what the monsters were like (although he does not know the word “vampire”, he can describe the creatures), why there is so much activity (it’s early morning – even if it looks like night – Setical can explain the “six month night” concept as well), why they were burning bodies (it was the elves’ suggested way of destroying the bodies so they wouldn’t reanimate as monsters), what the community knows of the shipwreck (nothing – the PCs are the first ones they heard of it from), and can help pass along any other bit of information the GM chooses. When the players’ are done asking questions (for the moment, anyway), continue by reading the following text:

Setical leads you to a small ice cave, carved out of the side of a snow bank. Crouching down, he motions for you to follow him as he crawls inside. Inside the cave’s single, hollowed out room are the two elves you saw by the bonfire. A small circle of stones in the middle of the room surrounds a few glowing embers and a pile of ash as wisps of smoke pass up and out a hole punched through the packed snow ceiling. Setical introduces the two elves as Eri and Tra, the guardians of the North Pole. Eri and Tra lie bundled up in animal furs and heavy blankets, protected from the cold. Both of them look to be in extremely poor health and in desperate need of rest and care, but both are awake and eager to speak with you.

Eri and Tra relate what they know of the information contained in the “Adventure Background” section (above) to the characters. It will be several days before they are physically able to travel again and they are afraid that Fahil may reach the stronghold and secure the second Rod before they can stop him. Since this is a community mostly of hunters and fishermen, there is no one else in the settlement they feel might have the ability to stop Fahil besides the PCs. They implore the characters to track down and destroy Fahil and protect the second Rod. They warn the characters of grave consequences to the planet if the Rods are moved too far away from their usual homes for too long.

Once the players agree to try and track down Fahil, Eri will show the PCs their “North Pole” – the northern Rod of Magnetic Alignment – and how, when placed upon the ice, it acts like a giant compass needle, spinning so the carved sphere on the end of the Rod points in the direction of the next closest Rod – the Rod the elves want the PCs to protect. Eri gives the PCs the Rod to use as a guide. Tra urges the party to gather whatever supplies they need, take the time to sleep, and study their magic (if applicable), so they can confront Fahil in (or least closer to) peak shape.

After a restful and more-comfortable than-expected sleep, Setical gets the party outfitted with snowshoes, furs, cold weather outfits, tents, torches, fire building equipment, and food before they leave. Due to the darkness, any characters not possessing darkvision or

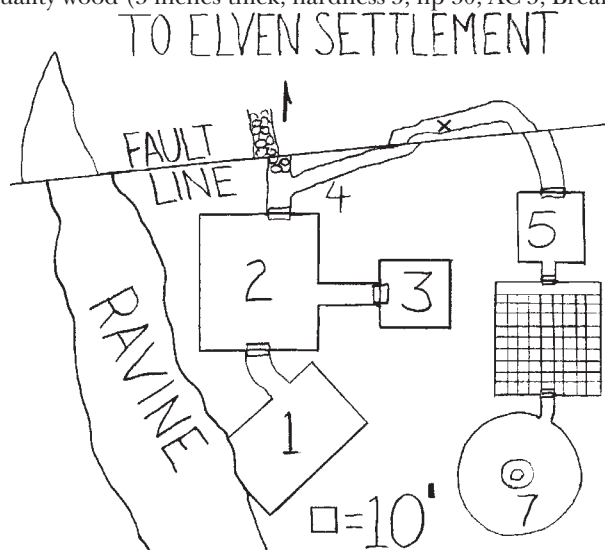
low-light vision will require some sort of light source. These light sources are sure to draw attention from any creatures wandering through the area. The GM should throw at least a few “random” encounters at the party to keep them on their toes.

Using the Rod given them by Eri and Tra, the characters essentially have a guide with them that will lead them right to the other Rod. The amount of time it takes to reach the stronghold is determined by the movement rate of the slowest party member. The PCs will have to cover a distance of four miles with a total net movement penalty of  $\times 1/2$  (partial bad surface, poor visibility, but a bonus from using the Rod to find their way). This would result in four hours of travel time for a party moving at a normal base of 20 feet/round.

Eventually, the Rod will lead the party to the edge of a great ravine. From their viewpoint on the edge of the ravine, the characters can see a cave on the opposite ravine face, about 50 feet away and 30 feet down. The bottom of the ravine varies from 30 to 40 feet below the PCs vantage point and has a DC of 15 for purposes of Climbing checks. When the PCs finally get across the bottom of the ravine, they realize the cave mouth is not natural. During the earthquake, part of the ravine wall collapsed, revealing a room and tunnel system inside. This is the stronghold they have been searching for.

### Stronghold Of The Rod:

Unless otherwise specified, walls, floors, and ceilings are carved from the permafrost (3 ft. thick; hardness 7; hp 90; AC 3; Break DC 35; Climb DC 15) and are finished smooth. Doors are made of good quality wood (3 inches thick; hardness 5; hp 30; AC 5; Break 18).



Map Of Elvish Stronghold

#### 1. Entry Point (EL 5)

Besides the single, grumpy Ettin that wandered in here just before the party, the room is empty. The door leading to room 2 is open.

**Ettin (1):** hp 52; Monster Manual 89.

#### 2. Storage (EL 5)

This room is littered with broken shelves, toppled stands, and shattered chairs. A round after entering the room for the first time, a Winter Wolf springs from the doorway opposite the way the PCs entered. It is just returning after unsuccessfully pursuing a Grimlock scouting party that wandered through here. There are two elvish corpses lying on the floor. They have nothing of value.

**Winter Wolf (1):** hp 30; Monster Manual 184.

#### 3. Frantic Elf (EL 1/2)

The door to this room is locked (DC 25). Sketched crudely all over the door is a collection of seemingly random elvish religious symbols drawn in charcoal. Heaped on the other side of the door are piles of trash (like that found in room 2) such that it takes one full round to push through the junk to enter the room. Nearly every square inch of wall and floor space inside the room are covered with the



same symbols and in the far corner, scrunched up in a ball and holding a tiny nub of a charcoal writing, is a young elf named Nor. Nor got separated from the main settlement (see area 4) when the cave in occurred and was here when Fahil arrived and attacked. After watching several elvish champions get bested by the vampire, and remembering stories he's heard about undead creatures, Nor retreated here, barricaded the room and started drawing holy symbols for his protection. Unknown to Nor, Fahil never even made an attempt to enter this room. He whimpers uncontrollably as the party tries to enter the room and pleads for his life once they are in. He is not familiar with the layout of these rooms, as he is not permitted (by the other elves) to be up here with the Rod (only the guardians are) and only after sneaking up here when he shouldn't of, did he get trapped. He will accompany the party out of the room if treated nicely, but won't go any further than area 4. Nor carries with him 3 cp and a wooden yo-yo.

**Nor, Elf (1):** hp 4; Monster Manual 85.

#### 4. Unsafe Passage (EL 4)

Part of this corridor is offset from the rest of the passage, due to an actual shift in the ground during the earthquake. It takes a PC a full round each to squeeze in or out of that section of passage. The side passage off this tunnel that is caved in actually leads to a much larger elven settlement (where the guardians actually lived with their families), but it, too, collapsed during the earthquake. The elves on the other side are actually digging and will break through in 2 days if they receive no other help. They are unaware of what has happened on this side of the cave in, but everyone is aware that Nor is missing. At the spot marked "x" on the map, there is a badly decomposed Grimlock corpse laying in what looks like a pool of water that seems to have dripped in between the cracks in the permafrost. In actuality, it is Gray Ooze and its most recent victim.

**Gray Ooze (1):** hp 21; Monster Manual 145 (Ooze).

#### 5. Dressing Room (EL 3)

This room is filled with racks of beautifully colored elvish ceremonial clothing. Several have been tipped over. At one time, there were several full-length mirrors in the room as well. Now, shattered pieces are scattered across the floor, as are the bodies of four dead elves. There are also three Grimlocks in the room. They carry a total of 300gp between them.

**Grimlocks (3):** hp 9, 11, 11; Monster Manual 114.

#### 6. Trap 'N' Vamp (EL Variable)

There is a powerful magic spell cast over this room that prohibits any magical, gaseous form, or other aerial movement (even natural) and negates the effect of Feather Fall spells. Part of the floor is trapped and the PCs have no other means of crossing it except to walk across the floor. The room is 45 feet wide and 50 feet long. They can walk along the 45' wide by 5' section when they enter the room without any problem. The rest of the room is covered with 5-foot square tiles, each with a different character on them.

#### Door

Q	I	H	J	97	89	83	81	Z
J	99	G	98	O	L	N	M	79
35	36	37	43	53	61	59	70	72
K	31	28	26	25	24	60	71	P
47	J	27	29	17	23	G	L	Y
41	I	19	Z	E	F	13	S	T
I	11	H	K	D	7	M	R	U
8	9	10	B	8	6	5	3	V
4	6	9	A	1	C	Q	M	2

#### Door

On the wall, in elven script, is a sign that reads "To find what is crucial, you must seek that which is primary." Each square is 5 square feet. Fahil is in the room, in rat form, trying to figure out the best way across the room. When the party enters, he decides to hide and see if they come up with any good ideas. The key to the riddle is "seek that which is primary", as in primary numbers. To cross the room, a character must step across the following adjacent tiles in order: 2, 3, 5, 7, 13, 23, 17, 29, 19, 11, 41, 47, 31, 37, 43, 53, 61, 59, 70, 79, 81, 83, 89, 97. Stepping on the wrong tile drops the PC into a spiked pit trap 1d4x10 feet deep (CR 1-4, 1d6 falling damage per 10 feet +10 melee (1d4 spikes for 1d4+5 points of damage per hit); Reflex save (DC 20) avoids; Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20), Spotting or Disabling one tile does not automatically help Spot or Disable the next.). If Fahil has not been spotted by the time the PCs discover the way across, he will reveal himself and attack the party.

**Fahil, Male Elf Vampire Ftr 3:** CR 5; Medium Undead; HD 3d12; hp 20; Init +7; Spd 30ft.; AC 19; Atk +7 melee (slam); SA charm, energy drain, blood drain, children of the night, create spawn; SQ undead, damage reduction 15/+1, fast healing 5, vampire weaknesses; AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +4; Str 18, Dex 17, Con -, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 12.

**Skills:** Bluff +9, Climb +9, Hide +11, Jump +9, Listen +13, Move Silently +11, Search +10, Sense Motive +8, Spot +12, Wilderness Lore +1. **Feats:** Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes.

Vampire special attacks and qualities are detailed on page 221 of the Monster Manual.

#### 7. The North Pole

The walls of this circular room are decorated with colorful banners covered with abstract shapes. In the middle of the room is a raised dais on which the Rod stands. Growing along the walls is a pale gray lichen. If the PCs were hired by the Wizard at the beginning of this adventure, this is the lichen they are searching for. Nor tells the PCs he knows how to brew a tea using the lichen that has special properties (treat as a half strength Potion of Cure Light Wounds if drank hot within 15 minutes of brewing).

#### Conclusion:

If the PCs have destroyed Fahil, there are several options they may consider next:

- Help Eri and Tra get home with their Rod.
- Help Nor tunnel to the elven settlement.
- Search for other shipwreck survivors (or slave traders if that starting hook was used).
- Find the ruins they were told about (if that starting hook was used).
- Find some way home (if you want to make the players worry about this for a little while, you can always give Eri or Tra the ability to send them home via magic, once they recover).

If the PCs accompany Eri and Tra home (to insure safe passage for them) and/or help Nor tunnel through to the elvish settlement, they will see that each party member is rewarded with a minor magic item (GM's choice).

If Fahil escaped, or worse, escaped with one or both of the Rods, Eri and Tra will insist that the PCs hunt him down with them joining the party (and they are not above using multiple Geas spells to get their way)!

#### Rod of Planetary Alignment:

These ancient tools were created and employed by powerful deities untold millennia ago when they were in the process of creating habitable planets. Although there are some planets that do not have Rods of Planetary Alignment, the Rods can be migrated to other worlds in order to establish their effects upon them. Up to four of these artifacts can be found on any planet at one time. More than four on a single planet can cause severe, worldwide disruptions.

Each Rod is three feet long and appears to be made out of a burnt sienna colored petrified wood-like material. Carved along the entire length of each Rod are unrecognizable words comprised of a mixture of Celestial and Elven characters (apparently the basis of some long dead language) with a carved sphere at one end.

Each Rod has the ability to nullify the Intuit Direction skill. Characters who possess that skill and attempt to use it will realize that their attempt didn't work but won't initially be sure why. Each rod also has the ability to suspend thirst and hunger for its owner(s)/protector(s) for an indefinite amount of time.

There are four different types of Rods, actually two sets of mated pairs. The other abilities of the rods are as follows:

**Rod of Rotational Alignment:** These Rods are almost always found in pairs. One Rod, when in contact with a planet, will cause the planet beneath it (relatively) to rotate clockwise. Its partner, usually located near the farthest point on the planet away from its mate, causes the planet to rotate counter-clockwise below it. If temporarily removed from contact with the planet and placed on a near frictionless surface (pool of water, sheet of ice, oil slick, etc.), the Rod will function similarly to a compass needle and point the way towards the closest Rod of Magnetic Alignment. If none of these Rods are present on a planet, it rotates only according to outside forces that act on the world. If only one is present, the planet wobbles unstably. Three or more, and the world's behavior is erratic and dangerously unstable. Over an extended period of time, the three Rods will eventually tear the planet apart.

**Rod of Magnetic Alignment:** These rods are also usually found in pairs. One rod, when in contact with a planet, will serve as a "north" magnetic focal point for the entire planet. Its partner, also usually located near the farthest point on the planet away from its mate, serves as a "south" magnetic focal point for the planet. If temporarily removed from contact with the planet and placed on a near frictionless surface (pool of water, sheet of ice, oil slick, etc.), the Rod will function similarly to a compass needle and point the way towards the closest Rod of Rotational Alignment. If none of these Rods are present on a planet, the planet has no discernable worldwide magnetic field (although certain large metal deposits may cause a smaller localized magnetic field in certain areas). If only one is present, the planet will eventually, over the course of millennia, develop a natural second magnetic pole somewhere beneath the position of the Rod. Until that time, navigation by compass would be impossible. Three or more, and the world has an unusual fluctuating magnetic field structure, essentially making tools like compasses usable only in certain limited geographic areas.

Note that Rods of Rotational Alignment and Rods of Magnetic Alignment do not have to be found at the same point on the planet (for example, on Earth, our rotational North pole is actually several hundred miles away from our magnetic North pole). Also note that the "north" magnetic pole does not have to be located at the Northern-most point of the planet (the Northern magnetic pole of our Earth is actually "south" magnetic).

Although the existence of the Rods is not general knowledge, stories and legends of them do exist but have become corrupted through the ages to the point that current references to the "poles" refer to the locations on the planet, not the Rods themselves.

## Frozen in Time

*By Christopher Campbell and Daniel Bishop*

"Frozen in Time" is an adventure scenario designed for a party of four 5th-level characters. A mixture of classes is recommended. The scenario can be dropped into any existing campaign with an isolated area in an arctic climate.

