

# KNOCKSPELL

Spring 2009

THE MAGAZINE OF OLD-SCHOOL FANTASY GAMING

## RE-IMAGINING THE THIEF ARCHETYPE

page 13

## ISLES ON AN EMERALD SEA 2

An adventure by Gabor Lux, page 24

### Plus:

### The Dungeon as Mythic Underworld

Philotomy Jurament discusses dungeon design

...and more from our regular contributors as well as new features from Old-School gamers like you!



© PETER FITZPATRICK 1991





# This Issue of KNOCKSPELL

magazine:

- 3 Editor's Note *Matt Finch*
- 4 Art Director's Note *Jeff Preston*
- 4 From Kuroth's Quill *Allan T. Grohe, Jr.*
- 8 The Dungeon as Mythic Underworld *Jason "Philotomy Jurament" Cone*
- 14 The Trouble with Thieves *James Maliszewski*
- 16 WhiteBox Thief (1): The Treasure Seeker *Rob Ragas*
- 17 WhiteBox Thief (2): The "Standard" Thief *Salvatore Macri*
- 18 Core Rules Thief (1): The Skillful Shadow *Salvatore Macri Core Rules*
- 20 Core Rules Thief (2) *James Maliszewski*
- 21 Thieves and Tasks *Akrasia*
- 24 Isles on an Emerald Sea 2 *Gabor Lux*
- 31 Retro-Clones: Interviews with the Authors
- 36 Jousting (Optional Rules) *Brendan Falconer*
- 37 Dungeon Oddities *Michael Curtis*
- 45 The Zocchi Experience *Matt Finch*
- 46 The Claws of Ssur-Sparih *James Carl Boney*
- 47 Random City Lair Generator *Sean Wills*
- 48 Random Thieves Guild Generator *Robert Lionheart*
- 51 The Fantasy Marketplace: Looking at Merchants Differently *Michael Shorten*
- 55 Spell Complexity (Optional Rules) *Brendan Falconer*
- 57 Thoughts on Arnesonian Alchemy in the Original Dungeon Game *Jason Vasche*
- 60 When is a Spell Book Much More than a Spell Book? *Brendan Falconer*
- 62 Random Pits & Occupants *Mike Davison*
- 63 Magic Swords & Treasure Maps *Jason "Philotomy Jurament" Cone*
- 67 Leprechauns *David ("Sham") Bowman*
- 69 Why White Box? *Jim Adams*
- 71 Surviving Old-School Dungeons *Sean Ahmed*
- 72 Three Sorcerous Creations *James Carl Boney*
- 77 Magic Items
- 78 Review: On the Road of Knives *Matt Finch*
- 79 Masterminds & Minions *bat*
- 82 The Bestiary
- 86 Classified Ads

## Credits

**Editor:** Matt Finch  
**Art Director:** Jeff Preston  
**Cover Artist:** Peter Fitzpatrick  
**Designer/Composer:** James D. Kramer  
**Interior Artists:** Jim Holloway, Chris Burdett, Leanne Buckley, Edward Kann, Pete Thiessen, Ken Seward, Peter Fitzpatrick, Michael Shorten, Liz Danforth, Chad Thorson, Steve "Bat", Michael Cote.

## Editor's Note

by Matt Finch

In the couple of months that have passed since the last issue of *Knockspell*, a lot has happened in the retro-clone community and in the old-style gaming world at large. First, as most of us know, Wizards of the Coast has pulled all pdfs of the Original D&D and Advanced D&D games, and these are no longer for sale. This is a tragic and unnecessary development, but it highlights exactly what the retro-clones were created for. Although the original books are still available in secondhand stores, stopping the legal electronic distribution of these rulebooks is a possibly significant blow to the expansion of the Old-School Renaissance.

On a lighter note, a lot of our readers may be aware of the sales competition held at Lulu.com during the month of March, in which *Knockspell* seems to have placed fourth in total sales of all print publications. I say "seems to" because they didn't release the rankings after the top three — but the Swords & Wizardry rulebook was the next graphic shown after the top three. *Fight On!* magazine managed to pull in at first place, which is a major coup for the overall credibility of old-school gaming.

Also, Stuart Marshall has handed "control" of OSRIC over to me, because of increased responsibilities at his real-world job. I will be putting OSRIC into a non-profit organization to serve as the publisher. The details aren't set in stone yet, but stay tuned. As a result, *Knockspell* is now going to be the "official" magazine of both OSRIC and Swords & Wizardry, although I don't like the word "official." Don't look for any official rules or official anything else to be coming out of this magazine, but you can expect to see more 1e material starting to show up in these pages as we continue to expand the magazine's scope.

A quick side note: a few copies of Swords & Wizardry will likely be for sale at the Fat Dragon Games booth at GenCon. So if the old-schoolers are looking for a place to congregate in addition to Joe Browning's Expeditious Retreat Press booth, that might be it.

It's all good. Let's take the framework of the rules, and "Imagine the hell out of it!"

— Matt Finch

## In Memorium

Gary Gygax • Dave Arneson • Jerry Mapes

## Art Director's Note

by Jeff Preston

Welcome to *Knockspell* Magazine Issue #2!

I'm very proud to be able to share with you all some of the work of the spectacular bullpen of artists we got for this issue.

Usually in small-press publications you pretty much have to take what you get as there is often little (or in this case ZERO) budget for art. Sometimes you get lucky and find talented amateurs who are looking for a chance to break in to the field/industry. Really, many original RPGs are done by "artistic friends" and "friends of friends" who were willing to chip in. Often, fans chipped in too: folks who simply loved the material and contributed as a labor of love.

Sometimes...you hit the jackpot!

Top-shelf artists who are also fans of the material or the genre. Folks taking time from their busy work schedules...to do work...for the love of it. When there is heart in the material it really shows and I think you'll see a lot of that here.

Some names you'll recognize, some you won't. In getting a product out the door I place a high priority on professionalism. Get the job done with low drama and on time. I scored HUGE.

In no particular order:

**Chris Burdett**, Rockstar Illustrator. I'm...speechless.

**Leanne Buckley**, dear friend and mentor.

**Edward Kann**, multi-talented guy who is a staple around here.

**Matt Finch**, heck but he's my boss here so I have to use his stuff (jk, he's good...he just doesn't know it.)

**Pete Thiessen**, great new artist and absolutely dependable.

**Ken Seward** came a knocking to see if we wanted some art...Umm, how about *HELL* yeah!

**Peter Fitzpatrick**, I was talking about fans of the material...home-run!

**Michael Shorten** another rock-solid new artist.

**Liz Danforth**, yes...THE Liz Danforth, a very dear friend and WoW guildie.

**Chad Thorson**, pretty much the primary artist around "these parts".

**Steve "Bat"**, **Michael Cote** and others who jumped in at the last minute and saved our bacon...Thank You!

It is my sincere hope that you enjoy *Knockspell* Magazine Issue #2. My goal was to insure the very highest quality and to create the most visually stunning issue (and product for Mythmere Games) to date as well as raise the bar for future issues. Matt and the other creatives behind all this have slightly different "visions" of what Old-school or Retro-Clones should look like. Some art we agree is dead on target for the look we want, but often we disagree on others. The fun part (in my opinion) of a project like this is the collaboration. I think any one "vision" would become stale...fast. Working with people with different visions and coming together to make a single unified product that incorporates a little bit of everyone involved; therein lies the challenge. In the end, I think we kicked its ass.

I'd like to personally thank my team for their work in this. I am honored.

Cheers!

— Jeff Preston

Art Director, *Knockspell* Magazine Issue #2

## From Kuroth's Quill

by Allan T. Grohe Jr. (*grodog*)

"From Kuroth's Quill" is my regular *Knockspell* design column covering the elements of adventure design (and more-specifically dungeon design, given my interest in that topic). I will also wander through the design of spells and magic items; monsters, traps, tricks, and treasures; PC and NPC classes; planes and pantheons; and likely other topics as well. In the articles, I hope to provide practical examples that will be useful in campaign play, to show theory in action.

### Dungeon Strangitude: Variations on Dungeon Dressing and Setting the Tone

Dungeons are the antithesis of the "real" world in D&D — the world of plowing crops and brewing beer, where cattle and horses are valuable commodities. Once the PCs enter the dungeon, they walk willingly into the Unknown, into Otherness — into another world that is out to get them, and from which they may never return.

Dungeon dressing sets the tone for the dungeon overall, but also plays to variations within sections of levels and sub-levels, and helps each to define and retain its own unique flavor in play. Consider Dave Cook's **A1 Slave Pits of the Undercity**, with its reeking sewers level and the orcish water-dripping drum beats resonating as PCs slosh through foul waters, desperately trying to be quiet. Contrast that with Lawrence Schick's **A4 In the Dungeons of the Slave Lords**, where inbred kobolds and stranger creatures stalk the crumbling caverns, and players must be ingenious to create light, to find arms, and to escape before the earthquakes and burgeoning volcanic eruption claim their lives. Each differs strongly from the other, and these nuanced differences can be reinforced by a Dungeon Master who employs dungeon dressing to good effect.

Dungeon dressing breathes life into the empty rooms and hallways that occupy roughly 60% of any given dungeon level's space. Dungeon dressing punctuates the otherwise drab 10' x 10' x 10' cube with hints of something mundane or mysterious, of the magical, or the odd, or the out-of-place. Something that will, hopefully, pique the players' curiosity, whet their appetite, and fire their imagination with possibilities: will the old boots in the corner be mismatched and rat-gnawed, or contain gems in a



secret compartment in the sole; be riddled with rot grubs, or be *boots of elvenkind*?

Like the use of verticality in the dungeon environment in general, dungeon dressing should not always be placed at floor level: the aforementioned boots could be hanging from a peg on the wall or sit on a shelf 18' up, and dungeon graffiti may be scrawled on the ceiling or floor, as well as the walls, or even hang magically in mid-air (in which case, it may reveal a different message if read from the back instead of the front!). Driving vertical challenges to the players at the local level of a room or a wall or a hallway, in addition to the verticality of large-scale features, helps to ground players in the need for climbers, multiple lengths of 50' rope, 10' poles, iron spikes, pitons, hammers, and the quotidian utility of movement and exploration spells like *feather fall*, *jump*, *levitation*, *rope trick*, and *spider climb*.

Similarly, the style, frequency, and types of dungeon dressing should vary depending up on the tone that the level sets. Through taunting riddles, strange portals, the sheer busyness of its elaborate frescoes and bas-reliefs — and hideous death traps, of course — **S1 Tomb of Horrors** builds an overwhelming feeling of dread in PCs (and players, perhaps!), and of ancient, undisturbed secrets best left unsought. In **S1**, there is no surety — of return at all, of return via the same path trod entering, of exiting with any possessions at all, of being the same sex/race/alignment/class upon exit. Dungeons like **S1** change adventurers, one way or the other. In some cases, such changes are obvious (change of sex or race), others are more-subtle, but regardless none who enter the **Tomb of Horrors** and similar environs, who partake of its dark feasts and then return to tell their tales in taverns — none are the same, ever again. In **S4 Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth** the details of battling Drelnza within her opulent and spherical lair — and desperately trying to kill her without destroying the treasures she guards — stand in stark contrast to the odious and oppressive depths of Greater Caverns, and their myriad of strange portals and warped inhabitants. The siren call of such dungeons lure explorers into change from which they will only truly escape in death, and their dungeon dressing acts as the foci around which the mood of the dungeons condense in slow, rippling evil.

Some mysteries of dungeon dressing are not meant to be solved immediately, if ever — otherwise they're not mysteries, right? The whys, wherefores, and whens of who created a shelf 18' up the wall are best left unsolved for some time, especially if players grow paranoid about flying

creatures, giants, wall-crawlers, and such in the meanwhile! That admonition applies to both sides of the screen: DMs can and should seed hints that raise player curiosity, that can blossom into future encounters — or not — based on player activity in response, and leads that are not followed-up on are sometimes more interesting than ones that the players latch onto, as well.... When the players imbue minor elements of dungeon dressing with greater significance as a result of their attention, they are driving the game forward in the direction they desire, which makes the game easier to manage and run, bridges the gap between encounters, and makes D&D more fun for all of the participants.

In my campaign dungeons, encounter types typically span five “levels” of player engagement:

1. Nothing: literally nothing to see here — search for secret doors and move along; I try to insure that that a number of seemingly-empty rooms are, in fact, empty, to help dungeon dressing stand out further
2. Dungeon dressing: spot color to maintain the game's flow, provide distraction, and avoid player boredom
3. “Special” dungeon dressing: spot color with inspirational potential to build into a something of significance, and perhaps even a true encounter, depending upon the players' actions in response; special dungeon dressing also highlights the unique aspects of a level in the small, details that make **A1** differ from **A4** (I dislike the term “special” so if you think of a better adjective, please let me know!)
4. Encounters: the usual mix of monsters, treasures, traps, hazards, riddles, puzzles, tricks, enigmas, and other dungeon features that wreak havoc upon PCs
5. Centerpiece encounters: the unique and distinctive encounters that resonate with players across the years of a campaign, like the Black Reservoir and Great Stone Face of **Castle Greyhawk**, and the Unopenable Doors and Terrible Iron Golem of **Maure Castle**

Special dungeon dressing offers players spot color that contains an order-of-magnitude-more potential than standard dungeon dressing. *Dungeon strangitude* is when the dungeon background foregrounds, and intrudes into the PCs' reality — lacing it with mystery and madness, marvels and mayhem. Dungeon strangitude defines Zagig's whimsy and Halaster's cruelty — where the surreal and the anachronistic are living, breathing laws of the land.

When I use standard dungeon dressing, it's mostly scenery, with some interesting bits thrown in for variety. With *dungeon strangitude*, the monsters and environment often play dirty. For example, the PCs discover staked corpses set before the dungeon entrance, to warn away potential invaders (or deeper within, at a hallway eventually leading to the lair of an intelligent and puissant foe). The corpses span local PC and monstrous races: an elf, dwarf, and human, side-by-side with a kobold, bugbear, gnom, and ogre. Any creature who cares sufficiently about their own kind to remove the corpses from their stakes to provide a proper burial, may — in the minds of those issuing the warning — also be a credible threat. So they infested the corpses with rot grubs or yellow mold, covered them with contact poison, or turned them into buboed incubators for disease. The noble few who not only ignore the warning

but act against with compassion can hopefully be slain with little to no risk. That said, special dungeon dressing must not become a “Special” detector: for special dungeon dressing to be unique and interesting, dungeon dressing should usually remain mundane: most of the time, corpses are just dead bodies rather than trap-laden warnings. When special dungeon dressing appears too frequently and is overdone — as with any element in a dungeon's environment — it spoils the encounter, ruins the mood, and detracts from the tone of the entire level.

## Example of Dungeon Dressing: Doors

Consult this table when you want to insert some colorful doors into your dungeon; the table mixes together what I consider levels 2–4 of encounter types:

| d100         | Result                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>01-08</b> | Door is <i>wizard locked</i> at level (roll 2d6):<br>2      Dungeon level – 2d4 (minimum, level 3)<br>3-4      Dungeon level – 1d4 (minimum, level 3)<br>5-6      Dungeon level (minimum, level 3)<br>7-9      Dungeon level + 1d6 (minimum, level 3)<br>10-11      Dungeon level + 2d6<br>12      Dungeon level + 4d4                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>09</b>    | Door is <i>held</i> ( <i>hold portal</i> ; roll 1d10 on the table above for <i>wizard lock</i> to determine level of the caster, and wing the remaining duration; given the short duration on <i>hold portal</i> , the caster is either nearby, or likely already in flight...)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>10-11</b> | Door is <i>variable</i> (see “From Kuroth’s Quill” in <i>Knockspell</i> #1)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>12-15</b> | Door is <i>one-way</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>16-22</b> | Door is <i>locked</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>23-27</b> | Door is <i>barred</i> (roll 1d6: 1-3 singly, 4-5 doubly, 6 triply)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>28-30</b> | Door frame is present, but the door and its hinges and hinge pins have been removed<br>Door is <i>trapped</i> (DM to provide details)<br>Door is of <i>special construction</i> (roll 2d6):<br>2      Door is metal, air tight, and looks and functions like a submarine hatch<br>3-4      Door is a Dutch door (split in half horizontally; each half opens and locks independently)<br>5-6      Door is equipped with a covered aperture (which may or may not have a grille on the other side of the cover to prevent passage of objects through the aperture when open)<br>7-9      Door is equipped with a peep hole (that may be obvious or hidden, one-way or usable from either side)<br>10-11      Door is created from an interesting but non-valuable substance: steel bars, stone, blood, mercury, magma, moonlight, flesh, etc.<br>12      Door is a composite, whether a mosaic, jigsaw puzzle, or simply created from multiple substances, and may or may not be complete, and may open once complete (or when made incomplete) |
| <b>48-50</b> | Door only opens to (roll 2d6):<br>2      Creatures from its home plane (not the dungeon's plane)<br>3-4      Monsters only<br>5-6      Creatures of a particular class<br>7-9      Creatures of a particular alignment (could be an particular alignment like LE or a general ethos like “any Neutral”)<br>10-11      Creatures of a particular sex<br>12      Creatures of a minimum level or HD                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>51</b>    | Door is <i>intelligent</i> ; DM will have to create its personality and motivations, which will influence whether it allows PCs to pass, as well as whether and how it can defend itself                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |



| d100  | Result                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 52-53 | Roll 1d6: 1-3 Door is a <i>teleporter</i> , 4-5 Door is a <i>gate</i> , 6 Door is a <i>teleporter</i> or <i>gate</i> and functions only after 2-5 characters pass through the door                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 54-57 | Door is monstrous, or has a monster bound within it or nearby (roll 1d12): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Demon/devil/guardian daemon/deva or other outer-planar monster</li> <li>2-3 Undead (shadow, wraith, spectre, etc.; the infamous "Dread Portal" from Undermountain)</li> <li>5-6 Mimic (roll 1d6: 1-4: intelligent mimic, 5-6: killer mimic)</li> <li>7-9 Ear seekers have infested the door</li> <li>10-11 Yellow or brown mold has infested the door</li> <li>12 Door is a golem, and will animate to attack PCs</li> </ul>                                                                                                                         |
| 58    | Door is made from a precious metal, gemstone, or some other valuable substance, and is worth a fortune; it presumably cannot be removed for some reason, or else it would probably be gone already                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 59-63 | Door is written upon (roll 2d6): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 Nonsense verses (I recommend Lear or Carroll)</li> <li>3-4 Dungeon graffiti in a PC language</li> <li>5-6 A palimpsest of overlaying graffiti, much of which has been rendered illegible over time</li> <li>7-9 Dungeon graffiti in a monster language</li> <li>10-11 Door depicts some scene or map, whether drawn, painted, gouged, carved, etc.</li> <li>12 Magical writing (explosive runes, sepia snake sigil, confuse languages, symbol, glyph of warding, wizard mark, etc.), or other effects (<i>magic mouth</i>, <i>secret page</i>, <i>maze</i>, <i>sanctuary</i>, etc.)</li> </ul> |
| 64    | Door only opens upon the proper answer to a riddle, or when told a story or sung to, or when kissed by a virgin, or when fed, etc.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 65-72 | Door is concealed                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 73-82 | Door is a secret door                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 83-86 | Door is a false door (roll 1d6: 1-3 Door is false, 4-5 False door is trapped, 6 False door conceals a secret door)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 87    | Door can only be opened (or unlocked) from a remote location                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 88-92 | Door is scarred by (roll 2d6): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 Acid</li> <li>3-4 Scored by monstrous claws, hacked by axes, pitted, etc.</li> <li>5-9 Fire</li> <li>10-11 Water (water marked and swollen, rotten wood, etc.)</li> <li>12 Door has been <i>warped</i> (if wood) or <i>stone shaped</i> in some manner, to enable passage in (or out)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 93-94 | Door is features bas-relief or is sculpted to resemble some creature, scene, object, person, etc.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 95    | Door is <i>invisible</i> , <i>ethereal</i> , <i>out of phase</i> , a <i>shadow door</i> , or otherwise not-quite-there (and may be periodic, in the manner of <i>variable</i> features)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 96-97 | Door is open (roll 1d6: 1-4 Door works normally, 5-6 Door won't remain closed unless spiked)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 98-99 | Roll twice                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 100   | Roll three times                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

**Errata:** In *Knockspell*, Issue #1, "From Kuroth's Quill: One-Way Doors, Variable Stairs, and the Accessibility of Sub-Levels," I stated that;

On the Bottle City map, Rob used the now-standard false door symbol to represent one-way doors. This shared symbol appears in the sample dungeon map in *Underworld & Wilderness Adventures* on page 4, and denotes a false door on that map (a standard symbol for one-way doors doesn't appear until 1981's *Moldvay Basic* rulebook).

Combing through some modules, I had found additional information on one-way doors, but the layout for issue #1 had already been completed, so here is the correct version of paragraph two:

On the *Bottle City* map, Rob used the now-standard false door symbol to represent one-way doors. This shared symbol appears in the sample dungeon map in *Underworld & Wilderness Adventures* on page 4, and denotes a false door on that map. The now-standard false door symbol is also used as the one-way door symbol in the 1978 monochrome editions of *G3 Hall of the Fire Giant King* and *S1 Tomb of Horrors*, and the *S1* usage of the symbol is easy to confuse with a false door. The symbol for one-way doors standardizes in 1981's *Moldvay Basic* rulebook, also used for the 1981 green-cover edition of *S1*.

Enjoy! ■

## Next up: "More Strangitude: Magical Fallout and Detritus in the Dungeon"

*Allan is known online as grodog, where he publishes a website featuring Greyhawk D&D content, as well as his non-gaming writing (poetry, personal essays, and literary scholarship), and the usual fan ephemera. He lives in Wichita, Kansas, with his lovely wife Heather, their two boys Ethan and Henry, and their two cats Percy and Jasper (truenames Percy Beeblebrox and Trapdoor Jasper).*

# The Dungeon as Mythic Underworld

by Jason "Philotomy" Cone

There are many interpretations of "the dungeon" in traditional fantasy role playing. One of the oldest approaches (and my personal favorite approach), lends itself to a certain type of dungeon that is often called a "megadungeon" and that I usually refer to as "the underworld." There is a school of thought on dungeons that says they should have been built with a distinct purpose, should "make sense" as far as the inhabitants and their ecology, and shouldn't necessarily be the centerpiece of the game (after all, the Mines of Moria were just a place to get through). None of that need be true for a megadungeon underworld. There might be a reason the dungeon exists, but there might not; it might simply be. It certainly can, and perhaps should, be the centerpiece of the game. As for ecology, a megadungeon should have a certain amount of verisimilitude and internal consistency, but it is an underworld: a place where the normal laws of reality may not apply, and may be bent, warped, or broken. Not merely an underground site or a lair, not sane, the underworld gnaws on the physical world like some chaotic cancer. It is inimical to men; the dungeon, itself, opposes and obstructs the adventurers brave enough to explore it. For example, consider this approach to doors and to vision in the underworld:

*Generally, doors will not open by turning the handle or by a push. Doors must be forced open by strength...Most doors will automatically close, despite the difficulty in opening them. Doors will automatically open for monsters, unless they are held shut against them by characters. Doors can be wedged open by means of spikes, but there is a one-third chance (die 5-6) that the spike will slip and the door will shut...In the underworld some light source or an infravision spell must be used. Torches, lanterns, and magic swords will illuminate the way, but they also allow monsters to "see" the users so that monsters will never be surprised unless coming through a door. Also, torches can be blown out by a strong gust of wind. Monsters are assumed to have permanent infravision as long as they are not serving some character. (The Underworld & Wilderness Adventures, pg 9)*

*Special Ability functions are generally as indicated in Chainmail where not contradictory to the information stated hereinafter, and it is generally true that any monster or man can see in total darkness as far as the dungeons are concerned except player characters. (Monsters & Treasure, pg 5)*

Notice that all characters, including those which can see in normal darkness (e.g. elves, dwarves), require a light source in the underworld, while all denizens of the place possess infravision or the ability to see in total darkness. Even more telling, a monster that enters the service of a character loses this special vision. Similarly, characters must force their way through doors and have difficulty keeping them open; however, these same doors automatically open for monsters. This is a clear example of how the normal rules do not apply to the underworld, and how the underworld, itself, works against the characters exploring it.

Of course, none of this demands that every dungeon need be a mythic underworld; there could be natural caves and delved dungeon sites that are not in the "underworld" category, and follow more mundane physical and ecological laws. Nevertheless, the central dungeon of the campaign benefits from the strange other-worldliness that characterizes a mythic underworld.

A mythic underworld should not be confused with the concept of the "underdark." The underdark concept is that of an underground wilderness composed of miles of caves, tunnels, delved sites, and even whole underground



**cities.** This is a cool fantasy concept, but is distinct from the concept of a mythic underworld that obeys its own laws and is weird, otherworldly, and apart from the natural order of things. (There is no reason a referee couldn't join the two concepts of underworld and underdark, though.)

Some common characteristics and philosophies for a mythic underworld or megadungeon (keep these in mind when creating your dungeon):

- It's big, and has many levels; in fact, it may be endless
- It follows its own ecological and physical rules
- It is not static; the inhabitants and even the layout may grow or change over time
- It is not linear; there are many possible paths and interconnections
- There are many ways to move up and down through the levels
- Its purpose is mysterious or shrouded in legend
- It's inimical to those exploring it
- Deeper or farther levels are more dangerous
- It's a (the?) central feature of the campaign

If you embrace these concepts, you'll be playing according to some of the original assumptions of the game. And boy, is it fun.

## Creating Your Own Dungeon Underworld

So let's say you're all excited about the idea of running a mythic dungeon underworld. (I hope you are!) You sit down with some graph paper and pencils. You spend some time drawing a nice map of the first level, and start keying. Hours go by. Your wife asks when you're coming to bed. Suddenly the weight and enormity of the task descends on you, stopping you in your tracks. How can you finish? How can you get the whole thing done? How do you keep things fresh and interesting for the players going through it? How do you even begin to go about designing this thing?

I don't have a one-true-way, guaranteed method to offer, but I do have some advice that might help. Most of this is nothing I've dreamed up on my own, but rather bits of wisdom I've gathered from various sources. Gary Gygax's words in the original rule books are a primary source, but I also gleaned much from online sources, including the

ideas of gaming forum luminaries like T. Foster (Trent Foster), Evreaux, Melan (Gabor Lux), Wheggi, Stonegiant, grodog, and many others. This is also a very broad look at the subject, not delving down into the details of the task.

One thing to keep in mind is that you don't have to create the whole the right off the bat, before you start playing. In fact, attempting that is probably setting yourself up to fail. You can sketch out a "Skull-mountain"-style elevation or side-view of the dungeon, including some deeper levels, but you needn't draw and key the entire thing. Instead, start off with the first three levels, and start running it. You can certainly have a framework or general idea of what you'll be placing in the deeper areas, but you don't need to finish (or even map) those areas, yet. You'll develop the deeper levels (as well as continuing to develop and modify the upper levels) as the game continues.

This is a very cool, and very "old-school" approach. Your dungeon will evolve in a very organic manner. During play, the players are going to ask questions and take actions that make you think and give you ideas that never occurred to you. Actual play is going to shape the direction and design of your dungeon, often in unexpected fashion. You and the players will be in a sort of creativity feedback loop, and your dungeon will be all the better for it.

When creating your first three (or so) levels, there are a few general concepts that you should keep in mind. First, remember to offer the players plenty of choices. Even at the entrance to the place, don't give them one path to follow, give them four or five choices to make, right off the bat. For that matter, there needn't be only a single entrance. Have several ways in, with a few of the entrances going directly to deeper areas. Maybe new entrances open up or are discovered as play continues. Another important way to give players choices is to offer them many opportunities to move up and down through the levels. You want the players to decide when they want to go deeper. This isn't a video game where you play through the level to the end with the boss monster, then find the stairs. If they're a group of 1st level PCs, but they want to try their luck and skill on the 4th level of the dungeon, that's their decision.

Also, remember that stairs needn't go up or down a single level, and that's it. Give the players ways to go down multiple levels. Some paths up or down may skip one or more levels. You may be leery of including a stair, shaft, or elevator that spans multiple levels, fearing that your players will go down into undeveloped areas of the dungeon. That's



true; they might. However, it's more likely that they will be fearful of going too deep, and even if they do descend to a level you haven't developed, they'll be very jumpy and very likely to stick close to their line of retreat. You can wing a hall or a room, or even an encounter from the appropriate wandering monster table. Usually a group dipping down below their comfort-zone will retreat after a quick look around and a maybe a scare (even hearing a threatening sound can be enough to send them scurrying back to safer ground). Once you know that the PCs are dipping down into those areas, you'll also have the motivation to work on and develop them. There's no goad like regular play to break dungeon-writers' block.

When drawing your maps, include multiple paths and choices, but also keep in mind that you want your players to be able to embark in meaningful exploration. You want them to be able to use their minds and their skill to make real discoveries. Include some dead ends, and leave some space on the map where you might later add stairs, shafts, and secret areas, as your dungeon continues to develop through play. Other desirable features include things like long, twisty passages, where they can't see the end. These will play on their fear (i.e. the unknown), and offer opportunities for interesting pursuit and evasion. A similar desirable feature are "pinch points" on the map. These are locations where access to a larger area or section is controlled by one or two points. Knowledge of and control of these pinch points can be an important factor if the PCs are being pursued and need a place to mount a defence.

Related to pinch points is the concept of a sublevel. A dungeon sublevel is an area that is isolated from the main level, usually by some sort of secret pinch point. In many old-school dungeons, sublevels are a kind of reward in and of themselves. They tend to be smaller than full levels, and are often themed, although neither of these is a rule that cannot be broken. Sublevels often contain fantastic elements and large treasures, but they can also be more dangerous than normal. One of the great things about sublevels is that they can easily be added to an existing dungeon layout. This is a good way to incorporate third-party modules into your dungeon, as well.

A large consideration when drawing your maps is how to lay them out. One common choice is graph paper with 6 squares per inch, but that varies by taste, and by the size of the level. I've also seen dungeon maps (especially cavern maps) drawn on hex-paper (e.g. *Isle of the Ape* uses this approach). However, there is something to be said for

eschewing graph paper, entirely, and drawing your maps on plain white paper. This frees you from the constraints of the grid, and you might be surprised to find that your mapping takes on an entirely fresh character, with levels stretching out or sprawling in a much more organic and natural manner. Varying your approach from level to level is another good technique for keeping things fresh. One level might be very maze and grid-like, with relatively thin walls and not much rock, stone or earth between areas. Another might use large chambers, widely spaced, with curving tunnels through thick areas of stone. Trying different approaches to the act of mapping will naturally result in different styles of map, in many cases.

How big to make your levels is another question that will come up almost immediately. There is no one correct answer, but the considerations I've already listed will have an impact. Another important consideration is the "density" of your dungeon, defined by the distribution of monsters. The traditional approach is to create a dungeon with about a third of encounter areas (e.g. rooms) containing monsters. That may seem to be a very "empty" dungeon. However, that empty space serves multiple purposes. It acts as a buffer between dangerous areas. It presents a measure of uncertainty to the players, and they need to balance their desire to search everything and everywhere with the danger of wandering monsters. It offers the benefit of repeat play, since they are unlikely to be able to explore everything on a level before continuing to the next. It offers room to run, allowing for meaningful evasion and pursuit, where the PCs can use the space and multiple paths along with techniques like hold portal and dropping food or treasure in order to extricate themselves from situations beyond their capabilities. It also offers the referee the ability to naturally re-stock, change, and add features (a secret stair to the newly completed sixth level could be penciled into the dusty and unvisited area of the first level, for example).