## Background

Over a thousand years ago, this arctic expanse was part of the Vikaathi kingdom of powerful wizards who dabbled in magic now forgotten. They manipulated the forces of time and space, created elaborate structures from the ice and snow that surrounded them, and maintained regular contact with outsiders from other planes of existence. Eventually they moved to the planes themselves, abandoning their isolated kingdom. Now all that remains of this mystical society is the infrequent icy tomb found by determined explorers. They contain riches unimaginable and magic the world hasn't seen for a millennium.

## Adventure Synopsis

The adventurers fall through the snow into a tomb complex. Upon exploring the structure, they encounter several creatures and eventually find their way to the main burial chamber, which has been rifled. Before they can search the chamber themselves, a male elf named Mardiv appears, wearing an item taken from the body in the sarcophagus. The group is then attacked, and the adventurers must decide whether to consider the newcomer a friend or foe.

## Tomb Features

The entire tomb complex is constructed from magically preserved blocks of ice. This makes the floor slippery, requiring a Balance check (DC 15) to move at full speed along the floor. Likewise, any failed melee attack requires a Balance check (DC 15) to avoid falling due to momentum. The ceilings are all 10 feet high; the walls are perfectly smooth and cannot be climbed unless someone takes the time to chip handholds or anchor pitons (in which case, treat the walls as slippery natural rock with a DC 30). All the doors are fashioned from solid ice (treat as strong wooden doors) and balanced on hidden hinges to allow easy movement. They always swing into a chamber, so only the inner side of a door has a handhold.

The watery crevasse that divides the complex averages about 40 feet deep. It is slow moving and filled with slush; anyone entering the water is in no danger from the weak current, but he or she must make a successful Fortitude save every 10 minutes (DC 15, +1 per previous check) or suffer 1d6 points of cold subdual damage regardless of the type of protective clothing worn. See the Player's Handbook for Swimming rules and the Dungeon Master's Guide for rules on Drowning.

The temperature of the complex is a constant 10° F, requiring a successful Fortitude save every hour (DC 15, +1 per previous check) to avoid 1d6 points of cold subdual damage. Anyone remaining in the complex while wet has the frequency of his or her saves increased to once every 10 minutes. See the Dungeon Master's Guide for more information on Cold Dangers.

Fire has no lasting effect on the ice in the tomb; casting a fireball will not melt a door, and building a bonfire will not melt a hole in the floor.

## The Party "Drops In"

**Without warning, the ground gives way beneath your feet and you tumble downwards in a chaotic tangle of arms, legs, and snow, landing in a heap. Recovering your bearings, you see the opening through which you fell about 10 feet above.**

### 1. Surprise Entrance

**This hall is constructed from blocks of ice, bone chilling to the touch. The south end is blocked by a cave-in, but the tunnel extends to the north, into darkness.**

If you wish to expand the tomb complex, you can allow the party to dig out the south end of the hall. Excavation takes 48 hours for one person (24 hours for two, etc., etc.).

## 2. Tread Lightly (EL 1)

Read the following text to anyone that trips the trap.

**A cracking sound echoes down the hall, and the icy floor heaves and buckles beneath your feet.**

**Trap:** The ice is thin at this particular point and collapses if more than 50 pounds of weight occupies a 5-foot section. Anyone occupying that space plunges into the slushy water beneath on a failed save. A Swim check (DC 10) is necessary each round to keep from submerging; no check is necessary to climb out of the hole with assistance, but anyone attempting it alone must make a Strength check (DC 18) because of the lack of handholds in the smooth ice. Using a sharp object such as a dagger or piton grants a +2 circumstance bonus.

See the Tomb Features above for the consequences of wandering around while wet.

**Thin Ice (10 feet deep):** CR 1; no attack roll necessary (-); Reflex save (DC 20) avoids; Search (DC 20). Note: The trap cannot be disabled.

## 3. Water, Water, Everywhere (EL 5)

**A watery trough cuts across the hall at this point, creating a minor barrier. The slush churns slowly, indicating a weak current deeper in the crevasse. Only 5 feet wide, it is possible to hurdle the icy stream, but care must be taken when landing on the slick surface beyond.**

The trough is roughly 40 feet deep. The slippery surface of the ice imposes a -2 penalty to Jump checks. In addition, a character must make a Balance check (DC 20) to remain standing once the trough is successfully hurdled; no damage is suffered if the character fails and falls prone, but success makes a difference during combat and chases.

**Creature:** A large water elemental occupies the semi-frozen stream, summoned long ago as a guardian for the tomb. There's a 60% chance that any time someone attempts to cross the trough the elemental is present, in which case it receives an attack of opportunity against the character. See Tomb Features for the consequences of getting wet.

**Large Water Elemental (1):** hp 68; Monster Manual 84.

**Treasure:** If anyone is brave enough to explore the depths of the trough, a total of 400 gp, one 500-gp gem, and a +1 large steel shield can be recovered from former tomb raiders. All other equipment has been ruined by years in the water.

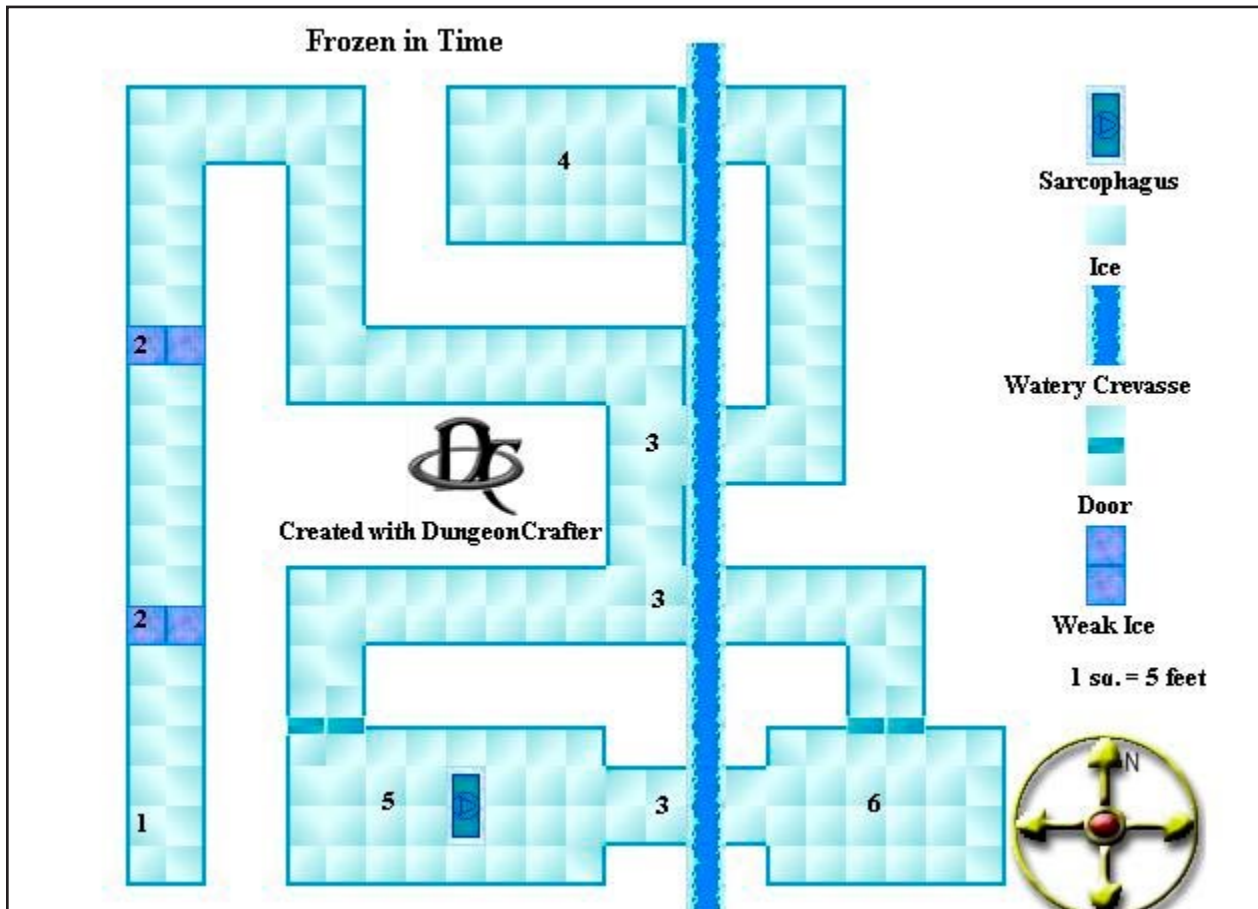
## 4. History in Pictures (EL 6)

**The water-filled trough cuts across the hall directly in front of a set of glittering ice doors. The doors bear no markings or handles.**

The doors swing easily into the chamber beyond with just a light push. Any sound out in the hall has a chance of alerting the Creatures to the party's presence. Read the following when the party looks into the chamber.

**This room takes your breath away with its beauty. Elaborate scenes etched into the icy walls are painstakingly accented with color and depict a burial ritual. A wooden footbridge painted bright blue occupies the center of the room, and you see the same bridge used to span the trough in certain scenes. Various other ritualistic items such as braziers, kneeling benches, and a portable altar are scattered about the room, all decorated with blue and white paint.**

The mural consists of 18 panels detailing the preparation of a body for entombment. It shows the lowering of the body into the complex, a procession carrying the body through the halls, the use of the footbridge over the trough, the summoning of the water el-



emental, the summoning of the ice mephits (see below), the preparation of the body in chamber 6, the placement of the sarcophagus in chamber 5, and the enchantment of the cryohydra statue. Of particular note is the ornamental disc gracing the arm of the body throughout the mural; the characters should recognize the object when they see it again in chamber 5.

**Creatures:** Three ice mephits lair in this room, amusing themselves by playing with the furnishings. They derive all nourishment from the ice, so they lack only entertainment to alleviate the boredom. At first, the mephits toy with the characters as new playthings; however, pranks escalate to violence if anyone attempts to remove objects from the room. The ice mephits follow the characters throughout the rest of the complex until slain, hanging back only if the water elemental manifests. Remember each mephit has a chance of summoning another of its kind.

**Ice Mephits (3):** hp 13, 14, 20; Monster Manual 132.

**Development:** If you want a more difficult encounter, have the water elemental attack when the characters attempt to enter the room and have the ice mephits join the fray. This raises the encounter level to 7.

**Treasure:** The footbridge is 10 feet long, weighs 60 pounds, and requires two people to carry. The total value of the room's contents (including the footbridge) is 2,000 gp to a historical collector and weighs about 500 pounds. There is no way to remove the murals without damaging them.

## 5. Timeless Tomb Raider (EL 7)

**You are not the only group to explore this burial complex. The elaborate sarcophagus in the center of this chamber is open, and a desiccated arm hangs limply from one side. The now-familiar trough bisects a hall to the east, and a body lies partly in the water. There are more scenes of intrusion in the connected chamber.**

**Suddenly, there's a brilliant flash of light next to the sarcophagus. A figure materializes – a male elf, by the looks of him – with a bewildered expression on his face. He holds a rapier in one hand and a necklace of copper coins in the other.**

**Creature:** Mardiv is the member of another group of adventurers that stumbled across the tomb...270 years ago. While his companions fought the cryohydra statue in chamber 6, he decided to loot the sarcophagus. When he put the armband of temporal longevity on his arm, he was transported through time to the characters' present (see the Minor Artifact below). The rest of his group perished fighting the construct.

**Mardiv, male high elf Rog7:** CR 7; Medium Humanoid (Elf); HD 7d6; hp 26; Init +8; Spd 30 ft.; AC 20 (touch 14, flat-footed 20); Atk +7 melee (1d6+1/18-20, masterwork rapier) or +11 ranged (1d6+1, masterwork mighty composite shortbow, masterwork arrows); SA Sneak attack +4d6; SQ Elven traits, immunity to sleep, low-light vision, uncanny dodge (retains Dex to AC, cannot be flanked); AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +10, Will +3; Str 12, Dex 18, Con 11, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 8.

**Skills:** Appraise +10, Disable Device +10, Hide +10, Listen +10, Move Silently +10, Open Lock +10, Search +10, Spot +10, Tumble +10, Use Magic Device +6, Use Rope +4. Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative, Shield Proficiency.

**Possessions:** Masterwork rapier, masterwork mighty composite shortbow (Str 12), 20 masterwork arrows, +1 studded leather, +1 buckler, *cloak of resistance* +1, silk rope (50 ft.), masterwork thieves' tools, copper necklace (25 gp), 2 potions of cure light wounds, 3 potions of *darkvision*, 2 potions of *haste*, 4 potions of *neutralize poison*, and an *armband of temporal longevity* (see Minor Artifact below).

**Development:** If the cryohydra statue in chamber 6 has not yet been destroyed, it begins breathing at anything that moves near the sarcophagus, including Mardiv. See chamber 6 for more information.

**Development:** If the armband of temporal longevity is removed from Mardiv while he is still alive, he returns to the past at the point

where he put on the minor artifact. See Minor Artifact below for more details.

**Treasure:** The body at the edge of the water is Xeg, Mardiv's half-orc ranger companion. While most of his equipment has either deteriorated due to exposure to the water or been carried away by the bored mephits, a few items still remain. The characters can recover a cloak of elvenkind, a suit of +1 studded leather, and a quiver with 20 masterwork arrows from Xeg's body.

## 6. Preparation Chamber (EL 6)

A huge purple statue of a five-headed reptile dominates the center of this chamber, facing west. Its heads nearly brush the ceiling, and its tail stretches across the floor to the east wall. Three bodies lie on the floor. You can see a hall linking this chamber to another to the west.

**Creature:** The statue is a construct resembling a cryohydra. It attacks anyone entering chamber 6 with bite attacks and tail slaps and uses its breath weapon on anyone near the sarcophagus in chamber 5. It cannot move from its position, so it is considered to have no Dexterity.

**Huge Animated Cryohydra Statue (1):** CR 6; Huge Construct; HD 8d10; hp 44; Init -1; Spd -; AC 9 (touch 3, flat-footed 9); Atk +9 melee (2d6+7, 5 bites) and +4 melee (1d6+3, tail slap); Face/Reach 10 ft. by 20 ft./10 ft.; SA Breath weapon; SQ Construct, hardness 8; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will -3; Str 20, Dex -, Con -, Int -, Wis 1, Cha 1.

**SA – breath weapon (Sp):** The cryohydra statue is enchanted to breathe a cone of cold from each head once every 4 rounds. Range is 45 feet, cold damage is 9d6 points, and a Reflex save (DC 17) is allowed for half damage. A head can either breathe or bite, not both in the same round.

**Treasure:** The three bodies are members of Mardiv's old adventuring group. Sanii, a human monk, has a masterwork sling and 10 bullets, a +1 kama, bracers of armor +1, a cloak of resistance +1, and a ring of protection +1 on her body; Pandif, a halfling wizard, has a dagger, quarterstaff, masterwork light crossbow, 10 bolts, and bracers of armor +1; Boris, a human fighter, has a masterwork mighty composite longbow (Str 17), 20 arrows, a masterwork bastard sword, full plate armor, and a large steel shield. The potions Sanii and Boris carried shattered when frozen, and Pandif's spellbook and scrolls were destroyed by the curious ice mephits.

## Minor Artifact

**Armband of Temporal Longevity:** These copper armbands are a symbol of Vikaathi nobility, worn only by their rulers. Placed on the heir to the throne only a few days after birth, the adjustable band transports the wearer into the future a number of years equal to twice the wearer's age. (For an infant, this is only a few days; for an adult, the results remove a character from an existing campaign.) As long as the armband is worn, the wearer's lifespan is magically lengthened; double all age categories when calculating middle age, old age, and venerable age. In effect, the wearer lives twice as long as other members of his or her race.

Meddling with the natural flow of time, however, does not come without a price. Should an armband of temporal longevity ever be removed, the longevity effect ends; the wearer is thrown back in time to the point when he or she originally put on the armband. Additionally, any time having passed since the armband was donned is NOT erased. For example, if the wearer lived 10 years while wearing an armband of longevity, he is still 10 years older when the armband is removed and he reappears in his original timeframe. Note that aging does result in ability score adjustments, and a character can die if the armband is removed when he has lived longer than the normal maximum for his race.

Caster Level: 20th; Weight: ½ lb.

# Gwendolyn and the Bottle of Arcana

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Concept by: Mary Fitzgerald

## GM Information:

This adventure is designed for a party of four 4th – 6th level adventurers. It is recommended that a wizard and a rogue be in the party. Any *italicized blue* text is to be read or paraphrased to the PCs. Make sure that you, the GM, read this adventure all the way through at least once before running your party through the adventure. This adventure requires use of the Player's Handbook, published by Wizards of the Coast. If you are not a GM, stop reading now!

## Adventure Background:

Last week, a female witch walked into Melker's Shop of Arcane Interests. Upon entering the store, she walked to the center of the shop, pulled out a blue bottle\*, and uncorked it. At this point, all of the magic items in the shop began to glow, the glowing colors rose from the items, and swirled into the open bottle. The witch corked the bottle, then turned and ran from town, followed by the town guard. Some children playing in the nearby hills saw her run into a cave. Since this, there has been a group of town guards watching the cave, and they have not seen the witch exit. Melker does not know what the bottle she used is, and is therefore unwilling to challenge her, so he is waiting for adventurers to solve his problem.

\*See Bottle of Arcana in the New Artifact Section

## Hooks:

- The PCs stumble into town unaware of the problem at Melker's. The wizard attempts to buy some supplies at the shop and finds the price very inflated; everything is priced at market value

+10,000gp. If the wizard comments about the prices, Melker asks him to return that night with his party. When they return Melker tells them the story.

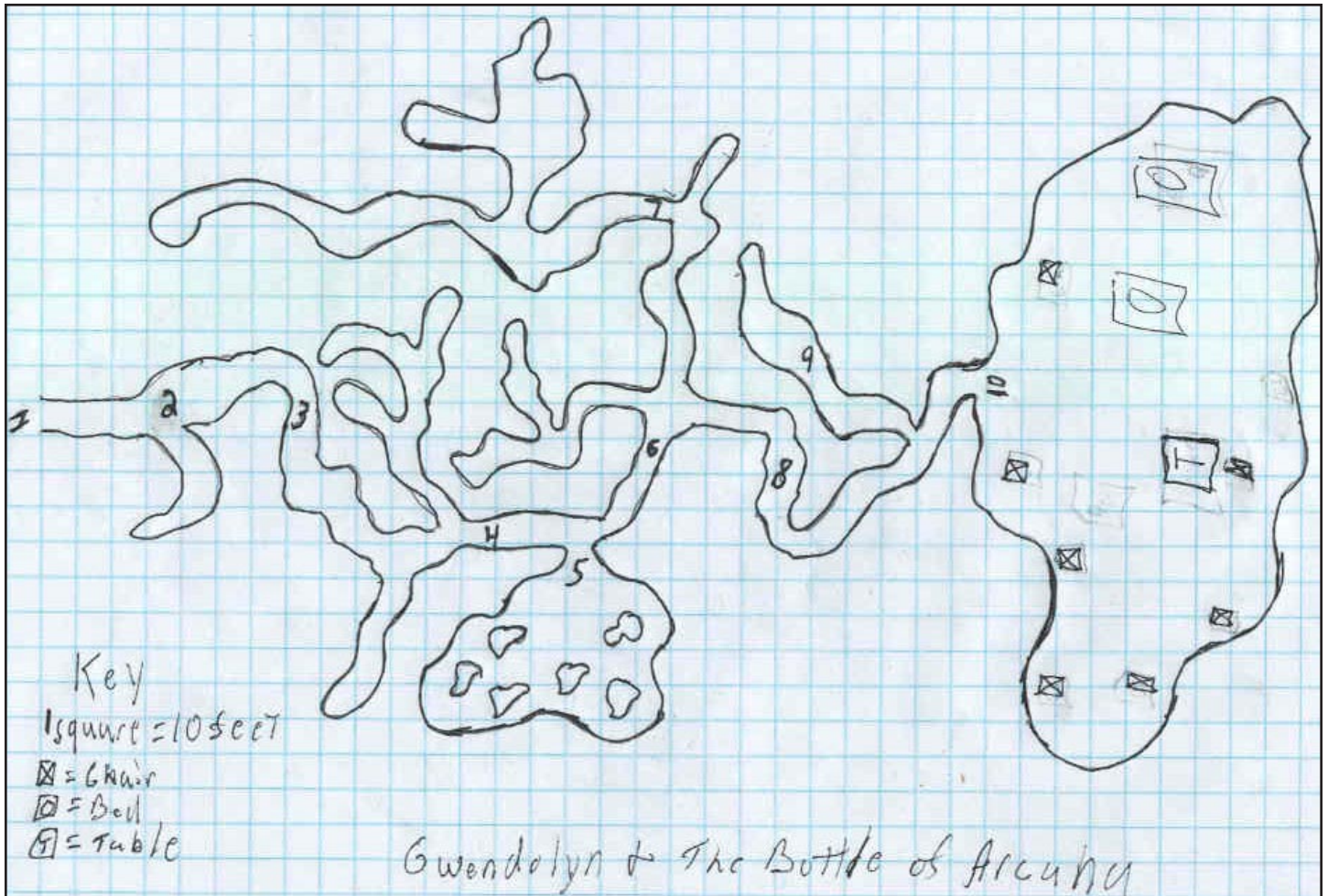
- The PCs are in the hills and discover the surveillance team watching the cave. The team tells them that they are waiting to see if someone leaves and if they are interested they should head into town and look up Melker. They give the PCs directions to Melker's shop, and instruct them to tell Melker that the "boys" sent them.

## Melker (human)

**Class:** Wiz(3), Exp (Shop Owner) (1)  
**Stats:** STR 9, DEX 8, CON 8, INT 18, WIS 17, CHA 16  
**Saves:** AC 9 (-1 Dex), FORT +0, REF +0, WILL +8  
**Attacks:** Quarterstaff +0  
**Damage:** 1d6-1 (crit x2)  
**Skills:** Alchemy +10, Concentration +5, Knowledge (Arcana) +10, Knowledge (Artifacts) +10, Spellcraft +10, Scry +10, Profession (Shop Keep) +9, Bluff +7  
**Feats:** Brew Potion, Empower Spell, Enlarge Spell  
**Special:** Scribe Scroll, Summon Familiar, Spells Lvl 0: Ray of Frost, Detect Poison, Detect Magic, Read Magic Lvl 1: Identify, Magic Weapon Lvl 2: Knock

## Set-up:

**Melker's Shop:** Melker's Shop is a small building, about twice the size of an average cottage. The building looks a little run-down. The windows are covered with dust far too thick to see through. Set in the center of the building is a door that looks like it would fall off its hinges if opened. Over the door, hanging from rusted and crumbling chains is a dilapidated wooden sign with the words "Melker's Shop of Arcane Interests" crudely carved in it. Upon entering the shop, the elderly Melker is seen behind a crude counter fiddling with a wand. There is no order or organization to the shop, and random objects are simply strewn about. While the building seems run-



down from the outside, the inside is in impeccable condition, and nearly spotless. Melker is desperate to get the magic back into his items. He runs a meager shop and gets by from sale to sale, so this is really hurting him. He gives the PCs the complete background and tells them everything he knows. He offers them either 5,000gp, or to give each of them a +1 magical weapon (at the DMs discretion). He does not haggle for a higher price, and does not pay anything up front. If the PCs attempt to haggle, he tells them that 5,000gp is all he can afford, but he would be more than happy to supply them with arcane needs anytime they are in town.

## Map Key:

### 1) Cave Entrance

*As you climb up the side of the mountain, you see a dark opening leading into the side. As you get closer, you see a red circle painted on the rocks marking the opening to the cave you search for. As you step closer to the entrance, you can hear the sounds of water trickling down the walls, and smell the musty dampness that lets you know these caves cut deep into the side of the mountain. As you step up to the entrance to take a look inside, you feel warmth emanating from the mouth of the cave. In the distance ahead, almost out of reach of the light, you see a small crop of mushrooms on the floor of the cave. Behind the mushrooms, running up the walls, it appears as though the wall of the cave is full of mineral deposits with disjointed lines of silver, brown, and white running up the walls of the cave in a haphazard pattern.*

### 2) Assassin Vines

The lines on the walls behind the mushrooms from number 1 are actually a subterranean variety of Assassin Vines (DC 25 to recognize). The warmth comes from a hot spring where the vines are rooted. The PCs can easily avoid the plants as the path is 20 feet wide here and the plants only have a 10 foot reach. If the PCs investigate the lines, the vines attack as soon as the PCs are within 10 feet. EL: 5

#### Assassin Vines (Large Plant) (2)

**Hit Dice:** 4d8+12 (30 hp)  
**Initiative:** +0  
**Speed:** 0 ft.  
**AC:** 15 (-1 size, +6 natural)  
**Attacks:** Slam +7 melee  
**Damage:** Slam 1d6+7  
**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft. (20 ft. with vine)  
**Special Attack:** Entangle, improved grab, constrict 1d6+7  
**Special Qualities:** Camouflage, electricity immunity, cold and fire resistance 20, blindsight  
**Saves:** Fort +7, Ref +1, Will +2  
**Abilities:** Str 20, Dex 10, Con 16, Int -, Wis 13, Cha  
**Special:** see Appendix A for more details  
**EL:** 5

### 3) Bugbears

The bugbears are in the caves because they find great joy in annoying the goblins that live in the caves. The bugbears capture and enslave the goblins to do menial labor for them in their nearby village. The bugbears are currently looking for some more goblins, but the supply is almost depleted. When the PCs stumble upon the bugbears, the bugbears attempt to capture the PCs, seeing as how they fit the bill of slaves in the bugbear encampment. Read this:

*As you round the bend in the cave, you see two large furry creatures carrying morningstars and shields heading your way. They do not look happy, and seem to be on the war path. At the sight of you, they quicken their pace and head for you at a charge with their weapons readied. Roll Initiative!*

EL: 4

#### Bugbears (2)

**Hit Dice:** 3d8+3 (16 hp)  
**Initiative:** +1 (Dex)  
**Speed:** 30 ft.  
**AC:** 17 (+1 Dex, +3 natural, +2 leather, +1 small shield)  
**Attacks:** Morningstar +4 melee; or javelin +3 ranged  
**Damage:** Morningstar 1d8+2; or javelin 1d6+2  
**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.  
**Special Qualities:** Darkvision 60 ft.  
**Saves:** Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +1  
**Abilities:** Str 15, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 9  
**Skills:** Climb +2, Hide +3, Listen +3, Move Silently +6, Spot +3  
**Feats:** Alertness  
**Special:** See Appendix A for more details  
**EL:** 4

### 4) The Roof is Collapsing

Gwendolyn hastily built this trap upon taking up residence in the caves. The trap is intended to be more of a warning that outsiders are approaching than to actually catch anyone or anything. She hastily strung up a net and filled it with rocks. She then strung a tripwire that pulls the stakes holding the net up out of the walls. The trap is easy for a trained rogue to spot (Search DC 15). Disarming is also not very difficult (Disable Device DC 17, failure means the trap is sprung). If the trap is sprung, roll 15 attack rolls (at +2 attack), each aimed at a specific PC within 10 feet of the PC that set the trap off, though not very much damage is taken (1d4+1 for every hit).

### 5) Goblins

The PCs see a large room coming off the cave to the right. If they sprung the trap at number 4, or have made a lot of noise getting to this point, then the Goblins are aware of their presence, and have taken the time to silently lay in wait behind piles of rubble around the room. This gives the goblins a surprise round to begin combat. If the PCs have not made undo noise up to this point, then the PCs get a surprise round if they hear the goblins moving about inside (Listen DC 15). The 8 goblins live in this room, as anyone can tell from the stench. These are the last remaining 8 goblins of a once proud tribe that has been ravaged for slaves by hobgoblins and bugbears. When the PCs actually see the room, read or paraphrase the appropriate text. EL 3

If the Goblins heard the PCs:

*A hail of javelins seemingly from nowhere fly about the room*

(Roll a javelin attack for each goblin at a specific PC. If any of the attacks are successful, deal damage).

*You hear shouts in deep guttural voices. Quickly taking in the scene you see a large natural room that has a horrid, nauseating stench*

(The PCs must succeed at a Fort save DC 12 or puke for 1d4 rounds, unable to fight)

*and see piles of debris scattered about the room. The voices seem to be coming from behind the piles of debris. You quickly realize that there is no chance for diplomacy or talking your way out of this fight, so you prepare for battle.*

(Everyone rolls initiative and the battle begins.)

If the Goblins are unaware of the PCs:

*You see eight small humanoid creatures with flat faces, pointed ears, spiked fangs and brown skin. Each has a morningstar in a holster at their side, and a javelin on their back. The beasts are standing in a large room scattered with piles of debris, and has a horrid, nauseating stench.*

(The PCs must succeed at a Fort save DC 12 or they are puking for 1d4 rounds and unable to fight)

*From their reaction to your sudden appearance, you believe that talking is futile, so you prepare for battle.*

(If the PCs heard the goblins give them a surprise round. Everyone rolls initiative and the battle begins.)