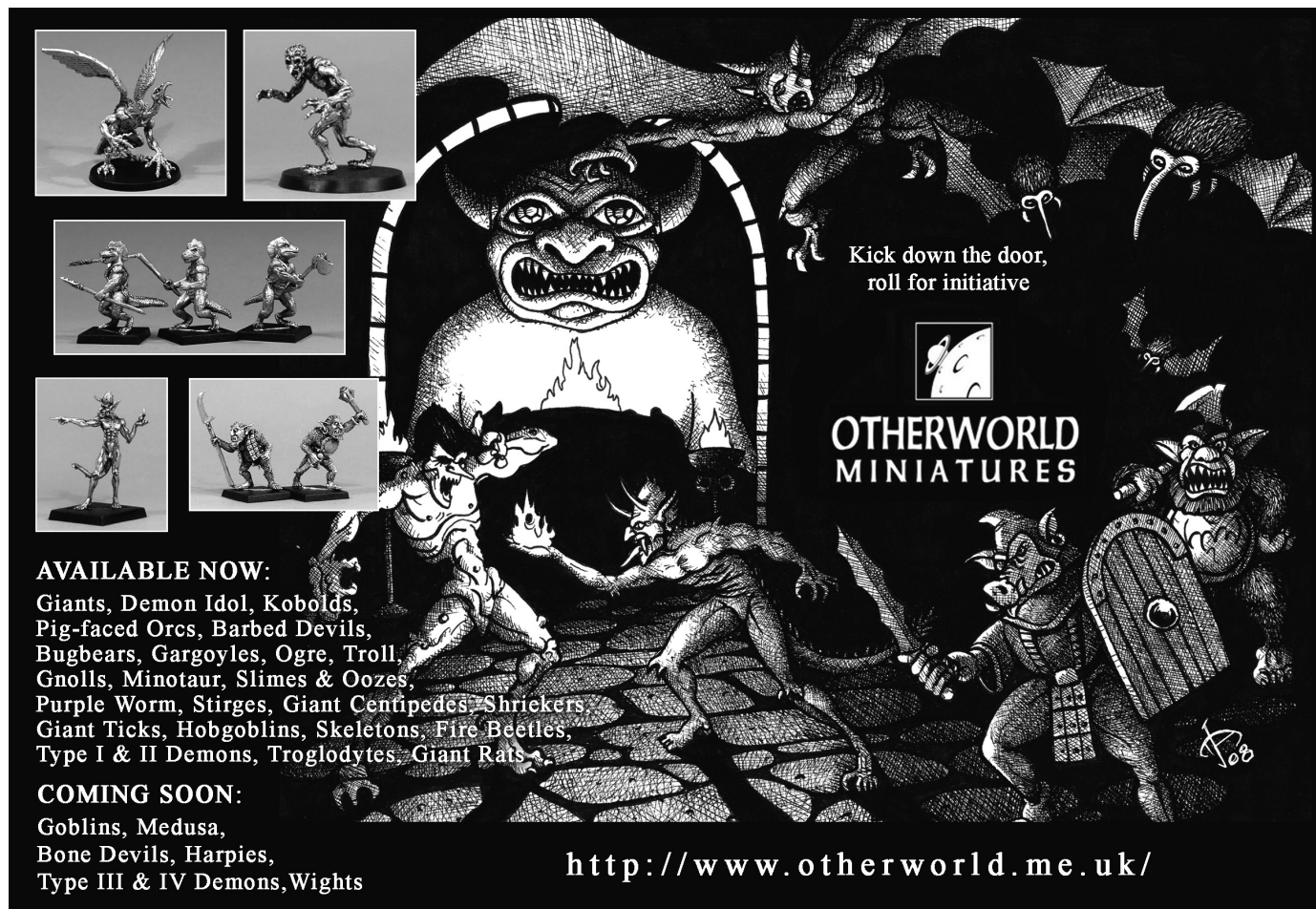
The question which naturally follows the distribution of monsters is the distribution of treasure. The traditional guideline is that half of the encounter areas with monsters will have treasure. Additionally, one-sixth of the "empty" encounter areas will have treasure, although such unguarded treasure will, no doubt, be craftily hidden and perhaps long-forgotten or guarded by ancient traps or magic. Treasure guarded by monsters may or may not be hidden or trapped. If it includes magic items, those will often be carried or used by the creatures, of course.

A very important consideration, and one that impacts the size of the levels, is just how much treasure should be placed. In the vast majority of traditional games, treasure is the main goal (i.e. the PCs are seeking fortune and glory), and will provide the bulk of the XP. A typical old-school campaign might have 80% of the XP coming from treasure, and the remaining 20% coming from defeating monsters. So the amount of treasure you stock your dungeon with will impact how many experience points the PCs earn. You need to provide enough XP to allow them to progress.

For the first level, especially, keep in mind that it's likely that the PCs will "lose" XP through attrition. That is, PCs will loot treasure (and thus XP) from the dungeon, but then die in a later encounter. They'll also overlook some treasure, simply not finding it. They may acquire XP from unexpected sources or side-adventures outside the dungeon, as well, and they may also acquire XP from dipping down into the lower levels, so judging the "correct" amount of treasure (i.e. XP) to place is more of a loose art than a science.

I suggest taking the average XP required to advance for a party of around 5 PCs and using that as a guideline for the amount of treasure you should place. For example, if a first level party needs around 10,000 XP for everyone to advance to second level, you need at least 8,000 XP worth of treasure (i.e. 80% of the 10,000, with the balance coming from monsters). However, taking attrition and missed treasure into consideration, you probably need to at least double that amount. There are several approaches you can take, given this guideline. You can use the treasure tables from the rule books or from various collections of monster and treasure assortments to assist with the process. The exact distribution will vary, of course. If you have a first level of 100 rooms or encounter areas, you might end up with something like this:

- 20 areas with monsters and treasure
- 15 areas with monsters (no treasure)
- 15 areas with treasure (no monster)
- 50 areas without monsters or treasure



**AVAILABLE NOW:**  
 Giants, Demon Idol, Kobolds,  
 Pig-faced Orcs, Barbed Devils,  
 Bugbears, Gargoyles, Ogre, Troll,  
 Gnolls, Minotaur, Slimes & Oozes,  
 Purple Worm, Stirges, Giant Centipedes, Shriekers,  
 Giant Ticks, Hobgoblins, Skeletons, Fire Beetles,  
 Type I & II Demons, Troglydites, Giant Rats.

**COMING SOON:**  
 Goblins, Medusa,  
 Bone Devils, Harpies,  
 Type III & IV Demons, Wights

Kick down the door,  
 roll for initiative

**OTHERWORLD  
 MINIATURES**

<http://www.otherworld.me.uk/>

That would mean 35 treasures, varying in value from hoard-to-hoard, and with the more valuable caches well-hidden and possibly defended by tougher monsters or more dangerous traps. These would be the major encounter areas that most PCs will be seeking.

With some idea of the required treasure out of the way, attention must turn to the monsters that will be placed on the level. As with treasure, the rule book tables and additional monster and treasure assortments that are organized by level provide an extremely valuable tool for the referee. I don't suggest simply rolling everything randomly, but rather using the tables as a springboard for your creativity. Also, examination of the traditional table will show that not all monsters on the first level of the dungeon are "first level" monsters. (Part of skillful old-school play being the ability to evaluate an encounter and know when to run.) The tables indicate a chance for more powerful and dangerous encounters, as well. The referee should choose a handful of monsters he wants to use, or a theme, and then perhaps use random rolls to "fill in" the gaps. When using random rolls, don't be afraid to discard results that don't work. However, one of the benefits of random rolls is their utility as a spur to your creativity. If you get a result that

seems odd, don't immediately reject it; instead, give it some thought to see if you can imagine a way that such-and-such combination or situation would make some sense. You might be surprised to that this results in cool ideas and encounters that you might not have considered, otherwise. Lastly, don't feel bound by the monsters on the tables. The tables provide a useful measure for an "appropriate" encounter difficulty for a given level, but you can certainly swap-out monsters of similar difficulty and number. Another useful technique is "re-skinning" well known monsters, giving them a different appearance while using the same stats as the original.

In addition to the difficulty of the monsters, the referee should consider how forgiving to make their exact placement. For example, on the first level, it's likely that any given fight may seriously deplete a party of adventurers. Therefore, encounters on the first level of the dungeon might be fairly widely spaced, with small enclaves of monsters, rather than large lairs of closely-placed and coordinated groups. The larger and more coordinated groups are more properly placed on the lower levels. That's not to say that you can't have a well-coordinated lair on the first level, but if all the encounter areas on the level are well-coordinated and closely placed, it will be extremely difficult for a first level party.

When choosing monsters to populate a level, do not overlook the opportunity to introduce opposed factions, tension, and NPCs that might offer the chance for smart play, dialogue, and "politics" within the dungeon. A common criticism of dungeon-based play is that it lacks the sophistication and opportunities for interesting interaction and role-play that are present in cities and such. This doesn't have to be the case. There's no reason a dungeon, even a mythic underworld that operates according to its own rules, must be a random, non-sensical place of simplistic and one-dimensional play. The dungeon can be filled with just as much intrigue and opportunity for dialogue as the King's court; it's up to the players (and the referee, of course), to take advantages of those opportunities.

When considering the second, and deeper, levels, the referee can follow a similar approach for determining the number of monsters and the total value of the treasure. However, keep in mind that you will have less PC attrition as the characters increase in hit points and power, so you won't need to double the treasure, like you might on the upper levels. The first few levels will probably be fairly large, but



**fight on!**

[www.fightonmagazine.com](http://www.fightonmagazine.com)

Experience the Old-School revival and order your copy of the new fanzine for imaginative gamers, **Fight On!** Featuring full adventures, new monsters, classes, magic and more!

Issues **1 - 4** available for purchase!



deeper levels can often be smaller and less sprawling, although this is not a hard-and-fast rule.

I mentioned wandering monsters, earlier, in passing. In an old-school dungeon, the purpose of wandering monsters is to provide a challenge that helps encourage good play. Wandering monsters present a danger that drains resources (e.g. hit points, spells, magic items) from a party for very little or no reward (i.e. treasure). Since monsters are not worth much XP, compared to treasure, wandering monsters are something to be avoided. Smart players will try to avoid, evade, distract, or otherwise bypass wandering monsters. They don't want to spend their resources on wandering monsters, but rather on areas and encounters that will provide a larger reward. They will try to stay focused and avoid wasting time in the dungeon, since wandering monsters encountered are a function of time.

Wandering monsters are typically rolled from a table, by level. Often, the table will include a chance of a roll on a deeper-level's table, as well. I typically include the following elements in my wandering monster tables:

- Strange or unexplained noises, smells, or events
- Encounters with monsters from keyed areas on the level. Killing these monsters reduces the total number of monsters from that area.
- Encounters with truly wandering monsters that are not from keyed areas. Killing these monsters does not reduce the total from keyed areas.
- A chance for a roll on a harder table.

I also like to set up my wandering monster tables with a bell-shaped probability curve, so that I can divide them into results that are common, uncommon, rare, and very rare.

This brief treatment of old-school dungeon creation barely scratches the surface. I have not mentioned anything about tricks, barely touched on traps, environmental hazards, puzzles, teleporters, light and darkness, air, water, fungus, factions, red herrings, sublevels, and a myriad of similar topics. However, I'm hopeful that these thoughts might assist a referee contemplating the task of megadungeon creation, and help him on his way. For more advice and details, I highly recommend checking out the various old-school forums, which hold a great wealth of wisdom and experience on creating and running interesting and fun dungeons. ■

# Imagining the Hell Out of Thieves

Most of us take the existence of a thief class for granted, together with whatever subtle effects it may have on how the game functions for non-thief characters. Re-imagining the concept of the thief archetype and how it operates is a fascinating exploration of one of the game's fundamental concepts. Obviously, there's not a right or a wrong answer about how (or whether) to use thieves – it depends on each individual referee and gaming group. But this series of articles is a really good example of what I mean when I talk about taking the game's basic framework and then imagining the hell out of it. James's article sets up the "questions," and then we have a series of alternate/variant thief classes, each of which uses the basic archetype in different ways.

## The Dashing Scoundrel



# The Trouble with Thieves

by James Maliszewski

In the beginning, there were but three character classes: the fighting-man, the magic-user, and the cleric. This trio of archetypes sufficed, forming the foundations, both thematic and mechanical, on which the Golden Age of the fantasy roleplaying hobby was built. Into this paradise, a roguish serpent slithered, a new character class, stealing its way into the hearts and minds of many, and precipitating the Fall ...

Or maybe not, but there's no question that the thief, first introduced in Supplement I in 1975, exposes a faultline within the contemporary old-school community. For most gamers, the thief is part of the Holy Tetralogy, one of the four pillars of Gygaxo-Arnesonian fantasy. How could anyone take exception to its introduction, particularly given that it was added to the game just a little over a year after its initial publication? Isn't the debate over the merits of the thief class just another example of how stodgy and narrow-minded the hardest of the hard core amongst us can be?

Speaking as someone who's on record as disliking the thief class, I may be biased in answering these questions, but I don't feel that the animus against it is irrational. Indeed, I think there are a number of valid arguments against the inclusion of the thief, as I'll discuss shortly. More to the point, even if one does not agree that the introduction of the thief represents a misstep in the game's early development, that doesn't mean there aren't nuggets of insight to be gleaned from the debate on the merits of the class.

## An "Interloper" Class

Perhaps the least complicated argument against the thief is that it didn't appear in the original three volumes of the game in 1974. For some gamers, that alone is enough reason to avoid the thief. They feel that a game without the thief is "truer" to the spirit of the White Box, in which every character, regardless of class, could and would attempt actions later associated with the new class. Unless one is a diehard historical preservationist, this argument alone probably doesn't command much attention. That's not to say it's specious, but, even within the old-school community, very few people see temporal precedence as an arbiter of worth. Likewise, there can be no denying the fact that the thief class came to be very soon in the history of the game and under the imprimatur of one of its creators. If people closely associated with the game didn't see it as an aberration at the time, why ought we to think so now?

## Everyone's a Thief

Another argument against the thief tackles it from a thematic perspective. The early hobby was heavily influenced by pulp fantasy literature of writers like Robert E. Howard, Fritz Leiber, and Jack Vance, among others. In those stories, the protagonists were often thieves by avocation, stealing and looting in pursuit of wealth, but none of them were professional criminals. This reality is reflected in the game, since all characters — fighters, magic-users, and clerics — are *de facto* thieves, raiding dungeons for treasure, an activity more highly rewarded in the rules than slaying monsters. Given that, what archetype does the thief represent? Is the mere act of theft sufficient basis for the creation of a new character class, especially when one considers how most other characters are played?

## We Don't Need No Stinkin' Skills

As originally written, any class could find and remove traps, move stealthily, hide in shadows, and scale walls. There were few explicit rules for undertaking these actions, but then there were few explicit rules for undertaking most actions. Referees adjudicated the likely success or failure of such actions on a largely *ad hoc* basis, taking into account various external factors and the cleverness of the player in describing what his or her character does. All that changed once the thief class was introduced, because the game now had explicit rules for determining the chance of success at many actions previously left solely to the discretion of the referee. Certainly a referee could say that those rules only applied to characters of that class, but many players would balk at this, seeing it for the inconsistency that it is. Furthermore, why would a player rely on the judgments of the referee anymore when he could instead have recourse to the rules to determine his fate?

## A Self-Justifying Class

Once the thief is introduced, two things begin to happen. First, activities that previously any character could undertake, such as moving quietly or hiding, now come to be seen as the exclusive purview of the thief class. Gone are all the fighters who doff their plate mail in an attempt sneak up on a prison guard or the magic-users who use iron spikes to try and climb to the top of a forbidden tower. Second, the referee begins to feel obligated to include obstacles and traps in adventures, "so the thief will have something to do" rather than because the adventures require

their inclusion. Why include a class that so drastically changes the way the game had previously been played?

None of the above arguments is conclusive in itself. There are many counter-arguments one could make to each, some of them quite cogent. There's also the fact that, for good or for ill, the thief has been embraced quite widely as foundational to the game, even if that's not strictly true from a purely historical perspective. Removing the class would, in the eyes of many, be every bit as big a change to the way they conceive of and play the game as was its original inclusion over thirty years ago.

Until recently, I never questioned the nature of the thief or even considered that possibility that its inclusion into the game had had deleterious effects on its subsequent development, let alone its play. Once exposed to these arguments in various forms, I heard a lot that made sense to me, at least in the abstract. That is, I think many of the arguments against the thief are at their most cogent as philosophical statements. That probably sounds more like a back-handed compliment than I intend it to be. I think it's vitally important to talk about one's philosophy of roleplaying, particularly how one sees the relationship between player and referee and between mechanics and adjudication.

Many (though not all) of the arguments against the thief are not so much arguments against the thief as such but against a particular philosophy of roleplaying that grew up in the wake of the introduction of the class: the recourse to explicit rules rather than extemporaneous rulings to determine success or failure and the treatment of the character as more distinct from its player than was originally the case. It's these that I found most useful to me as I grappled with my thoughts and feelings about the thief.

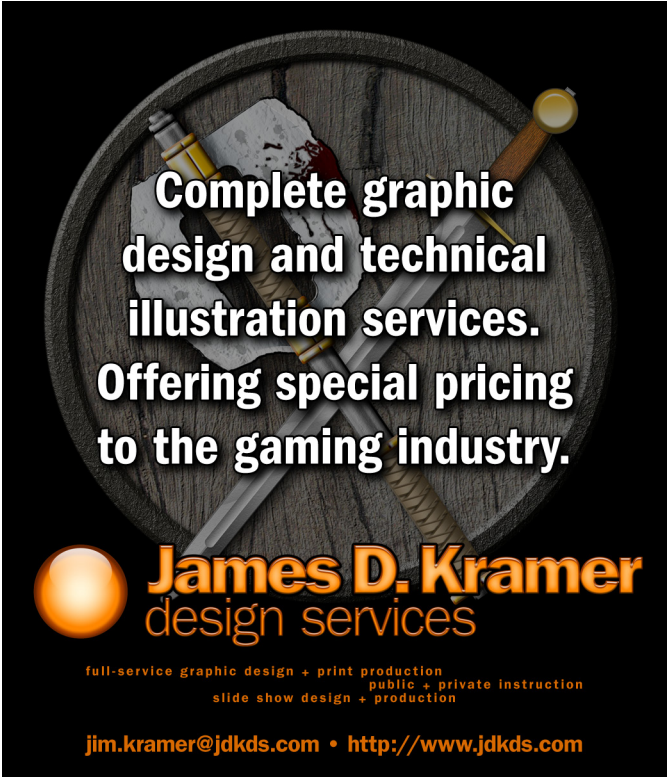
Of course, when dealing with a game, philosophy without action serves little purpose, except perhaps to highlight the decadence of one's entertainment. "Action" in this case is synonymous with play. What I have discovered is that the thief class is, like almost every aspect of the game, approached differently by different players and referees. Some do find that their presence creates unwelcome dynamics, while others find that their presence enriches their games immeasurably. There is thus no single, guaranteed outcome that the thief engenders, even if some of those outcomes are ones I think do violence to the style of game I prefer.

Consequently, I've come to soften my original stance against thieves. I'm still of two minds regarding their necessity. I've run a campaign for some time now without thieves and

haven't felt a need to include them. At the same time, knowing the pitfalls of the class as I now do, I also feel that I can sidestep most of them, enabling the thief class to play a role similar to the one most players expect of it. That's why I took a stab (no pun intended) at my own version of the thief class for *Swords & Wizardry*. Not everyone will agree with my interpretation nor will they agree with the assertion behind it, that the thief need not be as problematic as it appears when approached primarily from a philosophical perspective, which is how it should be. Rather than seeing the ongoing debate about the thief as a sign of the close-mindedness of the old-school revival, I see it as a sign of its strength. Far from being a monolithic group-mind whose every thought was trapped in amber in 1974, old schoolers show the same diversity as other gamers and our debates — and, yes, arguments — are a testament to the vitality of our corner of the hobby. Speaking for myself, I'd like to see *more* not less debates of this sort. The more we engage our passions for this hobby and channel those passions into playing and creating, the better off we all will be. ■

*Born in the Netherlands, and growing up in Baltimore, James attended university in Annapolis, Washington, D.C., and Toronto. Originally he believed his calling was to teach the world the wonders of medieval and early modern philosophy, but soon realized he could just as readily be ignored by pontificating about the history of roleplaying games — and have more fun in the process.*

*He currently lives in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, with his wife, two children, and a disturbingly large collection of gaming products. He spends much of his free time working on various gaming projects, particularly his blog, Groggnardia (<http://groggnardia.blogspot.com>).*



**Complete graphic  
design and technical  
illustration services.**  
**Offering special pricing  
to the gaming industry.**

**James D. Kramer**  
design services

full-service graphic design + print production  
public + private instruction  
slide show design + production

[jim.kramer@jdkds.com](mailto:jim.kramer@jdkds.com) • <http://www.jdkds.com>



## Alternate/Variant Thief Classes: Swords & Wizardry WhiteBox (0e White Box)

These thieves are designed for use as a “new” class in games that use pre-supplement 1 0e. Of course, there’s nothing to keep you from using these methods in a later-style game like the Swords & Wizardry Core Rules, or even 1e/OSRIC!

Rob’s interpretation of a thief for use with the Swords & Wizardry WhiteBox rules, or with no-supplement 0e, is quite different from the other thief variants in this issue. This thief is a Mouser-type rogue, a fighting-man with tomb-robbing skills. The class is less dangerous in combat than a fighting-man, but only slightly. I thought Rob’s interpretation of the thief’s “skills” as basically similar to the underground abilities of a dwarf was quite innovative, as was giving the class a bonus on treasure-experience rather than giving it a bonus based on a prime attribute.

### The Lock-smith



## Whitebox Thief (1): The Treasure Seeker

by Rob Ragas

The thief is the quintessential treasure seeker. Often self-serving, and invariably chaotic, this character prefers the sideways approach to wealth acquisition. While stealth and a good plan (when possible) are the thief’s favored weapons, it would be ill-advised to discount this hugger-mugger as a lesser-skilled combatant. Only a man-at-arms is likely to survive, let alone escape unscathed, a tussle with a rogue. Thieves are often proven swordsmen, rivaling even the best of fighting men. Only their preference for light armor endangers their chance for victory against more heavily armored foes.

### Thief Advancement

| Level | XP      | HD  | BHB | Saving Throw | Surprise Attack     |
|-------|---------|-----|-----|--------------|---------------------|
| 1     | 0       | 1   | +0  | 13           | Max Wpn Dmg         |
| 2     | 2,250   | 2   | +1  | 12           | Max Wpn Dmg + 1     |
| 3     | 4,500   | 2+1 | +2  | 11           | Max Wpn Dmg + 2     |
| 4     | 9,000   | 3   | +2  | 10           | Max Wpn Dmg + 3     |
| 5     | 18,000  | 3+1 | +3  | 9            | Max Wpn Dmg + 4     |
| 6     | 36,000  | 4   | +4  | 8            | Max Wpn Dmg + 5     |
| 7     | 72,000  | 5   | +4  | 7            | 2x(Max Wpn Dmg)     |
| 8     | 144,000 | 5+1 | +5  | 6            | 2x(Max Wpn Dmg) + 1 |
| 9     | 288,000 | 6   | +6  | 5            | 2x(Max Wpn Dmg) + 2 |
| 10    | 576,000 | 6+1 | +6  | 4            | 2x(Max Wpn Dmg) + 3 |

### Thief Class Abilities

**Racial Restrictions:** Only humans can be thieves.

**Weapons/Armor Restrictions:** Thieves may use any one-handed weapon, and they are limited to armor weighing no more than leather.

**XP Modifications:** Although the thief receives no bonus for an exceptional attribute, the class does receive a 10% bonus on all experience gained from treasure.

**Keen Detection:** A thief notes slanting passages, traps, shifting walls, and new construction, and is good at spotting hidden and concealed doors. Thieves are all also keen listeners, whether it’s overhearing

conversations in a tavern or through a door in a quiet dungeon.

**Deadly Accuracy with Missiles:** Thief characters gain a +2 bonus when firing missile weapons.

**Picking Locks:** Two d6 are rolled: the first die indicates the number of turns taken for the attempt, and the second roll indicates success or failure. The pick locks attempt succeeds on a 1 or 2 on 1d6. One turn per two levels of experience may be subtracted from the required time. Zero and negative results indicate success in a single round. Consecutive attempts are allowed until success is achieved.

**Moving Silently:** When using proper precautions and dressed appropriately, thieves move *nearly* noiselessly, at a movement rate of 1 per level.

**Surprise Attack:** Thieves do exceptional damage (as indicated on the Thief Advancement Table) on the first, and only

the first, attack on a surprised foe. When being exceptionally stealthy, thieves will surprise targets on a 1 or 2 on 1d6. This roll may be modified by -1 for every three levels beyond first (4th, 7th, etc). The chance to surprise is never better than 1-5 on 1d6. Depending on circumstances, the referee may, of course, apply modifiers to the die roll. Thieves have the same chance not to be surprised as they have to surprise others.

**Climbing:** Thieves may climb normally inaccessible vertical surfaces at the rate of 10ft for every two levels per round. Depending on circumstances, the referee may require die rolls, which or may not be modified by the use of climbing equipment. ■

*Rob lives in southeast Louisiana where he's been playing chit & hex wargames for 38 years and roleplaying games for 29.*

## Whitebox Thief (2): The “Standard” Thief

by Salvatore Macri

One of the options for adding thieves into a WhiteBox game is simply to add the standard Supplement I thief into the game. This is one interpretation of the “standard” thief. The class has more defined skills than Rob Ragas’ treasure-seeker thief, but doesn’t have the general protection of the better saving throw or the missile weapon bonus. This thief also gains combat bonuses based on tactical position rather than on surprise.

### WhiteBox Thief Class Abilities

**Weapon/Armor Restrictions:** Thieves may use any weapons, including magic swords and daggers, and may wear leather armor.

**Thief Abilities:** Starting at first level thieves possess a host of very specific abilities. These abilities include proficiency at opening locks and disarming traps, picking pockets, moving without a sound, and using shadows to conceal themselves. They also possess a greater facility at detecting sounds and noises from beyond closed doors.

To successfully use these abilities the player must generate a number (on a d20) which falls within the range displayed on Table 2: Thief Abilities table (see below).

**Backstab:** A thief attacking from behind gains a +4 bonus to his attacks and inflicts double damage. At levels 5-8 the damage is increased to x3, at levels 9+ the increase is x4.

**Climb Sheer Surfaces:** Thieves may climb incredibly sheer surfaces. As hardy adventurers, anyone may attempt to climb vertical surfaces but only the thief may ascend impossibly difficult surfaces or attempt unthinkable climbs. The thief starts out with a chance of 1-17 on d20 to climb sheer surfaces. This chance increases by +1 for every 5 levels.

**Read Languages (3rd):** At 3rd level a thief may read most languages (1-16 on d20).

**Use Scrolls (10th):** Upon reaching 10th level thieves are able to use arcane scrolls. Spells above 6th level carry a 2 in 20 chance (1-2 on d20) of being miscast resulting in the scroll’s reverse effect affecting the thief as opposed to the intended target.

**Saving Throw:** Thieves gain a +2 bonus on saving throws vs. death and poison.

**XP Bonus for Dexterity:** This class bonus is due to a high dexterity attribute. ■

Table 1: Thief Advancement

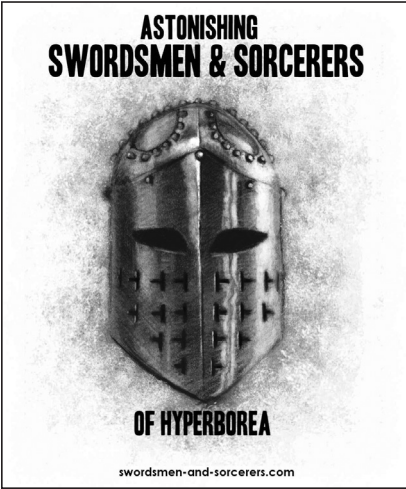
| Level | XP      | HD  | BHB | ST |
|-------|---------|-----|-----|----|
| 1     | 0       | 1   | +0  | 14 |
| 2     | 1,200   | 1+1 | +0  | 13 |
| 3     | 2,400   | 2   | +0  | 12 |
| 4     | 4,800   | 2+1 | +1  | 11 |
| 5     | 9,600   | 3   | +1  | 10 |
| 6     | 20,000  | 3+1 | +2  | 9  |
| 7     | 40,000  | 4   | +2  | 8  |
| 8     | 60,000  | 4+1 | +3  | 7  |
| 9     | 90,000  | 5   | +4  | 6  |
| 10    | 125,000 | 5+1 | +5  | 5  |

Table 2: Thief Abilities

| Level | Open Locks<br>(d20) | Remove Traps<br>(d20) | Pick Pocket & Move<br>Silently (d20) | Hide in Shadows (d20) | Hear Noises*<br>(d20) |
|-------|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1     | 1-3                 | 1-2                   | 1-4                                  | 1-2                   | 1-7                   |
| 2     | 1-4                 | 1-3                   | 1-5                                  | 1-3                   | 1-7                   |
| 3     | 1-5                 | 1-4                   | 1-6                                  | 1-4                   | 1-10                  |
| 4     | 1-7                 | 1-6                   | 1-7                                  | 1-5                   | 1-10                  |
| 5     | 1-8                 | 1-7                   | 1-9                                  | 1-7                   | 1-10                  |
| 6     | 1-9                 | 1-8                   | 1-11                                 | 1-9                   | 1-10                  |
| 7     | 1-11                | 1-10                  | 1-12                                 | 1-10                  | 1-13                  |
| 8     | 1-13                | 1-12                  | 1-13                                 | 1-11                  | 1-13                  |
| 9     | 1-15                | 1-14                  | 1-15                                 | 1-13                  | 1-13                  |
| 10    | 1-17                | 1-16                  | 1-17                                 | 1-15                  | 1-13                  |

\*GMs may allow other characters a 1-3 chance on a d20 to successfully Hear Noises.

Referees may allow characters with above average DEX scores (15 to 18) to add their bonus from dexterity to the success range given on Table 2. Example: A 1st level thief with a dexterity score of 17 (+1 bonus) would have a 4 in 20 chance of opening a lock as opposed to the standard 3 in 20.



# Core Rules Thief (1): The Skillful Shadow

by Salvatore Macri

The thief is a specialized class adept at subterfuge and pilfering. With skills born from a lifetime of stealing, thieves make an uncomfortable addition to an adventuring group. Morally, if using a Law-Neutrality-Chaos alignment system, thieves are, at best, Neutral. The thief’s low hit points make direct combat dangerous for this class, so most thieves prefer to rely on subterfuge and judicious use of backstabbing to prevail in battle. A thief attacks using the cleric’s Attack Chart. Thieves may use any weapons, including magic swords and daggers, and may don leather armor.

## The Thief

|                               |                                                                                |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hit Die Type                  | 1d6-1<br>After reaching 9 hit dice, the thief gains only 1 hit point per level |
| Armor/Shield Permitted        | Leather                                                                        |
| Weapons Permitted             | Any + magic swords and daggers.                                                |
| Prime Attribute (5% xp bonus) | Dexterity 13+                                                                  |

### The Knife in the Dark





## Thief Class abilities

**Thief Abilities:** Starting at first level thieves possess a host of very specific abilities. These abilities include proficiency at opening locks and disarming traps, picking pockets, moving without a sound, and using shadows to conceal themselves. They also possess a greater facility at detecting sounds and noises from beyond closed doors.

To successfully use these abilities the player must generate a number (on a d20) which falls within the range displayed in the Thief Abilities table (see below).

**Backstab:** A thief attacking from behind gains a +4 bonus to his and inflicts double damage. At levels 5-8 the damage is increased to x3, at levels 9-12 the increase is x4, and so on every 4 levels.

**Climb Sheer Surfaces:** Thieves may climb incredibly sheer surfaces. As hardy adventurers, anyone may attempt to climb vertical surfaces but only the thief may ascend impossibly difficult surfaces or attempt unthinkable climbs. The thief starts out with a chance of 1-17 on d20 to climb sheer surfaces. This chance increases by +1 for every 5 levels.

**Read Languages (3rd):** At 3rd level a thief may read most languages (1-16 on d20).

**Use Scrolls (10th):** Upon reaching 10th level thieves are able to use arcane scrolls. Spells above 6th level carry a 2 in 20 chance (1-2 on d20) of being miscast resulting in the scroll's reverse effect affecting the thief as opposed to the intended target.

## Thief Advancement Table

| Level | Experience Points Required | Hit Dice (d6-1) | Saving Throw |
|-------|----------------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 1     | 0                          | 1               | 14           |
| 2     | 1,500                      | 2               | 13           |
| 3     | 3,500                      | 3               | 12           |
| 4     | 6,500                      | 4               | 11           |
| 5     | 14,000                     | 5               | 10           |
| 6     | 30,000                     | 6               | 9            |
| 7     | 60,000                     | 7               | 8            |
| 8     | 110,000                    | 8               | 7            |
| 9     | 165,000                    | 9               | 6            |
| 10    | 225,000                    | 9+1             | 5            |
| 11    | 290,000                    | 9+1             | 4            |
| 12    | 360,000                    | 9+1             | 4            |
| 13    | 430,000                    | 9+1             | 4            |
| 14    | 500,000                    | 9+1             | 4            |
| 15    | 570,000                    | 9+1             | 4            |
| 16    | 640,000                    | 9+1             | 4            |

| Level | Experience Points Required         | Hit Dice (d6-1)           | Saving Throw |
|-------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| 17    | 710,000                            | 9+1                       | 4            |
| 18    | 780,000                            | 9+1                       | 4            |
| 19    | 850,000                            | 9+1                       | 4            |
| 20+   | 920,000 (+70,000 per level beyond) | 9+1 (+1 per level beyond) | 4            |

## Thief Abilities

| Level | Open Locks (d20) | Remove Traps (d20) | Pick Pocket & Move Silently (d20) | Hide in Shadows (d20) | Hear Noises* (d20) |
|-------|------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1     | 1-3 on d20       | 1-2 on d20         | 1-4 on d20                        | 1-2 on d20            | 1-7 on d20         |
| 2     | 1-4 on d20       | 1-3 on d20         | 1-5 on d20                        | 1-3 on d20            | 1-7 on d20         |
| 3     | 1-5 on d20       | 1-4 on d20         | 1-6 on d20                        | 1-4 on d20            | 1-10 on d20        |
| 4     | 1-7 on d20       | 1-6 on d20         | 1-7 on d20                        | 1-5 on d20            | 1-10 on d20        |
| 5     | 1-8 on d20       | 1-7 on d20         | 1-9 on d20                        | 1-7 on d20            | 1-10 on d20        |
| 6     | 1-9 on d20       | 1-8 on d20         | 1-11 on d20                       | 1-9 on d20            | 1-10 on d20        |
| 7     | 1-11 on d20      | 1-10 on d20        | 1-12 on d20                       | 1-10 on d20           | 1-13 on d20        |
| 8     | 1-13 on d20      | 1-12 on d20        | 1-13 on d20                       | 1-11 on d20           | 1-13 on d20        |
| 9     | 1-15 on d20      | 1-14 on d20        | 1-15 on d20                       | 1-13 on d20           | 1-13 on d20        |
| 10    | 1-17 on d20      | 1-16 on d20        | 1-17 on d20                       | 1-15 on d20           | 1-13 on d20        |
| 11    | 1-19 on d20      | 1-18 on d20        | 1-19 on d20                       | 1-17 on d20           | 1-17 on d20        |
| 12    | 1-20 on d20      | 1-19 on d20        | 1-20 on d20                       | 1-18 on d20           | 1-17 on d20        |
| 13    | 1-20 on d20      | 1-20 on d20        | 1-20 on d20                       | 1-19 on d20           | 1-20 on d20        |
| 14    | 1-20 on d20      | 1-20 on d20        | 1-20 on d20                       | 1-20 on d20           | 1-20 on d20        |

\* DMs may allow other characters a 1-3 chance on a d20 to successfully Hear Noises.