## Goblins (8)

**Hit Dice:** 1d8 (4 hp)  
**Initiative:** +1 (Dex)  
**Speed:** 30 ft.  
**AC:** 15 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +3 studded leather)  
**Attacks:** Morningstar +1 melee; or javelin +3 ranged  
**Damage:** Morningstar 1d8-1; or javelin 1d6-1  
**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.  
**Special Qualities:** Darkvision 60 ft.  
**Saves:** Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +0  
**Abilities:** Str 8, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 8  
**Skills:** Hide +6, Listen +3, Move Silently +4, Spot +3  
**Feats:** Alertness  
**Special:** See Appendix A for more details  
**EL:** 3

## Hobgoblins (11)

**Hit Dice:** 1d8+1 (5 hp)  
**Initiative:** +1 (Dex)  
**Speed:** 30 ft.  
**AC:** 15 (+1 Dex, +3 studded leather, +1 small shield)  
**Attacks:** Longsword +1 melee; or javelin +2 ranged  
**Damage:** Longsword 1d8; or javelin 1d6  
**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.  
**Special Qualities:** Darkvision 60 ft.  
**Saves:** Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +0  
**Abilities:** Str 11, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10  
**Skills:** Hide +1, Listen +3, Move Silently +3, Spot +3  
**Feats:** Alertness  
**Special:** See Appendix A for more details  
**EL:** 7

## 6) Gray Ooze

*As you are walk down the corridor, you notice what looks like a puddle in the middle of the path.*

A successful Spot check (DC 15) reveals that this puddle is actually a gray ooze. If any PCs touch the ooze, deal the acid damage as if the ooze had made a successful attack. The ooze does not attack unless it is provoked. The ooze takes up the entire width of the hallway, which is 10 feet wide. A successful Jump check (DC 15) allows a PC to jump over the ooze without provoking it, failure deals acid damage as if the ooze had made a successful attack. A PC can climb the walls to get around the ooze with a successful Climb check (DC 10). A failed climb check means that the ooze deals acid damage as if it had made a successful attack. If any PC makes contact with the ooze, it should be considered provoked, and battle should ensue. The ooze focuses first on the offending party member, and secondly on everyone else. EL: 4

## Gray Ooze (1)

**Hit Dice:** 3d10+10 (26 hp)  
**Initiative:** -5 (Dex)  
**Speed:** 10 ft.  
**AC:** 5 (-5 Dex)  
**Attacks:** Slam +3 melee  
**Damage:** Slam 1d6+1 and 1d6 acid  
**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.  
**Special Attacks:** Improved grab, acid, corrosion, constrict 1d6+1 and 1d6 acid  
**Special Qualities:** Blindsight, cold and fire immunity, ooze, camouflage  
**Saves:** Fort +1, Ref -4, Will -4  
**Abilities:** Str 12, Dex 1, Con 11, Int -, Wis 1, Cha 1  
**Special:** See Appendix A for more details  
**EL:** 4

## 7) Hobgoblins

The hobgoblins are here to try and capture a fresh supply of goblins to be used as slaves in their nearby colony. The hobgoblins see nothing wrong with using the PCs to serve this purpose instead, and attack as soon as they make visual contact with the PCs. EL: 7

*You see about a dozen sets of yellow eyes about six feet off of the floor burning into you from the darkness. As you get closer you see that the eyes are connected to the hairy bodies of humanoid beasts standing 6' to 6'6" tall. They are carrying longswords in their hands with javelins on their backs. They look ready for battle, and you quickly realize that you should get prepared as well.*

(Everyone rolls initiative and battle begins.)

## 8) Pit trap

There is 40-foot deep natural pit in the cave floor. The hobgoblins have used this pit to build a trap for goblins by placing a hinged door on the top that looks like the stone around the trap. Being that hobgoblins are not the brightest of creatures, the trap is not all that hard to spot (Search DC 17). However, they have managed to make the trap work very well, and disarming the trap is much more difficult than finding it (Disable Device DC 22). If more than 80 lbs is placed on the hatch, it opens and drops the PC 40 feet (doing 4d6 of falling damage) unless a successful Reflex save (DC 17) is made. As soon as the PC has fallen, the trap door closes and resets itself. The pit is about 10 feet wide, talking up the entire width of the hallway. A PC can jump over the pit with a successful Jump check (DC 15). The walls can also be climbed to circumvent the trap with a Climb check (DC 10). If the PC fails either the Jump or the Climb check, the trap has sprung. On a failed Jump check, the PC may attempt a Reflex save (DC 22) to catch themselves on the edge of the trap. On a failed Climb check, no Reflex save is allowed.

## 9) Huge Monstrous Spiders

The spiders have woven a web in this 30-foot wide section of the cave that takes up the entire width of the tunnel. A PC notices the web on a successful search (DC 15) or spot (DC 25) check. If the party notices the web, read this:

*You notice your lights glistening off of something that appears to be blocking the entire passageway. It is almost as if the light is reflecting off of water, but the substance is not moving the way that water would.*

If the party does not see the web, then the leading PC becomes entangled in it, see pg 210 of the MM for monstrous spider web details. While the PCs are either attempting to get their party member out of the web, or attempting to figure out a way around the web, the spiders drop down behind the PCs hanging from a strand of webbing. It takes the spiders 3 rounds to reach the ground. Each round that the spiders are descending on their webbing the PCs should get a spot check (DC 10) to notice the spiders. If the PCs notice the spiders, read this:

*You turn to see two gigantic spiders hanging from strands of webbing right at eye level. One spider hisses at you and begins dropping toward the floor at a hurried pace. The other spider begins to scurry back up the webbing towards the ceiling.*

If the spiders are noticed, one drops to the ground and fights, while the other scurries back up and comes down on the woven web to fight (3 rounds to get to the floor). If the spiders get to the ground without the PCs noticing them, they get a surprise round. EL: 6

## Huge Monstrous Spiders (2)

**Hit Dice:** 10d8+10 (55 hp)  
**Initiative:** +3 (Dex)  
**Speed:** 30 ft., climb 20 ft.  
**AC:** 16 (-2 size, +3 Dex, +5 natural)  
**Attacks:** Bite +9 melee  
**Damage:** Bite 2d6+6 and poison  
**Face/Reach:** 15 ft. by 15 ft./10 ft.  
**Special Attacks:** Poison, web  
**Special Qualities:** Vermin  
**Saves:** Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +3  
**Abilities:** Str 19, Dex 17, Con 12, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 2  
**Skills:** Climb +16, Hide +2, Jump +4\*, Spot +7\*  
**Special:** See Appendix A for more details.  
**EL:** 6

## 10) Gwendolyn

Gwendolyn is the annis that stole the magic from Melker's shop. Gwendolyn wants to be human. She wants to find a wizard to cast polymorph other and permanence on her so that she can become human. She approached Melker about this before, but he did not know the spells she needed, and she did not have enough money to pay for the scrolls. Gwendolyn set up a room in her mansion, in a swamp not very far from the cave. Her plan was to use the Bottle of Arcana to rob the magical abilities from the items in Melker's shop, return to her mansion, and imbue a room full of mundane items with magical abilities. She could then sell all these new magical items to get the money needed to cast the spells. However, she was being chased by the entire town guard, which she knew she could not overcome, so she ran into this cave, which is where she has been hiding ever since. The battles the PCs have fought have alerted Gwendolyn to their presence, and she has taken the form of a very tall and spindly human maiden using her alter self ability. When the PCs enter the room where Gwendolyn waits, read this:

*You see a large room with natural rock formations making crude beds and crude chairs. There is a large flat rock that forms a crude table, with a chair positioned near it. On the table is a glass bottle. The bottle is many shades of gold that appear to be move and swirl into one another. Seated in the chair at the table is a tall, spindly, and quite attractive young maiden. She is staring at the bottle and crying.*

The maiden is Gwendolyn who has used her alter self ability to make herself look like a maiden. She claims that she came into the cave about a week ago looking for some healing mushrooms. She was in this room looking around when a hag came in and put the bottle on the table. The hag then vanished. She hasn't left the room because she spotted the watch, and was afraid that the watch would think that she was the hag and attack her. Gwendolyn is attempting the ruse so that she has time to size up the party. If Gwendolyn feels that she is outmatched by the party she attempts to continue the ruse, offering them the bottle, stating that she has no clue what it does, if they would just escort her out of the cave and back to town. If Gwendolyn senses that her ruse is failing, or if the PCs act in a violent way against her, then she uses her fog cloud ability to gain the upper hand in battle. If the PCs fall for the ruse, then Gwendolyn stays as a maiden until out of the cave, at which time she uses her fog cloud ability to escape from the party so that she can return to her mansion to begin devising another plan to get Melker to transform her into a human. EL: 6

## Gwendolyn (Annis) (1)

**Hit Dice:** 7d8+14 (45 hp)  
**Initiative:** +1 (Dex)  
**Speed:** 40 ft.  
**AC:** 20 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +10 natural)  
**Attacks:** 2 claws +13 melee, bite +8 melee  
**Damage:** Claw 1d6+7, bite 1d6+3  
**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.  
**Special Attacks:** Improved grab, rend 2d6+14, spell-like abilities  
**Special Qualities:** SR 19, steely skin  
**Saves:** Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +6  
**Abilities:** Str 25, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 10  
**Skills:** Concentration +12, Hide +7, Listen +11, Spot +11  
**Feats:** Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Casting  
**Special:** See Appendix A for more details.  
**EL:** 6

## Ending the Adventure:

After the bottle has been returned to Melker, he awards the PCs what they were promised in the beginning of the adventure, after returning the magic to the items in his shop. The party has also made a life-long friend of Melker for saving his livelihood. If the party let Gwendolyn escape, and tell Melker of her, he knows who she is and where she lives. Melker asks the PCs to go to Gwendolyn's mansion and destroy her. The party should XP at the GMs discretion for role-playing and encounter success.

## Future Adventure Ideas:

- If Gwendolyn lived, the PCs go to her mansion to permanently take care of the problem.
- Melker finds himself on the wrong end of an evil wizard's or sorcerer's wrath.
- Melker is found dead, the scene looks suspicious and the PCs are blamed.
- After completing this quest for Melker, the PCs find that they have quite a reputation around town. The local lord wants them to lay siege to an enemy tower in the hills outside of town.
- After completing this quest for Melker, the PCs find that they have quite a reputation around town. The local lord wants them to vanquish the surrounding hills of some hobgoblins that have been causing trouble around the town.
- After completing this quest for Melker, the PCs find that they have quite a reputation around town. The local lord wants them to vanquish the surrounding hills of some bugbears that have been causing trouble around the town.

## New Artifacts:

### Bottle of Arcana

The bottle of Arcana appears as a blue corked bottle if empty, and a golden corked bottle if full. The color is not solid, but many shades of blue or gold that swirl and move into and out of one another. The bottle is finely crafted blown glass that is designed to resemble an ornate wine decanter. Emblazoned on bottle in arcane sigils are the words "open with care."

If the bottle is opened when empty, it pulls all of the arcane magical abilities out of any items in a 50-foot radius of the bottle when opened. If the bottle is full, and opened inside an area affected by an antimagic field, then the magical abilities return to their original items if the items are within a 50-foot radius of the bottle, or the nearest suitable items if the originals are not inside the affected radius. If the bottle is full, and opened without the protection of the antimagic field, then all of the spells contained in the bottle go off over the course of ten rounds at random places within a 50-foot radius of the bottle. Once the full bottle has been opened, it disappears and reappears at a random location somewhere on the same world on which it was opened. If the bottle is full when found, it contains 4d8+10 spells. For each spell the bottle contains, roll 1d10 (reroll



10s) to determine the level of the spell, then randomly choose a spell of that level from the wizard/sorcerer spell list.

## Appendix A: Monsters

### Assassin Vine

Assassin vines use simple tactics: They lie still until prey comes within reach, then attack. They use their entangle ability both to catch prey and to deter counterattacks.

**Entangle (Su):** An assassin vine can animate plants within 30 feet of itself as a free action. The effect lasts until the vine dies or decides to end it (also a free action). The ability is otherwise similar to entangle as cast by a 4th-level druid (save DC 13).

**Improved Grab (Ex):** To use this ability, the assassin vine must hit with its slam attack.

**Constrict (Ex):** An assassin vine deals 1d6+7 points of damage with a successful grapple check against Medium-size or smaller creatures.

**Blindsight (Ex):** Assassin vines have no visual organs but can ascertain all foes within 30 feet using sound, scent, and vibration.

**Camouflage (Ex):** Since an assassin vine looks like a normal plant when at rest, it takes a successful Spot check (DC 20) to notice it before it attacks. Anyone with Wilderness Lore or Knowledge (plants or herbs) can use those skills instead of Spot to notice the plant.

### Annis

**Improved Grab (Ex):** To use this ability, the annis must hit a Large or smaller creature with a claw attack.

**Rend (Ex):** An annis that hits with both claw attacks latches onto the opponent's body and tears the flesh. This attack automatically deals an additional 2d6+14 points of damage.

**Tear (Ex):** An annis automatically hits a held opponent with all its melee attacks each round it maintains the hold.

**Spell-Like Abilities:** 3/day-change self and fog cloud. These abilities are as the spells cast by an 8th-level sorcerer.

**Steely Skin (Ex):** The steely skin of an annis reduces damage dealt by slashing and piercing weapons by 1 point of damage per hit. Conversely, their brittle bones increase damage dealt by bludgeoning weapons by 1 point per hit. (Treat combination weapons such as morningstars as bludgeoning weapons.)

### Bugbear

Bugbears prefer to ambush opponents whenever possible. When hunting, they normally send scouts ahead of the main group who, if they spy prey, return to report and bring up reinforcements. Bugbear attacks are coordinated, and their tactics are sound if not brilliant.

### Goblin

They favor ambushes, overwhelming odds, dirty tricks, and any other edge they can devise.

### Gray Ooze

**Improved Grab (Ex):** To use this ability, the gray ooze must hit with its slam attack. If it gets a hold, it can constrict.

**Acid (Ex):** A gray ooze secretes a digestive acid that quickly dissolves organic material and metal. Any melee hit deals acid damage. The ooze's acidic touch deals 40 points of damage per round to wood or metal objects. Armor or clothing dissolves and becomes useless immediately unless it succeeds at a Reflex save (DC 19). The acid cannot harm stone. A metal or wooden weapon that strikes a gray ooze also dissolves immediately unless it succeeds at a Reflex save (DC 19).

**Constrict (Ex):** A gray ooze deals automatic slam and acid damage with a successful grapple check. The opponent's clothing and armor suffer a -4 penalty to Reflex saves against the acid.

**Camouflage (Ex):** It takes a successful Spot check (DC 15) to recognize a motionless gray ooze for what it really is.

### Hobgoblin

These creatures have a strong grasp of strategy and tactics and are capable of carrying out sophisticated battle plans. Under the leadership of a skilled strategist or tactician, their discipline can prove a deciding factor. Hobgoblins hate elves and attack them first, in preference to other opponents.

### Spider

**Poison (Ex):** Fort DC: 22 Initial and Secondary Damage: 1d8 Str  
**Web (Ex):** Escape Artist DC-28; Break (Strength) DC-34; Hit points (per 5-ft. section)-14

Web-spinning spiders can cast a web eight times per day. This is similar to an attack with a net but has a maximum range of 50 feet, with a range increment of 10 feet, and is effective against targets up to one size smaller than the spider. The web anchors the target in place, allowing no movement. An entangled creature can escape with a successful Escape Artist check or burst it with a Strength check. Both are standard actions. Approaching creatures must succeed at a Spot check (DC 20) to notice a web; otherwise they stumble into it and become trapped as though by a successful web attack. Attempts to escape or burst the webbing gain a +5 bonus if the trapped creature has something to walk on or grab while pulling free. Each 5-foot section has the hit points listed, and sheet webs have damage reduction 5/fire. A monstrous spider can move across its own sheet web at its climb speed and can determine the exact location of any creature touching the web.

## Pearl of the Eternal Waves

By Bruce Boughner (*Samugdragon@mortality.net*)

### Preparation

This adventure is for mid-level PCs 5th to 10th level. A well-rounded party of each PC class is helpful, but not necessary. It is an adventure set on the high seas, and on an atoll well away from normal shipping lanes, so it can be dropped into any tropic or sub-tropic setting of your choosing. It will require use of the Wizards of the Coast D&D Third Edition core books, as well as *Sword & Sorcery's Creature Collection II: Dark Menagerie and Relics and Rituals*, *Fantasy Flight Games' Seafarer's Handbook*, and *Living Imagination's BroadSides*. Texts in italics are the GM's information.

### Adventure Background

For centuries the pisceans have raided, ravaged and pillaged shipping lanes. No one is certain from whence they came. The aquatic elves and merfolk, the original inhabitants of the region, only know their long-time enemies, the sahuagin tribes, were decimated and begged treaties of aid from these marauders. Strange new creatures plied the ocean floor also. The first elven emissaries were enslaved, and the merfolk heads were returned on pikes as the pisceans gathered territory for themselves, securing it with blood. The good and gentle creatures of the deep were slaughtered or enslaved by the newcomers.

After a century or so, the pisceans turned their attention to the surface and began raiding human and elven shipping lanes. Coastal war parties set sail and were sunk, while settlements as far as 1000 leagues away were raided. What victories were attained seemed useless, as slain piscean war bands were replaced in short time. No knowledge of the pisceans could be garnered, and surface dwellers eventually pleaded for peace. The pisceans now demand tribute and tolls on shipping and fishing. Merchants who comply are routinely boarded for the toll, while those that refuse are sunk. Any ships out of line in port are scuttled.

As time went on, some of the gentler tribes returned to their home waters, and it was a merfolk bard who first related the story of a piscean temple, located on a volcanic atoll, weeks away from any major islands or shipping lanes. A temple of coral, in which resides a pearl.

“A pearl the size of a man’s head, luminescent in hues of blue and silver, and light as the fins of an angelfish adorns the altar. A piscine priest, black as the pumice of the fire mountain, entreats the pearl, and after the ceremonies that include the sacrifice of victims from above and below the surface, a glowing gate appears outside the temple and new war bands of pisceans appear.” The bard went on to describe how the priest seemed to use the pearl not only for transport of troops, but communication as well.

This information made its way to rulers both on and below the surface. Merfolk spies, surface privateers, and mercenaries have searched the waves for years but could not locate the atoll, and many were never heard from again.

### Adventure Synopsis

Player characters are drawn to investigate the atoll to end the piscine tyranny of the ocean. The otherworldly invaders must be stopped from seizing total control of the oceans.

- Aquarton, the black piscine high priest, employs all creatures at his disposal to stop any threat to his temple.
- The atoll is an active volcano that has built this lush isle, filled with deadly creatures. The temple resides in a lagoon with ample harborage for a medium-sized galleon to anchor.
- The temple requires some form of underwater access to obtain the pearl, such as spells and potions of water breathing. Other spells that would be helpful are free action and darkvision.
- The payoff. If the characters can remove the pearl from Aquarton’s control, the piscine threat is doomed to extinction. Over the past several centuries, the pisceans have amassed enough wealth to buy an empire.

### Adventure Hooks

The atoll is at least five weeks away from any major port, deep in uncharted waters. It can be included into any world as part of an island chain or volcanic system. Players can come upon the island in any of these fashions:

- **Recover kidnapped loved one:** The leader of the mission searches for a missing victim captured by the pisceans.
- **Blown off-course:** PCs serving in some function on a ship, military or merchant, are blown off-course by a hurricane. Their ship, badly damaged by the storm arrives at the atoll to re-supply and discover the temple.
- **Captured Mercenaries:** Hired by either a ruler or merchant house, the players are captured by a piscine war band and are brought to the temple for sacrifice.
- **Letters of Mark:** Hired by a ruler, the characters act as royal agents and seek out the island specifically to capture the pearl to end the piscine threat at any cost.
- **Aquatic Spies:** As part of an underwater tribe, the party invades the temple to steal the power of the pearl.

### Rumors

The following rumors may be found with a Gather Information checks (DC 15), by role-playing in a tavern in a seacoast town, or through any other informational source (bard songs, story tellers, drunken tales, military intelligence, etc.):

- The dead of sunken ships guard the pearl. False. They do inhabit the atoll and surrounding waters.
- There is enough swag there to make a man a king. True.
- Giant red pisceans that can rip open the hull of a ship in one swipe of their claws guard the temple. True.
- The pearl is from another world. False. See description.
- The pisceans are only defending their waters. False.
- This is an elven trick. False
- The pisceans are mutated sahaugin. False
- The temple is made of carved coral and partially underwater. True.
- Spies are sacrificed to the piscine god. True.
- The end of the world is nigh! Maybe.

### Pearl of the Eternal Waves

The volcano of the atoll looms high over the ocean. Lush palms wave in the ocean breeze, the sound of birds and game rise from the island as a passage into the lagoon appears. In the center of the lagoon, a squat coral temple rises from the water, it’s doors open to the rising sun. The occasional fins of sharks appear in the waters surrounding the island.

At first glance, the atoll seems to be a deserted island, full of lush tropical vegetation and wildlife. A Wilderness Lore (DC 16), or Knowledge [region] (DC 14) will reveal the atoll could re-supply the ship with needed fresh water and food stores, but dangerous animals and creatures could also exist here. Primitive human cannibals could also thrive here.

### Keyed Entries

The following entries refer to locations to be placed on a map. Random Encounters (roll 1d20 to determine result):

#### On the High Seas

Roll	Type	Description
1-2	Severe storm	Loss of control 12; 2d6 structural damage; 1-10 wave hazard with Large (10 foot) waves with Strength of 22; Command Total –4
3-4	Huge shark (solitary)	65 Hp; AC 15; SA bite (+10 melee), 2d6+7
5-7	Green piscine (hunting party 2-5)	28 Hp; AC 16; SA envenomed weapon, DR 5/- (bludgeon or subdual)
8-12	Aquatic elf spy (solitary)	23 HP; AC 15; Short spear and light crossbow; spells
13-15	Blood zombies (15)	16 HP; AC 11; SA slam (+2 melee) 1d6+1, wood bane ( <i>warp wood</i> ), undead, partial actions, slow
16-18	Mist reaper (solitary)	42 HP; AC 11 incorporeal, 15 manifested; SA choke 1d8+4, sword 1d6+4, undead, incorporeal, manifestation, fog
19-20	Red piscine (2)	127 HP; AC 17; SA rend 1d10+10/15, bite 2d8+5/7, harpoon 1d10+10/15; regeneration, blood strength, cold resistance, DR 10/- (bludgeon or subdual)

#### On the Atoll

Roll	Type	Description
1-2	Fog	Visibility less than 15 feet, roll again and ignore a roll of 1-2
3-4	Blood zombies (15)	16 HP; AC 11; SA slam (+2 melee) 1d6+1, wood bane ( <i>warp wood</i> ), undead, partial actions, slow
5-7	Chuul (solitary)	93 Hp; AC 22; SA grab (claws & squeeze) 2d6+5 extra 1d6 for squeeze, paralysis fortitude (DC 19)
8-12	Survivors (2-6)	Any NPC human or humanoid race, weapons random, morale very low
13-15	Cannibals (2-10)	Any NPC human or humanoid race, weapons random, hostile
16-18	Mist reaper (solitary)	42 HP; AC 11 incorporeal, 15 manifested; SA choke 1d8+4, sword 1d6+4, undead, incorporeal, manifestation, fog
19-20	Sea hags (covey of 3 with 5 ogres)	16 HP; AC 13; SA Horrific appearance, evil eye (Fortitude save (DC 11) or die), claws 1d4+4, water breathing; ogres: 26 HP; AC 16; SA huge great club 2d6+7, huge long spear 2d6+5

### Quay:

There is a quay seaward of the temple in the lagoon. The quay is large enough for a galleon to dock.

### Temple Entrance:

The coral temple is rough-hewn coral with smooth walkways. Symbols of bloody maws adorn the walkways and stairs as they rise to the entry.

### Entry Doors:

The doors are constructed of ship's hulls and are carved to depict a deity worshipped by the pisceans. They are not locked, but require a Strength check (DC 17) to open.

### The Nave:

The Nave is 40 by 40 feet square with doors in each wall. Players enter from the East. A huge statue of a reptilian beast roars as the doors are opened. The roar is caused by the tides and is funneled into the statue. A vial containing a visceral red fluid is held in the mouth of the beast. It is a relic of an ancient piscean blood god. Ingesting it requires a Fortitude save (DC 19) or die. Success means the imbiber begins to slowly mutate into a vicious beast of the DM's choosing.

### Scriptorium (South Door):

Slaves who can read and write in the languages of surface dwellers are kept here. Most of them are the survivors from sunken ships; travelers, mates and captains. They are to facilitate any written communication with the surface dwellers, and are allowed to keep the scrolls found in any plundered vessel. Given the chance, the slaves will flee to the island or to the PCs' vessel. Unless there are sufficient guards posted onboard, the slaves will attempt to sail away as soon as they can, possibly stranding the PCs. There is an immense wealth of charts and scrolls kept here. Some indication of available treasure could be discerned with the gathered ship's manifests and logs, but it would take 3-5 days to compile it together. The GM can include divine scrolls of *water breathing* and *freedom of movement* (for about half of the party number), *cure critical wounds* x3, *bless*, and *wall of stone*. Arcane scrolls include *stoneskin*, *hold monster* x2 and *confusion* x5.

### Dry Storage (North Door):

Items that would lose value or be destroyed under water are stored in here. Dry goods of all kinds (GM's option), some fruit (which is fed to the slaves), *rings of freedom of movement* x4, *a plate armor of the deep*, and *potions of water breathing* x20, *wands of silence* (4 charges) x4, *a wand of cure serious wounds* (15 charges), *a belt of giant strength* +4, *gloves of dexterity* +2 and *gloves of swimming and climbing*.

### The Great Hall (West Door):

A great hall, 50 by 70 feet, opens onto a downward spiraling path into the saltwater lagoon. From this point on, players will have to rely on potions and other items to breathe and move underwater. There is a sickly greenish glow illuminating the pathway.

### Antechamber:

The spiral pathway ends in an antechamber. Again, ship hull doors bar the way to the temple. They are not locked, but require a Strength check (DC 20) to open.

### The Temple:

This huge underwater chamber, 70 by 120 feet, is in the shape of a giant opened clamshell with the altar at the juncture of the shell hinge. The altar is constructed from the shell of a dragon turtle and holds the *pearl of eternal waves*. The pearl gives off the faint green glow seen from above. Off to one side is a small hallway. The temple is filled with pisceans, Aquarton, his three black piscean underpriests, and one war band of green pisceans. They will defend the pearl to the last fish. Aquarton will summon Huge sharks if he can.

### Aquarton:

105 HP; AC 16, SA claws 1d8+4, bite 1d8+2, DR 6/- (bludgeon or subdual) *fast healing* 2, *spells*; *bane* x2, *doom*, *grim feast*, *obscuring mist*, *shockwave strike*, *commanding presence*, *inflict moderate wounds* x2, *sleep of the dead*, *silence* x2, *animate dead* x3, *curse of terror*, *dispel magic* x2, *condemned*, *death ward*, *dimensional anchor*, *mind over matter*, *unholy channel* x2, *break enchantment*, *circle of doom*, *doomwail* x2, *inquisition*, *blade barrier* x2, *create undead*, *dark water* x2, *control weather*, *destruction*, *incite*, *repulsion*, *discern location*, *strength of Kadum* x2, *unholy aura*, *convert*, *gate and miracle*. He is armed with a +3 trident and a +3 crossbow of the sea god.

### Black piscean under-priests:

75 x2, 80 HP; AC16, SA claws 1d8+4, bite 1d8+2, DR 6/- (bludgeon or subdual) *fast healing* 2, *spells*: *bane* x2, *doom*, *obscuring mist*, *shockwave strike*, *inflict moderate wounds* x3, *silence* x2, *curse of terror*, *dispel magic* x2, *condemned*, *doomwail* x2, *inquisition* x2, *dark water* x3. They are armed with +2 tridents and nets of snaring.

### Green piscean war band:

32 x27, 45 x3 HP; AC 16; SA envenomed weapon, DR 5/- (bludgeon or subdual), armed with harpoons poisoned with man-o-war jelly (paralysis) Fortitude save (DC 14).

### Red piscean:

127 HP; AC 17; SA rend 1d10+10/15, bite 2d8+5/7, harpoon 1d10+10/15; regeneration, blood strength, cold resistance, DR 10/- (bludgeon or subdual)

### Aquarton's Chambers:

Down the hallway from the main temple, the High Priest's chambers are a simple affair. The 40 by 60 feet room is roughly carved out of live coral, and layered with a kelp bed. Within a warded (2d12+6 damage) clamshell is his personal treasure of 10,000 gp, 8500 sp, five 1000 gp pearls, three 5000 gp rubies and a *ring of elemental control (water)*.

### Black piscean Under-Priests Chamber:

The priest rooms are spartan by comparison. Also 40 by 60 feet, the sparsely furnished room has 2000 gp and 4 500 GP pearls inside a sea chest.

### Temple Treasure Room:

Under Aquarton's kelp bed is a hidden passage into the treasure vault of the piscean temple (GM's Note: This can be filled with what ever the GM wishes, this is merely MY list) 4000 pp, 200,000 gp, *armor of swimming*, *spear of the shark*, *rod of the deep*, *cloak of storms*, *farscope*, *helm of the crab*, *amulet of storm dispersal*, *rod of the waves*.

### Pearl of the Eternal Waves:

An artifact from the Elemental Plane of Water, the pearl bridges the oceans of the Prime Material Planes via the Plane of Water. Other powers may be assigned as the GM needs.

### Source Material (Product Identity printed with permission)

**Pisceans, Mist Reaper, and Blood Zombies:** Creature Collection II Dark Menagerie

**Spells:** *grim feast*, *shockwave strike*, *commanding presence*, *sleep of the dead*, *curse of terror*, *condemned*, *mind over matter*, *unholy channel*, *doomwail*, *inquisition*, *dark water*, *incite*, *strength of Kadum:* Relics and Rituals

**Crossbow of the sea god, helm of the crab, amulet of storm dispersal, rod of the waves, and storm data:** Seafarer's Handbook

**Armor of swimming, spear of the shark, rod of the deep, cloak of storms, farscope:** BroadSides

**Chuul, shark, aquatic elf, sea hag, sahuagin, merfolk:** Monster Manual

## Necklace of the Banshee

By Pedro Carlos Storti Corrêa Filho (gremlinz@triang.com.br)

**Item Name:** *Necklace of the Banshee*

**Description:** The necklace of the banshee is a golden round necklace (it fits on the user's neck much like a gorget) with engravings that resemble a beautiful woman. Her eyes are two gems that change color according to the user's mood. It can only be worn by a woman, making her more beautiful and persuasive (+5 bonus on all charisma-based skills), and more intuitive (+10 on scrying and sense motive). On command, it amplifies the wearer's voice, resulting in a screaming attack ranging from 1 to 20d6, maximized. All these benefits, however, come with a curse. When a person uses the screaming attack, her face turns into a raging banshee's face, returning to normal afterwards. But with each use, the user becomes more and more like the banshee. Upon the 20th time she uses the scream attack, she becomes a banshee, having no way to revert to normal, unless by a full wish.