## Variant: Non-Human Thieves

Dwarves, elves, and halflings may also become thieves. Like the standard human thief, halflings gain experience solely in the thief class. There is no limit to how high a halfling may progress in this class.

Dwarves and elves may also to take the thief class, but this is an *additional* class. Experience points gained by dwarves and elves that have chosen the additional thief class must be evenly divided between Dwarven Warrior and Thief or Elven Adventurer and Thief. Much like the elven adventurer, dwarves or elves possessing the thief class must choose whether to operate as a warrior or thief (dwarves) or as a magic-user, warrior, or thief (elves). Like the halfling, there is no limit to how high dwarves or elves may progress in the thief class. Thief abilities may not be performed if wearing armor heavier than leather.

Dwarves, elves, and halflings gain certain racial bonuses on their thief abilities.

### Racial Bonuses for Thief Abilities

| Race     | Open Locks | Remove Traps | Pick Pocket | Move Silently | Hide in Shadows |
|----------|------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Dwarves  | +1         | +3           |             | +1            | +1              |
| Elves    |            |              | +1          | +2            | +3              |
| Halfling | +2         | +1           | +1          | +2            | +2              |

Salvatore Macri hails from Montreal, Quebec. Receiving the Basic box-set as a gift in 1980 sealed his fate and he's been a devoted fan of Classic D&D ever since. When not working on RPG related material, he can usually be found making the rounds of the various OOP and Classic gaming message boards. ■

## Core Rules Thief (2)

by James Maliszewski

**Editor's note:** James's thief class has most of the "traditional" abilities of a thief, but cannot automatically find traps with a good die roll, and cannot effectively become invisible or move silently (these latter are expressed in terms of a surprise bonus rather than a separate percentage chance). All in all, this variant is close to the standard thief's abilities, but these abilities are adjudicated quite differently.

## The Thief

|                               |                                                                                |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hit Die Type                  | 1d6-1<br>After reaching 9 hit dice, the thief gains only 1 hit point per level |
| Armor/Shield Permitted        | Leather                                                                        |
| Weapons Permitted             | Any one-handed                                                                 |
| Prime Attribute (5% xp bonus) | Dexterity 13+                                                                  |

### Thief Class abilities

**Backstab:** When attacking from behind, a thief may roll two dice for damage and take the highest result. At fifth level, he may roll three dice and keep the two highest results, adding them together. At ninth level, he may roll four dice and keep the three highest results, adding them together.

**Extraordinary Climbing:** A thief can climb sheer surfaces without the need for special equipment. His chances of success are 1-17 on 1d20. This chance increases to 1-18 at fourth level and 1-19 at eighth level.

**Observant:** At first level, a thief detects secret doors and hears noises on a roll of 1-2 on 1d6. This increases to 1-3 at third level, 1-4 at seventh level, and 1-5 at eleventh level.

**Sneaky:** Beginning at first level, a thief gains a +1 bonus to surprise, when alone or operating with thieves of similar experience. This bonus increases to +2 at fourth level, and +3 at eighth level.

**Tools of the Trade:** When possessed of appropriate tools, a thief can open locks and disable small mechanical traps on a roll of 1-2 on 1D6. This increases to 1-3 at third level, 1-4 at seventh level, and 1-5 at eleventh level.

**Wary:** A thief can only be surprised on a roll of 1 on 1d6.

**Establish Gang:** At ninth level, a thief may establish a stronghold and attract a number of lesser thieves who will recognize him as their boss and serve him so long as his activities continue to provide them with a steady supply of ill-gotten gains. ■

### Thief Advancement Table

| Level | Experience Points                     | Hit Dice (d6-1)              | Base Hit Bonus | Saving Throw     |
|-------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|------------------|
| 1     | 0                                     | 1                            | 0              | 15               |
| 2     | 1250                                  | 2                            | 0              | 14               |
| 3     | 2500                                  | 3                            | 1              | 13               |
| 4     | 5000                                  | 4                            | 1              | 12               |
| 5     | 10000                                 | 5                            | 2              | 11               |
| 6     | 20000                                 | 6                            | 2              | 10               |
| 7     | 40000                                 | 7                            | 3              | 9                |
| 8     | 80000                                 | 8                            | 3              | 8                |
| 9     | 160000                                | 9                            | 4              | 7                |
| 10    | 280000                                | 9+1 hp                       | 5              | 6                |
| 11    | 400000                                | 9+1 hp                       | 5              | 5                |
| 12    | 520000                                | 9+1 hp                       | 6              | 5                |
| 13    | 640000                                | 9+1 hp                       | 7              | 5                |
| 14    | 760000                                | 9+1 hp                       | 7              | 5                |
| 15    | 880000                                | 9+1 hp                       | 8              | 5                |
| 16    | 1000000                               | 9+1 hp                       | 8              | 5                |
| 17    | 1120000                               | 9+1 hp                       | 9              | 5                |
| 18    | 1240000                               | 9+1 hp                       | 10             | 5                |
| 19    | 1360000                               | 9+1 hp                       | 10             | 5                |
| 20    | 1480000<br>(120,000 per level beyond) | 9+1 hp (+1 per level beyond) | 11             | 5 (remains at 5) |

*Born in the Netherlands, and growing up in Baltimore, James attended university in Annapolis, Washington, D.C., and Toronto. Originally he believed his calling was to teach the world about the wonders of medieval and early modern philosophy, but soon realized he could just as readily be ignored by pontificating about the history of roleplaying games — and have more fun in the process.*

*He currently lives in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, with his wife, two children, and a disturbingly large collection of gaming products. He spends much of his free time working on various gaming projects, particularly his blog, Grogardnia (<http://grogardnia.blogspot.com>).*

# Thieves and Tasks

by Akrasia

**Editor's note:** Akrasia's thief is the third alternative we're presenting here, in which traditional thieving skills are replaced by a general "saving throw bonus" on certain types of endeavors.

My interpretation of the thief class relies on using the saving throw system in *Swords & Wizardry* as a kind of 'general task resolution system,' that is, as a system for determining whether a character succeeds at a particular task when his/her success or failure is not certain. Because of this, I describe this way of using saving throws before presenting my interpretation of the thief class.

## I. Saving Throws as a General Task Resolution System

All classes in S&W have a single saving throw that may be used as a general 'task resolution' mechanism. Under this system, when attempting a particular task, the player rolls 1d20, applies any relevant attribute modifiers (a bonus of +1, a penalty of -1, or no modifier, depending on the attribute score), and any additional modifiers that the GM judges appropriate. Very easy, but not automatically successful, tasks might receive a bonus of +10, while extremely difficult, but not impossible, tasks might receive a penalty of -10. Less extreme modifiers should apply to rolls involving tasks of intermediate ease or difficulty. The difficulty modifier is applied to the character's saving throw *roll*. (It is up to the GM to determine whether the player has knowledge of this modifier.) If the modified roll equals or exceeds the character's saving throw number, the task is successful. An unmodified roll of a 20 always indicates success, and an unmodified roll of a 1 always indicates failure (otherwise, there is no point in making the roll in the first place, and the GM should simply decide that the character automatically succeeds or fails).

For example, Nibold the Purple, a bold roguish warrior, is attempting to swim across a dangerous rushing river. Because Nibold is a fifth level fighter, his base saving throw number is 12. The GM judges that superior strength would assist anyone attempting such a feat, and thus allows the player to apply Nibold's strength bonus, in this case +1, to the roll. Because the river is flowing swiftly, and contains dangerous rocks and currents, the GM assigns a -2 penalty to the player's roll. Finally, the GM notes that Nibold's background is that of a sailor, and therefore grants the character a +4 bonus to the roll. This leaves the player with

a net +3 bonus to his roll for Nibold. The player rolls a 10 and adds 3 for a total of 13. Since that exceeds Nibold's saving throw number of 12, Nibold successfully swims across the river. If the player had failed his roll, the GM may have decided that Nibold suffered 1d6 points of damage from being bashed about the rocks by the stream's strong currents. A roll of a natural 1 may have resulted in Nibold being knocked unconscious, and likely drowning to death, unless rescued by his compatriots (assuming that he has some nearby!).

Finally, GMs should always exercise *discretion* when using this system. It should *not* replace common sense or player creativity. If the task in question is one that any normal human being would typically succeed at accomplishing, then a roll should be unnecessary. Avoid having players roll to determine if their characters can climb a ladder, jump across a three foot crevice, or swim across a calm pond. Moreover, if a player comes up with an ingenious plan to overcome some difficulty or challenge, the GM may want

## The Top-Floor Man





to reward that player by allowing the plan to succeed without a roll, or, if the GM thinks that the plan is risky enough to require a roll, with a positive modifier. Interesting and daring plans make the game more exciting for everyone, and thus generally should be rewarded by GMs. (Foolish plans, on the other hand, are rightfully mocked!)

## II. The Thief Class

My interpretation of the thief class is inspired primarily by the fictional characters of “Fafhrd” and the “Gray Mouser,” as found in the stories by Fritz Leiber, as well as other roguish characters from classic ‘pulp’ swords and sorcery fiction. Consequently, I understand the thief typically to be a good fighter, a roguish scrapper capable of standing his own ground in most cases. Therefore, the thief is understood to be a ‘sub-class’ of the fighter (fighting-man) class. Except for the special restrictions and abilities noted below, the thief follows the rules (including experience point requirements and attack rolls) for fighters.

**Prime Attribute:** Dexterity, 13+ (5% experience)

**Hit Dice:** 1d6+1/level (Gains 2 hp/level after 9th)

**Armour/Shield Permitted:** Thieves may use their special abilities only when wearing leather armour or no armour, and not using a shield. When wearing armour heavier than leather and/or using a shield, they may fight as normal (as a fighter), but may not use their unique abilities and advantages (including their combat advantages, as described below).

**Weapons Permitted:** When using two-handed weapons, thieves may not use their special abilities and advantages. They may use any one-handed weapon without penalty, including a weapon in each hand (more information on this below, in the description of thieves’ special abilities). The one exception to this rule is short bows, which thieves may use without penalty. (If using the ‘Class-Based Damage’ system that I presented in the first issue of *Knockspell*, thieves use the ‘fighter’ chart – except for large weapons. When using large weapons thieves only do 1d8 damage.)

**Saving Throw:** As Clerics (i.e., starts at 14 at first level, and improves by one every level thereafter, until level 11, when the thief’s saving throw is 4, and no longer improves).

**Establish Thieves Guild (9th level):** Instead of establishing a traditional stronghold like regular fighters, thieves may, upon reaching ninth level, establish a guild in any urban area of appropriate size (population 3,000 or greater). Upon establishing such a guild, the thief typically will attract 4+1d6 thieves as followers (levels 1–4; roll separately for each thief). (The GM may decide that additional thieves will join the

guild in very large cities, e.g., cities with populations of 20,000 or greater, and that fewer thieves will join the guild in smaller settlements, e.g., towns with populations less than 8,000.) Additional thieves may join the guild later, if it proves to be successful (GM’s discretion). However, if the town or city in which a thief establishes a guild already has a well-organized thieves guild in it, the GM may want to role-play the subsequent conflict between the two guilds (or negotiations over ‘territory,’ etc.).

**Races:** Thieves may be of any race (Elf, Dwarf, Halfling, or Human), unless the GM judges otherwise. Non-human thieves may progress to any level, but have a Hit Dice of only 1d6 (and gain only 1 hp/level after 9th).

## Thief Special Abilities

### Thieving ‘Tasks’ – Climbing, Legerdemain, Opening Locks, Perception, Stealth, and Traps

The thief enjoys a +3 bonus to any roll involving the following categories of tasks (using the saving throw system described earlier).

#### Climbing

This category covers attempts by characters to scale sheer surfaces, including walls and cliffs. If a rope and grappling hook are available, though, the character normally need not make a roll in order to climb (although if the situation is very stressful, e.g., the character is being pursued by trolls, then the GM may judge that a roll is necessary).

#### Legerdemain

This category covers tasks involving the skilful use of one’s hands when performing tricks (e.g., hiding a dagger from a guard), as well as attempts to pick the pockets of others without attracting notice. Halflings (if understood in the ‘standard’ fantasy way) receive a +1 bonus to any legerdemain task.

#### Opening Locks

This category covers attempts to pick locks. Halflings (if understood in the ‘standard’ fantasy way) receive a +1 bonus to attempts to pick locks. If the thief lacks a proper set of lock picks, he/she suffers a penalty of –2 or greater (as the GM judges) to his/her attempt. Especially well crafted lock picks may give the thief a bonus to his/her attempts. Legends speak of magical lock picks that enable thieves to overcome even the most difficult of locks.

## Perception

This category covers attempts by characters to notice hidden or concealed objects (e.g., secret doors or traps) or creatures (e.g., brigands waiting in ambush). Elves (if understood in the ‘standard’ fantasy way) receive a bonus of +2 to all attempts at perception. Dwarves (if understood in the ‘standard’ fantasy way) receive a bonus of +4 to all attempts involving perception vis-à-vis stone surfaces or objects (e.g., stone traps or secret doors).

## Stealth

This category covers attempts by characters to remain unnoticed, including hiding and/or moving silently. Dark shadows or dense foliage may give characters a bonus to their saving throws, while bright lights or clear ground may give them a penalty (or even make an attempt at stealth impossible). Halflings (if understood in the ‘standard’ fantasy way) receive a bonus of +4 to all attempts at stealth. Wearing armour heavier than leather normally prohibits a character from moving silently. Carrying a torch or other light source prohibits a character from hiding.

## Traps

This category covers attempts by characters to disable or set traps. The GM may sometimes judge a roll unnecessary, if the player describes his/her character’s actions in such a way that the GM thinks guarantees success or failure. Dwarves (if understood in the ‘standard’ fantasy way) receive a bonus of +2 involving attempts to disable mechanical traps.

Exactly which tasks fall under the above categories is, of course, to be determined by the GM (although in most cases this should be obvious). Moreover, it is important to keep in mind that *any* character of *any* class may attempt *any* of the above kinds of tasks – *if* the GM judges that it is possible for that character (e.g., the GM may decide that a character who has no understanding of locks simply cannot attempt to pick a lock). These abilities are *not* the unique province of thieves. Non-thief characters, however, simply do not receive the same bonus (+3) that the thief does. Thus it is possible for a fighter with a good dexterity, and not wearing armour (or only leather armour), to be quite good at the ‘thief-like’ tasks summarized above, despite not enjoying the special bonus that thieves do. (The character of ‘Conan,’ as described by R. E. Howard, can be interpreted as an example of such a fighter.)

## Languages

The thief learns a new language at level 5, another new language at level 10, and a final new language at level 15. At no point, however, may a thief exceed the maximum number of languages that he/she may know, as determined by his/her intelligence. These bonus languages are in addition to any new languages that the thief may have learned ‘normally’ (based on the GM’s discretion or house-rules).

## Reading Scrolls

At level 6, thieves with an intelligence of 12 or greater may read and use magic-user scrolls as though they were magic-users five levels lower than their thief level (thus a 10th level thief may use magic-user scrolls as though he/she were a 5th level magic-user). There is always a chance that a thief’s attempt to use a scroll will fail. The chance of failure = 5% + (2 x spell level) – intelligence bonus. (Example: a thief with 14 intelligence attempts to use a magic-user ‘fireball’ scroll. Her chance of failure is 10% [5 + 6 – 1].) If a thief’s attempt to use a magic-user scroll fails, he/she must make a saving throw. If the thief fails that saving throw, the scroll ‘backfires’ in a manner to be determined by the GM. (For instance, if the thief in the previous example failed in her attempt to use the fireball scroll, and then failed her saving throw, the GM may decide that the fireball explodes right in her hands!)

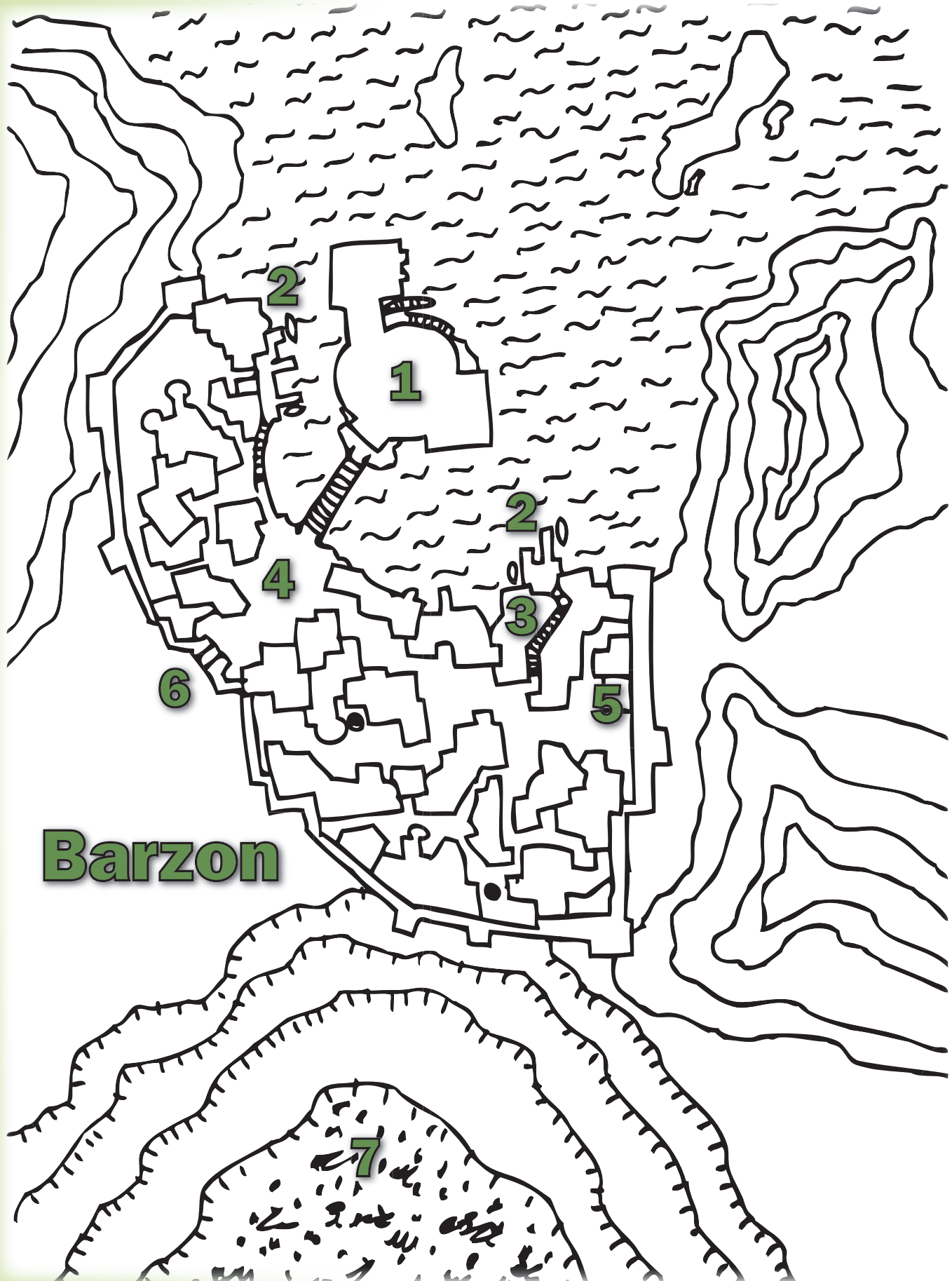
## Two Weapon Fighting

So long as the thief is wearing ‘light’ armour (no heavier than leather), and is not using a shield, he/she gains a +2 to hit (instead of the standard +1) when using two weapons.

## Artful Dodging

So long as the thief is wearing leather armour or no armour, is not using a shield, and is not wielding a ‘large’ (i.e., two-handed) weapon, he/she receives a -2 [+2] bonus to his/her armour class.

(Perceptive readers who own *Knockspell* #1 may notice that thieves automatically enjoy the benefits of the ‘swash-buckling’ fighting style described in my article, “Fighter With Flair!” This is the *only* fighting style that they can use. Unlike regular fighters, thieves do not have access to any additional fighting styles. The thief class described above may be used with or without the ‘fighting styles’ system described in “Fighters With Flair!”) ■





# Isles on an Emerald Sea 2

by Gabor Lux

## The Isle of Barzon

Power on the world of Fomalhaut takes many forms, from pragmatic appeals to human self interest to naked coercion. The worship of divine beings can manifest in either of these sterile extremes, as well as a dozen varieties between the two: there are as many specific arrangements as there are gods. Yet the power of gods (who, like all of us, should themselves be entitled to the right to act in accordance with their own welfare) more often than not serves the weal of their direct subordinates before their worshippers – or, it is said, the gods themselves. So it was on the Isle of Barzon, a small island ruled by an empire not much larger...

The mountainous terrain of Barzon, a geography of jagged mountains and deep valleys, rises proudly above sea level; against the crushing waves, the dark rocks look as if they were unvanquishable battlements. It is not possible to moor ships safely anywhere except a protected bay to the north, right below the towers of Skei (which means Glory-in-the-Sky), and a lesser, hidden channel to the south that runs to the small fortress Modax (which means Immense Shield). The waters are patrolled by the island's war galley, the Mesk (Imperious), under command of Denna Swaura, harsh commander of Barzon's soldiers. The galley intercepts all ships within its range. The valleys of the island are blooming with strange flowers that bring uneasy dreams (-2 to saving throw when trying to avoid sleep while proceeding through), and are also populated by an abundance of wild sheep. The Flying Gods hunt them according to their Purpose.

The city state Skei is haughty seat of this empire, massive brick and concrete structures interlinked by high bridges against the sky, colourless save for the yellow-black of woven curtains in the doors opening from the balconies, or the occasional house plant or flower one may see in a high window... there is an absence of activity on the streets, as life takes place within the network of interconnected towers, most the home to a large extended family. The total population of Skei is 600, of whom 90 are soldiers. Commander Denna Swaura, a plain, cold and efficient woman of green eyes and rust-coloured hair hinting at amazon descent, is their leader.

**Playtesters:** Gabor Acs, Kalman Farago, Laszlo Feher, and Gabor Izapy



## Isles on an Emerald Sea 2

**Soldiers (60):** Fighter 1; AC 6[13] (ring mail, shield); Atk spear (1d8); HP 1(x8), 2(x9), 3(x9), 4(x9), 5(x6), 6(x5), 7(x3), 8(x4), 9(x4), 10(x3).

**Trained Soldiers (30):** Fighter 2; AC 5[14] (ring mail, shield, Dexterity); Atk spear 1d8 or short bow 1d6; HP 5(x1), 6(x2), 8(x3), 10(x5), 11(x3), 12(x2), 13(x4), 14(x2), 15(x4), 17(x2), 18(x1), 20(x1).

**Denna Swaura:** Fighter 4; AC 2[17] (chain shirt, large shield, Dexterity); Atk bastard sword 1d10; Str 14; Dex 13; Con 14; Int 12; Wis 13; Cha 10; HP 31.

The small tower-fortress of Modax on the southern periphery of the island is held by 30 additional soldiers, who are more loyal to Trademaster Svanth Dorl than the inhabitants of Skei, and also more skilled in combat.

**Trained Soldiers (30):** HP 8(x1), 9(x2), 11(x4), 12(x1), 13(x3), 14(x1), 15(x2), 16(x4), 17(x4), 18(x3), 19(x1), 20(x3), 23(x1).

Barzon is a civilisation of diligent craftsmen who fashion woven mats and vivid tapestries from the legs, wings and chitin shell of the Flying Gods, giant wasps lairing in an abandoned wing of Trademaster Svanth Dorl's majestic palace in the middle of the bay. The Flying Gods attack all outlanders who are not in the company of soldiers; they also carry away sinners who, by action, thought or recalcitrance blaspheme against their inscrutable Purpose. On the Festival of Ascendance, they descend upon spies and heretics who are chained to a large concrete bloc in the middle of Skei's central square. Occasionally, one flies above the green waste at the foot of Skei, and falls lifeless amidst the rubble. The citizens then carry it back to the city in reverence, and use its hallowed Shell to create various goods.

**1. Skybreak Palace:** The unfriendly, round fortress, although constructed much more recently than the concrete towers, already shows signs of decay. The entire northern wing is uninhabited and left to the giant wasps; the rest of the complex is likewise mostly empty, with vast dark hallways and cold gathering chambers. In addition to most soldiers and Denna Swaura, Trademaster Svanth Dorl also maintains his court at this location.

Clad in a voluminous fur cloak and holding a heavy metal staff, his ruddy face and squat stature are less prominent. Svanth Dorl possesses the Cube of Wasp Control, a technological device which allows him telepathic control over the Flying Gods. Presently, his major objective is to decimate Skei's elite on the upcoming Festival of Ascendance to further bolster his rule (the precise date will be T -1d4+1

days when the characters arrive). Svanth Dorl is fond of nothing more than yelling "Cut them into wasp food!"; he is also a tremendous xenophobe, although a company of dangerous heretics and spies abusing the island's hospitality may just come in handy in his present situation. Svanth Dorl shares his decorative although empty quarters with two wives, Ura and Issema. These sisters are dark-haired, dark-eyed, unsympathetic creatures whose mind has eroded due to the frequent consumption of scrape, a drug that turns users dull and impassive.

**Giant Wasps (36):** HD 4; AC 4[15]; Atk sting (2d4 + paralysis poison); HP 6(x1), 8(x2), 9(x1), 10(x1), 11(x2), 12(x1), 13(x3), 14(x2), 15(x3), 17(x2), 18(x2), 19(x2), 20(x2), 21(x1), 22(x1), 23(x2), 24(x2), 25(x2), 28(x2), 29(x1), 31(x1).

**Trademaster Svanth Dorl:** Thief 2; AC 7[12] (thick fur cloak, Dexterity); Atk staff (1d6+1) or throwing dagger (1d4 + poison (permanent paralysis)). Str 14; Dex 16; Con 12; Int 12; Wis 12; Cha 10; HP 12.

Deep beneath Skybreak Palace is a damp crypt-hall almost as wide as the central part of the fortress. Here lie the sarcophagi of Barzon's old kings: four of the seven have been broken, and are now filled with dark waters. The others:

**a) Auska:** mummy-woman in rotted lace; pointed teeth and foul smell. She has the abilities of both mummy and vampire. Treasure: 300 gp diadem, 500 gp gem box, *candle of invocation* (evil), *periapt of foul rotting*.

**b) Barzon III:** this corpse has shrivelled into a foul leathery blackness, which is in turn covered by a fine layer of yellow mould. Attacks as zombie, melee hits and many spells just stir up the mould cloud. Treasure consists of 60 gp silver necklace, 500 gp dragon tooth *dagger* +1, *oil of ESP*, *potion of cure disease*.

**c) Barzon IV:** all that remains is a dark glistening putrescence (black pudding).

**Auska, Vampire-Mummy:** HD 7; AC 2[17]; Atk 2 claws (1d6+4 + energy drain + mummy rot); Spec vampire and mummy abilities/vulnerabilities; HP 29.

**Barzon III, Yellow Mould Zombie:** HD 2; AC 8[12]; Atk grasp (1d8); Spec mould; HP 3.

**Black Pudding:** HD 10; AC 4[15]; Atk pudding 3d8; Spec corrosion, division, impervious to cold and electricity; HP 40

**2. Harbour:** Two mostly identical locations in the shadow of the city. Both are continuously guarded by a contingent



of soldiers; three with spears and missiles and one with an alarm horn. The boats here are used for fishing in the bay and generally aren't fit for the open seas; Ullkmaran owns the only one large enough for long-distance travel.

**3. The house of Ullkmaran the Polyarch:** The long and narrow building functions as both dwelling and warehouse. One floor is on the plateau, four more are cut into the cliffside – the lowest two damp and out of use, the third a warehouse, the fourth and top living quarters. There are entrances both above and below. Ullkmaran the Polyarch, purple-skinned and complacent, is a man of the Empire and a typical follower of Mung's doctrines. Through an agreement with the Trademaster, he is Barzon's intermediary in the wasp trade, exporting tapestries, mats and occasionally poison, and in turn importing miscellaneous products for use by the locals. Since he has no power base in the city, he maintains a well-defensible household of 12 guards and 8 slaves (6 of whom are nubile girls). Ullkmaran's primary interest lies in stability, and if given the opportunity, he will drug the characters, strip them of valuables and sell them to whomever is most convenient. In a warehouse cache, he has 600 sp, 600 gp and 10 doses of wasp poison. He carries a laser pistol on his person.



**Ullkmaran the Polyarch:** Thief 5; AC 9[11] (Dexterity); Atk shortsword 1d6+1 + poison (permanent paralysis) or laser 2d10+ [3 cartridges]; Str 11, Dex 18, Con 15, Int 14, Wis 9, Cha 7.

**Guards (12):** Fighter 3; AC 5[14] (chain shirt, Dexterity); Atk battleaxe 1d8; HP 5(x1), 14(x1), 15(x1), 17(x2), 19(x1), 21(x2), 22(x2), 25(x2).

**4. Central square:** A dusty, unfriendly and windswept plaza. In the middle, there is a square platform around an antique concrete bloc. On the four sides of the bloc, heavy chains are affixed to iron rings. This place is used to condemn sinners to the hunger of the Flying Gods.

**5. Guest house:** This is a dilapidated one-story hovel against the city walls; no furnishings except the earth floor. Outlanders to Barzon are only allowed to sleep here, and as always while staying on the island, they are under escort and open surveillance by a detail of soldiers, ostensibly so that the Flying Gods don't attack them. Although unhelpful and uncommunicative, the soldiers will explain local customs and warn characters in advance of possible infractions.

**6. Gates:** The narrow gate of Skei is always guarded by 10 regular and 5 trained soldiers. The portcullis is down, and two ballistas point outside. Beyond the gate, a winding road leads to the island's blooming valleys and, ultimately, to the fortress of Modax.

**7. Wasteland:** This desolation is an expanse of shifting rubble in a deep crater. Traces of metal deposits in the debris lend the place a greenish hue. The wasps tend to avoid the periphery of the crater, since the metal and its vapours are deadly to them; however, a few dried-out husks may be present. On the bottom, there are bent metal wrecks half-covered by the stones. The purpose of these artifacts is a mystery; however, searching them yields 1d3 small, oblong metal boxes stamped with the letters ΔIA (DIA). They contain diambroid, a potent explosive (6d6 damage, but 1:6 chance an individual box is so fragile that it detonates on its own).

## The Isle of Armul Urthag

Power can make gods of men: for what else is a great hero who can stand against an army? Yet power can also make gods of monsters, and there are few things more dangerous: for by magnifying the power, the ability to do evil without restraints is also increased. By this ability, the vampire lord Armul Urthag rules over men as men rule over wild beasts; emerging at night from his unvanquishable tower, he drinks their blood as it pleases him.



## Isles on an Emerald Sea 2

The Isle of Armul Urthag is covered in lush vegetation: a thick jungle from shore to shore, teeming with animal and plant life. To its west, rugged hills emerge from among the trees to form a lifeless realm in this isle paradise. In the middle of the jungle, there is a village populated by a small tribe of hunter-gatherers; since they are timid and peaceful, the only sign that indicates their presence is the smoke rising above the trees. Many of the inhabitants are sickly and pale, as Armul comes often to quench his thirst. Formerly the masters of the land and a minor town (now only ruins), the men of the island have regressed into primitives and are gradually being hunted out by a force they are powerless to resist, and whose fearful worship only delays the inevitable.

The vampire's lair is an ancient tower in the hills, constructed of concrete in Fomalhaut's earlier cycles. Although the structure looks timeworn due to its age and the lichen that gives it a green-gray color, it is extremely resilient, and could withstand anything up to and including a nuclear blast. There are two entrances on the ground (**A.** and **C.**), and thick, amber-coloured windowpanes with a closed door on the level of the terrace (**F.**). A trapdoor hidden among the various antennae and satellite dishes of the communications array on the top (**H.**) allows access into Armul's personal retreat, but this is almost impossible to find from the outside.

If made aware of intruders within his tower, Armul sends a meta-droid to kill them if they are on a level these mechanical monstrosities can reach by elevator or the stairs; however, the latter are too narrow and steep between **C.** and **E.** for them to navigate. The vampire also relies on his natural abilities and laser pistol; if possible, he tries to enthrall a character to do his bidding and lure others to their doom. Outside the tower, Armul only hunts at night, but this he does in silence and with deadly determination.

**A:** At the base of the tower, there is a dark, low opening in the wall allowing access to a damp cellar of sorts. The place is filled with debris; near the entrance, green fronds and fleshy leaves grow between the cracks. The only way leads down through a dry well; iron rungs allow easy descent (although there is a 1:3 chance one of them comes out under heavy weight). The elevator shaft goes through this level;

although it is possible to see its place by the dent in the walls, there is no way in from here.

**B:** A round control room under the tower is the resting place of black iron machinery; blocky control panels, odd metal mirrors and a hundred glass eyes, which, like the machines, are currently lifeless. A main switch on the central panel restores power to the room (making it possible to call the elevator and open the metal doors that block its shaft). However, the switch needs to be pulled up and down to activate the equipment, and every time it is operated, there is a 1:6 chance one of the defensive systems high above activates, along with a force shield that envelopes the tower to form a 150 ft range barrier around its perimeter. The results are determined randomly; periodic saving throws may be applicable to resist their effects (1d6):

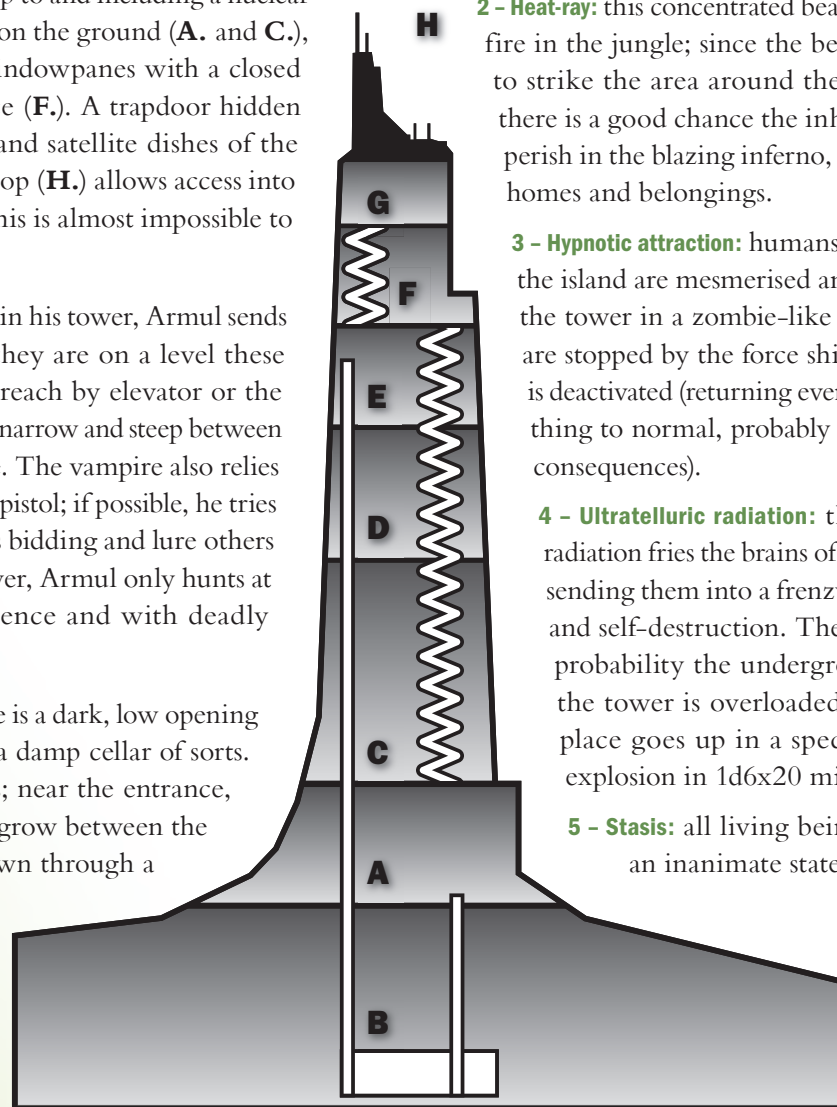
**1 - Super-magnetic:** ferrous metal objects on the island are pulled with irresistible force towards the surface of the force shield.

**2 - Heat-ray:** this concentrated beam causes a forest fire in the jungle; since the beam is calibrated to strike the area around the tribe's village, there is a good chance the inhabitants will all perish in the blazing inferno, or else lose their homes and belongings.

**3 - Hypnotic attraction:** humans and animals on the island are mesmerised and walk towards the tower in a zombie-like state, until they are stopped by the force shield or the beam is deactivated (returning everyone and everything to normal, probably with unpleasant consequences).

**4 - Ultratelluric radiation:** this horrendous radiation fries the brains of all on the island, sending them into a frenzy of murder, lust and self-destruction. There is also a 20% probability the underground reactor of the tower is overloaded and the entire place goes up in a spectacular atomic explosion in 1d6x20 minutes.

**5 - Stasis:** all living beings are put into an inanimate state.



**Armul Urthag**

**6 – Electric shell:** the force shield is endowed with potent electrical energy; anything coming in a 300' distance suffers a discharge identical to the effects of a 6th level *lightning bolt* spell.

Activating any of the defensive systems warns Armul of the characters' presence, and he takes immediate steps to deal with them.

**C:** Circular stairs clinging to the tower's exterior climb up to this point, an ancient blast door. A successful bend bars check or a *knockspell* may move it, but it does not budge to normal attempts. Inside, there is a concrete circular staircase going further up.

**D:** The level is storage space, mostly looted but a few large metal crates are still around. They contain boxes of MRE (synthetic rations; they have gone wrong over the millennia and are now just hardened lumps of crystallised salts and black-brown organic matter).

**E:** In the corridor before the doors of the elevator, two hunched, grotesque statues with rough bestial features guard the way. If approached, one hisses *“This iss not for the Massster’s enemiiessss!”* Unless one of the characters immediately counters with a denial (e.g. “We are not enemies, we are friends!”), they attack. The statues are dim and easily fooled. If slain, they utter one last croak: *“Masssterr... massterrr... you have found your foesss...”*

**Living Statues (2):** HD 4; AC 2[17]; Atk 2 limbs (1d8); Spec: +1 to hit, immune to cold, heat and mind-affecting; HP 18(x1), 30(x1).

**F:** This level – the entirety filled with a circular room – is bathed by amber light streaming through the windowpanes. This special glass is unbreakable, and filters the light in a way that renders it inoffensive to Armul. There is an unlocked door leading to a terrace above the jungle. A circular staircase climbs up to level **F**.

Around the room's perimeter, there are 22 large round metal tanks with thick glass doors. Each tank bears the stamped sign “KPIOΣTAT” (KRIOSTAT). The interior is filled with a greenish liquid heavy with lichen and moss-like plant matter... indistinct human forms float inside. A console in the centre of the room opens all tanks; alternatively, the entry of a larger group into the room or the command of Armul also brings forth the inhabitants.

If the tanks open, stumbling zombies shuffle out, wheezing *“Armuuul... Armuuul... Massterrrr...”* These humans, stored for so many years in the failing cryogenic tanks, are now entirely under the control of Armul Urthag, their mind and personality gone. They attack without hesitation. They may not be turned or commanded.

**Zombies (22):** HD 2; AC 8[11]; Atk slam (1d8); Spec strike last, immune to turn/command; HP 2(x1), 4(x2), 5(x1), 6(x1), 7(x2), 8(x1), 9(x1), 10(x3), 11(x3), 13(x6), 14(x1).

**G:** The former command centre of the tower is now Armul Urthag's retreat. Two panes of amber glass are set into the walls; opposite them stands a functioning KRIOSTAT tank, which now serves as the vampire's coffin. Unless alerted, the thin, pale form of Armul, long white moustache and a strange black outfit (jumpsuit salvaged from the tower's stores), slumbers within. The chamber is protected by two meta-droids, tireless robotic sentinels encased in a yellow enamelled carapace. They immediately attack anyone who enters. Armul also awakes if he senses a commotion, preferring to use his laser pistol against opponents he deems dangerous.

Next to the tank, there is a locked weapon cabinet (normal chance to pick; Armul carries a key to it). It contains an extra laser pistol and 8 extra cartridges charged to full capacity. In a corner, a metal ladder leads up to a trapdoor and the roof.

**Armul Urthag:** HD 7; AC 2; Atk 2 claws (1d6+4+energy drain) or 2 laser pistol blasts (2d10+); Spec vampire abilities/vulnerabilities; HP 39.

**Meta-Droids (2):** HD 8[12]; AC 0; Atk fist (1d12) or 1 laser beam (3d10+); Spec laser 1/3 round, 5/day, immune to mind-affecting spells, ½ damage from cold, fire or electricity; HP 32(x1), 33(x1).

**H:** The top of Armul Urthag's tower is a forest of satellite dishes, antennae, metal outcroppings and other remains of ancient machinery. Everything is timeworn but in a fundamentally good shape and very hard to damage. A trapdoor leads down to Armul's quarters, but it is so well hidden that it is almost impossible to find.

## The Islands Miscellaneous

**The Isle of Winds:** This forested isle is continuously besieged by harsh winds. In the middle of the wind-torn forest, there is a stone menhir with ancient inscriptions. It is this magical structure that attracts the winds. Upon approaching the menhir, the winds coalesce into a hostile air elemental which lasts to a maximum of 5 rounds. If the menhir is broken, the winds stop and the seas within two hexes of the island will be forevermore calm. The inscriptions contain the spells *wind wall* and *summon elemental* (air only).

**Air Elemental:** HD 12; AC 2[17]; Atk strike (2d8); Spec whirlwind; HP 40.

## Isles on an Emerald Sea 2

**The Isle of Mertagras:** Well-tended, lush forests with pleasant trails and flower-beds; a multitude of colourful birds. In the middle of the garden, a gazebo constructed of brass rods is the home of Mertagras, a wise fire crow. Mertagras, formerly a magic-user, is of chaotic good alignment, and prefers to live in this form. He may teach spells to characters who are worthy.

**Mertagras, Fire Crow:** M-U 7; AC 3[16]; Atk beak (1d3); Spec immune to fire, fireball 3/day; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 18, Wis 15, Cha 11; **Spells:** 1 - sleep, burning hands, unseen servant, charm person, magic missile, 2 - ESP, forget, Tahssa's laughter, 3 - suggestion, clairaudience, 4 - polymorph; HP 26

**The Isle of Panodax:** A hill-topped island ruled by Panodax, an insane gardener. The entire surface is covered by a green plantation, which is worked by two brigades of slaves, 30 persons of mixed sex per brigade. A further 30 are guards with ill-kept and primitive equipment. All inhabitants on the island, Panodax included, are addicted to the plantation's only product, a nefarious drug named "scrape". Scrape dulls the senses to pain and pleasure, and makes a life of misery bearable, although addiction is by no means pleasant and the plant has a foul chemical taste.

The slaves, guards and the gardener live in a small village of stone huts, including a warehouse. Panodax occasionally performs bloody sacrifices to "give strength" to his beloved plants, which he believes are the gifts of nymphs and naiads. One day, he hopes to finish his life in the same way. The drug is picked up by ships from Mungor City which visit occasionally, and necessary supplies are left in their stead. No other boats, rafts, or wood to construct the same are present on the island.

**Guards (30):** Fighter 1; AC 7[12] (leather, shield); Atk sharpened stick (1d6); HP 1(x1), 3(x4), 4(x3), 5(x3), 6(x3), 7(x1), 8(x4), 9(x3), 10(x9).

**The Isle of Magrar Yemmaure:** An unfriendly rock surrounded by shoals. A small colony of wild buffalo live off the abundant grass. In the middle of a field, a stone slab has been sunken into the earth with the following inscription:

*"This island of stone is the domain of Magrar Yemmaure's kin as long as the sun burns and the sea roars."*

## Appendix

### Meta-Droids

**Armor Class:** 0 [19]

**Hit Dice:** 8

**Attacks:** fist (1d12) or laser beam (3d10+)

**Saving Throw:** 5

**Special:** laser, immune to mind-affecting spells, ½ damage from cold, fire or electricity  
**Move:** 9  
**Challenge Level/XP:** 10/1400

These mechanical sentinels are somewhat larger than humans, and are protected by riveted and yellow enamelled metal sheets. In addition to attacking with their fists, Meta-Droids can shoot a laser beam every third round, for a maximum of 5 per day. Meta-Droids are set to guard ancient ruins and military bases, and are found there as well as in certain domains of Fomalhaut's Underworld.

### On laser weapons

**Laser pistol:** DMG 2d10+, long range, 30 shots max.

**Laser rifle:** DMG 3d10+, long range, 30 shots max (consumes stores at a 3/2 rate)

**Tri-beam laser:** 3 attacks, DMG 2d10+, long range, 50 shots max

Lasers are characterised by an infinite penetration capability but the need for precise aim. Therefore, armour, shields and even natural defensive ability is going to be useless against them (magic and Dexterity still apply), but a character who concentrates on moving unpredictably can avoid beams by making a successful saving throw. No other action can be taken during that round. This advantage only applies versus one opponent; if there are multiple attackers, the save is normal versus the first, at -4 versus the second and so forth.

If a "0" is rolled on any dice of damage, it is counted as 10 and an additional dice may be rolled. There is no theoretical upper limit to the damage that can be inflicted this way. An attack roll of natural '1' means that all remaining charges have been depleted in one burst.

Characters who attempt to employ lasers but are untrained in their use need to learn by practice. Until they can be considered proficient, the Referee applies a d6 roll to the attack to simulate inaccuracy. If the result is an even number, the attack is as rolled. If it is odd, it is subtracted from the attack roll. Since lasers are very simple to learn, proficiency is attained after winning three battles where the character successfully uses a laser.

Laser pistols have a maximum capacity of 30 shots. Those found in the field usually have 2d10+10. Recharging pistols is done with cartridges holding 15 shots. Laser rifles are heavier weapons with higher damage and corresponding power use. Tri-beam lasers are too heavy to transport, and are therefore mounted in key locations. ■



# Retro-Clones:

## Interviews with the Authors

If you're reading this magazine, you're almost certainly familiar with the retro-clone part of the old-school renaissance — old games rewritten under the Open Game License to allow publications like *Knockspell* itself. The history of the retro-clone movement, at least as a rudimentary concept, might be seen to start with *Castles & Crusades*, but the first game to really explicitly go in and mimic old rules was Chris Gonnerman's *Basic Fantasy Roleplaying Game*. Chris took *Moldvay Basic* and updated the rules with significant changes, but also kept a lot of the older material. *Basic Fantasy Roleplaying Game* is probably best described as a "Simulacrum Game," to take some of the Internet's jargon, but as the first real step toward retro-clones it merits inclusion here. After that, Stuart Marshall developed the *OSRIC* system (with some help from yours truly), which was the first explicit, deliberate, and precise reconstruction of an older ruleset using the OGL. By cloning 1e, *OSRIC* paved the way not only for several other retro clones, but also established the concept itself. One of the earliest results of *OSRIC* was Dan Proctor's *Labyrinth Lord*, a much closer reconstruction of *Moldvay Basic* than Chris Gonnerman's *BFRPG*. Both games have large followings and many available resources, and they are quite compatible with each other, in my opinion. Finally, your humble author came out with *Swords & Wizardry*, a retro-clone of 0e. There's one version of *Swords & Wizardry*, *WhiteBox*, which covers only the first three books of 0e, and the *Core Rules* include materials from the later 1974–1978 supplements. We interviewed Chris, Stuart, and Dan (and I interviewed myself in front of the mirror), to ask some questions suggested by fans — and here are the results.

### Stuart Marshall on *OSRIC*

**KS:** *Where do you see OSRIC three years from now?*

**SM:** As a free download and optional print publication supporting the First Edition system. I don't want to change the core *OSRIC* rules once I release them in print. I'd like for users to know that there's one (1), final edition of *OSRIC* that they can buy and use forever. In my ideal scenario *OSRIC* will never be updated, because we got it exactly right the first time.

**KS:** *Knowing what you do now about how OSRIC has evolved, how would you have changed it back at the beginning, and why?*

**SM:** I'd have got more people involved earlier. The collaborative nature of the ruleset is, I think, a key strength.

**KS:** *What prompted you to write OSRIC?*

**SM:** Not what: who. Matt Finch prompted me to write *OSRIC*!

**KS:** *What were your influences when you wrote OSRIC?*

**SM:** The works of the late Mr. E. Gary Gygax combined with the open game philosophy of Mr. Ryan Dancey.

**KS:** *Are there things you wished you had written?*

I wish I'd contributed more to *Footprints*. [Editor's note: *Footprints* is the free e-zine published by the *Dragonsfoot* message boards]

**KS:** *Are you going to be writing anything in the future?*

**SM:** Yes, but I don't want to say anything more about that on the record for fear of raising expectations too early.

**KS:** *Are you satisfied with the number and quality of OSRIC-compatible products currently available? Which products do you use most frequently?*

**SM:** I'm thrilled with the number and the quality. I think *OSRIC*'s taken off as well as I could have hoped. I think *Kellri*'s free netbooks are the products I use most frequently, and I recommend them. [editor's note: <http://kellri.blogspot.com/>]

**KS:** *What do you think attracts people to your system?*

**SM:** I think few people use *OSRIC* as written. I think a lot of people play 1e with *OSRIC* supplements, or *C&C* with *OSRIC* supplements. Of the few who do use *OSRIC*, I think most of them like the simplified layout and single-book format.

**KS:** *Do you play the rules you publish as written?*

**SM:** Not exactly, no. *OSRIC*'s supposed to reproduce the non-copyrightable parts of 1e, not the RPG Stuart Marshall plays, and I've striven to keep my own house rules out of it.

### Chris Gonnerman on *BFRPG*

**KS:** *Where do you see BFRPG three years from now?*

**CG:** I don't know, honestly. I'll be playing it. Hopefully others will, also.

**KS:** *Knowing what you do now about how BFRPG has evolved, how would you have changed it back at the beginning, and why?*

**CG:** Nothing. The project has gone better than I could have dreamed.

**KS:** *What prompted you to write BFRPG?*

**CG:** My BX books were falling apart. That, and I had begun to see the possibility of a truly “Open Source” RPG reproducing the game mechanics I grew up with. Yeah, I made a few changes, but they are nearly all changes I’d have made back then had I thought of them.

**KS:** *What were your influences when you wrote BFRPG?*

**SM:** Gary Gygax, of course. Tom Moldvay. Dave Cook and Steve Marsh. And perhaps a little Roger Zelazny and Clark Ashton Smith.

**KS:** *Are there things you wished you had written?*

**SM:** Not really... I have everything I really wanted to get done by now, done, except perhaps Morgansfort, and it’s really close.

**KS:** *Are you going to be writing anything in the future?*

**SM:** I’m writing all the time. Right now, BF4 Ruby Mountain and BF5 Megadungeon have the lion’s share of my attention, mainly because I’m using them in my games. But I have high hopes that I’ll get Morgansfort into print-ready shape soon, and possibly the 2008 Olde Dungeoneer’s Almanack as well.

**KS:** *Are you satisfied with the number and quality of BFRPG-compatible products currently available? Which products do you use most frequently?*

**SM:** Yes. Though of course there could always be more. So far as I know, there are no explicitly Basic Fantasy RPG compatible game materials not already hosted on my site; this is in stark contrast to OSRIC and LL, which have materials from non-affiliated authors available. But there have been many people who have contributed to the Basic Fantasy Project, and as a consequence we have a non-trivial number of works available. And of course, materials for those other games work quite well with BFRPG.

**KS:** *What do you think attracts people to your system?*

**SM:** Nostalgia, perhaps. The open nature of the rules (not just in play, but in print). Dissatisfaction with fat, slow “modern” games.

**KS:** *Do you play the rules you publish as written?*

**SM:** Yes, in two groups (one adult group, one kids group); but in my original game, BFRPG is used as a resource along with an older house rules core. I won’t make my established group change, no matter how cool I might think it could be.

## Dan Proctor on Labyrinth Lord

**KS:** *Where do you see your system three years from now?*

**DP:** I’d like to answer this question in a way that will preface this entire interview, because I think it’s important to convey my general attitude about Labyrinth Lord and the “Old-School Renaissance” (OSR) in general. The first thing I have to stress is that I don’t see Labyrinth Lord as “my system.” I definitely see the trademark “Labyrinth Lord” as mine, but the game itself, the algorithms, its “spirit” if you will, belongs to everyone who is interested in it.

Having said that, I see the game itself being the same three years from now inasmuch as the core rules will always remain the same. In my mind I don’t really separate Labyrinth Lord from the broader OSR, so when you ask me where I see Labyrinth Lord I tend to think of it in the bigger scope of the systems and supplements being released not just for LL, but also BFRPG, S&W, OSRIC and other supplements compatible with these and their inspirations, but not explicitly stating which system. In short, I think that we will see the OSR expand. We’ll see more supplements, more cross-compatible supplements, more “new” systems that are less “*retro-clones*” and more house-rule versions inspired by OD&D, AD&D, Basic D&D, and other older games. I think the OSR will probably evolve over time in other ways we can’t predict right now. Currently, many people (not all) have at least some fuzzy idea about what “old-school” means, which has some overlap between people. I think as time goes on the term “old-school” will be co-opted ever more for other games, since this term is seen as a desirable characteristic of games in the broader market. The “commodity” of old-school really began in the heyday of 3e, when “old-school” was advertised as desirable in 3e products. So I see this desirability transferring to just about anything and it will become more of a marketing term than anything else.

As for the future of Labyrinth Lord specifically, I think only time will tell. I’m a hobby publisher. Therefore the support of Labyrinth Lord, from me at least, does not follow the typical pattern you might see from a “professional” publisher, or publishers who derive their primary income from publishing games. What this means is that Labyrinth Lord will not likely grow in popularity under the same model as more commercialized games. I think its fan base will grow slowly, primarily via the internet. On the downside this means we won’t see Labyrinth Lord become a sudden success, but on the plus side the game will always

be around, and so can grow steadily over the years without ever being scrapped to start over with a new edition.

**KS:** *Knowing what you do now about how LL has evolved, how would you have changed it back at the beginning, and why?*

**DP:** I can honestly say that knowing what I know now, I wouldn't change anything about the way I wrote Labyrinth Lord. I stuck to my goals as closely as I see possible, and I think the end result fits what I see as the ideal retro-clone game. When writing this sort of thing there is a very strong...compulsion, if you will...to "fix" things that you thought were either broken, clunky, or what have you in the source of inspiration. I think if nothing else, Labyrinth Lord represents its inspiration fairly admirably. There are differences of course, but in no case did I change something with the idea that it was "better."

**KS:** *What prompted you to write LL?*

**DP:** I originally got involved in self-publishing after I discovered OSRIC. At the time my intent was to only support OSRIC, since for the most part first edition is probably my favourite old-school system. It wasn't long before I started to think of what else might be possible. I kept seeing posts on the internet asking if there is or ever would be a Moldvay/Cook or "Basic" inspired retro-clone, and then something just sort of clicked in my head. I perceived a need for Labyrinth Lord, and feverishly wrote it in my "spare time" over about a four-month period.

A more personal answer to this question is that I must be a little obsessive/compulsive, and I sometimes indulge in large projects as a way of procrastinating other projects, and as a means of escapism. I wrote Labyrinth Lord during a very stressful time in my life, when I was writing another series of big projects for "real life." So during that time I might write for those projects for the first 8 hours in a day, then write Labyrinth Lord for another 8 hours or so. It was bizarre, but that's the way I work. I have concentration problems, so whenever I sit down to write I have to have at least a block of several hours which are uninterrupted, or else I lose my momentum. I'm trying to get better about this, but it isn't easy.

**KS:** *What were your influences when you wrote LL?*

**DP:** There were many influences in various avenues. Of course, the main inspiration for the actual rules was the basic Moldvay/Cook edition game. However, the main inspirations for the execution were OSRIC and the Basic Fantasy RPG.

I'm sometimes credited with having created the most open and complete retro-clone (at least prior to S&W and the revised and expanded OSRIC). What I always stress is that Labyrinth Lord owes a lot to those who created this path that I merely followed. So in terms of making the text open, I followed the example in BFRPG. In terms of making the trademark license free and flexible, I followed the example provided by OSRIC. I felt by marrying these ideas, I could present something that best reflected my philosophical point of view of the emerging old-school renaissance and open gaming. To me, the OSR and open gaming are completely intertwined. This is a way of thinking not everyone shares, and in fact I didn't always feel this way, but my views evolved as I was writing Labyrinth Lord. To me, an important part of bringing back out of print rules, by which I mean making them in print again and developing a wider audience, is to make these rules not just freely available but also completely open. It would seem unethical to me to present the algorithms of another game but lock them up in text that is not open. The key idea here is that of ownership. Although I went to great trouble to write Labyrinth Lord, I don't see it as mine. It's everyone's. People can take LL and do anything they want with the text.

A confession I have is that when I was writing Labyrinth Lord I also sought inspiration from the time period. Among other things I read and watched Mazes & Monsters (because I have a perverse like of that movie...it is funny), and read *The Dungeon Master*, by William Dear. *The Dungeon Master* is a great book. It really is a window into this strange time period when D&D had become a phenomenon and there was both exhilaration and fear about what that meant.

**KS:** *Are there things you wished you had written?*

**DP:** There are all kinds of things I'd like to write, but have limited time available to do so!





**KS:** *Are you going to be writing anything in the future?*

**DP:** I certainly will. I probably won't be writing any more retro-clone core rules books, but I have plenty of ideas for other projects. I have two books I'm slowly plugging away at. I can't say much about them right now but I do hope to present them sometime in 2009.

**KS:** *Are you satisfied with the number and quality of LL-compatible products currently available? Which products do you use most frequently?*

**DP:** I'm satisfied with the quality, but you can never have enough quantity! I've always felt that these efforts are deeply rooted in the "old-school community," to the extent we can call ourselves a community. So we will probably see more and more "fan" oriented support, but I think "professional" support will be slow and tentative over the coming years simply because the market is small and it isn't always economically feasible to publish for retro-clone games... at least for now. Of course this concern only really applies to "professional" publishers who need the income, of which Goblinoid Games is not. Even though this is the case, even I am constrained by what projects I can complete because I can't afford to eat the production costs. This is a hobby for me, and I do have to draw the line sometimes about how much I'm willing to spend on this hobby. Note that above I put "fan" and "professional" in quotes above because more and more the distinction between these in terms of quality of writing, editing, and presentation are narrowing. Also I think we have finally gotten past all the so-called legal concerns of these endeavors, of which OSRIC was the unintentional martyr, but helped break the very thick ice that made all of this possible.

As for what third-party publishing material I use more frequently, I have to confess that since I have been abroad most of the last year I haven't been able to game too much. I hesitate to "sanction" any one publisher, so instead I'll say that the products I'm most likely to use are adventures. I'd also love to see monster books and books of new magic items.

**KS:** *What do you think attracts people to your system?*

**DP:** There are all kinds of reasons people might be attracted to Labyrinth Lord, but I think that currently most people fit in one of three categories. The first category includes people who love the Moldvay/Cook rules, and who want to play a game that is in print. It is easier sometimes to find players for games that are perceived as "in print" and currently supported. Another group of people includes those

who are disenchanted with the complexity of some current games, and who want to "get back to the basics" so to speak. Some of these people played Moldvay/Cook, first edition, or other older games at one time, switched with the new editions, and then found that the new editions didn't offer them the sort of play they prefer. Finally there is another category, the one I am most excited about, of people who never played any version of this game but find Labyrinth Lord and enjoy it. Some of these people are young, have never role-played before, or who usually play very different games. Some of these people continue to play LL or use LL as a jumping-off point for revisiting the actual older games, which I think is wonderful.

**KS:** *Do you play the rules you publish as written?*

**DP:** Pretty much, but as I said before, I am a huge fan of first edition, and therefore OSRIC, so my ideal game is probably a hybrid of Labyrinth Lord and OSRIC. I would play Labyrinth Lord straight in terms of the core resolution rules, but I'd import the expanded character options and magic of OSRIC. I think the key thing here is that there is no "right" way to play these games, there is only the way a particular game group has fun with. In the end, that's what this is all about. We're here to have fun, and as long as you're doing that, no matter which system or amalgam of systems you use, you're doing it right.

## **Matt Finch on Swords & Wizardry**

**KS:** *Where do you see Swords & Wizardry three years from now?*

**MF:** I view Swords & Wizardry as a project, much more than I see it as a set of rules. Like the other authors, I don't intend to make any changes to the rulebooks themselves. However, the Swords & Wizardry project is about getting back to the hobbyist roots of the game, the idea that everything, even the basic assumptions of the rules, can and should be at least questioned, and at most house-ruled to fit each individual gaming group. We've had a tremendous response to this philosophy, with an outpouring of creative support from the net. So, in three years I think Swords & Wizardry is going to have several variant games like Mike Davison's Ruins & Ronin, which is a samurai movie re-imagination of S&W. Kellri has started talk about a sci-fi version as well, although I think that's further off. Knockspell magazine already has circulation in the triple digits, and I expect that to continue. Our free resources are already running in the hundreds of pages, and I think we'll have thousands in three years, if we keep up at this rate. I do not foresee S&W being in brick and mortar stores. Getting

into the retail distribution chain means increasing prices to pay middlemen, and I prefer to keep the books as inexpensive as possible.

**KS:** *Knowing what you do now about how Swords & Wizardry has evolved, how would you have changed it back at the beginning, and why?*

**MF:** Well, Swords & Wizardry is by far the youngest of the retro-clones, being only five months old at the time I'm writing this. I had the luxury of watching how things worked with each of the other retro-clones mentioned in this article, so they all faced more surprises than I did. At this point, I don't think I can say I would have done anything differently. Probably I should have gotten Marv Breig, my co-author on the WhiteBox edition, involved earlier in the process. But that's all I can think of. What I did, I apparently did right.

**KS:** *What prompted you to write Swords & Wizardry?*

**MF:** Jerry Mapes, the founder of the Knights & Knaves Alchouse (<http://www.knights-n-knives.com/phpbb/index.php>), plays Original D&D, and his comments kept making me think back to the mishmash of Supplement 1, Holmes Basic, and a Monster Manual that I played right at the very beginning of my gaming days. I started to realize that the way I still played AD&D was actually so loose that it wasn't AD&D in any real sense at all. I was using AD&D as a resource, but the underlying rules I was using ... were still those old OD&D rules. This is why the game's dedicated to Jerry as well as Gary Gygax. It absolutely wouldn't have happened without him; after OSRIC I had sworn I'd never go through the process of writing a clone game again.

**KS:** *What were your influences when you wrote Swords & Wizardry?*

**MF:** Jerry Mapes, as mentioned above. Dan Proctor's methods for developing Labyrinth Lord as a project in addition to a game were a big influence and a good lesson. Labyrinth Lord is the reason I built a website for Swords & Wizardry and focused on building a community early on rather than just releasing the rules into the wilds. Continuing support is a vital feature for a clone game.

**KS:** *Are there things you wished you had written?*

**MF:** There are a lot of things I want to write — I'm satisfied with what I have written so far.



## CHGOWIZ'S OLD GUY RPG BLOG

Games, commentary and friendly opinionating on Fantasy Role Playing done old-school style.

<http://oldguyrpg.blogspot.com>



**KS:** *Are you going to be writing anything in the future?*

**MF:** Yes, I have a huge slate of projects, most of which will turn out to be vaporware, so I won't list them. At the moment, most of what I'm doing is contributing to the work of other people, and organizing these resources into whatever form they fit best — articles in *Knockspell*, free downloads on the S&W website, or stand-alone resources like Ruins & Ronin. I'm assembling a book of 0e/S&W monsters, and the new monsters in it are 90% or more the product of other imaginations than mine. Running a project like S&W takes a lot of time behind the scenes.

**KS:** *Are you satisfied with the number and quality of Swords & Wizardry-compatible products currently available? Which products do you use most frequently?*

**MF:** I'm very satisfied with the quality, and amazed at how rapidly new resources are coming out. Out of the compatible documents, I think the *Monster Book* is what I use most frequently. Which is unfair, since I'm the only person with a compiled copy at this point, but I'm trying to get it finished and out the door.

**KS:** *What do you think attracts people to your system?*

**MF:** Free-form gaming on the one hand, and the "Imagine the Hell out of it" attitude on the other hand. There's a lot of crossover between those two groups, but not always. I think the White Box edition is beginning to be seen as a "new" old-school experience, and it's drawing people for that reason, like skydiving. The Core Rules players seem to be more about sharing resources and ideas, and I don't think the White Box community has matured into that phase yet. Lots of people are still learning the ropes of that kind of skydiving.

**KS:** *Do you play the rules you publish as written?*

**MF:** Pretty much, although with additions placed on top. When I find a thief class I like, I'll allow thieves, and same with most of the later classes except illusionists. I'm definitely going to hack Kellri's necromancer NPC, from last issue, as a PC class. ■

# Jousting (Optional Rules)

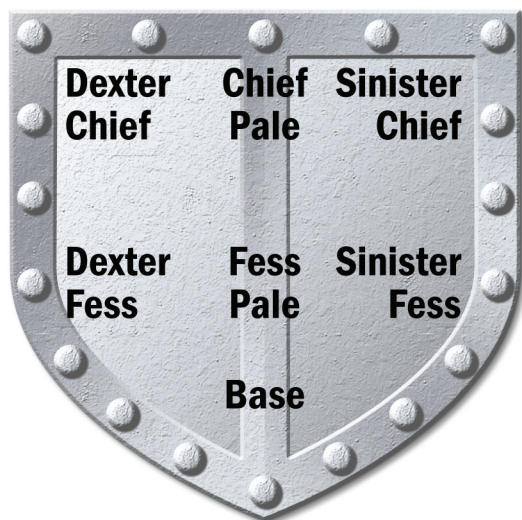
by Brendan Falconer (Lizardfolk)

**Editor's note:** There aren't many images more dramatic and fantastic than the joust. In this article, Brendan Falconer provides a great, compact system for turning the joust into a white-knuckle challenge of opposed tactics, filled with flavour and historical accuracy.