Banshee, (Stats removed for d20 OGL compliance. Full monster description is available in *Monster Manual II* by Wizards of the Coast.)

### Adventure

The players are hired by a young and selfish queen (Niele) to get the necklace of the banshee. She heard about it in some legends, and wants to have it so she can seduce and persuade the neighboring kings to give her their land (Neither she nor the players know about the curse). She offers them a great amount of gold to get it, although she doesn't know where it can be found. The playrtd should research and find out where it's now located.

After some research, they should learn (using Knowledge, libraries, Gather information or whatever they want) that far north, in the icy lands, there used to be a place called Bannya, that was taken over by a very powerful group of banshees many centuries ago. Nothing else is available, so they should go and investigate the place.

On an old map, they find out where exactly it was, but when they get there, they find nothing. The city is buried deep below the snow, and they should find a way to get there. On their way down, they should meet an ice worm or a similar creature.

They will reach a very hard and translucent surface. It's an ice bowl, covering the whole town. They can see plenty of movement below, lots of beautiful women. Among them, they can see many men, women and children working like slaves. Dealing 50 points of fire damage in one spot can pierce the ice bowl. The hole is big enough to let a medium-sized character pass. Characters with full plate armor have to take it off, or they will get stuck. Backpacks should be passed separately.

The town is medium-sized, with lots of huts, some stables, and a big fort in the middle. On their way to the fort, they will have 30% of chance to meet a group of 1d4 banshees, and 45% of chance of meeting 1d6 slaves (roll 1d100 for every 10 minutes they spend travelling to the fort. The distance from where they entered the ice bowl to the fort is about 1 mile). The stats for the banshees are in the beginning of this document. For the slaves, use an average human.

Two huge men, wearing chain mail and carrying halberds, guard the fort. They should be rolled as heroic humans, having at least 16 in each physical Ability. In the back of the fort, there's an unguarded small trapdoor that leads to the basement, where the kitchen, stor-

age and dungeon are located. Going through the front door, there is a hall with stairs leading up and two lateral doors: one leading to the throne room and the other leading down to the basement.

Inside the fort, there's a 60% chance of meeting a group of 1d4 banshees and 10% chance of meeting slaves (except for the kitchen, there are no banshees there). If they meet a group of banshees, they will scream, and other banshees will come to their aid.

There should be no one in the throne room and nothing in the dungeon (it appears the banshees just kill whoever bothers them). Up the stairs in the entrance hall, there are four rooms – a library, a trash room and two bedrooms. Only in the larger bedroom will there be anything or anyone. The banshee queen is here, sleeping beside a huge man. She is wearing the necklace (though the players don't know what it looks like), and will wake up if touched. The man beside her is a lycanthrope (Were-Snow tiger), and will fight to protect her. She is a beefed-up version of a normal banshee.

Ghiara, (Stats removed for d20 OGL compliance. Full monster description is available in *Monster Manual II* by Wizards of the Coast.)

**Weretiger (snow), Medium-Size/Large Shapechanger (cold) CR 5;** HD 6d8 +18 (45 hp); Init +0, +2 (Dex) as tiger or hybrid; Spd 30 ft, 40 ft as tiger or hybrid; AC 12 (+2 natural); 17 (+2 Dex, +5 natural) as hybrid, 16 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +5 natural) as tiger; Atk Unarmed strike +0 melee, 2 claws +10 melee, bite +8 melee as hybrid, 2 claws +9 melee, bite +7 as tiger; Dmg Unarmed strike 1d3 subdual, claw 1d8 +6, bite 2d6 +3; Face/Reach 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft., 5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft. as tiger or hybrid; SA Pounce, improved grab, rake 1d8 +3, curse of lycanthropy as tiger or hybrid; SQ Tiger empathy, plus scent, damage reduction 15/silver as tiger or hybrid, cold subtype; AL always neutral evil; SV Fort +10, Ref +7, Will +4; Str 23, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10 as tiger or hybrid (Str 11, Dex 11, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10 in human form).

**Skills:** Balance +6, Hide +9, as hybrid or +5 as tiger, Listen +10, Move Silently +9, Search +8, Spot +10, Swim +11 as tiger or hybrid (Craft or Profession [any one] +6, Knowledge [any one] +4 in human form); Blind-Fight, Multiattack, Power Attack as tiger or hybrid (Skill Focus [any Craft or Profession] in human form); Climate/Terrain Any cold land or underground.

**Cold Subtype:** Cold immunity; double damage from fire except on a successful save.

The queen is buck-naked, and the players should make a will roll (DC 16) or be bedazzled by her beauty for 1d6 rounds. She can use the necklace (so the players see that she is wearing it).

After defeating the queen (or taking the necklace from her, that should take a tumble and a pickpocket roll, DC 25), they should get out of the town. If she is dead, they will have 1d10 minutes before everyone in town realizes the queen is dead. If she is alive, she will scream, and everyone in town will come to help her. The scream has a 5% chance of bringing the ice dome down.

When taking the necklace to the queen, she should give an enormous sum of cash to the players. Some months later, they should hear rumors that the queen has disappeared, after she turned into a monster of some sort (when the person turns definitely into a banshee, it is in its true form, and it takes a while to learn how to look beautiful).

XP should be given according to the battles, plus a bonus 200XP for clever thinking (if it applies) and 500XP for success. 🍀



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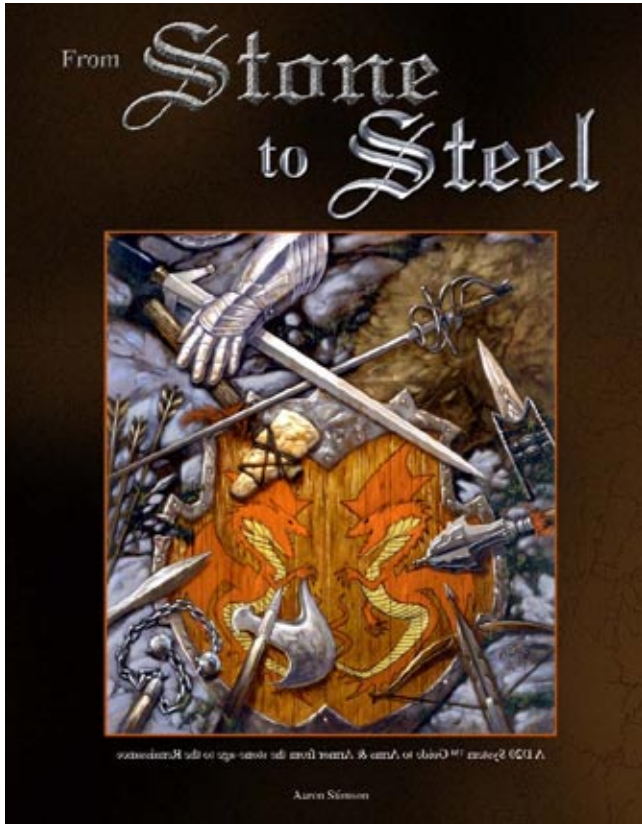
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# The Gamer's Corner

The Gamer's Corner is a place where you will find review of role-playing games and accessories that are not specifically for the d20 rules system. In honor of the upcoming Lord of the Rings movie, we reprinting two reviews that appeared on our website.

## The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game

Reviewed by Steve Creech

This first review is for The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game by Decipher Roleplaying & Miniatures Studios. This 304-page hard-bound book, which retails for \$39.95, gives you all of the essential information needed to begin gaming in Middle Earth. Up front, I have to say that this is one of the most visually pleasing books in terms of layout that I've read in a long time. Graphic layout artists should take a lesson or two from this book and learn from it. I wish half the products I received were done this well. But that's just my opinion...

One of the first things you will notice about LoTR is that Decipher has elected not to use the d20 rules system. The second thing is that the book is filled with photographic stills from The Fellowship of the Ring movie. Many of these stills are from scenes that never made the final cut. If you're a big fan of the movie, this alone adds a lot of appeal to the book.

The book starts out with an introduction to role-playing. If you've never played a RPG before, this book does a great job explaining the concepts behind it. It's good to see a publisher open with a strong section devoted to newbies. I wish more companies did this. It would make attracting new players a little easier.

"There and Back Again" is the title of chapter one. The first 25 pages is an in-depth lesson in the geography of Middle Earth. Starting with Eriador and then to The Halls of the Dwarves, through the Shire, past Rivendell, around Mirkwood, and straight through Morдор, you get a complete and thorough tour of Middle Earth.

Chapter two addresses character creation. Ability scores are referred to as attribute scores. Each score may range from 2 to 12, although higher scores are possible. The primary attributes are: Bearing, Nimbleness, Perception, Strength, Vitality, and Wits. Secondary attributes are: Reactions, Stamina, Swiftiness, Willpower, Wisdom, Defence, and Health. Bearing represents your hero's force of personality, presence, and ability to inspire certain feelings in others. Nimbleness is your coordination, dexterity, and deftness. Perception represents your awareness of your surroundings. Strength is pretty much self-explanatory. Vitality represents your hardiness, stamina, and health. This attribute helps govern how tough you are to kill. Wits represent your memory, capacity for reasoned thought, intellect, and store of basic knowledge.

On the secondary attribute side, Reactions allow your character to avoid injury. Stamina represents your toughness, your ability to withstand pain and so forth. Swiftiness is your speed and reflexes. Willpower is your strength of will, your ability to stave off fear and domination. Wisdom represents your common sense. Defence is your natural ability to avoid blows and weapon fire in combat. Health represents the number of Wound Points of damage a character can sustain before dropping to the next lower Wound level.

There are other attributes that aren't directly tied to either the primary or secondary attributes. Courage defines the character's heroism and nobility. Renown is your character's reputation and ability to be recognized by others. Both of these attributes are primarily used with NPC interactions.

Chapter three addresses the different races of Middle Earth. The four races - dwarves, elves, hobbits and men - are further broken down into sub races or regional races where applicable. The tendencies and mannerisms of each race are discussed in detail.

Chapter four, "Warriors, Wizards and Kings," delves into explanation of the different classes (referred to as orders) that you can choose for your character. There are nine possible orders that broadly describe the type of character to be played. The basic orders are: barbarian, craftsman, loremaster, magician, mariner, minstrel, noble, rogue and warrior. Each of these orders is profiled in-depth to help players make an informed decision about what order to follow. There are also options for belonging to multiple orders or for starting with no order selected. Each order description captures the feel of Middle Earth quite nicely.

Chapter five, "Ringing Anvils and Rhymes of Lore," addresses skills that you acquire and use during the game. The skill system used is very similar to that used in the d20 system. In this game, skill checks are determined by rolling 2d6 + skill rank + modifiers and matched against a target number (TN) that is determined by the GM (sounds just like DC's in d20 rules, don't it?). Many of the skills are the same or similar to those from d20 rules. The choice of skills includes: Appraise, Armed Combat, Craft, Debate, Games, Intimidate, Lore, Perform, Persuade, Ride, Search, Stonecraft, Track, Weather-sense, and many more.

"Stern Men and Resolute" is the title of chapter six. Here you find the traits that separate heroes from ordinary folks. Traits come in two types: edge (beneficial or useful) and flaw (hindrance or complication in life). Some of these traits provide game modifiers, but many do not. Many traits reflect the personality of the character and are meant to be role-playing tools. Traits include Bold, Elf-friend, Foresighted, Honey-tongued, Swift Recovery, Warrior's Heart, Arrogant, Fey, Oath, Stiff-necked, and many others.

Magic is the topic of "Words of Power and Runes of Might." Magic in Middle Earth works a bit differently than most are used to. It is divided into two types: Wizardry (which is the primary use of magic) and Sorcery (the evil form of wizardry). Sorcery is only used by those who would do evil (such as Sauron). Magic is also a constant subtle presence in Middle Earth and a very tangible thing to several races including elves. Spellcasting is based upon skills. The more skill ranks you possess in certain skills, the more spells you can learn and cast. Casting a spell does not require a skill check. If the character knows a spell, he can use it whenever he likes as long as he meets the requirements. There are only 73 spells listed in the book with various levels of power and requirements.

Of course, magic items exist in Middle Earth, like any fantasy world. However, they are very rare and wondrous things and not something that can be bought and sold. (Personally, I really like this concept. It puts the wonder back into magical items.) There are such enchanted and magical things as dwarf doors (like those to entrance to Moria), dwarven magical traps, elven food, elven gear, and even some weapons. There are also more famous items of power such as Gandalf's sword Glamdring, the palantiri, and of course, the nine rings of power and the one to rule them all.

Chapter eight is a very short section on equipment, weapons and money. While much of the commerce in Middle Earth is in the form of barter, there is still an occasional need to buy things. Denominations fall into the familiar copper, silver and gold, but there are also pennies and pieces. For example, 4 gold pennies equal 1 gold piece.

Chapter nine is meant for GMs. Here is where all of the rules for running a campaign are contained, including Decipher's CODA system. Many elements closely resemble d20 (once again) but just as many blaze their own path. All of the rules, as they are presented, are very clear and easily understood. In a nutshell, nearly every resolution is based upon beating a defined target number (TN) for that course of action. The various forms of combat and the rules for such are covered very well and really help flesh out the game.

"Saga and Grandeur" is a fitting title for chapter ten. Here GMs learn the tips for establishing an epic storyline. Many solid fantasy concepts are addressed including good and evil, white and black, and heroism. Every GM of any game system could stand to read this chapter.

The final two chapters continue the good advice on successfully running and scripting a story. One of the necessary keys to that is the use of evil and vile monsters, which are graciously provided with stats so they may be inserted into your campaign. Even Sauron himself is included.

Overall, The Lord of the Rings Roleplayn Game succeeds in what it set out to do; capture the magic of Middle Earth. The game mechanics stand on their own as easily understood and playable. Even though it is not d20, an industrious GM could convert it easily enough and still retain most of the game flavor. As I mentioned before, it is a beautiful book filled with movie stills and quotes from the books (my .sig file generator grew exponentially after entering quotes). It is a great game to introduce people to the world of role-playing, especially those enamored by the movie (soon to be movies) and the novels. This one's a recommended buy for any gamer's library.

**The Gamer's Rating:** (maximum 5 pts for each category)

**-Originality:** 3.75 (Adaptation of an existing work.)

**-Playability:** 5.0

**-Value for the dollar:** 5.0

**Overall Rating:** 4.58

**Final Grade:** A (Decipher really delivers!)

## Lord of the Rings Trading Card Game

By Chris Sims (with John Zamarra), guest reviewers, d20 Magazine Rack

I know you've seen the movie. I know you've read the trilogy. In fact, you've gone on to the hard stuff, and read the whole Silmarillion. You need help. Well, help is here my friend! Trade your middling Lord of the Rings addiction in for a real disease: collectible card game playing. In fact, now you can mix the two with Decipher's The Lord of the Rings Trading Card Game (LotR TGC).

While some of the game's concepts are a bit nonsensical, it's easy to play. Each player controls a group of heroes of Middle Earth and the LotR trilogy. Everyone has Frodo and the One Ring, and everyone has the same goals. Either get your Frodo from Hobbiton to Amon Hen (the place where the Fellowship was broken and Boromir killed) first, or you kill or corrupt everyone else's Frodo.