Knights may engage in “friendly” or competitive combat on the back of specially trained warhorses with lance and shield. Organised tournaments are used to stage “hastiludes”, martial games of which jousting is perhaps the best known. Under normal circumstances, a joust takes place on a “list field”, a roped-off enclosure long enough to allow for a full ride by both fighting-men on mounts. Some arenas will be called “tiltyards”, built specifically to host jousting.

Horses, usually chargers or destriers are trained for ambling, a pace that improves the rider's stability. Each exchange between knights is dubbed a “ride,” and contests might have a limit of 3, 5, or more rides. The knights are trained to “tilt” when striking with the lance, tilting being the method by which a jousting knight unhorses a foe, usually without inflicting serious injury or killing. In most cases the knight will be well-armoured, and often the horse will wear chanfron, metal armour intended to protect them should the lance stroke go astray.

Each competitor in a joust selects an aggressive and defensive strategy, with offence being the intended area of impact, (the aim point on the opposing knight), and defence being the position in the saddle. Once both participants have selected these secretly, the Jousting Matrix below is consulted to determine the result for both riders.



| Aiming Point        | Defensive Positions Possible                        |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| H – Helm            | Steady Seat, Shield High, or Shield Low             |
| DC – Dexter Chief   | Lean Left, Steady Seat, Shield High, or Shield Low  |
| CP – Chief Pale     | Any                                                 |
| SC – Sinister Chief | Lean Right, Steady Seat, Shield High, or Shield Low |
| DF – Dexter Fess    | Steady Seat, Shield High, or Shield Low             |
| FP – Fess Pale      | Any                                                 |
| SF – Sinister Fess  | Steady Seat, Shield High, or Shield Low             |
| B – Base            | Lower Helm, Steady Seat, Shield High, or Shield Low |

## Jousting Matrix

| Aiming Point | Defensive Position |            |           |             |             |            |
|--------------|--------------------|------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|------------|
|              | Lower Helm         | Lean Right | Lean Left | Steady Seat | Shield High | Shield Low |
| H            | M                  | M          | M         | H           | U           | M          |
| DC           | U                  | B          | M         | B           | B           | M          |
| CP           | B/U/W              | U          | D         | B           | B/U         | U/W        |
| SC           | D                  | M          | B         | D           | D           | U          |
| DF           | B                  | B/U        | M         | B           | M           | B          |
| FP           | B/U                | D          | B         | B/U         | B/U/W       | B          |
| SF           | D                  | M          | B/U       | D           | D           | D          |
| B            | B                  | D          | U         | B           | B/U/W       | B          |

## Ride Tilt Results

**B** – Breaks Lance\*

**D** – Deflected Stroke

**H** – Helm Knocked Off\*

**M** – Miss

**U** – Unhorsed\*\*

**W** – Wounded\*\*\*

\*A knight who suffers a broken lance or loses a helm must assume the “Steady Seat” defensive position on the following ride. A knight without a helm might take additional damage if unhorsed or wounded at referee's choice.

\*\*An unhorsed knight is considered to have lost the joust.

\*\*\*Wounded knights suffer an amount of hit point damage determined by the referee. Suggested damage might be 2d4+1 (normal lance damage), 4d4+2 (a ‘critical hit’ with a lance), or perhaps a specific value such as 1d4 per level of the knight who scored the wounding stroke.

Jousting should ordinarily require extensive training, and be available only to fighting-men of noble classes. Depending upon the requirements of the campaign setting, the referee might declare that only fighting-men of certain backgrounds are trained in the joust, or that any fighting-man is capable equally. Perhaps the simplest option is to require a Fight Style (Jousting) or Weapon Mastery (Lance) be chosen to represent the practice of this hastilude. ■

*A grouchy English chap with over twenty years of role-playing games experience, usually spent despairing behind the screen, Brendan Falconer wastes more time writing settings and systems he'll never finish than he should. The rest of the time he spends trying to find ways to put lizardfolk, otyugh, and blue dragons into every dungeon he designs no matter how nonsensical that gets!*



# Dungeon Oddities

by Michael Curtis

Pity the poor adventurer. As if the blood-thirsty beasts and fiendish traps which await him in the dungeon weren't enough of a threat to life and limb, sometimes even the dungeon itself is intent on keeping him from the riches sequestered within its dank depths.

This article presents just a small selection of hazards, tricks, and other obstacles that an adventurer might face and be forced to overcome during his career – however short that career might be. These oddities are objects and situations that cannot be overcome by sheer brute force, requiring the character (and his player) to rely on his wits instead of his sword arm. Despite this, or rather because of this, the successful negotiation of these hazards may prove to be more satisfying to the player than the fiercest of battles fought and won.

One last word before we begin: The following article presents several suggestions for adjudicating some real world hazards. These rules are merely the suggestions of the author meant to speed game play and should not be taken as official addendum to *Swords & Wizardry*. As always, the GM may choose to alter the rules presented in this article or to ignore them completely when running his individual campaign.

## Puzzling Portals and Vexing Valves

The primary function of any door is to prevent or limit access. Most doors in the dungeon do so by such mundane means as locks, traps, or just being stubborn to pry open. Some doors, however, employ more complex mechanics to keep out interlopers – or to keep things better left confined from escaping. Here are six such portals. Adventurers encountering them will need crafty and cunning minds or at least powerful magics to bypass them.

### The Storm Door

This door appears to be of incredibly odd construction. Either made from or sheathed in copper, the surface of this door is covered with a jumbled mass of tubes, metal wires, crystals, unrecognizable stone, and box-like protrusions. Four thick metal bolts keep the door tightly fastened and there appears to be no keyhole or lock visible.

This door is a bizarre techno-magical construction. It allows access to the rooms beyond it only when the magical battery encased inside it is fully powered. Once the battery has a

charge, the four bolts shoot open and the door swings open on its hinges. When found, the battery in the door is dead and requires the application of electricity to function.

The most obvious and easiest way for a party of adventurers to charge the battery would be through the use of the 3rd level magic-user spell, *lightning bolt*. In most cases, a single casting of the spell directed at the door is sufficient to power the battery and allow the door to open. For doors that guard more substantial rewards, the battery might require a much higher voltage of power before it becomes operational. This could range from anywhere between 10 to 30+ dice of electrical energy (which would require either a high level magic-user or multiple applications of the spell to generate). Of course, the party will not know how much electricity is required before the door opens. The Game Master may also decide that the magical battery can only contain so much electrical power before discharging the excess in a 20' radius or perhaps exploding in an electrical conflagration that destroys both the door and those standing too close to it.

The other method to charge the battery, while a less obvious one but one which rewards clever player thinking, is to rig a primitive battery. This is not as unreasonable as one might imagine. The so-called "Baghdad Battery" dates back to the early centuries A.D. and, although archeologists are divided on whether the device was actually used in electrical generation, the principles of it do work. Players with knowledge of the Baghdad Battery might endeavor to jury-rig one from iron, copper, pottery containers, and vinegar or wine, all of which would not be uncommon items in an adventuring party's inventory. While the success of such a device is up to the Game Master to decide and the electricity generated would be nowhere near that of a *lightning bolt* spell, the author suggests that player creativity should always be encouraged and rewarded.

### The Door that is a Jar

This door appears to be an immensely secure portal, bound in iron and secured by many locks and bolts. Merely looking at it, the party can guess that it's going to be a chore for even the strongest of men to pry open. A *knock* spell has no effect upon this mighty barrier.

This is because this door is a fake. It is in truth part of the wall and provides no access to the rooms beyond. The purpose of the door is to delay any attempted trespassers and to cause them to exhaust their magic and resources in attempting to open it.

The real door to the room beyond is a simple barrel, urn, large amphora or similar container, which is usually hidden in plain sight amongst others of its ilk in the same room as the “door”. That container is enchanted to function as a permanent version of the 4th level magic-user spell *dimension door*. Anyone entering through the open mouth of the container finds themselves exiting a similar container located on the other side of the false door, granting them free access to the rooms resting beyond. The container will radiate a magical aura if *detect magic* is cast but, other than this, there are no obvious clues to how to breach this massive portal.

### Door of the Dead

Created from an unknown flat black metal, this door is cold to the touch and hangs from bone-white hinges. It bears bas-relief decorations of skulls, bones or funerary rites on its surface. There is no visible lock or means of securing the door shut. A simple handle of carved bone is attached to the face of the door.

This door is secure against most attempts to open it by the living. It cannot be forced or broken down. A *knock* spell will function as normal and incorporeal creatures may pass through it easily. The only relatively easy way to open this portal is to have the dead do it for you. The door swings open readily and silently if any undead creature places its hand upon the handle. For most parties, circumventing this door would require the presence of an *animated* skeleton or zombie under their control. The Game Master may opt to make the door slightly less difficult for a low-level group of adventurers to pass through. In this case, just the touch of a dead humanoid’s hand – say one hacked from a recently slain goblin – would allow the party to gain entry.

### Painted Door

This is a secret door and must be found accordingly. The door is located in a wall that has been partially covered by an unfinished mural or fresco. This door is located in a part of the wall where the painting has yet to be completed, although the areas nearby have been decorated with images. The only mundane way to pass through this portal is to finish the mural over the space where the door is located. Once the painting is completed, the door swings open to reveal that which lies beyond it.

Depending on the Game Master, the party might find the tools and materials needed to complete the painting in the same room as the door or in another section of the dungeon. He might alternately rule that the painting supplies are not

available within the dungeon complex and must be purchased back in town. Once the party has the means to finish the painting, they must do so in a manner that meets the aesthetical standards of the original artist.

It is up to the Game Master to determine if the party’s artistic efforts are skillful enough to satisfy the eye of the original artist. The GM may employ whatever house rules he wishes to determine the success or failure of the painting (having the character make a saving throw or roll their Wisdom or less on a d20, for example) or render judgment based on the character’s history and class.

A third, and more interesting solution, would be to provide the players with an unfinished drawing – perhaps a simple line sketch found on the Internet with part of it erased in a paint application – and have one of them actually finish the drawing. This might give a player who has some actual artistic skill a chance to shine at the table. Of course, the Game Master will have to make a qualitative judgment of the player’s artistic skill to determine their success or failure and some GMs might not be comfortable in doing such.

### Puzzle Door

The puzzle door, if found unassembled, is nothing more than a doorframe embedded in the stones of a wall. It leads only to blank stone an inch beyond the frame. It might initially be misidentified as a bricked-up doorway. Nothing can be detected on the other side of the brickwork by either magical or mundane means. This doorframe has a matching door that fits within its confines and allows access to the extra-dimensional space that lies beyond. The problem is that the door lies in several pieces and has been secreted in other parts of the dungeon. If all the pieces of the door are found and reassembled within the doorframe, the door glows briefly with a white-red light, then swings open to reveal a 10’ x 10’ x 10’ extra-dimensional room. The door remains intact as long as it is left open, but once closed, it separates into its multiple parts again.

The smallest number of door pieces on record is three; the largest twenty-seven. The pieces are of odd shapes and angles and require some thought and practice to assemble correctly. A Game Master with a penchant for props might wish to construct a miniature door from cardboard, Styrofoam or wood, and then cut the door into multiple pieces with an x-acto knife or jigsaw. He can then distribute the pieces to the players as they are discovered during the exploration of the dungeon. Once they are able to reassemble the door, they are able to use it in the doorframe.

Since the door returns to its separate parts once closed, it is possible to trap a creature within the extra-dimensional space if the door is closed with them still inside. In most cases, this dooms the creature to a slow death by dehydration and starvation. Not all creatures are subject to such a fate, however, and the party who assembles a puzzle door might discover something on the other side of it that has been imprisoned for a long, long time...

### **The Repulsive Door**

This appears to be a simple wooden door, having only a handle and latch and no lock. It is never locked, barred, or otherwise secured, and could normally be opened without effort. However, there's more to this door than meets the eye.

A repulsive door possesses a sort of rudimentary intelligence, imparted upon it during its arcane creation. The door can read the thoughts of creatures within 30' of it as if it was employing the 2nd level magic-user spell *ESP*. As long as no creature wishes to go through the portal, it merely stands in its frame, content with its simple existence. Should a creature wish to pass beyond the door and moves towards it, however, the door protects itself with a repulsion field that mimics the 6th level magic-user spell *repulsion*. The door ceases generating the field as soon as the creature stops attempting to approach it with the intent to open it or pass through. The door can generate this field an unlimited amount of times each day, so bypassing it will be problematic. A *knock* spell will cause the door to open, but attempting to pass through the portal will cause the door to slam shut and activate the *repulsion* field.

The only way to move through a repulsion door is to shield one's mind from the door (covering one's head with a thin sheet of lead to foil the *ESP* perhaps), to possess the key for the door, which negates the effects of the field, or to pass through the door unwittingly. This third method is difficult to do but circumstances might occur that allows this to happen. An example would be using *telekinesis* on an unsuspecting creature and hurling them at the door. If the portal is struck hard enough, that creature might serve as a living battering ram and bash the door open. A repulsive door that has been successfully open by physically touching it is unable to generate a repulsion field until it is closed again. The door must also be located within its doorframe to function. If removed from its frame in any manner, it loses all of its enchantments and special abilities.

## **Constructed Oddities, Enigmas, and Obstacles**

Many dungeons have long histories that stretch back decades, if not centuries, before the adventurers first set foot within their confines. During these periods of previous occupation, many strange and wondrous artifacts were created and some still exist in those gloomy halls and chambers, waiting to be rediscovered. While the purpose of these objects might be long lost, their presence still confounds and challenges those who encounter them.

### **Look, But Don't Touch**

In a disused room in the dungeon sits an ornamental pool with low stone walls. The pool is 10' in diameter and rises 2' above the level of the floor. The pool appears to be filled with still, clear water and a large treasure hoard consisting of several thousand gold and silver coins, a handful of brilliant gems and a gleaming sword sits at the bottom of the pool.

The party that discovers this pool will no doubt suspect a hidden trap or lurking creature within its waters. In truth, the pool is harmless and the treasure within is real and very valuable. On closer examination, providing the party summons up the nerve to approach, they discover that the pool is not filled with water as first believed but a solid, transparent resin similar to modern epoxy resins or Plexiglas. The treasure lies mere feet from party's grasp but they cannot hold it in their hands.

This resin is quite resilient, shrugging off attempts to cut through it or smash it. The resin is held firmly in place by the stone wall of the pool, making any attempts to lift it with crowbars or other implements impossible. Most spells cast upon the resin have no effect.

If the party is truly determined to gain this hoard, they must either demolish the stone wall of the pool, which will allow them to gain purchase with tools and pry the resin free or they must cast the proper spells to destroy or weaken the resin.

If the party demolishes the wall of the pool, they discover that the resin forms a solid disc shape, being 8' in diameter and 1.5' in height. The disc and its contents weigh in excess of 600 lbs. and it is extremely bulky. It is possible to lift the disc on end, allowing the party to roll it from the room but, depending on how they entered the dungeon and the previous hazards and obstacles encountered, it may still prove impossible to get the disc out of the dungeon. The



GM is reminded that the process of demolishing the pool's wall is going to generate a lot of noise; noise which the denizens of the dungeon will most likely come to investigate. Rolling the disc down dungeon hallways is also going to be a noisy undertaking, leaving the party little chance of taking creatures by surprise.

While most magic is ineffective against the resin, there are a few which will have results. The 3rd level magic-user spell *fireball*, the old standby, will cause the resin to melt away and free the treasure within. Assuming any of that treasure survives the immense heat of a detonating *fireball*, of course. The GM may rule that the hoard has become a giant heap of fused metal and crystal, which would present its own difficulties in recovering. The 6th level magic-user spell *disintegrate* will destroy the resin and free the treasure, as will the 8th level spell *polymorph object*. *Wishes*, both full and *limited*, also affect the resin. Casting the 4th level spell *ice storm* on the resin, followed by striking it with great force, will cause the resin to shatter in tiny fragments and release this cache of coins and magic.

### The Coin Flip

The dungeon corridor widens, opening to reveal a narrow ledge at the verge of some hazard or challenge that inhibits further progress into the dungeon. This hazard could be of natural or constructed origin — a river of lava, a gaping chasm, a whirling deathtrap of gears and spikes, the Bottomless Pit (see below), a spiked pit, or other danger chosen by the GM. Spanning this obstacle are a series of 3' diameter round iron discs that float in the air above it, seemingly without support. On the far side of the obstacle, the dungeon corridor continues, leading further into the subterranean expanse. It appears that these mysterious discs are the only way to cross to the other side.

Each of these iron discs is held in place by a permanent modified *levitate* spell. The discs are locked in their locations and cannot be made to rise or fall from their position by any means short of dispelling the magic that holds them in place. The enchantment that keeps them afloat in the air, however, is not completely stable.

The discs are delicately balanced upon a central axis, allowing them to spin and flip in place if weight is applied to them anywhere but their direct centers. Too much weight on the front or back of the disc, or to either side, cause the disc to flip end over end, dropping the applied burden into the hazard below. In order to successfully navigate their way across this obstacle, the party must use each disc as a stepping stone of sorts, being sure to land directly on each

disc's center as they leap from one to the other. A difficult challenge indeed!

Each disc is between 5' and 10' apart and both the discs' size and balance make it nearly impossible for the individual standing on them to get a running start. In order to successfully leap from disc to disc, each character attempting to do so must make a successful saving throw. Failure indicates that they've either missed or landed badly on the neighboring disc, causing it to dump them into the hazard below. The GM should also take into account the Strength scores of those attempting to make the leap, as well as the amount of gear each carries, and make adjustments to the characters' saving throw rolls based on those factors. In the case of a failed saving throw, the GM might choose to rule that a roll which failed only by a point or two means that the character landed atop the disc but was dumped from their intended target and allow them another saving throw to grab on to it to arrest their fall. Such respite will be very short lived; however, as the disc flips down towards the character clinging to it, leaving it suspended vertically and with little chance of the character maintaining purchase for long. His companions had better act quickly to save him.

The adventurers' best bet to successfully bypass this hazard would be to ignore the discs entirely and make their own way across by means of ropes and spikes or magical flight but even that does not ensure success. A crafty GM might place monsters nearby who know of the discs properties and lay in wait to ambush those attempting to cross or falling victim to the discs' peculiar balance. A gaggle of gargoyles or a thirst of stirges lurking nearby will make any crossing hazardous, regardless of whether the party uses the discs or not.

### The Stone Womb

Hidden in some forgotten dungeons are curious oval capsules made of stone and resembling sarcophagi with rounded, tapered ends. The origins of these capsules are unknown but they are coveted by aging mages and paranoid potentates alike.

Each of these capsules is 7' long by 3.5' wide by 3.5' tall, with rounded tops and flat bottoms that lie flush with the floor upon which it is placed. No seam, gap or opening is visible on them; each seemingly constructed of a solid piece of stone. A shallow depression, the size and shape of a human hand, is carved in the top of each capsule at its midpoint. A series of runes, sigils, and glyphs decorates each capsule along its horizontal axis. A *read magic* spell reveals these markings all pertain to life, sleep, and rebirth. These capsules radiate a magical aura if scryed for.

Any adventurer placing his hand into the depression must make a saving throw. On a failed saving throw, nothing occurs. If the character makes his saving throw, however, he immediately loses one level as if struck by a wight (*q.v.*), as well as losing 10% of the maximum hit point total permanently. This is not necessarily the tragedy the character might imagine.

The Stone Womb serves as a repository for part of the character's life energy. In the event the character dies, this stored life force is channeled into a mass of embryonic proto-matter that resides inside each of these capsules. Once this occurs, the proto-matter gestates over the course of a full week, upon which time the Stone Womb opens to reveal a full grown copy of the deceased adventurer. This copy possesses the personality and full knowledge the character possessed at the time his life energy was siphoned off by the Womb. This reconstituted version of the character has but a single level of experience in the deceased's class and a hit point total equal to those permanently drained at the time when the life energy of the character was stored (the 10% of total hit points drained). This total may exceed that normally allowed for a 1st level character if the original adventurer was of significantly high level when the life force exchange took place. This copy bears no clothing, possessions or memorized spells (if applicable), and may be used as a replacement character for the original player as long as a) the GM allows it and b) the reconstituted character survives whatever dungeon hazards that stand between him and safety.

At the time of the initial energy drain, the character has no understanding what has occurred and the consequences of this exchange should be kept secret from the player. Only in the event of the character's death or by seeking out wise sages or knowledgeable wizards will the character learn the properties of the Stone Womb. The character may choose to regain his lost level and hit points, in which case the casting of the 7th level clerical spell *restoration* will return both his lost level and hit points, retrieving the character's life force from storage in the Womb and returning it to its living host. In this event, the Womb will not reconstitute a new character if the original character dies.

Each Stone Womb can only hold the life energy of a single individual at any one time. Any character touching a Stone Womb already "in use" will encounter no life force exchange so no saving throw is required. If a Stone Womb is destroyed prior to reforming the physical body of one whose life energy rests inside, that energy is dissipated and lost. It does not return to its original host. A Stone Womb can be destroyed by either inflicting 100 points of damage

upon it or by the application of certain spells that affect stone (*transmute rock to mud*, *stone to flesh* or *disintegrate* for example). A ruptured Stone Womb spills forth 25 gallons of an unknown clear, sticky slime and a 5' long mass of grey, featureless proto-matter.

## Natural and Magical Hazards

While many of the oddities and hazards encountered in the dungeon are of artificial construction, Nature herself is responsible for a number of threats to passing adventurers. Some of these challenges have counterparts on our own Earth, while others could only exist in a world where magic is a reality.

### Tar pits and petroleum seeps

In some deep dungeon depths, crude petroleum seeps out from the rock, forming natural pools and lakes of the viscous material. If left alone and avoided, these deposits bear no threat to exploring adventurers. It's only when the adventurers seek to interact with this oily, black substance that problems arise.

Any character that falls into a sufficiently deep reservoir of this bitumen faces a very real chance of drowning in it. Because of its thick and sticky nature, tar pits are difficult to escape without outside assistance. Each round a character remains immersed in a tar pit, he must make a saving throw in order to try an escape. On a successful save, he may move up to ¼ his normal movement rate towards the edge of the pit (or some other safe location). On a failed save, he sinks deeper into the tar but may attempt to grab a rope or similar buoy if one is thrown to him. If the character ever fails three saves in a row, he has sunk completely and is lost. The GM may apply penalties to the character's saving throw roll if the character is not extracted quickly as struggling against the substance rapidly tires out its victims.

Tar pits will burn if flame is applied to it and the natural inflammable properties of petroleum keeps it burning for extended periods of time. If needed, torches can be created by dipping one end of a wooden or metal object into the material and setting it afire. Anyone caught in a flaming tar pit takes 1d8 points of damage each round with a saving throw allowed to reduce damage by half.

### Lava pits and Magma Rivers

Subterranean pits and channels filled with hot lava (technically magma if encountered underground) are a staple of sword & sorcery stories, so it is likely that the characters may face the threat of this superheated rock at some point

in their adventuring careers. The heat generated by lava is so intense that even approaching within 20' of it is enough to do 1d6 points of damage each round if the characters do not possess some form of protection against fire or heat and they fail a saving throw. Any character unlucky enough to come into direct contact with lava or magma suffers 10d6 points of damage each round they are directly exposed to it (a successful saving throw reduces this damage by half). Additionally, direct exposure to magma or lava will ignite any inflammable materials in the character's possession and denser materials such as metal will begin to heat and ultimately melt. Weapons, armor, and other magical items can survive the initial contact with lava or magma if the character possessing those items makes a separate saving throw, which might be modified by any "pluses" the objects has or by some other increment as determined by the GM.

### **Vaedium**

Vaedium is a rare, naturally occurring mineral found in deposits deep within the earth. It appears as an extremely dense grey stone that possesses an iridescent sheen. Vaedium is a radioactive element, but not in the way understood by residents of 21st century Earth. Instead of the harmful radiation produced by such Earthly counterparts as uranium and radium, vaedium emits a more eldritch energy whose exact effects vary from deposit to deposit. Vaedium is prized by sages, sorcerers, and alchemists alike, each of whom will pay large sums of money to lay their hands on sample of this mineral. Due to its rarity and possible side-effects of prolonged exposure, however, the collection of vaedium for trade is an extremely uncommon occurrence.

While the effects of vaedium radiation vary, some of its different properties have been documented. Some subterranean races have been known to temper weapons of forged steel by bathing them in the mineral's arcane energies. This process gives the weapons a temporary magical enchantment that persists as long as the weapons receive occasional exposure to the radiation. Stories abound of adventurers who, believing they've acquired a cache of magical weapons, have returned to the surface world only to discover these weapons quickly pit and decay once removed from regular vaedium exposure. Vaedium has been known to produce bizarre mutations in those who suffer regular exposure to it, giving rise to tales of two-head Goblinoid races and dragons of unusual colors. One extremely unbelievable account tells the tale of a race of clockwork men who seemed to use vaedium as food or fuel by placing chunks of the ore inside their hollow chest cavities.

For game purposes, vaedium serves as a support from which a GM can hang whatever odd or "unrealistic" events or creatures he wishes to introduce to his campaign. It's a panacea for dealing with players who, despite the fact they're playing a fantasy game, require a scientific or rational explanation for the oddities that exist in the dungeon depths. Vaedium may be pseudo-science but it functions in this role admirably.

### **Hazardous Gases**

Concealed traps and invisible foes are not the only unseen threats in the dungeon. Air fouled by natural and magical emissions awaits the party careless enough to stumble upon one of these deadly atmospheric pockets. Hazardous gases can range from the noxious, which will merely incapacitate the breather with nausea for a brief period, to the toxic, which can kill upon exposure if a saving throw is failed. Gas is difficult to detect as many of them are both colorless and odorless. Of all the races, dwarves have the greatest chance to notice the presence of naturally occurring hazardous gas due their racial abilities.

In addition to the threat of breathing hazardous gases, some natural gases are highly flammable and the party's light sources might detonate the gases before they face the threat of asphyxiation. Depending on the quantity and concentration of the gas encountered, the chance of igniting the gas can range between 20 to 90% each round the party remains in the area with lit torches or lanterns. In the event of an explosion, each individual caught in the blast area suffers 1d6 points of damage for each 10% chance the gas had of igniting (2d6 damage for 20% and up to 9d6 for a 90% chance of ignition). A successful saving throw reduces the sustained damage to half. Some adventurers advise bringing small birds such as canaries on prolonged sojourns underground as these animals will succumb to the effects of hazardous gases long before their owners do. However, adventurers who have brought canaries along only to have the bird's song alert lurking monsters of their presences seldom survive to refute this advice.

Not all hazardous gases encountered underground are of natural origin, instead being the result of more arcane phenomenon. Whether the legacy of long-ago magical experiments, seepage from another dimension, or a mutation wrought by the prolonged exposure of natural gas to vaedium deposits, these mystical vapors, like their mundane cousins, run the gamut from mere nuisances to lethal threats. One form of arcane gas might do nothing more than alter the pigmentation of the skin, eyes or hair of those exposed



to it, while another causes metal objects such as weapon and armor to suddenly rust and crumble into dust. In one very memorable incident, exposure to arcane gas caused every memorized spell of a party's magic-user to spontaneously take effect, resulting in a tremendous holocaust of fire, lightning, and frost.

### **The Bottomless Pit**

Often rumored but seldom encountered, the Bottomless Pit shatters the known laws of Nature. Whether a remnant from the forging of the world, the by-product of some magical experiment going horribly amiss, or evidence of a creeping foray into the known world by insidious powers, the Bottomless Pit puzzles sages and madmen alike.

The Bottomless Pit can appear as a natural chasm, crevasse, or other deep depression in the earth but it has also been encountered in the form of excavated constructions such as pits or mine shafts. The Bottomless Pit can only be discerned from its normal counterparts by the white and purple mists that swirl and boil in its depths, with the mist appearing anywhere between 20 to 100' feet below the lip of the pit. Anything unlucky enough to plunge into those colorful wisps of vapor has effectively fallen in between the known dimensions of the multiverse.

Plummeting through these gaps between dimensions is not, in itself, fatal. The victim of such a descent experiences an endless fall through a featureless mist-shrouded expanse. They are effectively lost from play and will ultimately perish from thirst and starvation once their limited supplies of sustenance are expended or lost. There are only two methods of salvation for one who has fallen in between worlds. Powerful magics and the intervention of deities have been known to retrieve those lost to the depths of the Bottomless Pit. A *wish* spell may be used to return the victim to their previous dimension of existence, as will the intervention of a higher power. The exact requirements for divine intervention are left to the individual GM to determine based on his or her own campaign world.

Additionally, the GM may rule that the victim of a fall into a Bottomless Pit has a single chance of slipping back into a concrete dimension. In such a case, the victim is allowed a single saving throw to determine their fate. If the saving throw is successful, the character has managed pass through another gateway into the material world. This does not necessarily ensure their survival, however.

First, the character must survive the impact of the sudden arrest of their fall. The damage accrued by this sudden halt is left up to the GM but 12d6 points of damage is not an unreasonable amount in the case of a victim plummeting long enough to achieve terminal velocity. Secondly, even if the victim survives the impact, they may discover the dimension they've landed in is either openly hostile to them or completely alien to their own home dimension. It wouldn't be unreasonable to rule that the character has landed in Hell or Valhalla, on the surface of Mars or on the outskirts of Dutch Flat, California at the high of the Gold Rush. The character's attempts to survive in a hostile or alien time and place, as well as the subsequent search for a way back home, could easily become a series of solo side adventures for the player of the displaced adventurer.

### **The Black Blood of the Earth**

Deep beneath the surface of the earth, black rivers flow. Ranging from the size of miniscule streams to broad expanses many hundreds of feet across, these rivers consist of a viscous, slightly luminescent substance known as the Black Blood of the Earth. The origin and purpose of these rivers have been debated by sage and sorcerer alike for millennia, with no conclusive results. What is known is that these inky channels possess powers that far outstrip those of mortal men.

On first glance, the Black Blood of the Earth is often mistaken for a river of crude oil; a nature assumption given its subterranean locale. The longer one gazes upon these black tributaries, however, the more it becomes apparent that this is no normal petroleum deposit. In the ebony depths of the Black Blood, faces swirl and coalesce, some gazing peacefully back at their observers while other seem to scream silently in eternal torment. Those who persist in staring into the depths of the Black Blood must make a saving throw or become overwhelmed by the compulsion to join those faces and will seek to drown themselves in the Blood unless restrained by others. This compulsion passes once the observer has been removed from the presence of the Black Blood. Those making their saving throw are forever immune from this compulsion and may gaze upon the Blood without effect. Anyone who meets their demise in the depths of the Black Blood is not subject to the life-restoring powers of the dark liquid (see below).

While the origins of the Black Blood of the Earth may be shrouded in mystery, the powers of it are not. The Black Blood possesses several unique traits that may be tapped

by adventurers who overcome the self-destructive lure of river. Firstly, the Black Blood functions as an amplifier of mystical energies. Any spell cast within 50' of the Blood acts as if the caster was two levels higher in experience for determining any spell effects based on caster level (number of creatures affected, damage, duration of spell, etc.).

Secondly, the visages within the Black Blood possess knowledge long since lost by the living races of the sunlit lands. By gazing into the depths of the Blood and questioning the faces that dwell amongst the currents, an adventurer may seek knowledge as if they had cast the 5th level magic-user spell, *contact other plane*. For the purposes of determining knowledge known, chance of wrong information, and risk of temporary insanity, treat the Black Blood as if it were the 7th plane of existence.

The Black Blood of the Earth also functions as a conduit between the lands of the living and the dead and may be employed to breach the barrier between those two worlds. By placing even the smallest fragment of a deceased creature within the Black Blood (a bone, a tooth, or a lock of hair), one may ask questions of the deceased as if they had cast the 3rd level cleric spell, *speak with dead*. This power of the Black Blood is of such great magnitude that it acts as if cast by a 15th level cleric. Thus, the spirit of the deceased may be contacted regardless of how long the creature has been dead.

If the complete mortal remains of a deceased creature are placed within the Black Blood, their spirit is drawn back from the land of the dead to return to their mortal shell, resulting in a complete *resurrection* (as per the 7th level cleric spell) of the deceased. Again, the power of the Black Blood is strong enough to bypass the normal time limits placed upon raising the dead and this *resurrection* can affect the remains of the deceased regardless of the length of time that has passed since its death. The only stipulation is that the remains must be complete. There is a potential drawback to this power of the Black Blood, however. Any creature resurrected through the power of the Black Blood has a base 20% chance of suffering a change of alignment due to the eldritch trials forced upon the soul as it returns. This chance of alignment change is increased by +10% for each century that has passed since the creature's demise. The creature's new alignment may either be picked by the GM or determined randomly. This change will not be readily apparent at first but those familiar with the deceased will begin to suspect that something is not quite right about the returned creature with the passage of time. Sometimes, as the old saying goes, "Dead is better."

The Black Blood of the Earth has one final power, albeit not one with immediate effects. Items forged from metal, such as weapons and armor, that are quenched within the Black Blood during the creation process are renowned for possessing magical qualities. Some of the greatest magical weapons known to the surface races were forged along the banks of these black rivers and have powers far beyond the abilities of even the greatest magic-users to impart. While the exact effects of quenching a forged item in the Black Blood of the Earth is left to the individual GM, seeking out a tributary of the Black Blood is highly recommended as part of the crafting process for the creation of magical items. Entire adventures might be written around seeking out a branch of the Black Blood, fighting through the obstacles between it and the surface world, and ultimately forging a mighty weapon on its banks. ■

*Despite having never been a professional adventurer, Michael Curtis has nonetheless deciphered cryptic writings, handled ancient maps and texts, ridden both a camel and an elephant, fallen off a mountain, participated in a mystical rite, and has discovered the resting places of lost treasures. He currently spends his time working as an archivist, contributing role-playing articles to various publications, and excavating his megadungeon, Stonehell. These later pursuits are documented on his blog, The Society of Torch, Pole and Rope (<http://poleandrope.blogspot.com>).*

## Sham's Grog 'n Blog



a rambling blog about D&D and other stuff

*[shamsgrog.blogspot.com](http://shamsgrog.blogspot.com)*

# The Zocchi Experience

by Matt Finch

A couple of months ago, a few of us crusty old-schoolers decided to take a field trip and go see what was going on these days at a gaming convention. 'Twas the season of Owlcon, which has been held at Rice University in Houston, Texas since (virtually) time immemorial. In fact, when I was only about 11 years old, Owlcon got me grounded for the first time in my life, leaving me with an emphatic reminder to call your parents if you're going to be playing a cleric in embattled Constantinople until one in the morning. How bitter to place into the next round of a tournament at the age of 11 and then sit grounded at home the next day instead of going for the gold. By the time my second experience with Owlcon rolled around this year, I'd already reached the age where I no longer have any desire to stay anywhere until 1am, and I can ground my own kids if I feel like it. So, having grounded the kids and called my parents, I set out for the mustering point, a restaurant called the Hobbit Cafe, which, like Owlcon, dates back to the days when someone would in all seriousness name a restaurant "The Hobbit Cafe." Actually, I think it was called "The Hobbit Hole" back then, so apparently they gave in to corporate culture and sold out to The Man somewhere in between the seventies and the present day. Probably in the eighties.

We had Flambeaux in from Dallas, and Piper (DuBeers) in from Austin, and the Houston crowd was there too: Philotomy Jurament, and Northrundicandus, and Grim, and myself. We selected from Belgian beers and dishes with names like the "Gandalf Burger" (I kid you not; the place is hardcore hobbit to the present day), and once we were all introduced and the meals eaten, we packed up into our various vehicles and headed for the convention in high spirits (Belgian beer has, by the way, a higher alcohol content than American beer).

The first stop at the convention was the vendors' area — which is where we discovered that Lou Zocchi had a booth. The Daimyo of Dice himself! We prowled around looking for him, and although there wasn't a Zocchi to be found, there was one unoccupied booth. The front tables were covered mysteriously with a dark tarpaulin, but from underneath winked the unmistakable glitter of sharp-edged, flat-sided dice. Even more tellingly, the racks at the back of the booth were laden with products I hadn't seen for decades; *City State of the Invincible Overlord*, *City State of the*

*World Emperor*, *Tegel Manor*, and an *Empire of the Petal Throne* book. Books of numbered hex maps, even. We exchanged glances and camped out around this booth-out-of-time, keeping a sharp eye out for Lou. We'd all seen his mythical sales pitch on YouTube (this tells you something about us, I suppose), so we knew what we were looking for. And after about twenty minutes, during which time I assembled a pile of ancient product to buy, Lou rounded the corner in a tuxedo, with his lunch in hand. Introductions went around, and the dice were uncovered, and Lou eyeballed me to make sure I hadn't stuffed any copies of *Tegel Manor* into my shirt while I was browsing, and we all got down to business. Which in our case was to make Lou go into his famous sales pitch. We tried everything. Piper poked at the sharp edges of the dice and wondered aloud if it wouldn't be better to get dice that couldn't be used to slash your wrists. I noticed a slight blemish on one of the dice, and asked why he didn't file those down or something. If it was something Lou had addressed in his video, we gave it a shot. But, (ahem) ... no dice. Lou was eating his lunch, and when he took to grinning fondly at us it was clear he knew the name of *this* game. And with my stack of books and another couple of guys behind me, all of us older by a baker's decade than any other gamer in the room, he not only had a guaranteed sale, but to customers with credit lines instead of weekly allowances. No sales pitch necessary — he was going to concentrate on the sandwich. Once or twice he reached across the table to point out dice like the five-sider or the universal all-sided die, but mainly he was just lying in wait. After I'd gotten my dice and a couple of books and a tapped-out budget, I waited for Piper to give up on eliciting Lou's sales pitch, looking with some longing at a Holmes Basic set on one of the shelves. I hadn't even walked into the con with that sort of cash, but it's not every day I get that sort of window shopping. Finally, Piper gave up on his last-ditch gambit of "absentmindedly" stacking up Lou's dice to see if he could at least get *that* part of the sales pitch, and I reached over to put the Holmes set back onto the shelf. Lou noticed *that*. None of us had put anything back on a shelf up until now. "Do you want that?" Lou asked. "Make me an offer over ten bucks."

"What?" I asked. Because I couldn't have heard right. The box was in shrink-wrap, obviously not the original — it had been rewrapped at some point — but still. I shook it a little bit. What, was it empty or something? Heck, even



if it was, ten bucks probably won't get you even an empty Holmes box, even on Ebay.

"Make me an offer. Anything over ten bucks. I don't know what's in any of those boxes. What you get is what you get, though."

"Hang on." Here's where that "credit line" thing came into play; I headed over for the nearest ATM, keeping an eye on Grim, who was quietly explaining to Lou that I'd been called away from the convention but that he, Grim, would

be pleased to step in and purchase anything I might have been thinking of buying, even on the exact same terms.

Once I got the box back from Grim and we dusted ourselves off, I paid Lou for it and tore off the shrink wrapping. A mint condition blue book. A monochrome B1. Unexpectedly, there was also a copy of Silver Princess in there as well, which shouldn't have been there, and a set of dungeon geomorphs as well. All of it went into the backpack with a great sense of satisfaction. Next to a bag of Lou Zocchi dice. These modern day conventions aren't so bad ... and I didn't get grounded for being home late, either. ■

## The Claws of Ssur-Sparih (Relic)

By James Carl Boney

*The Claws of Ssur-Sparih were written for the OSRIC (1e) system, and this relic is also fully compatible with Swords & Wizardry and other retro-clone games.*

**Editor's note:** For those high-level characters who dabble in the perils of ancient artifacts and relics, this eerie item from James Boney offers both terrifying risks and great power. Powers enough to entice many an otherwise cautious wizard, perhaps...

When the demon Ssur-Sparih was finally slain on his home plane, the victors (Artekt the Wise, Malvane the Valorius, and Temil the Sweven) took vital parts of his corpse as magical talismans. Of these, only the dread triple Claws are still known to exist, for the other parts of the demon were taken by Ssur-Sparih's nefarious associates, humans

and other less-palatable beings bent on retribution for Ssur-Sparih's death.

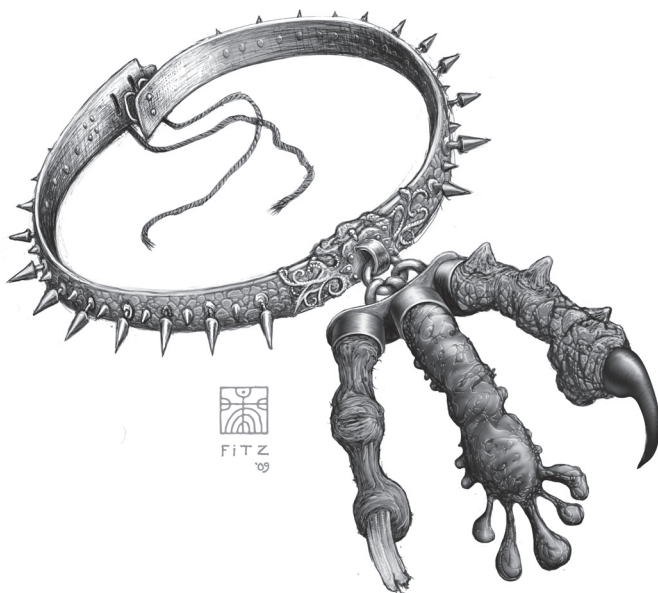
The three Claws are melded together at the base, forming a fan shape. Each claw is curved, six inches long, deep red in color, and marked with dark stains that cannot be removed. At the base, an iron ring  $\frac{3}{4}$ " in diameter provides for the Claws to be worn on a chain. In daylight, the stains on the Claws seem to shift subtly, so that it has no permanent pattern from moment to moment. In darkness or shadow, the Claws glow with a dim, crimson light, and allow the wearer to see within a 5 ft radius.

The other powers and effects of the Claws are as follows:

**Minor Benevolent Powers:** The demonic nature of the Claws adds 1 point to the possessor's major attribute; if removed, the attribute will immediately drop to its normal score. The possessor also gains the abyssal ability of a *tongues* spell on command when he holds or wears the Claws and may see invisible objects when the Claws glow in the darkness, within the radius of their reddish light. Additionally, the Claws' demonic nature allows the wearer to *animate* 1d4+1 zombies once per week, provided he himself killed the corpses within the last 24 hours. Lastly, the wearer gains a +2 bonus to AC.

**Major Benevolent Powers:** The wearer may *dispel magic* on command twice per day.

**Minor Malevolent Effects:** Wearing the relic for more than an hour allows the demonic essences to seep into the wearer's soul, thus subtly binding both object and possessor. A deep yearning for the item's presence begins to develop, and the possessor will find that he cannot bear to be away from the Claws for more than one day at a time. He will attempt



to overcome any obstacle to get the relic back into his possession.

**Major Malevolent Effects:** The shadow of Ssur-Sparih still lives on within the Claws; each use of a prime power results in a cumulative 1d3% chance that the relic will mentally enslave the possessor for 2d4 weeks. During this period, the Claws will force the possessor to perform the evil and heinous acts most likely to get him into serious trouble. Once the enslavement ends, the cumulative chance resets.

**Prime Powers:** The possessor may cast a death ray equal to *finger of death* once per day with no saving throw for the victim. The possessor may also *plane shift* once per day; note

that using this prime power to travel to a good-aligned plane will double the chance of possession (if the power use would normally generate a 2% chance, then traveling to a good-aligned plane would introduce a 4% chance). If the wearer becomes possessed by the relic (see above) and should prove a worthy and valuable slave, the Claws will attempt to *plane shift* back to the Abyss at the first opportunity.

**Side Effects:** The possessor takes on the poisonous touch of Ssur-Sparih; any human or man-sized humanoid (except undead) touched by the possessor will die of poison unless a successful saving throw is made. ■

*James Carl Boney is a three-decade veteran of many RPGs. He is the author of three OSRIC modules for Expeditions Retreat Press, with a fourth in the works. He resides in the spooky little town of New Edinburg, Arkansas.*

## Random City Lair Generator

by Sean Wills, a.k.a. Geordie Racer

**Editor's note:** When Russell Cone invented the Roll All The Dice table, in which the referee grabs one of each type of dice, rolls them all, and then immediately has the results from the tables, the concept took off. Here, Sean Wills offers one of these tables for generating lairs inside a city.

This quick and easy generator will create a variety of City Lair locations.

### Roll All The Dice!

(1d4, 1d6, 1d8, 1d10, 1d12, and 1d20)

| d4 | Lair is located |        |
|----|-----------------|--------|
|    | 1               | Under  |
|    | 2               | Within |
|    | 3               | Above  |
|    | 4               | Behind |

| d6 | 'Cover' Building |          |
|----|------------------|----------|
|    | 1-3              | Dwelling |
|    | 4                | Tavern   |
|    | 5                | Temple   |
|    | 6                | Store    |

| d8 | Frequency Of Use |                   |
|----|------------------|-------------------|
|    | 1                | Special Occasions |
|    | 2-3              | Daily             |
|    | 4-5              | Nightly           |
|    | 6                | Weekly            |
|    | 7                | Monthly           |
|    | 8                | Yearly            |

| d10 | City Location |            |
|-----|---------------|------------|
|     | 1             | North      |
|     | 2             | South      |
|     | 3             | East       |
|     | 4             | West       |
|     | 5             | North West |
|     | 6             | South East |
|     | 7             | North East |
|     | 8             | South West |
|     | 9-10          | Centre     |

| d12 | Main Activity |            |
|-----|---------------|------------|
|     | 1-3           | Planning   |
|     | 4-5           | Storage    |
|     | 6             | Gambling   |
|     | 7             | Recruiting |
|     | 8             | Spying     |
|     | 9             | Carousing  |
|     | 10-12         | Hiding     |

| d20 | Occupants |             |
|-----|-----------|-------------|
|     | 1         | Monsters    |
|     | 2         | Rebels      |
|     | 3         | Smugglers   |
|     | 4         | Bandits     |
|     | 5         | Demi-Humans |
|     | 6         | Fugitives   |
|     | 7         | Pilgrims    |
|     | 8         | Mercenaries |
|     | 9         | Cultists    |
|     | 10        | Refugees    |

d20

#### Occupants (continued)

|    |             |
|----|-------------|
| 11 | Burglars    |
| 12 | Adventurers |
| 13 | Monsters    |
| 14 | Exiles      |
| 15 | Vigilantes  |
| 16 | Thieves     |
| 17 | Assassins   |
| 18 | Monsters    |
| 19 | Scholars    |
| 20 | Berserkers  |

Add up all the dice rolled then halve it to give the total number of lair occupants. ■

Generator Layout concept by James R. "Grim" Cone, 2009.

Sean Wills, aka Geordie Racer, began gaming in 1986 using a customized version of 1st ed. AD&D with a homebrewed setting. Living in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, a city of Orcs and Amazons in the shadow of Hadrian's Wall, Sean gravitated towards rules-light games and collaborative writing.

## Random Thieves Guild Generator

by Robert Lionheart

No honor among thieves? On the contrary, organized Thieves Guilds are a staple of fantasy roleplaying. These criminal gatherings are commonly found in cities, less so in towns and rarely in villages. When not sending footpads and cutpurses to steal an adventurer's hard won treasure, Guilds usually run protection rackets, forcing merchants and maybe even nobles to pay sacks of gold to keep their stores and homes safe from theft. A fun Thieves Guild should have all the backstabbing action and shadowy drama of your favorite mobster movies.

Like pirates with their shipboard code, thieves have a few basic rules that are common to all Guilds. First, never pilfer from the Guild or its Members. Second, never pilfer from a Merchant or Noble who pays his protection money and lastly, never ever try to hide the Guild Master's cut of your evening's endeavors. Beyond that, every Guild is different.

Adventuring thieves and their dungeoneering comrades wander the world and frequently step into another Guild's territory. It is common tradition for non-guild thieves to bring an offering to the local Guild to get limited permission for any thieving within their territory. An offering worth 100 gold per level of the thief is usually acceptable for starters, but most Guild Masters will prefer "a piece of the action" instead.

Old School Mapping



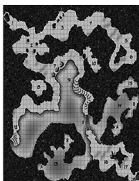
# PARATIME DESIGN CARTOGRAPHY

<http://paratime.ca/cartography/>

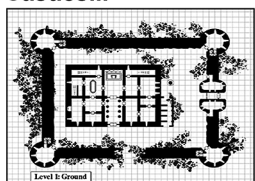
Need a map for your RPG game? Check out Paratime Design Cartography where there are over 175 free maps available that range from fantasy to sci-fi. The maps range from old school blue to full colour with many having more than one option.

Private and Commercial commissions are available. Check us out today.

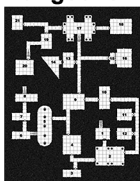
**Caverns...**

**Castles...**



**Dungeons...**



**Villages...**





A Thieves Guild is defined by its Arena of Power, Headquarters, Leadership, Resources and maybe even an Unusual Trait or two. Roll for each of these components on the following charts to build your next Thieves Guild. The 2D6 randomizer means that extreme results occur 1 in 36 and unusual combinations may arise in 1 in 6 guilds. These odds were chosen to create interesting and memorable guilds.

### Arena of Power

Thieving guilds tend to control a single area, such as city, port town, or other local area where plenty of commerce comes and goes. Any settlement large enough to have Merchant Quarter has a Thieves' Guild (whether they know it or not!). The geographic size of any "local area" is determined by the referee based on population, commerce and distance from other settlements.

The Arena of Power of the Guild describes how far their tendrils of informers, burglars and protection rackets can effectively reach. Most are localized to a single settlement, but a few rare guilds might be powerful forces reaching across an entire game world. Guilds that lack control of their territory surely have Rival Guilds. These Guilds will usually be caught in deadly power struggles fought in dirty



back alleys, dimly lit street corners and bloody crossroads at midnight. What faction will your adventurers favour with their swords and spells?

|     |                                                                                          |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2   | The Guild has no power (either recently broken apart or maybe just established)*         |
| 3   | Fraction of the Local Area (Rival has Majority or multiple Rivals have Fractions)        |
| 4-5 | Majority of Local Area (Rival has a Fraction)                                            |
| 6-7 | Entire Local Area                                                                        |
| 8   | Entire Local Area and Nearby Settlements                                                 |
| 9   | Fraction of the Nation / Region (Rival has Majority or multiple Rivals have Local Areas) |
| 10  | Majority of the Nation / Region (Rival has Fraction or multiple Rivals have Local Areas) |
| 11  | Entire Nation / Region                                                                   |
| 12  | Multiple Nations / Regions (maybe even an entire Planar Dimension!)                      |

\*A Guild without any power does not mean it lacks membership or leadership, just that they are currently completely ineffective at gathering information, enforcing their protection rackets or keeping non-guild thieves from doing as they please.

## Headquarters

Unlike wizardly towers, clerical temples and warrior halls, most Thieves Guilds must remain hidden from the authorities and other prying eyes. Many are hidden behind (or beneath) legitimate establishments or exist outside the reach of the long arm of the law. A Thieves Guild rolls once on the Headquarters chart for each Local Area (or Fraction) controlled by the Guild.

|    |                                                                                        |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2  | Underneath the Palace (maybe right under the King's Treasury!)                         |
| 3  | None (meetings are held in homes, taverns, rarely the same place twice!)               |
| 4  | Classic Abandoned Dungeon or Natural Cave / Tunnel Complex                             |
| 5  | Multiple Hidden Locations in Local Area (various safe-houses, vaults and false fronts) |
| 6  | Hidden Manor (my that nobleman surely has odd guests on moonless nights!)              |
| 7  | Hidden within Other Establishment (Gambling Den, Brothel, Orphanage)                   |
| 8  | Keep / Fortress                                                                        |
| 9  | Mobile Headquarters (such as a galleon, caravan or airship)                            |
| 10 | Beneath the Temple of an Immortal worshipped by criminals                              |
| 11 | Public Structure (a multi-story guild right on the Merchant's Row!)*                   |
| 12 | Extra-Dimensional Space                                                                |

\*A public Thieves Guild might be forbidden to prey on local citizens, but instead focus their crimes on foreigners and official enemies of the realm. These public guilds might exist under the protection of a rural lord, whose territory would act as a shelter for the guild's activities outside his realm. Such organizations might rename themselves "Adventurer's Guild" to allay the fears of nearby merchants. Another possibility is that some cities might permit the existence of a legal thieves guild, provided that the guild provides a share of the "take" to the city's government. Such cities might view this arrangement as a way of keeping crime down to an acceptable level without having to spend the city's own resources on battling crime – the criminals would take care of it themselves.

## Leadership

The Thief Lord is the final authority in his Guild, but such figures are rarely known to the general public. Many live double lives as pompous nobles, wealthy tradesmen, odd hermits or even toothless beggars. Some paranoid Guild Masters might even disguise their identities from their own followers, hiding behind masks, doppelgangers and illusions.

|    |                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2  | Anarchy – although united in common cause, no thief stands higher than his brother                                                                                                                  |
| 3  | Clerical – the Guild serves a god of thievery. All upper hierarchy must be thieves who are dual-class clerics or maybe clerics rule and thieves obey.                                               |
| 4  | Merchant Prince – the merchant uses the thieves to prey on rivals and keep the nobles in check. Maybe the entire Merchant's Guild is just a false front!                                            |
| 5  | Hereditary Rule – the Guild is essentially a noble family and most members are related by blood or marriage (and they make offers you cannot refuse)                                                |
| 6  | Dictatorship – ruled by a dangerous warlord who may or may not be a thief                                                                                                                           |
| 7  | Meritocracy – ruled by Thief of highest level or biggest hoard                                                                                                                                      |
| 8  | Oligarchy – ruled by a small group of high-level Thieves (imagine the backstabbing!)                                                                                                                |
| 9  | Powerful Monster – a succubus, lich or demon would make an excellent Thief Lord!                                                                                                                    |
| 10 | Enemy of the Crown – the Guild leaders are usurpers (possibly "freedom fighters," or possibly "terrorists") who are actively working to overthrow the ruling class.                                 |
| 11 | The Crown – nobles use the Guild to spy on other nobles, keep the merchants in check and act as secret police. Or maybe the Guildmaster is the Crown!<br><br>Or maybe thieves are the ruling class? |
| 12 | Demi-god – the lord of the thieves is a minor member of the immortal pantheon who enjoys the temporal power to carry out his whims and wishes.                                                      |

## Resources

The main resource of any Guild is its membership. The exact number, racial breakdown and character levels are left up to the referee to decide as fits his campaign. Thieves Guilds whose power stretches beyond a single locale might have additional Resources or even different resources in each local area.

|   |                                                                                                                                                         |
|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2 | Supernatural Pacts, Curses, or Diseases – maybe demonic pacts, rampant lycanthropy, or agreements that are enforced by supernatural powers of some kind |
| 3 | Honor Among Thieves – members adhere to a strict code of conduct, spiritual philosophy, or fanatical devotion that makes them all very dangerous.       |
| 4 | Gossip Network – all Guilds have ears for gossip, but this one has an organized network running through the entire populace.                            |

|    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5  | Monsters – usually as guard creatures, like trained apes, giant rats or golems                                                                                                                                                      |
| 6  | Monstrous Humanoids – goblins, orcs, and other unsavory bestial types                                                                                                                                                               |
| 7  | Non-Thieves – Guild invites fighting-men, clerics, and wizards as members                                                                                                                                                           |
| 8  | Mercenaries – can call upon both Non-Thieves and Monstrous Humanoids,<br>but their loyalty is to the gold and not the Guild, which can be problematic                                                                               |
| 9  | Thick With Thieves – a very large membership that can be easily called upon.<br>Double the normal number encountered. Alternately, such a Guild could instead have an unusually strong number of high-level thieves in their ranks. |
| 10 | Influence or Control of a noble family                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 11 | Influence or Control of a Temple (of an Immortal worshipped by criminals)                                                                                                                                                           |
| 12 | Ancient Artifact of tremendous power                                                                                                                                                                                                |

### Unusual Trait

The final touch to a Thieves Guild is an Unusual Trait that may add some roleplaying depth, regional oddity, or maybe fleshes out the extent of their criminal activities.

|    |                                                                                                                                          |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2  | Severe Paranoia – non-guild thieves are hunted and slain!                                                                                |
| 3  | All members must adhere to one alignment (dependent on how the referee handles alignments in his campaign)                               |
| 4  | Stealing from the living (or the dead, pick one) is prohibited.                                                                          |
| 5  | The Guild is deeply ensconced in local political intrigues                                                                               |
| 6  | The Guild controls one or more unsavory businesses (brothels, moneychangers, opium dens, gambling parlors or tax collectors)             |
| 7  | Nothing unusual...or what dark secrets are they hiding?                                                                                  |
| 8  | Dirty Deeds! The Guild sells the services of assassins.                                                                                  |
| 9  | The Guild controls one or more a legitimate businesses (lamplighters, dock porters, taverns, bodyguards, street performers or breweries) |
| 10 | Stealing from a specific race (humans, elves, dwarves, orcs, etc) is prohibited.                                                         |
| 11 | The Guild is obsessed with collecting magical items above all other wealth                                                               |
| 12 | Robin and the Hoods – the Guild supports the poor by robbing the rich                                                                    |

## Sample Guilds

Here is a sneak peek of what you can do with a few dice rolls and five minutes of brainstorming. Don't forget these are just random charts so make sure the final results create something that adds to the fun of your adventures!

### Who says you can't take it with you?

**Arena of Power** = Majority of Local Area (Rival has a Fraction)

**Headquarters** = Beneath the Temple of an Immortal worshipped by criminals

**Leadership** = Powerful Monster

**Resources** = Monstrous Humanoids

**Unusual Trait** = Guild is deeply ensconced in political intrigues

There is a temple where beggars, whores, money changers and lawyers gather to pray and give up sacrifices of gold and jewelry in hopes of gaining even greater riches. It is a church of greed, and a shrine to ill-gotten wealth. The Thieves Guild lives deep beneath the catacombs, ruled over by a shadowy Wraith who rules the criminal underworld with a chilling skeletal grip, bereft of mortal compassion or sympathy. The human thieves of the city are aided by loyal ghouls who munch away unwanted “evidence” of any crimes. And how many nobles and merchants have been seduced by this Guild's vampiric thralls?

### The Rival Guild

**Arena of Power** = Fraction of Local Area

**Headquarters** = Hidden Manor

**Leadership** = Merchant Prince

**Resources** = Influence or Control of a Noble Family

**Unusual Trait** = Guild controls one or more unsavory businesses

Someone has to oppose those vicious undead! Who better than Barnabas Blackblade? Or better known in polite circles as Lord Barns – a cheap scoundrel who tricked the Duke's daughter into a tawdry marriage. The Guild Headquarters is actually the Duke's summer estate and the servants all replaced with loyal criminals. While Lord Barns is new to the post of Guild Master, he is maneuvering his royal in-laws against the Temple and deepening the Guild's war chest by controlling the town's moneychangers and tax collectors.

### Elven Whispers

**Arena of Power** = Fraction of the Nation / Region

**Headquarters** = None

**Leadership** = Hereditary Rule

**Resources** = Gossip Network

**Unusual Trait** = Nothing Unusual

Thieves in the coastal settlements know where their way bread is buttered. A family of elves controls all the illicit trade, keeping track of cargo and ship manifests coming and going along the waterways. Woe to pirates who strike a caravel under their protection! Members of the fey clan come and go as they please, showing up suddenly to advise their human thieves and leaving just as quickly. If they have a base of operations, it is unknown to every human

member. The elves are generous with their silver, so information flows to them from the smallest fishing hamlet to the largest port city. The elves will know your adventurers have arrived in their territory before the sun sets.

### Port City Delvers' Guild

**Arena of Power** = Entire Local Area

**Headquarters** = Public Structure

**Leadership** = Meritocracy

**Resources** = Monsters

**Unusual Trait** = All members adhere to one Alignment

Although the Delver's Guild controls all thieving in the port city, they are not rivals with the Elven Whispers because they are not concerned with sea-trade, protection rackets or any criminal acts! Instead, the Guild is beholden

to Law and the pursuit of digging out riches from the many dungeons that lay buried in the nearby isles. Their headquarters is a prominent meeting place for foreign adventurers, but all true members must swear fealty to the High Laws of the realm. Half of the treasure from their delving goes to rebuild the nation so deeply harmed in the last Orc War. Their leader is usually the highest-level thief and the Guild Master is expected to lead at least one successful expedition per year to keep his post. Since it is hard to recruit smart warriors for dungeoneering, the Guild supports their excursions with a variety of tamed beasts. They prefer stealthy monsters, such as giant weasels, poisonous snakes and charmed bugbears. ■

*Robert Lionheart can be found haunting various forums as the ever troublesome Spinachcat. He won the 2008 PolyCon Game Design Award for his upcoming Goreblade: Heavy Metal Roleplaying and he has been published in several fanzines and journals. Robert has been a dedicated Old-school gamer since 1978.*

## The Fantasy Marketplace: Looking at Merchants Differently

By Michael Shorten

(<http://oldguyrpg.blogspot.com>)

How many times have you encountered this bit of play during your game?

**Referee:** "OK, you all enter the town, victorious after your excursion to the Ultimate Pit of Despair. What are you going to do now?"

**Player 1:** "Well, we're going to head to the store to buy rations, more torches, maybe some chalk."

**Player 2:** "If you're heading to the store, I could use a sling."

**Player 3:** "Oh yeah, I want to buy a guard dog! That would be useful for wandering monsters..."

**Referee:** "OK, you all head to the store, gold burning holes in your pouches..."

That's how most of my "shopping trips" went as I've refereed and played games. I never stopped to think that perhaps this hand-waving of shopping, though quick and skips over the "boring parts," was also missing out on some exciting possibilities as well.

There's nothing wrong with a "Ye Olde WalleyMartte." It's definitely easier to referee shopping if it's skipped over, and in many campaigns, this is appropriate and even desirable, if you are emphasizing "less town, more wilderness" type of play. Some referees may expand that a bit to have a tavern or Inn, an Armorer, a Blacksmith and maybe even

a Magic Shop and Stables in their town and city settings, but most of the time, they stop there.

After having some inspiration from the Internet and a game I play in [1], I looked at the various equipment lists from my favorite RPGs. What could a Referee do if he or she set up his towns and cities with merchants, marketplaces, and division of products similar to what we might have encountered in a genuine medieval setting? No more "Store of Many Things," but instead a lively, bustling city with shops, merchants, and reasons for their being in the setting. So I started putting together some ideas that turned into this article as well as new equipment lists and setting information in my campaigns.

This article showcases some of the merchants from my own campaign as well as some seed ideas for you to use. This guide can be used with all the most common OGL RPGs that I'm familiar with: OSRIC, Swords & Wizardry, microlite20 and Labyrinth Lord as well as inspiration from the first "advanced" edition of the world's most well known fantasy role playing game.

[1] Alexis of the blog "Tao of D&D" has compiled an utterly mind-blowing fantasy-accurate European/Asian setting. His entire campaign system is unique and is a fascinating simulation of melding fantasy with the world



in 1600. His use of merchants and unique equipment lists per town is what inspired me to write this guide.

## Acater (Provisions/Food Sellers)

In every town or city, among the boring shop-keeper types, there's a particular merchant the characters should want to find and befriend – the acater (known today as a 'caterer'). While some acaters may not be little more than a grocery store, an acater can also specialize as an outfitter, the land-based version of a ship chandler. In other words, they prepared and sold food in bulk to military units, castles, manor houses, caravans, and .. in this context, adventuring expeditions. When you sell the food, you know where everyone is, you know how many there are, and you know who's on the move (even if you don't know exactly where they're headed).

The players might find him accidentally by asking around for rations, or they might get curious when the patrons of tavern after tavern keep pointing out this "grocer" as an information source. A friendly (or charmed) acater can be a source of more information than almost anyone else in the campaign, if the players think of it or if the acater approaches them for some reason with a tidbit. Also, scouting out the acater's operation can be a great way to find and exploit opportunities. Want to sneak into a caravan, a ship, or a castle in a barrel of food? Befriend the acater, or sneak into his storerooms. Want to "divert" some supplies? Figure out a way to cook the acater's books without him finding out. Want to find out when a rich merchant's caravan is slated to leave? When are the supplies scheduled for delivery? The acater knows all.

Plus, since the acater is in contact with all sorts of traveling merchants, and a lot of his clients are also travelers, he's bound to have picked up some interesting items in stock. Some of these might even include minor magic items. For example, an elven acater could have "elven rations" which are small, virtually encumbrance free, quite tasty and can add 1 to 2 wounds of recovery if eaten within one hour of a *healing* spell.

An acater might also be willing to buy interesting monster-meat from the PCs if it is fresh and something that would smoke/dry out well and provide a profit. If an acater has need, a PC cleric with a "Purify Food" type of spell may be asked to provide a service. Anything that affects food sources can affect the PCs ability to buy their rations, too – disease, drought, war. An acater would definitely be affected by all this and may ask for help from the PCs.

**Example Available Items:** Garlic, Standard Rations, Iron/Trail Rations, Salted Meats and Fish, Hardtack.

## Apothecaries

Apothecaries were the drug stores in medieval times. They would supply the various chemicals and mixtures known to medicine. They were probably as mysterious and interesting as we might find an old occult shop today. In your campaign, the apothecary could be home to the town's brightest alchemists, or it could be the shop for a hedge wizard who is selling mundane items to commoners, but more interesting goods to the discerning shopper – the apothecary can act as the local "Magick Shoppe" for those campaigns where it is appropriate.

If you are looking for a way to include alchemy into your campaign, an apothecary would make a great place to host an alchemist – there are plenty of lists available where one can match herbs to various effects (the Game Referee's Guide for first edition has an excellent appendix on this). An apothecary can also provide a counterpoint to the usual temple healing – apothecaries might sell healing potions and salves that don't work quite as well as magic, but are also less expensive – imagine a salve that does 1d4 wounds of healing, but only costs 25 gold pieces. A bargain at the price! He might also sell, if not real magic potions, concoctions that do the same thing with lesser effects, shorter durations, or more random durations.

In my campaign, the apothecary shop is run by a seer, who has interesting needs as well as information to dispense to the mages. He may find it easier to gain spell components and adventure hooks by befriendng her. Enterprising players that play natural magical users (like druids) could conceivably set up shop in their town and become "respectable" merchants in their own right, or become suppliers of unique items to existing apothecaries.

**Example Available Items:** Acid (flask), Antitoxin (vial), Belladonna (bunch), Disguise Kit (face paint), Ink (1 oz vial), Soap (per lb), Wolvesbane (handful)

## Armorer

An armorer in medieval times was less prevalent than in the typical fantasy setting. Most armorers were funded by patronage, and therefore were in the service of nobility and governments, given the costs and materials needed to make armor. It might add a special bonus to players if at the end of a quest, the Lord of the Keep offers the services of his personal armorer (and weaponsmith) to the players.

That might make more advanced armors available, as versus the common cloth or leather armor.