"How do I kill Frodo?" I hear you ask. It's simple my bloodthirsty friend. Every player also controls a faction of the dark forces in Middle Earth, with which to oppose all the other Frodos (I warned you it was a bit abstract). Before you ask, Frodo doesn't need any help at corruption; he does that just fine all by himself. Little Mr. Baggins can "wear the One Ring" to avoid being wounded in a "skirmish" (the term used for a clash between good and evil in the game). Each time our furry-footed friend does so he gains a "burden". Ten burdens and he's done.

Before play, everyone must have one version of Frodo (there are currently three options) and the One Ring (there are currently two versions), along with a number of companions whose "twilight" cost is less than four (more on twilight later). Everyone must additionally have a "draw deck" of at least 60 cards and an "adventure deck" of 9 "sites". Exactly half of the draw deck must represent the "Free

Peoples", and the other half must represent the forces of the "Shadow". Free Peoples cards represent companions (such as Legolas or Gimli), allies (dwarven guards or Rivendell elves), possessions (like weapons and magic items), and conditions. Shadow cards represent the villains, such as Nazgûl, orcs, Saruman, and their equipment and conditions. Each personality in the game also comes from a specific culture.

The cultural aspect of the game is a great addition. Different companions come from different cultures, and culture often determines whether another card can be played or not. A similar aspect of the game requires a certain type of person or creature (that is, an orc or a ranger, and so on) to be in play for certain actions or other cards to be played. These two points make the game feel like it takes place in a richly detailed world, paying proper homage to its roots in Tolkien's creation.

On the downside, the culture aspect also places some remarkably odd constraints on play. For example, Glamdring may only be played on Gandalf. Nevermind that it is the sword of an elven king, Gandalf is the only one who can ever use it. An orc from Moria cannot use a scimitar from Mordor (he can't even scavenge it off of a dead Mordor orc), and if Aragorn is attacked before he gives those "Hobbit Swords" to the hobbits, he cannot use them to defend himself but must fight barehanded, since only hobbits can use them. There are a few cases where Fellowship cards may cross cultural boundaries (some Gondor cards require rangers, and thus can be used on the elven ranger Arwen), but this is by far and away the exception rather than the rule.

Where the culture incompatibility really helps, though, is in the cost to collect for the casual gamer. A casual gamer might only have one or two decks, each featuring only one culture of each side. So he can buy a starter deck for the Free Peoples and Shadow cultures that he wants to play, and can pickup a small number of boosters. In the boosters, most of the cards will be completely useless, because they require the wrong cultures. So he can trade them all for cards from his one or two desired cultures. In every other card game, basically every card can interact with every other card. Here, because so many of them are incompatible, they become instant trade items to get you what you want. If you and your friends have different tastes (you like elves, your friend likes dwarves, and another friend really likes the hobbits) then you'll have an easy time trading in-group. Trading can be fun, but the game's the thing.

To begin play, each player bids the number of burdens with which his Frodo will start play. The highest bidder becomes the first player and places down his "Site 1" card, which is always someplace in Hobbiton (eleven different places currently), and all players place their player markers on the site.

Site cards are an interesting feature of this game, not unlike similarly named cards from Iron Crown Enterprises' Middle Earth card game. As play continues, these cards form a kind of board that the players move across. In the game as it's now played, there are nine sites beginning with Hobbiton and ending at Amon Hen (or various places near or in these sites).

Play consists of turns, predictably, and each turn has several phases. Without going into too much detail, certain cards may only be used in certain phases, and certain actions may only occur in certain phases or at certain times. The beginning of a player's turn he is considered to be a "Fellowship player" and plays only Free Peoples cards. Then that player moves, with the player to his left or right, as determined by the current Site 1 card, placing his Site 2. So, the first player uses his own Site 1, but from there on out whoever is in the lead has to move to his opponent's sites instead of his own. This also places a maximum limit on the time of a game. Because you must move every turn, and the game ends when the first player reaches Site 9, no player will ever take more than 8 turns. Why one is forced to move each turn is an unanswered question, but I assume it's to keep the game progressing. It would be nice to be able to rest for

more than one turn if you want to, giving up one strategic advantage for another.

As players move or play Free Peoples cards, they generate a form of countering energy called "twilight", which is tracked using counters, such as colored beads. Each time a player's Fellowship enters a new site, other players may use counters from this "twilight pool" to attack the Fellowship with Shadow minions (orcs, Nazgûl, Uruk-hai, and etc.), arm these enemies with possessions, or to put Shadow conditions into play. These activities occur during the "Shadow Phase", with the first "Shadow player" being the player to the right of the Fellowship player.

The Shadow Phase is one of the things I really like about the game. While it too harkens back to ICE's Middle Earth card game, I found the mechanics for generating and using twilight quite elegant. Decipher even included a rule for playing shadow minions in sites where the might not make sense called "roaming". So a Mordor orc can still appear at the Bree Gate site, but such a minion costs more to play because he isn't at or near his home. Another nice (and scary) feature of the game is that all of the current Fellowship player's opponents may use twilight left in the twilight pool by taking turns proceeding to the right of the first Shadow player. Once everyone's played their Shadow cards, if there are any minions to face, the game goes on to the next phase.

Battles (called "skirmishes") in the LotR card game work, but they can be dismayingly abstract at times. In the "archery phase" characters with the archery ability can shoot at each other. Strangely, the player being shot at gets to assign the wounds accumulated from being shot amongst his various characters (usually preventing any one from being killed outright). Melee combat gets even stranger.

When the Fellowship companions and Shadow minions clash in melee, each companion may only be assigned to fight one minion (barring special abilities or conditions). Further, if there are fewer minions than companions, the remaining companions cannot be assigned to a minion. They seemingly stand around and do nothing. However, if there are minions leftover after this part of the "assignment phase", each Shadow player may assign his leftover minions to attack whomever he chooses. In effect, this means that the Shadow minions can gang up on Fellowship companions, but the opposite is not true. Why this is the case is beyond me, and it seems to be a flaw in the mechanics of play. It also makes it much easier for the Shadow minions to kill a Fellowship companion outright, than vice versa.

Another irregularity between the Shadow minions and Fellowship companions is that when a unique companion (such as Boromir or Aragorn) dies, no other copy of that character may be played by the player who lost the hero. But this is not the case for unique minions. Thus, you might kill The Witch King eight times over the course of one multiplayer game. Meanwhile, for poor Boromir, dead once is dead forever.

Referring to Boromir's battle, both in the movie and in the books, brings me to another point about Shadow minions: they're way too tough as executed in the game. This is especially true when one considers the rule that a tie in a skirmish always goes to the Shadow minion. I don't mean to say that creatures like the Cave Troll of Moria are too hard-hitting (they should be), but that some of orcs and goblins are. Considering the way the Fellowship laid waste to their foes in both the movie and the books, this is a little hard to stomach.

If you remember the book, it says of Boromir, "His glance strayed to his fallen enemies; twenty at least lay there." That's twenty orcs to one Boromir. Yet, in the card game, whole group of "Goblin Reinforcements" might not have as much punch as a single "Orc Warrior", when it would seem the opposite should be true. Boromir can be wounded easily by a couple of orcs, and killed outright by some such pairs, if he's not properly armed. Making more of the minions appear to be groups (a simple naming issue) could have easily eliminated this problem of perception.

A fun part of battles, though, is what are called "fierce" creatures. After the skirmish is resolved, still-living, fierce creatures get to attack again. These minions include many of Saruman's Uruk-hai warriors, the Balrog of Moria, and a few others. Such opponents can make combat deadly and thrilling. Of course, fierce creatures compound what I call "the doomed Boromir" problem I pointed out above.

Another good part of the Shadow aspect in the game is that minions who aren't killed in a skirmish will follow a Fellowship, if that Fellowship's player moves again. In other words, minions stay in play until they are killed, or until the current Fellowship player ends his turn. Once the Fellowship player does end his turn, any minions left in play are discarded. As long as he keeps moving, though, those minions are on him.

As for movement, a Fellowship player is limited to moving two sites in a turn if there are three players or less. The actual move limit is equal to the number of opponents any one player has, with a minimum of two. Judicious movement is a key element to the game since certain sites allow healing, and others assure a nasty encounter (the Balrog almost always appears at the Bridge of Moria, currently the only Site 5 card). Knowing when to move and when to stay put can easily make the difference between winning and losing the game. Move too far, and your Fellowship may be too weak to continue successfully. Minimizing the amount of twilight your Fellowship generates is a viable alternative to limiting your own movement, and a valuable strategy altogether. That brings me to deck building.

Like most other trading card games, wise and skilled deck building is essential. It's important to put multiple copies of your key companions in your deck, for example, because discarding a copy of that companion allows the companion to heal. Multiple copies of a good possession, condition, or minion make it more likely that that card shows up in your hand. Good cards can also make a difference, meaning that those who spend more money on the game will have advantages in the long run, such as a special version of Aragorn that has an additional edge in play.

It's this last point that I've always disliked about trading card games, and this one's no different. A hardcore collector will always have the advantage over a casual gamer if the two have similar deck building and playing skills. Often this imbalance is to the point that the game's just not fun to play with anyone other than those players who fall into the same category as you, and this game is one of the worst offenders. Regardless of business interests in the gaming market, buying power should not determine the outcome of a game. (This logic could be applied to the world of professional sports, but I digress.)

Unfortunately, Decipher, like so many other companies before them, decided to make most of the rare cards more powerful than their uncommon and common counterparts. Granted, there are a few exceptions, where a common or uncommon card is critical to the strategy of a given deck. Overall playing with just a starter deck against an opponent's deck full of powerful rares is essentially a hopeless endeavor.

As I've stated, casual gaming and The Lord of the Rings TGC don't mix well, and this is true for new players too. While the starter decks are theoretically playable right out of the box, they are absolutely horrible for actually enjoying play. The Shadow cards in all of the starter decks are so much weaker than the Free Peoples' cards that, in almost nine games out of ten, both players double move every single turn, meaning the player taking the first turn wins. The problem has been brought up on Decipher's forum over and over by new players, but the reply is always the same, "It appears this way, but if you have more cards and play against other decks, the first player won't always win." In other words, "Buy more cards if you want to have fun."

Because the booster packs in LotR TCG have the smallest number of cards (11 compared to an industry standard of 15), and yet are priced roughly the same as most other products, it's hard for the



casual gamer to actually get more cards for a reasonable price. Now, for that money you do get the same one rare and three uncommons as any other game, but you're missing out on four commons. While this is a virtue to the sort of player who will spend a few hundred dollars each time a new set comes out, it really hurts the casual gamer, who needs those commons for his deck.

Now that my biggest gripes about the game are listed, one of them not specific to this game, I'll end with my biggest praise. A multiplayer game of Lord of the Rings rocks! To me, this is where Magic: the Gathering falls short, though interesting multiplayer variants did find their way into the game as it matured. More players means more varied strategies and different challenges to overcome. One player may focus on Nazgûl and Shadow conditions, while another centers his attacks on brutal Uruk-hai and weapons. The Fellowship of one player may be mostly hobbits, with Legolas thrown in, while another style may see Frodo guarded by Aragorn and Gimli all the way to Amon Hen. Of course, more players means more time to finish a game; my first multiplayer go lasted almost 6 hours.

Taken as a whole, the Lord of the Rings Trading Card Game is a worthy contender in the gaming arena. It's fun, if not fast, and playable, even if abstract at times. Each player's Fellowship, and the challenge those heroes face, retells a unique version of Tolkien's legendary story. The best way to learn is to grab a starter deck and a few booster packs at your favorite gaming dispensary, and join in on a game night. As for card buying, I can only recommend self-control and consciousness of the business policy of trading card game manufacturers (that is, "get them to buy more cards"). Just don't blame me for ensnaring you...my precious.

### **The Critic's Rating: (maximum 5 pts for each category)**

**Originality:** 2.5 (Except for the concept of Twilight, the otherwise innovative elements appear to be holdovers from the older Middle Earth game by Iron Crown Enterprises. Both Decipher and ICE are based in Virginia, so this may not be coincidence; the two may have business arrangements.)

**Playability:** 4 (The game is very playable, but some aspects of play may be frustrating. Players with more green to spend will have better decks if skill isn't a factor.)

**Value for the dollar:** 2.5 (This rating includes unabashed bias against collectible card games as a whole industry, in theory and practice. Remember that Decipher includes less cards in their booster packs for about the same price as other games, though.)

**Overall Rating:** 3 (3.25 without my bias)

**Final Grade:** B-/C+ (B-)

### **Lord of the Rings Trading Card Game Resources:**

Decipher Games

Decipher's LotR Trading Card and Roleplaying Game Site

LotR TGC Rulebook (PDF)

My Game Vault (Great resources for card collectors and players, including LotR. A searchable index of all the current cards, deck builder, and more!)

## **Fairy Meat Miniatures Game Rulebook**

**by Chris Sims**

Welcome to The Gamer's Corner. Have you ever been in a gaming session when fey were involved, and you just wanted to kill the little suckers, despite the required alignment violations? Well, in case you didn't know, two years ago Kenzer and Company, the beloved creators of Knights of the Dinner Table, Hackmaster, and Kingdoms of Kalamar, released a little game that not only let's you be a fairy, it lets you butcher them too—literally. And, after the dirty deed is done, it's fairy for dinner, or breakfast, or a light snack before tea. Welcome to the miniatures game to eat them all: Fairy Meat.

The game rules are worthy read just for the guffaws you'll get out of them. Author Scott Leaton wrote the game and its associated information with a witty style that'll keep you turning the pages. All of the elements of the game have sweet or sick fairy names, including pose, pounce, frolic, and flutter to describe modes of movement.

The art is suitably lighthearted and revolting at the same time; the cartoonish style accentuates the book's tone. Of course, whether you're amused or not may depend on your personal feelings about fairy cannibalism.

The rules are simple too. All you need to play are some fairy miniatures, counters for the various scores you have to track during play, a card for each fairy on which to track those scores, weapon counters (so everyone knows what a fairy is packin'), and a regular deck of cards with jokers still in. The playing cards are used as the random element in the game, and they're the only things that aren't included. Since the 32-page rulebook is nearly \$25 you might wish they were. You'll also need a surgeon's precision to cut out some of the counters included with the game; they're round and imperforated. I used glass beads, which were easier to handle in play.

In order to play, each player must construct a warband of blood-thirsty, shot-glass-sized cutthroats, using a point-buy system that should be familiar to players of other miniature games, such as Warhammer. Players use the same points to arm their fairies, and to gain thralls, which are common woodland creatures turned ravening, fairy-mind-controlled beasts. Each fairy in a warband has a card with its name and weaponry noted, the proper number of counters allocated, and its type of magic (that is, "Twinkle") assigned ("Sweet" or "Mean"). The options are diverse enough that each game can be a unique experience, but not so broad that the average 1E D&D player won't easily grasp them. Constructing a fairy tribe is fun, and after all players' warbands are constructed it's time to brawl!

Fairy Meat play is a riot. (I mean that word in all ways it can be taken.) It's all about the fight, and the quick reference charts in the back of the rulebook will have your fairies chopping and chomping faster than you can say "arterial spray". With a tape measure handy (since movement is in inches), you'll maniacally command your warband in all sorts of mayhem. They can engage in close combat, shoot, cast spells, and do some down-and-dirty wrasslin'. Dragging other fairies that try to backstab a wrassler into the melee is allowed, and fun to boot. Sometimes fairies are easy to kill, and other times they're hard; it all depends on who's tougher and the luck of the draw.

Using playing cards as a randomizer really works for this game, especially since it seems the author put some thought into what certain cards do. Almost every situation is determined by number cards and modified by face cards. Face cards can sometimes be used as wild cards as well, further increasing the chaos. Those jokers left in the deck make for some wacky play results. A little bout of pugilism between two fairies can be going just fine, and then someone has to go and draw the Ace of Spades. You'll have to read the rules to find out what that means, but I'll tell you that it's bad. Real bad.

The game isn't all random though. In addition to strategic thinking, which is not a fairy strength, there's always the fairy's trusty Twinkle. Twinkle is easy to use, since there are only eight spells, and any one fairy can only cast four of them (four are Sweet, and four are Mean). Spell effects can be a real wildcard in the game, because it can be used to help or hinder, to wound or heal. I hope there are more spells in the Fairy Meat supplements. Judicious use of twinkle can save a fairy's bacon in many ways.

Speaking of meaty snacks, your fairies can settle in for a bite after they defeat an opponent. Watch out for the fairies from other warbands, though, because even the new corpse's former "friends" will want a piece. There are even rules for wrestling over, tugging apart, and carrying the carcass to one's mates. Besides, fairy meat is good for fairies, because it heals them so they can fight on, or makes them more powerful if they need no healing. Fairy Meat is good for people, because most of you nasty brutes take life too seriously anyhow. (Fairy meat isn't good for people, because fairies don't exist, silly!)

Fairies can eat and fight anywhere, having little respect for property or propriety. My favorite aspect of this game is you can play it far and wide; the middle of a highway is not recommended. The fairies are "life-sized" at 23 mm, so your messy office, or a dimly lit forest

glade, will do. In fact, I highly recommend playing in the forest, perhaps on a break from an idyllic hike. Ah, carnage and pastoral settings. Just be sure the play area has a few mushrooms. Fairies love mushrooms—killer buzz (really).

Environment can be more important than just the inclusion of madness inducing fungi. Scenarios provided with the game are fun, and serve as examples to help you set up your own ideas for a few hours of "slapstick slaughter". My favorite was the "Happy Un-birthday" scenario, where the playing area is filled with boxed presents from some twisted gnomes. What's in the boxes? It could be a bomb or a shiny, new gun, but you have to open the box to find out. Don't you love surprises?

Some I didn't love were the few downsides to this game of fairy bedlam, and movement is one. Movement is just plain weird in Fairy Meat, which is saying a lot taken in context. While I realize that few miniatures games handle flying creatures or machines well, this game deals exclusively with flying movement. Fairy Meat's fairies can only climb to a height of 12 inches, without magical assistance, before their frail wings give out and they have to land. That makes some obstacles insurmountable to the wee folk. Further, fairies can't hover in midair. Game balance demands limited movement in a turn, I know, but the fairies seem more like powerful jumpers than real flyers. Maybe if the game included ground markers with a height notation for flying fairies it would work better.

The only other things I didn't like about Fairy Meat were a couple of nit-picky points. First, the fairy cards are mislabeled (at least according to what the rules describe), which can confuse those just starting to learn the game. Second, though I liked the silly art, the graphic design of the book is below desktop publisher level. From the standpoints of visual presentation and ease of reading, the quality just isn't there. The first point can hamper the game a bit at the learning stage, but only for a moment or two. The second point doesn't change the fact that it's just good, sick fun to play cute, tiny carnivores that make orcs look squeamish.

If everyone in the group can handle the viciousness, Fairy Meat is a great diversion for those game nights when a couple of players can't show up. Just make sure nobody has a soft spot for the fey. Actually, it's a great diversion even when everyone shows up, and that maturity thing is strictly optional. So grab a copy, and take out your GMing frustrations on the players without killing their prized characters. Make sure to actually pay for the book though, because the rules for those who've stolen it make the game nigh unplayable. Just don't be surprised if the quiet girl who plays the halfling paladin ends up with the most meat by the end of your first game. It's always the quiet ones.

### **The Critic's Rating: (maximum 5 pts for each category)**

**Originality:** 5.0 (I'd go to 6, if they'd let me. I admit, I'm a sucker for the novelty.)

**Playability:** 4.5 (Once you get the hang of it, it may be too easy! The movement is a little crazy, conceptually.)

**Value for the dollar:** 2.5 (\$25 for a 32 page book, even if it comes with cardstock accessories, is high. This is especially true when the quality and difficulty cutting out the accessories are considered.)

**Overall Rating:** 4

**Final Grade:** A

**Postscript:** You can get your greedy, fairy-swallowing paws on some nice miniatures for Fairy Meat. If your game store doesn't have them, you can get them direct from [Kenzer and Company's Fairy Meat store](#). These little cannibals are pretty cheap as pewter minis go (for miniature games), but almost all of the fairy models require some assembly and they come unpainted. If you want to add a little more dimension to your game of bullets-with-butterfly-wings, these may be for you.

As a wish, I'd like to see Deluxe Fairy Meat released. Included in this imaginary boxed-set would be an assortment of Kenzer's Fairy Meat pewter figurines (maybe cast in plastic), laminated Fairy Cards

for four players, and glass beads of three differing hues to track game statistics. I, for one, would readily buy such a thing. I'm sure others would too.

**Here are some other resources to help you eat more meat:**

[Kenzer and Company](#)

[Fairy Meat Homepage](#)

[Fairy Name Generator](#)

## **Abduction**

**by Brad Mix**

Welcome to the Gamers Corner. This review is for the card game Abduction produced by Eden Studios Inc. and retails for \$10.00. This is not a collectable card game just a stand alone game designed for 2-4 players. The deck includes 66 playing cards, 4 rules cards, and 2 cards that can be cut up and used to represent the abductees. One of the cut outs is a cow. What is it with aliens and cows anyway. The game does require 1 six sided die to play, not included. The game takes about 20 minutes to play and is a lot of fun.

The rules are pretty easy. You have been abducted by aliens and must escape off of the mother ship. At the beginning of your turn you draw as many cards that will bring your hand up to five. The first person gets three actions, either move or search. After the first action is taken each other player can play an event card or pass. This continues until all 3 actions are used or until the player gets a Blackout condition and is returned to the Holding Cell, or the player passes. Then the process is repeated for the next player.

The cards are dived into three categories: Event, Location and Item. Locations are placed during your turn and you move your token onto the card to represent where you are in the game. There are three Exit cards included and the goal of the game is to end your turn at the exit. The first place you start is the holding cell. The Holding Cell card is placed in the middle of the table and the other location cards are placed next to an opening. Each Location card has 1 to 4 doorways on it. Think of a Dominoes layout. Only instead of matching numbers you are matching up doorways. At least five locations in a row must be played and then the Exit card can be played. Ending your turn in the exit will win the game.

Some location cards have powers associated with them. The powers are detailed on the card. Some locations require an evade check. If the check is failed then you either end your turn or blackout and get taken back to the holding cell. Some of the locations include: Corridor, Breeding Pit, Armory, Teleport Chamber, Examination Room, Communications, Hyper Sleep Chamber, Main Bridge, and Engine room. Corridor is nothing special, just a safe play to help you get to the exit. Breeding Pit makes you evade with a 4 or higher to avoid losing your turn. This effect happens anytime someone enters the room. Armory makes you evade at 3 or higher or avoid a Blackout (which sends you back to the Holding cell. Teleport Chamber effects vary depending on the roll. On a 1 Blackout, 2 and 3 no effect, 4 or higher lets you move to any non-exit location. Examination room, nothing special, just kind of creepy to think about though. Communications lets you exchange play hands with any other abductee. Hypersleep Chamber activates with a roll of 4 or higher. You then take that many cards from the draw pile and play all location cards that you draw. The rest are discarded. If you are on the Main bridge and get targeted by an Event you can roll 4 or higher to avoid the effect. Engine room makes you discard a card any time an action is started there.

The event cards are what make this game so much fun. After the active player is finished with an action the next player can play an Event card to either slow down any other abductee or help himself. One of the best cards to slow down a runaway abductee is the Hull Decompression card. This card flips over the location card of your choosing and makes it impassable until the end of your turn. Any-one in that location Blackout and is returned to the holding cell. No

Take Him lets you avoid blackout and send someone else back to the holding cell. This can only be used if you are in the same room as another player. Temporal Flux makes each player pass a card to the player on the left. Time's Running Out makes a player discard his hand. And of course no self-respecting alien would be without an Anal Probe. Anal Probe is played on a location and if it is in the examination room then each player Blackout and are returned to the Holding cell. If played on any other location then an evade check at 5+ is rolled and failure also gets the other players sent back to the Holding cell.

Equipment cards can also be placed on a location card. Each location card has a number on the lower right hand corner. The player can place an Item card there and attempt to search for it. If the roll is higher than the number on the card then the player finds the equipment and gets to use it. If the roll is not high enough then another player can come along and attempt to take it. Multiple searches are allowed. A maximum of three items can be carried at once. If more than three are found the player has to drop one and then another player can come along and try to search for it. The Psi Helmet lets you steal a card at random from any players hand. Pulse Rifle adds +2 to all of your evade checks. Alien Rail Gun lets you attack another abductee at the same location. If his evade roll fails then he is sent back to the Holding cell.

Temporary alliances, backstabbing, and lying are encouraged in game play to make sure that you are the one who gets out alive. I would recommend 2 decks for 4 or more players. I hope that an expansion set is planned for this game.

**The Gamer's Rating: (maximum 5 pts for each category)**

**Originality:** 5.0

**Playability:** 5.0

**Value for the dollar:** 5.0

**Overall Rating:** 5.0

**Final Grade:** A+ 🍷

# Music in Gaming: Midnight Syndicate

By Steven Creech

Truth be told, I've never really tried to actively use music during a gaming session. It seems to me that it would be quite distracting. Recently discussions with several different people have put this idea in a new light. While I agree that the soundtrack to *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* is an excellent source of gaming music, it has limited opportunities before it becomes overused and cliché. Based upon a recommendation from a bulletin board posting, I checked out a group called Midnight Syndicate ([www.midnightsyndicate.com](http://www.midnightsyndicate.com)) and downloaded a couple of their songs. I have to say that I was quite impressed. This is the perfect music for gaming, especially if you run a dungeon crawl or horror-driven campaign. So I contacted them and they were nice enough to send me a complimentary copy of their past four CDs to review here.

*Gates of Delirium* was the first Midnight Syndicate CD I listened to. Without hesitation I immediately thought it ideal to use during the free adventure *Where Madness Dwells* (which takes place in an asylum) by Inner Circle Games. The back of the CD jacket reads, "A lone scream pierces the night... Dark shadows envelop unwilling guests of a wretched stronghold that harbors an unspeakable terror... Welcome to Haverghast Asylum." The music has a haunting quality and is interlaced with sound effects such as crickets, screams, moaning, steps and even a horse carriage. Sometimes it is merely in the background of the music, a subtle reminder of the place you visit. Other times, it is the focal point driving home the fact that madness lies just around the corner. The music is strong with synthesizer, bass, horns, drums and cymbals but is never overwhelmingly slanted to one particular instrument. All instruments tend to be blended perfectly with several tracks being ideal for chase or combat sequences. "Residents Past" is an ideal track for using when the party first sees a haunting apparition off in the distance or even up close.

*Born of the Night* is actually the second CD released by Midnight Syndicate (I don't have their first). "Enter the dark tower where creatures of the night lurk in shadows and ghostly sounds echo through the halls." Filled with haunting melodies, chilling sounds effects, and a brooding tone, this CD is ideal for a *Ravenloft* or other vampire campaign. It would be equally good for a *Call of Cthulhu* session. A wide variety of orchestral instruments are used in this work adding fullness to it all. Piano, harp, woodwinds, horns, and percussion instruments create an eerie atmosphere ideal for exploring an ancient ruin or dark tomb. Fans of the 1st edition *Dungeons & Dragons Ravenloft (I6)* adventure will eat this CD up. It is perfectly suited for that adventure and could literally be considered a soundtrack for it. "Gargoyles" is a track where you can just feel the eyes of the stone statues follow you as you pass by them. You expect them to leap at you at any moment. Of course, it could just be your imagination. "Haunted Nursery" has the sound of a beating heart that is perfect for the huge heart sitting at the top of the tower in the original *Ravenloft* adventure. This is a CD with a definite gothic feel.

*Realm of Shadows* is the follow-up CD to *Born in the Night* and contains much of the same gothic feel as its predecessor. The CD jacket on this one reads, "Venture to the Realm of Shadows where restless spirits arise from unknown depths to wander the shores of the night." The rich instrumental tones flow between the haunting melodies creating a sense of loneliness at times while almost a palpable fear on other occasions. Again, this is good background music for gothic adventures, *Call of Cthulhu* or even a good dungeon

crawl. The music mixes well with the use of supernatural beings in your campaign and will undoubtedly make your player's heart race a little during their encounters. Much of the music on this CD has a foreboding and slightly brooding tone that will lend itself to the atmosphere of fear that you try to create for your players. GM's looking for background music for *Heart of Nightfang Spire* might do well to get this CD. "Serpent's Lair" is perfect background music for an encounter with a naga or other serpentine monster. "The Night Beckons" has the sound of howling wolves in the background along with the howl of the wind making it suitable for a forest sequence or encounter.

Midnight Syndicate's latest offering is *Vampyre: Symphonies from the Crypt*. The back jacket reads, "Unleash your darkest nightmares as you enter the world of the Vampyre. Echoing from ancient crypts, these haunting symphonies call forth the horror, mystery, and passion of the night that awaits you..." This is definitely their darkest CD, with many of the melodies sounding familiar to the *Batman* soundtrack. The tracks are a little more varied in terms of style but they all share a strong sense of foreboding and possible doom. This CD will fit well in any undead driven campaign or story. Of the four CDs reviewed, I found this one to be slightly disappointing perhaps due to its much darker tones and that fact that much of the sound effects I am accustomed to hearing seem to be lacking. A few tracks do stand out such as "Unseen Eyes," "Undead Hunters" and "Graveyard." For the money, GMs should still get a lot of use from it.

While everyone has his or her own preferences for music suitable to play while gaming that strikes that perfect mood, it is hard to find a balance between distracting and hardly noticeable. I believe that one of the successes to the use of music is choosing the right kind of music. In my opinion, the music of Midnight Syndicate should be a part of every GM's library that uses music for gaming. The range of music gives GMs substantial choices so that repetition does not become a problem, thus inherently tipping players off to an impending encounter by the selection of music alone. The music that blends sound effects with the instrumental music itself is, in my opinion, the stronger pieces and has the most potential for use at the game table. So if you are looking for something more than soundtrack music to play during your games and you have the skills to be descriptive enough to flavor the atmosphere even more, why not put a little work into it and try using something different. Once I get a laptop, I know that I will be using Midnight Syndicate's music extensively in my gaming sessions. Especially if I feel I can couple a single CD as the soundtrack to an entire adventure. 🎧

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