Don't forget that most armor wasn't bought "off the shelf", but was the product of measurement and creation, much like the tailoring of clothes. When your Fighting-man walks into the armorer's shop and tosses down the hundreds of gold pieces, he may still have to wait a few weeks for his armor to be completed. Just for the sake of convenience, you might give the armorer a stock of one or two suits of 'lesser' armor, but if characters keep dying, or the party keeps hiring more and more NPCs, that stock might get depleted and cause some of the torchbearers to wear cloth armor instead of chain mail, at least until the order gets filled. Plus, a "torchbearer" suit of ring mail can only be punctured so many times before it needs repair – and a bloodstained, slashed-up suit of armor isn't the most confidence-inspiring piece of equipment to hand your hirelings, either.

You might also consider how armorers can craft "plus type" armors (think of the typical +1 shield) or truly "magical" armors and shields. In my campaign, "plussie" armors and shields are the results of a high degree of craftsmanship and time taken to produce the item, versus anything truly magical. In order to create a "true" magic item, an armorer must work with a mage or cleric to produce something arcane or divine. This could involve rituals, quests, items that need to be obtained – any number of things which you could include the PCs in. An example quest might be to obtain the Deep Black Waters from the depths of the Unknown Caves – first braving the beasts and goblins that lie in the way. These waters are used in the forging of the metal to create the chainmail of spell resistance.

**Example Available Items:** An armorer should be able to make or sell all armors available in the various equipment lists, but you may want to restrict or vary by armorer or situation.

## Bookbinders

Book "printing" in medieval times would normally be the work of several different craftsmen, from the paper makers to the binders, to the "illuminators" (those who put gold leaf on pages) to the scribes who would write the words. A bookbinder is a natural place to find blank spell books, although you might consider lumping bookbinders and booksellers together to make an interesting spell book and scroll shop.



It could be that by having a spellbook especially prepared with gold leaf and the finest in materials, it affects the spells' effects and duration. You may rule that for higher-level spells, such fine quality books are necessary, forcing the player to give up gold and find special inks and materials to have the book made.

Bookbinders and booksellers also provide opportunities for small quests. In my campaign, the Ruined Wizard's Tower was found to have a great many old books intact. Now the party is waiting word from the bookseller as to the value and worth of those books – but who knows what evil plots have been hatched by nefarious figures to snatch those books away, and kill any who have seen them?

**Available Items:** Spellbook (blank)

## Locksmiths

In medieval times, locksmiths were usually members of a guild. They were highly regarded as skilled craftsmen with secret knowledge of the inner workings of locks. What a better way for a thief (or thieves guild) to operate in the open than by selling the very items that they are good at overcoming? An especially powerful thief might be able to create nearly foolproof locks, except that they open for himself and those he favors. An honest locksmith might not be willing to part with a copy of lockpicks or master keys, whereas a more dishonest or greedy locksmith might be bribed with a few extra gold pieces to provide a key (or correct lockpick) to the castle's storerooms.

**Available Items:** Lock (average), Lock (good), Lock (simple), Manacles, Thieves' Tools (lockpicks)

## Smiths (Blacksmith, Coppersmith, Goldsmith, Silversmith, Tinsmith)

In typical campaigns, a referee might have a blacksmith serving as the general “metalsmith” of the town. In some campaigns, the blacksmith can create just about any sort of metal object, as well as be an armorer and weaponsmith kiosk! This was usually not the case. Generally, each “metal” had its own craftsman to master the intricacies of each metal. This provides opportunities for Referees to help players part with their gold, as well as provide unique items and effects and adventure hooks.

For a holy symbol, having a metal symbol versus a wooden symbol might confer a higher probability of turning undead. The quality of the metal might also increase the effect, or the lack of quality might cause problems. When trying to turn a powerful undead, your pewter holy symbol melts if you roll a large failure. The vampire looks at your wooden or copper holy symbol and laughs at your attempt to dissuade him.



**NOW AVAILABLE!!**

### The Outpost On The Edge Of The Far Reaches

What glorious treasures and unspeakable  
dangers rest within this abandoned outpost?  
Only the most brave (or foolhardy)  
may ever know!

A Fantasy RPG adventure module adaptable  
to Old School Fantasy Rule Systems.

 **THE  
WARLOCK'S  
HOME BREW™**

[www.IndieOnly.com/mods.html](http://www.IndieOnly.com/mods.html)

One very interesting thought regarding metalsmithing comes from a book by Harry Turtledove, called *Between the Rivers*. In this book, the gods feared metalsmithing because it represented something “not natural” or almost a man-made magic that flew in the face of the power the gods represented. You could extend this to make the various smiths shamanic in nature. They could possibly grant their wares and crafts a type of power based on the metal they were made from. A golden wand might cast higher-level spells than an iron or pewter wand. A sword laced with gold may be eligible for higher bonuses than a simple iron weapon.

An alternative to the availability of a smith is the UNavailability of a metalsmith. In my campaign, the players just learned that the only tinsmith has been missing for months and the family has packed up and left for kinder parts. The tinsmith made the lanterns, tinderboxes and other little items that players don't often think about. However, now, torches are suddenly a premium and any travelling merchant who happens to have a lantern or two can charge a pretty penny for them. This not only brings a flavor and life to things, it also forces the players to make choices, find resources and perhaps look at your dungeons and encounters with a different eye. (“Wait, those orcs have lanterns! Let's steal 'em!”)

## Smiths — Blacksmith

The typical fantasy trope is the sturdy blacksmith, pounding away at iron weapons, armor as well as the chain and horseshoes. In reality, many blacksmiths could create many things, but the typical town blacksmith was more engaged in the creation of common items than anything else.

**Example Available Items:** Box, iron, small (200c), Piton, Box, iron, large (400c), Pot, Caltrops, Sewing Needle, Cauldron and tripod, Scythe, Chain (10ft), Shovel, Crowbar, Sickle, Fish hook, Skillet, Grappling Hook, Sledge Hammer, Sling bullet, Mirror (small iron, polished), Spike, Miner's Pick, Spikes (dozen).

At the end of the day, it's my hope you gain some ideas and have some fun with these lists and merchants. I had a lot of fun putting them together and setting them up in my campaign. My players have enjoyed meeting unique NPC merchants and learning that sometimes a shopping trip might not just be a quick run to the mega-store. I hope you and your players have that kind of fun too. ■

*Enjoy!*



## Sources for Jobs/Merchants:

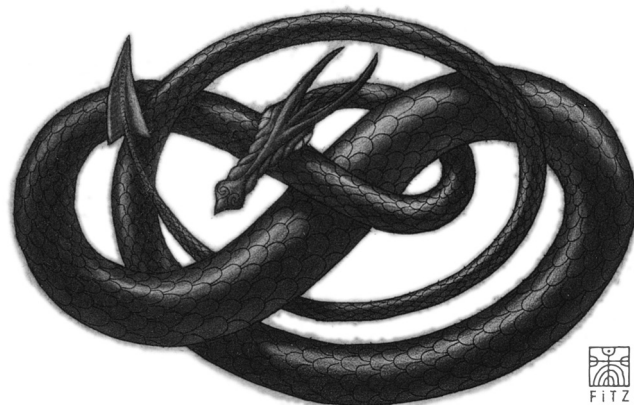
### What did people do in a Medieval City?:

<http://www.svincent.com/MagicJar/Economics/MedievalOccupations.html>

### Medieval Demographics Made Easy:

<http://www.io.com/~sjohn/demog.htm>

Michael Shorten is an old-school D&D gamer and DM. He publishes a blog (<http://oldguyrpg.blogspot.com>), is an amateur artist/writer, works as an IT manager and is a father and grandfather, in his spare time. Michael would go back in time and totally open a "Ye Olde S-Mart."



## Spell Complexity (Optional Rules)

by Brendan Falconer (Lizardfolk)

Instead of the simple 'spells per day' system whereby a magic-user erases spell formulae prepared from memory upon completion of the spell casting, referees and players may prefer to use these rules to add more uncertainty to magical power.

The results of a magic-user casting a spell are determined by two primary factors — The level of experience of the

spell caster, and the level of the spell. Secondary factors might include injury, or other distractions that may hinder the magic-user at referee discretion.

Upon casting a spell the player rolls 1d12 and consults the spell complexity matrix below.

### Spell Complexity Matrix

| Spell Level | Magic-User Level of Experience |            |             |             |             |             |             |            |
|-------------|--------------------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
|             | 1 to 3                         | 4 to 6     | 7 to 9      | 10 to 12    | 13 to 15    | 16 to 17    | 18 to 19    | 20+        |
| One         | 1-4 I (2)                      | 1-4 I (2)  | 1-5 I (2)   | 1-5 I (2)   | 1-6 I (3)   | 1-6 I (3)   | 1-7 I (3)   | 1-7 I (3)  |
|             | 5-8 D (1)                      | 5-8 D (1)  | 6-9 D (1)   | 6-9 D (2)   | 7-10 D (2)  | 7-10 D (3)  | 8-11 D (3)  | 8-11 D (3) |
|             | 9-12 F (1)                     | 9-12 F (1) | 10-12 F (1) | 10-12 F (2) | 11-12 (2)   | 11-12 (2)   | 12 F (2)    | 12 F (3)   |
| Two         | 1-3 I (1)                      | 1-4 I (2)  | 1-4 I (2)   | 1-5 I (2)   | 1-5 I (2)   | 1-6 I (3)   | 1-6 I (3)   | 1-7 I (3)  |
|             | 4-7 D (1)                      | 5-8 D (1)  | 5-8 D (1)   | 6-9 D (1)   | 6-9 D (2)   | 7-10 D (2)  | 7-10 D (3)  | 8-11 D (3) |
|             | 8-12 F                         | 9-12 F (1) | 9-12 F (1)  | 10-12 F (1) | 10-12 F (2) | 11-12 (2)   | 11-12 (2)   | 12 F (2)   |
| Three       | —                              | 1-3 I (1)  | 1-4 I (2)   | 1-4 I (2)   | 1-5 I (2)   | 1-5 I (2)   | 1-6 I (3)   | 1-6 I (3)  |
|             | —                              | 4-7 D (1)  | 5-8 D (1)   | 5-8 D (1)   | 6-9 D (1)   | 6-9 D (2)   | 7-10 D (2)  | 7-10 D (3) |
|             | —                              | 8-12 F     | 9-12 F (1)  | 9-12 F (1)  | 10-12 F (1) | 10-12 F (2) | 11-12 (2)   | 11-12 (2)  |
| Four        | —                              | —          | 1-3 I (1)   | 1-4 I (2)   | 1-4 I (2)   | 1-5 I (2)   | 1-5 I (2)   | 1-6 I (3)  |
|             | —                              | —          | 4-7 D (1)   | 5-8 D (1)   | 5-8 D (1)   | 6-9 D (1)   | 6-9 D (2)   | 7-10 D (2) |
|             | —                              | —          | 8-12 F      | 9-12 F (1)  | 9-12 F (1)  | 10-12 F (1) | 10-12 F (2) | 11-12 (2)  |
| Five        | —                              | —          | 1-3 I (1)   | 1-4 I (2)   | 1-4 I (2)   | 1-5 I (2)   | 1-5 I (2)   | 1-6 I (3)  |
|             | —                              | —          | 4-7 D (1)   | 5-8 D (1)   | 5-8 D (1)   | 6-9 D (1)   | 6-9 D (2)   | 7-10 D (2) |
|             | —                              | —          | 8-12 F      | 9-12 F (1)  | 9-12 F (1)  | 10-12 F (1) | 10-12 F (2) | 11-12 (2)  |

**I** The spell is cast immediately.

**D** The spell is delayed, as long as the magic-user continues to perform whatever activity is required to cast the spell it will occur on the next round of combat.

**F** The spell is not cast.

**(#)** The spell is not automatically lost from memory and may be cast again if this value or lower is rolled on 1d6.

| Spell Level | Magic-User Level of Experience |        |        |           |            |            |             |             |
|-------------|--------------------------------|--------|--------|-----------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|
|             | 1 to 3                         | 4 to 6 | 7 to 9 | 10 to 12  | 13 to 15   | 16 to 17   | 18 to 19    | 20+         |
| Six         | —                              | —      | —      | 1-3 I (1) | 1-4 I (2)  | 1-4 I (2)  | 1-5 I (2)   | 1-5 I (2)   |
|             | —                              | —      | —      | 4-7 D (1) | 5-8 D (1)  | 5-8 D (1)  | 6-9 D (1)   | 6-9 D (2)   |
|             | —                              | —      | —      | 8-12 F    | 9-12 F (1) | 9-12 F (1) | 10-12 F (1) | 10-12 F (2) |
| Seven       | —                              | —      | —      | —         | 1-3 I (1)  | 1-4 I (2)  | 1-4 I (2)   | 1-5 I (2)   |
|             | —                              | —      | —      | —         | 4-7 D (1)  | 5-8 D (1)  | 5-8 D (1)   | 6-9 D (1)   |
|             | —                              | —      | —      | —         | 8-12 F     | 9-12 F (1) | 9-12 F (1)  | 10-12 F (1) |
| Eight       | —                              | —      | —      | —         | —          | —          | 1-3 I (1)   | 1-4 I (2)   |
|             | —                              | —      | —      | —         | —          | —          | 4-7 D (1)   | 5-8 D (1)   |
|             | —                              | —      | —      | —         | —          | —          | 8-12 F      | 9-12 F (1)  |
| Nine        | —                              | —      | —      | —         | —          | —          | 1-3 I (1)   | 1-4 I (2)   |
|             | —                              | —      | —      | —         | —          | —          | 4-7 D (1)   | 5-8 D (1)   |
|             | —                              | —      | —      | —         | —          | —          | 8-12 F      | 9-12 F (1)  |

**I** The spell is cast immediately.

**D** The spell is delayed, as long as the magic-user continues to perform whatever activity is required to cast the spell it will occur on the next round of combat.

**F** The spell is not cast.

**(#)** The spell is not automatically lost from memory and may be cast again if this value or lower is rolled on 1d6.

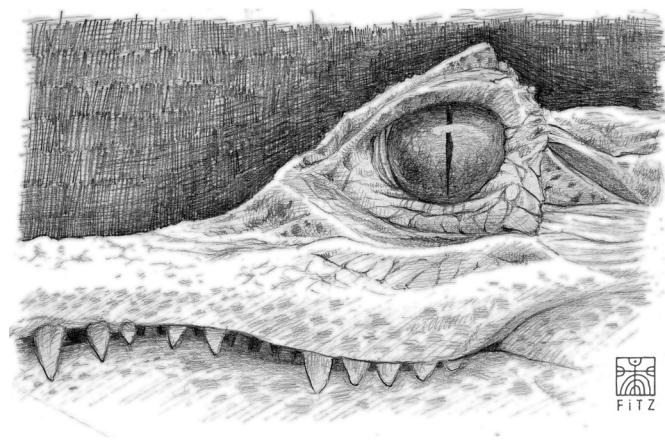
The game implications of using the spell complexity rules should be understood. A magic-user will generally be able

to attempt to cast more spells per day, particularly lower level spells with which a greater mastery has been achieved. However, the greater element of risk means that magic-users will perhaps cast fewer spells successfully per encounter. Spells being delayed or failing entirely could mean the difference between life and death for the spell caster or allied characters.

The random element could well add a great sense of drama, not to mention a swell of success and achievement for the magic-user who is able to defeat foes with magic and still be able to press on without requiring rest. Likewise, poor luck could spell disaster for the party if the spell caster is unable to cast vital spells in a timely fashion, or not at all! ■

*These rules are based on rules by E. G. Gygax and Jeff Perren as presented in the Fantasy Supplement of Chainmail – rules for medieval miniatures, 3rd Edition, 7th printing 1979.*

*A grouchy English chap with over twenty years of role-playing games experience, usually spent despairing behind the screen, Brendan Falconer wastes more time writing settings and systems he'll never finish than he should. The rest of the time he spends trying to find ways to put lizardfolk, otyugh, and blue dragons into every dungeon he designs no matter how nonsensical that gets!*



# Thoughts on “Arnesonian” Alchemy in the Original Dungeon Game

By Jason Vasché, March 2009

In the *First Fantasy Campaign*, Dave Arneson outlined a magic system quite different from Gary Gygax’s “Vancian” one that has become the established norm for D&D. Spell slots and memorization were wholly absent, replaced by quasi-alchemical research and experimentation. However, the information provided offered only the barest sketch of what could (and by accounts, was) an exciting, flavorful magic system.

*“In Blackmoor, magic followed the “Formula” pattern for most magic. The reason behind limiting the number of spells that a Magic User could take down into the Dungeon was simply that many of the ingredients had to be prepared ahead of time, and of course, once used were then powerless... Progression reflected the increasing ability of the Magic user to mix spells of greater and greater complexity.” (First Fantasy Campaign, p. 50.)*

The goal of this article is not to present a comprehensive alchemical system; for those readers hoping for a complete, detailed listing of reagents, compounds, mixtures, and other minutiae, I am sorry to disappoint. Fortunately there are plenty of such resources out there, ranging from the simplicity of the *Ultima* computer games to detailed systems as found in *The Compleat Alchemist* by Stephan M. Sechi or David A. Hargrave’s *Arduin Grimoires* and *Compleat Arduin*, Vol. 3: *The Black Grimoire*. My goal here is to explore the possibilities of the “Arnesonian” system laid out in the *First Fantasy Campaign*, hewing to the spirit and freewheeling approach of the original rules. I hope to provide a meatier framework for “Arnesonian” alchemy that still allows for plenty of creative input and customization by individual referees. While my mechanical emphasis is on *Swords & Wizardry: White Box*, the material is equally usable by referees of 0e, *Labyrinth Lord*, *OSRIC*, and other old-school games.

## Alchemical Mixtures: Their Preparation and Delivery

### The Basics

For the purposes of this article, alchemy is the arcane discipline of preparing special *mixtures* that produce magical effects. All characters are capable of utilizing these mixtures, but the preparation of such is not a trade or craft that can be casually learned like brewing, sewing, or smithing; such

an esoteric art requires years of careful, systematic study and intense mental discipline to even be initiated into its mysteries. Alchemical mixtures are prepared from individual ingredients (or *reagents*) possessing latent magical properties. Said properties are activated through alchemical processes, and manifest when the mixture is inhaled, ingested, or otherwise applied.

Many of the alchemical mixtures and effects in my own campaigns are derived directly from the standard spell and potion lists found in old-school game products. For example, the effects produced by *Powder of Friendship* and *Dust of the Sandman* are similar to the spells *Charm Person* and *Sleep* respectively, differing primarily in the method of delivery and area of effect. As with standard spells, the research and presentation of new spells that suit the tone of your individual campaign is left to the group’s imagination. Depending on the campaign, alchemists may also prepare poisons, antidotes, healing draughts, acids, drugs, etc. with the potency of said mixtures increasing in proportion to the Alchemist’s level of experience.

### Reagents

Interesting and useful though they may be, extensive lists of reagents and their individual properties seem out of place in a freewheeling, rules-light game. Suffice it to say that all mixtures require highest-quality reagents and materials of varying cost. I suggest that most reagents – herbs, spices, minerals, animal matter, etc – be commonly-known, if not commonly obtainable (mixture level x 25–200 gp depending on availability and amount needed). More complex, I.e. higher-level mixtures may also require the procurement of additional special reagents that increase the cost of production. Gaseous mixtures as a rule are more expensive on account of the need for *airtight* containers and the particularly intensive labor required (mixture level x3). Perhaps there is some sort of *handwavium* native to your campaign setting which must be added to “activate” the latent magic in the other ingredients. Higher level mixtures may require more exotic items such as 5000-gp gems, dragon eggs, giant spider poison or silk glands, Orcus’ tears and so on. The referee may also rule that certain mundane reagents must be collected under certain conditions for maximum potency: limestone from a particular cave under



flood conditions, herbs picked during a certain phase of the moon, bones exhumed at a certain time of night, etc.

The Laboratory

Successful preparation of alchemical mixtures assumes several things: the Alchemist has access to a proper laboratory (stocked with equipment of minimum value of [level x 1000] gp), that said laboratory is a carefully controlled environment, and that the alchemist has sufficient time and energy to wholly devote himself to the preparation. 1st level and most 2nd level liquid- or solid-state mixtures may be prepared with the use of a mortar & pestle, cauldron, and fire, but such a hazardous approach invites greater chances of failure and mishap. Liquid- and solid-state mixtures of 3rd level or higher and all gaseous mixtures (regardless of level) cannot be prepared in such a way at all.

*“Since there was always the chance of failure in spells (unless they were practiced and materials for some spells were limited (determined simply by a die roll)), the Magic User did not just go around practicing all the time... The Magic User could practice low level spells all the time, cheaply and safely, but his Constitution determined how often he could practice without rest. Thus, the adventurers might want a Magic User to come with them only to find him lying exhausted.”*  
(First Fantasy Campaign, p. 50)

Preparation of Mixtures

To prepare the mixture requires use of the appropriate materials for a number of days equal to the mixture level x2; furthermore, the process requires intense concentration. For each day spent in the laboratory, the alchemist must make a Constitution check; furthermore, he suffers a cumulative -1 penalty to the check for each consecutive day after the first. Failure of that roll at any time indicates fatigue, which in turn increases the chance of failure. Upon completion of the preparation process, the Alchemist must make an additional Constitution check; failure indicates that the alchemist is totally exhausted and must have complete rest for a number of days equal to the mixture level.

Failure and Occupational Hazards

To determine the failure of a mixture, use this formula (list of modifiers below): 1d20 ± modifiers ≥ 10 + effect level. If the roll is less than the target number, roll on Table 1: Mixture failure.

| Mixture                      | Modifiers                                 |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Experience:                  | +1 per levels                             |
| Proper laboratory:           | +1 per 1000 gp value greater than minimum |
| Flawed reagents:             | -1 to -4                                  |
| Superior-quality reagents:   | +1                                        |
| Fatigue:                     | -1 per day of failed Fatigue rolls        |
| Insufficient lab equipment*: | -1 per mixture level                      |
| Uncontrolled conditions:     | -1 to -4                                  |

**Example:** Kleejin the Klever is a 6th level alchemist who wants to prepare some *Dust of Speed*, a 3rd level mixture. In his 6000-gp laboratory. He has spent extra to obtain the finest reagents. Over the course of the three days of mixing, he failed his CON check once. To determine the success of his labors, he must roll 1d20 against a target of 13, modified by the following: 6 (Level mod) + 1 (superior reagents) + 3 (3000 gp over minimum lab costs) – 1 (1 day of fatigue), for a total modifier of +9. Kleejin’s player rolls a 2, resulting in a total of 11 – a failure! Now he must roll on Table 1 and hope for the best...

Table 1: Mixture Failure

| # (d12) | Result                                                                                                     |
|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1-3     | Mishap; roll on Table 2                                                                                    |
| 4-7     | Total failure; mixture is powerless and reagents are destroyed                                             |
| 8-10    | Partial failure; mixture has ½ potency + 50% chance of side effect (roll on Table 3 when mixture is used)  |
| 11-12   | Partial failure; mixture has ½ potency + 25 % chance of side effect (roll on Table 3 when mixture is used) |

Table 2: Preparation Mishap

| # (d10) | Result                                                                                                      |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1       | Mixture combusts, causing 5d6 damage; 20% of maiming, 60% chance of laboratory destruction                  |
| 2       | Noxious vapors cause 4d6 damage (save vs. Poison for ½ damage)                                              |
| 3       | Alchemist experiences uncontrolled mixture effect sporadically for 1d4 days                                 |
| 4       | Alchemist is <i>polymorphed</i> into a random animal, monster or sentient plant (15% permanent change)      |
| 5       | Alchemist’s features permanently change (eye/skin/hair-color change, toes fuse together, grows horns, etc.) |
| 6       | Mixture process seems successful, but has opposite effect when used                                         |
| 7       | Noxious vapors cause violent hallucinations; save vs. poison or go insane                                   |
| 8       | Piece of lab equipment is transmuted into a random substance (lead, gold, slime, etc.)                      |
| 9       | Alchemist is turned to stone                                                                                |
| 10      | Alchemist is turned to gaseous form (20% permanent)                                                         |

**Table 3: Mixture Side-effect**

| # (d12) | Result                                                                                                      |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1       | Permanent loss of 1 random attribute point                                                                  |
| 2       | Temporary loss of 1 random attribute point                                                                  |
| 3       | Permanent gain of 1 random attribute point                                                                  |
| 4       | Temporary gain of 1 random attribute point                                                                  |
| 5       | Permanent change of feature (hair/eye/skin color, etc.)                                                     |
| 6       | Temporary change of feature                                                                                 |
| 7       | Temporary raging halitosis or body odor                                                                     |
| 8       | Temporarily blind, deaf, or mute                                                                            |
| 9       | Temporary magic/psionic enhancer (doubles effect )                                                          |
| 10      | Temporary magic/psionic dampener (spells & items won't work in 10' radius)                                  |
| 11      | Violent hallucinations; save vs. poison or go insane                                                        |
| 12      | Mixture target suffers confusion for 1d6 turns after effect wears off (save for ½ duration, minimum 1 turn) |

### Delivery

Dusts, Powders & Incenses: Dusts and Powders may be blown through pipe, cast by hand, or placed inside glass or clay vessels to shatter and disperse on impact. Certain powders, such as poisons, may be dissolved in liquid and drank. Others may be directly ingested (through the mouth or nose) or smoked. Incense must be burned. Note that airborne powders, dusts, and incense smoke are subject to changes in wind direction or ventilation, so use with caution...

Potions, Elixirs, Philtres, and Tinctures: Potions, Elixirs, and Philtres must be consumed as per potion guidelines. Tinctures are dissolved in other liquids and drank; at the referee's discretion, their potency may be amplified or diminished depending on the solvent. Oils, Balms, Salves, Creams, Ointments: These must be applied directly to skin or physical surface. Gases: Must be contained in an airtight vial or other appropriate container (see *Preparation*), and may be delivered as a grenade, introduced into ventilation systems or some other ingenious method devised by the player. Like airborne powders and such, gases are subject to changing air currents.

## Alchemy in the adventure

Alchemy offers a potentially rich source of player- and referee-driven adventure. Alchemist characters are motivated to seek out arcane formulae in wizards' towers, ancient libraries, and elsewhere. Enterprising PCs might hire themselves out to NPC alchemists, tracking down rare reagents in exchange for treasure or information. They may find themselves targets of evil alchemists, who learn of the PCs'

possession of a particular item or reagent needed for an experiment... The services and products of NPC alchemists (where available) can be quite expensive, up to 10x the normal cost.

### The Alchemist as Player Character

The presence and characteristics of an Alchemist PC class would obviously depend on the treatment of alchemy in the individual campaign. The character methods below are based on two approaches to alchemy in my own games: the first is a *supplement* to Vancian magic, the second a *replacement* of Vancian magic. (Note that the rules laid out in this article apply equally to the alchemical procedures of both character versions.)

*Method I:* In my *White Box* "library game," I have designated alchemy as a Magic-User ability that supplements Vancian magic. Examining the *White Box* spell list, I have marked certain Magic-User and Cleric spells that can be prepared as alchemical mixtures; a suitably-equipped mage who knows the "proper" spell can produce the mixture version. Alchemically reproducible *White Box* spells: *Cure (Cause) Wounds I/II*, *Protection from Chaos (Law)*, *Purify (Putrefy) Food & Drink*, *Cure (Cause) Disease*, *Neutralize Poison*, *Charm Person*, *Sleep*, *Invisibility I/II*, *Levitate*, *Web*, *Alter Time*, *Dark Vision*, *Fly*, *Hold Person/Monster*, *Protection from Normal Missiles*, *Water Breathing*, *Confusion*, *Giant Growth*, *Polymorph*, *Animal Growth*, *Animate Dead*, *Feeblemind*, *Transform I/II*.

*Method II:* In a "Vancian-free" *White Box* campaign such as my Zhontaar science-fantasy setting, the Alchemist prepares "magical" mixtures through a combination of applied arcane study and psionic focus:

- Prime requisite: INT. To-hit bonuses, saving throws, hit dice, and level advancement as WB Magic-User.
- Begins with a number of 1st level alchemical recipes equal to his INT / 2 and 1d2 properly-prepared 1st-level mixtures. New mixture *levels* are gained using the WB Magic-User spell progression table, but new recipes within a "spell level" must be found, learned through a mentor, or individually researched.
- +1 bonus to saving throws vs. poisons and drugs, due to the Alchemist's extensive study of the subject.
- INT + 5% chance per level to read unfamiliar languages/scripts.

- Alchemists may use any weapon or armor. However, because of their lack of martial training they suffer a -2 penalty to hit when using a weapon other than the following: staff, dagger, club, dart. Similarly, the Alchemist suffers a +2 penalty to AC (-2 if using AAC) and a -1 DEX penalty if wearing medium or heavy armor.
- Starting at 5th level, the properly-equipped Alchemist can create talismans, charms, and other items imbued with permanent magical effects of [character level - 4] potency; e.g. a 6th level Alchemist could imbue an object with 2nd level mixture effects, an 8th level

character 4rd level effects, etc. Such processes require a minimum number of weeks equal to the mixture level, several exotic reagents and laboratory equipment costing at least 20,000 gp.

- Starting at 8th level, the properly-equipped Alchemist can create homonculi, golems, and other constructs (requires lab equipment costing at least 50,000 gp, numerous exotic reagents, and months of work) ■

*Jason “gnombient” Vashé is a librarian, musicologist, and armchair adventurer. Moldvay Basic was his gateway to adventure in 1983–84. He lurks in various rpg forums, and blogs on music, fantasy, old-school gaming, and library RPG advocacy at the scroll of gnom-bientus (<http://gnombient.wordpress.com>).*

## When is a Spell Book Much More Than a Spell Book?

by Brendan Falconer (Lizardfolk)

One of the greatest mistakes that can be made in a fantasy roleplaying game is to belittle magic into nothing more than a functional and reliable science; and often such dismissal of the awe and mystery of magic begins with the spell book! Every starting elf and magic-user has one, and the lucky ones will find more during expeditions or quests – yet such little import is attributed to these tomes of untold power! To be tossed into a backpack and stripped of spells at some future date, that’s the fate of far too many a spell

book. Yet, we need only whisper the names “Scrolls of Skelos” or “Necronomicon”, and every player at the table is going to be intrigued, impressed, and perhaps just a little wary... As it should be!

Consider: to the ignorant commoner, even a first level magic-user’s tome is a strange and perhaps frightening thing... But all too often a player couldn’t even tell you what it looks like! So here we have a few tables for either players or referees to use in order to whip up interesting grimoires quickly and easily.

### Appearance

Arcane volumes are not mass-produced paperbacks, even if your campaign world has the printing press! No wizard with any self-respect would bother to touch a mass-produced book, let alone use it as a repository for sorceries and knowledge. No, spell books are crafted with care, added to over time, and often affected by the forbidden magic held within.

Use the following tables to determine the cover, fittings, decoration, clasps and locks, as well as any special traits the spell book possesses. Alternatively, simply use these for ideas and create a magical tome personalised to the magic-user who uses it, add in an appropriately impressive name, and you’ll have a much more interesting grimoire just from putting a little thought into it.

#### Cover — Roll 1d20

|      |                                              |
|------|----------------------------------------------|
| 1-3  | The cover is velvet, roll for <b>Colors</b>  |
| 4-7  | The cover is leather, roll for <b>Colors</b> |
| 8-14 | The cover is silk, roll for <b>Colors</b>    |





|       |                                                                  |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 15-16 | The cover is metal, roll for <b>Metals</b>                       |
| 17-18 | The cover is made of common materials, roll for <b>Materials</b> |
| 19-20 | The cover is made of monster hide, roll for <b>Monsters</b>      |

## Fittings — Roll 1d10

|      |                                                                 |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1-6  | The fittings are common materials, roll for <b>Materials</b>    |
| 7-8  | The fittings are metal, roll for <b>Metals</b>                  |
| 9-10 | The fittings are made of monster hide, roll for <b>Monsters</b> |

## Decorations — Roll 1d20

|       |                                                                                       |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1-10  | The spell book is not decorated                                                       |
| 11-14 | The decorations are precious stones, roll for <b>Gemstones</b>                        |
| 15-18 | The decorations are ornate carvings, roll for <b>Ornamentation</b>                    |
| 19-20 | The decorations are ornate metalwork, roll for <b>Metals</b> and <b>Ornamentation</b> |

## Clasps & Locks — Roll 1d20

|        |                                                                                               |
|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1-5    | The book is tied with leather or rope                                                         |
| 6-9    | The book is clasped with metal, roll for <b>Metals</b>                                        |
| 10-12  | The book is clasped with ornate metal, roll for <b>Metals</b> and <b>Ornamentation</b>        |
| 13- 15 | The book is tied with monster hide, roll for <b>Monsters</b>                                  |
| 16-18  | The book is chained                                                                           |
| 19     | The book is sealed with a metal lock, roll for <b>Metals</b>                                  |
| 20     | The book is sealed with an ornate metal lock, roll for <b>Metals</b> and <b>Ornamentation</b> |

## Special Traits — Roll 1d20

|       |                                                      |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------|
| 1-10  | No notable special traits                            |
| 11-16 | One special trait, roll for <b>Special</b>           |
| 17-19 | Two special traits, roll for <b>Special</b> twice    |
| 20    | Three special traits, roll for <b>Special</b> thrice |

| Roll | Colors (2d8)*        | Metals (1d10)            | Gemstones (2d10) | Monsters (1d20)          |
|------|----------------------|--------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| 1    | -                    | Or (Gold)                | -                | Ermine (Stoat)           |
| 2    | White                | Argent (Silver)          | Pearl            | Vair (Squirrel)          |
| 3    | Azure (Blue)         | Platinum                 | Sapphire         | Lycanthrope Fur          |
| 4    | Gules (Red)          | Brass                    | Ruby             | Owlbear Fur and Feathers |
| 5    | Purple (Purple)      | Bronze                   | Amethyst         | Bat Wing                 |
| 6    | Sable (Black)        | Steel                    | Diamond          | Dragon or Gorgon Scales  |
| 7    | Vert (Green)         | Iron                     | Emerald          | Goblin Hide              |
| 8    | Tenne (Orange-Brown) | Electrum (Silver-Gold)   | Jacinth          | Lion or Tiger Fur        |
| 9    | Sanguine (Red-Brown) | Orichalcum (Gold-Bronze) | Sardonyx         | Lizardmen Scales         |

| Roll | Colors (2d8)*         | Metals (1d10)            | Gemstones (2d10) | Monsters (1d20)         |
|------|-----------------------|--------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| 10   | Murrey (Red-Purple)   | Hepatizon (Black-Bronze) | Jade             | Badger Fur              |
| 11   | Carnation (Skin Pink) | -                        | Jasper           | Purple Worm Hide        |
| 12   | Celeste (Sky Blue)    | -                        | Moonstone        | Rat or Giant Rat Fur    |
| 13   | Cendree (Grey)        | -                        | Sunstone         | Treant Bark             |
| 14   | Orange                | -                        | Garnet           | Horse Hair              |
| 15   | Yellow                | -                        | Opal             | Unicorn or Pegasus Hair |
| 16   | Brown                 | -                        | Carnelion        | Wolf or Worg Fur        |
| 17   | -                     | -                        | Aquamarine       | Snake or Serpent Scales |
| 18   | -                     | -                        | Tanzanite        | Human Skin              |
| 19   | -                     | -                        | Peridot          | Stone Scales (Basikisk) |
| 20   | -                     | -                        | Topaz            | Troll Hide              |

| Roll | Ornamentation (1d20)      | Materials (1d8) | Special (1d20)**         |
|------|---------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 1    | None                      | Ebony           | Moving Ornamentation     |
| 2    | Common Runes              | Redwood         | Faint Glow               |
| 3    | Ancient Runes             | Ivory           | Elemental Aura or Debris |
| 4    | Alchemical Symbols        | Lacquered       | Whispers                 |
| 5    | Knotwork                  | Coral           | Bites, Cuts, or Closes   |
| 6    | Lightning Bolts           | Amber           | Trembles                 |
| 7    | Demonic Faces             | Marble          | Writing Fades or Changes |
| 8    | Many Mouths               | Stone           | Cruel Laughter           |
| 9    | Eye or Many Eyes          | —               | Attracts Vermin          |
| 10   | Flames and Smoke          | —               | Flashes if Opened        |
| 11   | Clouds and Wind           | —               | Smells Rotten            |
| 12   | Stars, Moons, and Suns    | —               | Stains Fingers or Hands  |
| 13   | Mazes and Labyrinths      | —               | Bleeds                   |
| 14   | Hourglasses and Skulls    | —               | Reads Itself             |
| 15   | Pentacles and Circles     | —               | Floats                   |
| 16   | Monster Face              | —               | Smells of Incense        |
| 17   | Monsters Fighting         | —               | Smell of Burning         |
| 18   | Hypnotic Patterns         | —               | Runes Float from Pages   |
| 19   | Holy Symbols              | —               | Always Dusty             |
| 20   | Celestial or Infernal Map | —               | Snarls and Curses        |

\* - It might be practical to add random color to more than just the velvet and silk covers, feel free to add tinctures to metals, or even monster hide if appropriate.

\*\* - Special traits are intended only to add flavour. The list is neither exhaustive nor intended to provide notable advantages or disadvantages, the player and referee together should discuss the implications of a spell books special traits.



# Random Pits & Occupants

by Mike Davison

**Editor's note:** Similar stuff is probably out there for one game or another, but this table is just too much fun to pass up.

Table I: Pits

| d20     | Type                    |
|---------|-------------------------|
| 1 - 12  | Empty Pit               |
| 12 - 18 | Occupied Pit (Table II) |
| 19      | Teleporting Pit         |
| 20      | Bottomless Pit          |

Table II: Occupied Pit

| d20     | Occupant Result             |
|---------|-----------------------------|
| 1 - 7   | Spikes*                     |
| 8 - 13  | Animal / Insect (Table III) |
| 14      | Teleporting Pit             |
| 15 - 18 | Monster (Table IV)          |
| 19 - 20 | Special (Table V)           |

\*40% are coated in poison.

Table III: Animal / Insect

| d20     | Animal / Insect Result |
|---------|------------------------|
| 1 - 7   | Snakes*                |
| 8 - 9   | Lizards*               |
| 10 - 11 | Giant Tick             |
| 12 - 14 | Giant Snake*           |
| 15 - 17 | Giant Weasels          |
| 18 - 20 | Giant Centipedes       |

\*40% are venomous.

Table IV: Monster

| d20     | Monster Result                            |
|---------|-------------------------------------------|
| 1 - 10  | Jelly, Ooze, Mold, or Pudding, etc.       |
| 11 - 20 | Roll on referee's wandering monster table |

Table V: Special

| d20     | Special Result                                 |
|---------|------------------------------------------------|
| 1 - 8   | Captured Merchant/Commoner (Table VI)          |
| 9 - 16  | Captured NPC (Table VII)                       |
| 17 - 20 | Captured Monster (Make reaction roll if freed) |

These folks will be stripped of their gear 90% of the time.

Table VI Merchants/Commoners

| d12 | Merchant/Commoner Result |
|-----|--------------------------|
| 1   | Pipeweed Grower          |
| 2   | Shipbuilder              |
| 3   | Hunter                   |
| 4   | Beer Merchant            |
| 5   | Sculptor                 |
| 6   | Fisherman                |
| 7   | Locksmith                |
| 8   | Tool Merchant            |
| 9   | Weaponsmith              |
| 10  | Wool Merchant            |
| 11  | Farmer                   |
| 12  | Trapper                  |

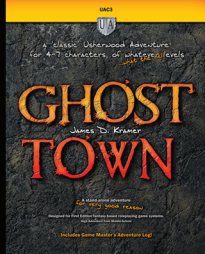
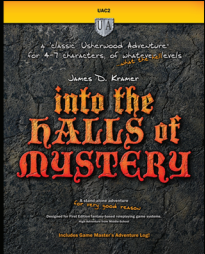
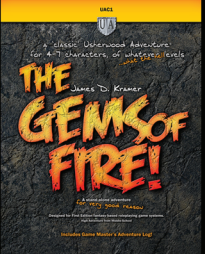
Table VII: NPCs

| 2d6    | NPC Result |
|--------|------------|
| 2 -3   | Elf        |
| 4 -5   | Dwarf      |
| 6 -7   | Fighter    |
| 8 -9   | Cleric     |
| 10 -11 | Magic-User |
| 12     | Halfling   |

Mike Davison lives in Villa Rica, Georgia. He started his role-playing addiction sometime around Christmas of 1982 when (at the age of 12) he received his Moldvay boxed set from Santa Claus (aka: his mom). He is a contributing author on the newly revised OSRIC system (1e retro clone game).

## High Adventure from Middle-School!

From a time when 'plot' was  
just a 4-letter word that  
stood between you  
and the treasure.

From the creator of the Usherwood Adventures;  
reproductions of modules from the mind of the 13-year  
old is us all. **Free for download...** just don't expect us  
to explain them...they are what they are...free.



<http://www.usherwoodadventures.com/downloads.html>

# Magic Swords & Treasure Maps

by Jason "Philotomy" Cone

When determining the distribution of treasure in my game, I like to include two elements from the grand old tradition of early fantasy campaigns: the unique nature of magic swords and the frequent inclusion of treasure maps along with standard treasure.

## Magic Swords

Magic swords are special and distinctive in ways that other magical weapons are not. Swords are, by far, the most common magical weapon. In addition, **all** magical swords possess alignment (law, neutrality, or chaos) and some degree of intelligence. Lastly, magical swords are likely to possess additional bonuses and special powers. Obviously, these factors make magic swords puissant items.

The ability to wield these potent weapons is one of the major benefits of playing a Fighter. In the absence of a Thief class, the Fighter is the only class that can use magic swords. The prevalence of magic swords, compared to other magic weapons, serves to further reinforce the benefit. I make an effort to distribute magic items in accordance with this concept, and try to avoid undermining it when adding house rules to my game.

Allowing other classes to use swords is the most common dilution of the Fighter's perquisite. However, this doesn't necessarily mean that Thieves or Clerics of Mars swinging longswords must be anathema. Allowing other classes to use non-magic swords has little effect on the game (this is especially true of games where all weapons do 1d6 points of damage). The big benefit to the Fighter isn't the use of swords, but the use of *magic* swords. That's the benefit (and the corresponding restriction on other classes) that should be preserved.

Fortunately, the special nature of magical swords provides a built-in justification for discouraging the use of magic swords by other classes. Since all magical swords are intelligent and aligned, they have preferences. In my game, a magical sword will always prefer a Fighter over a skulking thief, and even over a Cleric from a warlike order (whose prayers and devotions keep him from truly mastering the martial arts and wielding the sword in the manner it deserves). The referee can make this bias known in any number of ways. On the most restrictive end of the spectrum, the weapon might function only as a normal sword unless it is in the hands of a Fighter. Alternatively, the

sword might strike as a magic weapon, but not confer its bonuses or allow its powers to be used. It might strike with the benefit of its basic bonus, but not grant any additional bonuses or special powers. Or it might function normally, but use its ego and personality to resist and give a non-Fighter a hard time.

The effect of swords' special nature on the campaign world is also worthy of consideration. The fact that magical swords are exceptional and more potent than other magic weapons will not be lost on the inhabitants of the campaign world. The referee might provide an explanation (e.g. during the enchantment process, a magical sword becomes the corporeal form for an extra-planar spirit or consciousness, and only swords possess the essential nature that is required for this to occur). Alternatively, the reason for swords' unique nature might be a mystery. In my game, the exact reason is a matter of speculation by even the wisest sages, and it has also become a matter of religion, giving rise to the Sword Cults. One of the most common sword cults is the Sword Brotherhood.

## The Sword Brotherhood

The Sword Brotherhood is a quasi-religious fraternal organization of swordsmen and sword-smiths. They honor the "sword spirits," which they believe serve a greater purpose in the world. The Sword Brotherhood professes no official dogma beyond this, so a great variety of interpretations and beliefs arise from this simple foundation. Many Sword Brothers believe that sword spirits exist to join men with the gods, or at least with the power of the gods, making men active participants in the greater cosmic struggle. This belief gives rise to the idea that a magical sword and a Sword Brother join together in a mystic bond where two become one, and in this way the man inherits the divine or spiritual as part of his nature. This makes magical swords even more desirable, in the eyes of a Sword Brother. It also means that Sword Brothers tend to frown on non-Brothers possessing magical swords, since only a Sword Brother is truly wed to his blade in the manner which is right and proper.

Another common Sword Brotherhood belief is that non-magical swords can *become* magical. They believe that, ordinarily, sword spirits enter new-forged and enchanted blades, but that sword spirits can also enter a honored and worthy blade through extraordinary means. For this reason,



even Sword Brothers with non-magical blades treat their weapons with reverence. It is always possible that a sword spirit will enter a worthy and storied weapon that has been wielded with courage and skill.

Sword Brothers possess several secret identifying signs, grips, and words by which they can identify one another. They also possess common shared rituals, some of which are secret and some of which are not. One of the more common rituals is the Rite of Sharpness, in which Sword Brothers sit in a circle with stones, oil, cloth, and steel, sharpening and maintaining their blades. The Rite of Sharpness often incorporates chants or songs, with the common refrain, “Hone your steel!” Other rituals of the Brotherhood include the Rite of Cutting, the Rite of Joining, the Rite of Beginning, and the Rite of Ending. Sword Brothers value skill with the blade and martial excellence. Sword Brother trainers and instructors are highly-regarded. The Brotherhood also places a very high value on the art of swordsmithing. A great warrior who is also a master craftsman is the Sword Brother ideal.

The Sword Brotherhood is not a unified hierarchy, but a loose organization of various Orders, which are mostly geographic, but can also be organized by belief. Inter-Order conflict is not uncommon. Sword Brothers often organize themselves into local guild-like structures, operating as weaponsmiths and as mercenaries. Some Orders are more hierarchical than others.

Sword Brothers typically enjoy greater morale than average men-at-arms, and this morale is even higher when they are led by a fellow Sword Brother. The referee should apply a morale bonus as he feels appropriate to the situation, considering Sword Brotherhood membership, the renown and puissance of the leader and his sword, the respective Orders involved, et cetera.

## Treasure Maps

Another old-school element I adopt in my game is treasure hoards that include maps to more treasure! These maps can be detailed or brief, clear or obscure, and can show areas within the current dungeon or hidden caches in an unknown land, requiring the assistance of a sage to locate them. Treasure maps provide an opportunity to offer choices to players, which is something that I enjoy, since I like for the direction and “story” of the game to be driven by the choices the players make.

Treasure maps are also an excellent way for referees to inject a change of pace or a third-party adventure into their campaign. For example, if the main activity of your game is the exploration of a megadungeon underworld, treasure maps leading to smaller, non-underworld sites on the surface or in the wilderness can offer a welcome change of pace. Treasure map sites are often relatively small and self-contained, compared to a sprawling megadungeon; they can be useful for side-treks in situations where all the players couldn’t make it on game night.

The most common form of treasure map is a scroll or fragment of parchment with the map inscribed upon it, but the form of the map is limited only by the creativity of the referee. A few ideas:

- a map tattooed on a monster or person
- clay/wood/stone tablets
- painted/incised/engraved on the wall/floor/ceiling
- hidden in a large mosaic or painting
- sewn into the back of a tapestry or curtain
- carved into the lid of a chest
- obscured by magic (requiring *read magic*)
- directions in the form of a riddle
- directions in the form of a journal entry
- partially obliterated by fire/water/mold/insects
- encoded or enciphered
- foreign or unknown language
- directions in the words of a song or poem
- clues or directions encoded in music
- sent in dreams or visions caused by breathing/hearing/reading/drinking something
- part of a series of maps or directions
- magnetic — iron filings must be applied to see the map
- invisible — apply heat/magic/water/blood/command-word to see
- living
- automaton/undead/created entity that leads/directs you
- stored as memories or pictures in a gem/pool/vessel/orb
- interactive
- misleading (true map or directions hidden within more obvious falsity)

- requires sustenance (water/blood/fire/food/wine) to maintain cohesiveness
- extremely fragile
- must be precisely folded to read
- can only be read in specific place
- edible/perishable

## New Tables & Charts

The following tables integrate with the existing *Swords & Wizardry* tables for determining magical weapons and treasure, but model the ideas and concepts described earlier.

## Treasure Maps

Whenever the treasure tables indicate a magic item, roll on the following table:

| 1d100 Roll | Result                             |
|------------|------------------------------------|
| 01-03      | Map to monetary & magical treasure |
| 04-10      | Map to magical treasure            |
| 11-25      | Map to monetary treasure           |
| 26-00      | Magic Item                         |

When a roll on the Magical Weapons and Armor Table is indicated, use the following table, rolling 1d12 for minor, 1d12+12 for medium, and 1d12+24 for major.

## Variant Magical Weapons & Armor

| 1d12 Roll | Result                          |
|-----------|---------------------------------|
| 01        | Cursed Sword (-1)               |
| 02-06     | Sword                           |
| 07-08     | Misc. Weapon - roll on subtable |
| 09-12     | Armor - roll on subtable        |
| 13        | Cursed Sword (-2)               |
| 14-18     | Sword (+25 on Potency Roll)     |
| 19-20     | Misc. Weapon - roll on subtable |
| 21-24     | Armor - roll on subtable        |
| 25        | Cursed Sword (-3)               |
| 26-30     | Sword (+50 on Potency Roll)     |
| 31-32     | Misc. Weapon - roll on subtable |
| 33-36     | Armor - roll on subtable        |

## Armor Table

| 1d100 Roll | Result    |
|------------|-----------|
| 01-30      | Armor +1  |
| 31-37      | Armor +2  |
| 38-67      | Shield +1 |

| 1d100 Roll | Result                 |
|------------|------------------------|
| 68-75      | Shield +2              |
| 76-78      | Shield +3              |
| 79-93      | Armor +1 and Shield +1 |
| 94-00      | Armor +2 and Shield +2 |

## Miscellaneous Weapons Table

| 1d100 Roll | Result                                            |
|------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| 01-10      | 2-20 crossbow bolts +1                            |
| 11-40      | 3-30 arrows +1                                    |
| 41-45      | Bow +1                                            |
| 46-50      | Axe +1                                            |
| 51-60      | Mace +2                                           |
| 61-65      | War Hammer +1                                     |
| 66-69      | War Hammer +2                                     |
| 70         | War Hammer +3, returns with thrown (60 ft. range) |
| 71-76      | Spear +1                                          |
| 77-79      | Spear +2                                          |
| 80         | Spear +3                                          |
| 81-95      | Dagger +1, +2 vs. kobolds and goblins             |
| 96-00      | Dagger +2, +3 vs. kobolds, goblins, and orcs      |

## Swords Table

| 1d100 Roll | Result                                  |
|------------|-----------------------------------------|
| 01-55      | Sword +1                                |
| 56-60      | Sword +1, +2 vs. lycanthropes           |
| 61-65      | Sword +1, +2 vs. spell casters          |
| 66-70      | Sword +1, casts locate object           |
| 71-75      | Sword +1, +3 vs. dragons                |
| 76-80      | Sword +1, +3 vs. regenerating creatures |
| 81-85      | Sword +1, Flame Tongue                  |
| 86-90      | Sword +1, Wish Blade                    |
| 91-95      | Sword +2                                |
| 96-97      | Sword +2, Charm Blade                   |
| 98-99      | Sword +3                                |
| 00         | Sword +3, Life-Drinker                  |

## Sword Alignment

(Note that any character touching a magic sword will take damage if the sword's alignment differs from the character's alignment. If the alignment is one step removed, 1d6 damage is taken. If the alignment is two steps removed, 2d6 damage is taken.)

| 1d20 Roll | Result  |
|-----------|---------|
| 01-02     | Chaotic |
| 03-07     | Neutral |
| 08-20     | Lawful  |

## Sword Potency

| 1d100 Roll | Intelligence | Powers                  | Communication      |
|------------|--------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| 01-50      | Int 1d6      | 0                       | None               |
| 51-59      | Int 7        | 1 standard              | Communion          |
| 60-68      | Int 8        | 2 standard              | Communion          |
| 69-76      | Int 9        | 3 standard              | Communion          |
| 77-84      | Int 10       | 3 standard              | Verbal             |
| 85-92      | Int 11       | 3 standard              | Verbal, Read Magic |
| 93-00      | Int 12       | 3 standard plus 1 major | Mental, Read Magic |

When a sword communicates through communion, no actual words are exchanged between it and its wielder, but the wielder becomes intuitively aware of the powers the sword possesses and how these can be employed. A sword capable of verbal communication actually produces an audible voice and speaks to those around it. Magic swords capable of **read magic** do so as the magic-user spell. A sword capable of mental communication makes its words “heard” mentally; unlike communion, actual words and language is used, allowing for complex and detailed communication. Such a sword can also “hear” mental responses from its owner. In addition to knowing its alignment language, magic swords with verbal or mental communication ability will understand an additional number of languages to be determined on the following table:

## Sword Languages

| 1d20 Roll | Languages Known                              |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------|
| 01-10     | 1                                            |
| 11-14     | 2                                            |
| 15-17     | 3                                            |
| 18        | 4                                            |
| 19        | 5                                            |
| 20        | Roll twice and combine, ignoring this result |

## Sword Powers, Standard

| 1d100 Roll | Result                    |
|------------|---------------------------|
| 01-04      | Detect Evil               |
| 05-08      | Detect Gold               |
| 09-10      | Detect Gold & Evil        |
| 11-20      | Detect Traps              |
| 21-25      | Detect Gems               |
| 26-35      | Detect Magic              |
| 36-45      | Detect Food               |
| 46-55      | Detect Invisible          |
| 56-65      | Detect Secret Doors       |
| 66-80      | Detect Sloping Floors     |
| 81-95      | Detect Moving Walls/Rooms |

| 1d100 Roll | Result                                       |
|------------|----------------------------------------------|
| 96-99      | Roll twice and combine, ignoring this result |
| 00         | Roll on the Major Powers table               |

## Sword Powers, Major

| 1d100 Roll | Result                                                      |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| 01-09      | Clairaudience                                               |
| 10-19      | Clairvoyance                                                |
| 20-29      | ESP                                                         |
| 30-34      | Fly                                                         |
| 35-39      | Heal 1 hit point per round to a maximum of 6 points per day |
| 40-44      | Giant strength once per day                                 |
| 45-54      | Telepathy                                                   |
| 55-64      | Telekinesis                                                 |
| 65-73      | Teleport                                                    |
| 74-82      | X-Ray Vision                                                |
| 83-87      | Levitate                                                    |
| 88-97      | Phantasmal Force                                            |
| 98-99      | Roll for two major powers (max)                             |
| 00         | Roll for three major powers (max)                           |

## Sword Psyche

Magic swords have a Psyche rating from 1-12 (roll 1d12). This rating represents the overall strength of character that the sword has. In addition, magic swords have a base willpower rating equal to the sum of its Int and psyche. A bonus of +1 is added to this rating for each major power the sword possesses. A magic sword may mentally wrestle for dominance with its wielder, depending on the sword’s personality and desires. Under certain situations, the referee will need to make an influence check. Examples of situations that might require an influence check include:

1. The wielder first touches the sword
2. The sword’s objective (see below) comes into play
3. A character of a differing alignment touches the sword
4. Another magical sword is found
5. A character has lost 50% of his hit points or is otherwise weak/vulnerable

When an influence check is called for, the willpower of the sword and the willpower of the character are compared, and the highest score wins the test. A character’s willpower is determined by summing his Int and Str. The character subtracts 1d4 from this total if he is wounded but has more than or equal to 50% of his hit points. If he has less than 50% of his hit points, 2d4 is subtracted from willpower.



The sword receives a bonus of 1d10 to its willpower if its alignment is not the same as the character's.

### Sword Objective

Magic swords all further the cause of their particular cosmic alignment. However, a few magic swords have a specific objective as a part of their essential nature. To determine if a magic sword has a specific objective, roll 1d10, with a result of 10 indicating the sword possesses a specific goal or objective. These objectives involve the destruction of particular creatures, classes, or alignments. If a sword has an object, raise its Int and Psyche each to 12. When a magic sword is used to attack a being that fits its motivation, an

objective power is used against the opponent. These powers are determined by the alignment of the sword. A hit from a Chaotic sword will disintegrate a Lawful opponent. A successful hit from a Lawful sword will paralyze an opponent of Chaotic alignment. Saving throws versus spells are allowed for each of these effects. A neutral sword grants sword wielder a bonus of +1 to all saving throws when combating a creature of the appropriate type (regardless of its alignment).

The referee should determine the sword's objective as he sees fit (choose, or decide randomly). A few examples of possible objective include the destruction of a particular class, a particular race, a particular type of monster, et cetera. ■

## Leprechauns

### New Monster and Magic Items for S&W

by David Bowman

**Editor's note:** In my own games, I'm not generally a fan of the "wee folk" of Irish folklore ... partly because modern advertising and "modernized" fairy tales have sapped them of the darker side they originally possessed, and rendered them into friendly, cereal-selling caricatures. Leprechauns were certainly one of the least malign of the Irish faerie-folk, but like any of these creatures in the original folklore, they were still extremely dangerous and even vicious when crossed. David Bowman (aka "Sham") has done a great job of characterizing (and leaving open for the referee) the double-sided nature of the folkloric leprechaun: generally aloof and neutral when left alone, but capable of turning with inhuman ferocity upon those who venture to intrude beyond a mortal's proper place.

### Leprechaun

|                            |                      |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Armor Class:</b>        | -1 [20]              |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b>           | 1 (attacks as HD 15) |
| <b>Attacks:</b>            | 1 (1d3)              |
| <b>Saving Throw:</b>       | 3                    |
| <b>Special:</b>            | Luck, magical powers |
| <b>Move:</b>               | 12                   |
| <b>Challenge Level/XP:</b> | 7/600XP              |

A Leprechaun's very existence is dependent upon its stash of rare metals and gems, and they accordingly hoard gold and all manner of precious stones. Leprechauns encountered away from their homes are for the most part simply an annoyance, but woe to the rambler who dares enter a Leprechaun dwelling, be it in a tree, a cave, a hidey-hole, or even underground. Leprechauns do not take kindly to mortals who meddle in their frolicking and mayhem. All Leprechauns can use the spell-like magic abilities *invisibility*, *detect magic*, *sleep*, *wizard lock*, and *plant growth* at will. Leprechauns can cast a special illusion called *fool's gold*, which will turn pebbles, stones and even soil into Gold

Pieces for 1 full day. These coins are masked and radiate no aura of magic whatsoever. Leprechauns, due to their incredible **Luck**, will never sustain more than a single point of damage from any one attack. This incredible **Luck** is further reflected in the excellent Armor Class, Saving Throw and attack scores of the Leprechaun. If a Leprechaun is slain its body will turn to ash, and its entire treasure trove will materialize on the spot leaving a large pile of gold and gems behind. The first person to touch this treasure will have to make a saving throw or be cursed with the **Endless Jig**. If so cursed, the victim will dance in place for 3d6 turns before collapsing from exhaustion. The victim will then require a period of sound rest of no less than 1 full day before any other activity may be undertaken.

### Leprechaun Shenanigans

#### Dunce Cap

Cursed. This cap appears to be a hat of some sort, be it a helmet or even a wizard cap. Once used, its true nature will become apparent as it transforms into a tall, conical felt cloth cap, and the user involuntarily utters the word "Duh..." The wearer will now stand stupefied for 1d4 rounds, unable to act at all. Until the item is removed via a *Remove Curse* spell, the wearer will automatically become stupefied thusly for 1d4 rounds at any time he is required to 'think'. If the player keeps quiet and follows his party members around, and remembers that he is cursed, it is possible to avoid the cap's effect, but as soon as he does any act that the referee deems to involve thinking, the curse will activate and stupefy him again.

## **Evil Shoes**

These animated boots, slippers, or clogs await the unwary. Often placed throughout a Leprechaun's dwelling, these Evil Shoes present a true threat. Sometimes a Leprechaun might be carrying a pair of these to drop upon unsuspecting adversaries. Any living being, other than a Leprechaun, that comes within 10ft of these shoes will cause them to animate and attack. Once animated, they will only cease attacking when no target is within 60ft, or when the command word is spoken. While animated, the shoes will dance and prance about, kicking the closest living target in the rear, never missing, and causing one point of damage each round. The shoes will pursue their victims, but can only manage a movement rate of 6. If attacked, the shoes are AC 0 [19] with 5 hit points. If reduced to 0 hit points, they are destroyed.

## **Faerie Mead**

This magical libation is a favorite of Leprechauns. While overindulgence in the alcohol will slightly impair a Leprechaun they are mostly immune to its disorienting effects. Each swig of Faerie Mead will heal two points of damage. Any non-Faerie drinking the sweet mead will be healed, but then disoriented for 5 rounds per swig. While so disoriented, a character will have a maximum move of 3, and attack and defend at -5 for the duration.

## **Hidey-Hole**

These hollows in trees, stumps or other places are only about two feet around, but are the perfect size for a Leprechaun to duck into. When a Leprechaun enters one of his Hidey-Holes, he can instantly teleport to any other Hidey-Hole within 100ft, although he must emerge from the other hole. When a Leprechaun uses a Hidey-Hole, he is instantly healed one point of damage.

## **Faerie Hourglass**

These crystal, sand-filled hourglasses are 4 inches tall, and store a potent magic. They are sometimes carried by a Leprechaun, but more often they are placed in strategic locations within the Leprechaun's dwelling for emergency use. When the hourglass is inverted, its magic is activated. The user is effectively Hasted, as all time around him is slowed down by the Hourglass. The duration of the effect is 10 rounds. Any non-Faerie who uses the Hourglass is aged three years. Each Hourglass has a set number of charges (normally 3d10), and its magic may only be used once per hour. Once the charges are spent, the hourglass turns to dust.

## **Maze Garden**

Grown and cultivated for years by Leprechauns, these mazes are only found within, or just outside of, their dwellings. The size of the maze is dependent upon how much time the Leprechaun has had to enchant and care for the magical shrubs forming the walls of the maze. Leprechauns and most Faeries are immune to the effects of Maze Gardens, but all others find the winding passages to be confusing and disorienting. Travel through a Maze Garden is at a movement rate of no more than 1. While in such a maze, all attacks are at -3 to hit. If the shrubs are hacked with melee weapons, small sections of the maze can be destroyed at a rate of 20 hit points per 10ft section. The shrubs are resistant to both fire and acid.

## **Plant Prison**

The Plant Prison is contained within an enchanted flowerpot. It may only be used once, for to free its victim the pot must be smashed or rendered non-magical (see below). To function, the pot must be placed upon the head of a sleeping or unconscious target, and the command word spoken. Instantly, the victim is turned into a small flower within the soil of the pot. This change is permanent until the pot is smashed. When the pot is broken, the prisoner is released and reverts back to a normal state, but is disoriented for 1d4 rounds. Leprechauns use these prisons to unleash foul creatures upon their enemies, or to imprison trespassers. If the plant is plucked from the soil without the pot being smashed, the imprisoned victim will likewise be freed, and the pot will become non-magical.

## **Pot o' Gold**

This powerful magic creation is used by Leprechauns to lure or even waylay would be trespassers. This small kettle appears to be brimming with gold and gems, and glows with an inner light. Often, a faint shimmering rainbow appears to be descending down on top of the kettle. Any humanoid viewing the pot must make a saving throw once per combat round to resist its spell-like allure. If the character who sees the pot is unsuspecting, he might willingly seek to grab it without any attempt to resist its magic (no save at this point). Those under its allure will attempt to greedily grab the pot as fast as they can. As soon as this item is approached within 5 ft, it will scuttle away from those trying to acquire it. It may be grabbed by trapping it in a corner or by approaching it at different angles by three or more characters. Once the pot is touched, it turns into a large round stone, non-magical and worthless. Particularly vengeful Leprechauns have been known to drop lone trespassers into a circular chamber with a Pot o' Gold. Once under its

spell, the magic only ends when the cursed victim touches the pot, or is the recipient of *remove curse* or *dispel magic*.

### Seamrogs

These small, rare leaves are collected with great care by Leprechauns, and enchanted to confer a powerful magic upon the user. There are two types, Lesser and Greater Seamrogs. Each is a small clover leaf, the Greater variety being slightly larger than the Lesser variety. Once enchanted, the seamrog can be used by wearing the leaf until its magic is invoked. Each may be used but once. The Lesser Seamrog allows its user to 're-roll' any single die roll during the course of the game, immediately after rolling and before resolution. This can include any game roll, even by the referee, if the referee allows. The Greater Seamrog will act in a similar fashion, but the 're-roll' will always be the

maximum or most favorable possible roll. Said re-rolls are limited to combat, saving throws and the like, as judged by the referee (in other words, not for HP, or random events).

### Shillelagh

These small canes are of gnarled wood, and but 1ft in length. Once per round, a Leprechaun may use the Shillelagh to smite an opponent for 1d6 damage, with no roll to hit required. Each use expends a charge, and the Shillelagh holds up to 24 (4d6) such charges. In the hands of a character, it may only be wielded by Magic-Users or Elves. ■

*David "Sham" Bowman, a resident of Darnestown, Maryland, has been rolling dice and making funny voices from behind his referee screen for thirty years. Best known for the Entourage Approach and the One-Page Dungeon concept, David has also written a contest winning adventure, Spawning Grounds of the Crab-men. The author hopes to continue sharing his thoughts and ideas for his favorite hobby with other fans of tabletop gaming for years to come at his blog, Sham's Grog 'n Blog.*

## Why White Box?

or

*Why I love my d6.*

by Jim Adams

**Editor's note:** Jim Adams is well known as "Meepo" on many internet message boards.

To those around me, it's no secret I like my Role Playing Game rules light. I've taken part in contributing to some of the leanest RPGs out there, including Microlite20 and Dungeon Squad, and even edited my own 4-page rules expansion to the 1977 Basic "Holmes" Set rules, all with degree of success. I didn't take on these tasks because I thought I could do it better than someone else, but simply because I'm a referee who doesn't enjoy reading through manuals during games. Or using a GM Screens. Or being bothered in general by a lot of rules where a ruling can suffice just as well.

When I stumbled across Swords & Wizardry, I'd been out of the RPG "scene" for awhile (for personal reasons) and in one of those unfortunate huffs, had sold off much of my collection. My favorite set of rules at the time of my "departure" having been the 1974 "0E" rules, I was *very* grateful to have S&W waiting for me when I returned. A fitting — and affordable — place to rebuild, I thought to myself.

### Then I heard about S&W: White Box!

There is old-school, and then there is the school that is so old, you can distinctly smell the lead in the miniatures just by walking by your closed closet door. This is what White Box is to me. Whereas the S&W: Core Rules are a solid representation of the original 1974 rules and elements of its first supplement from the best fantasy game of all time, the White Box Rules exist in a vacuum where 1975 and beyond simply never even existed.

This isn't to say that the first supplement to the original rules — or the Core rules themselves — were a bad thing. From a passing glance, there is very little difference between the Core Rules of Swords & Wizardry and White Box, and they aren't incorrect: the differences between the two games are very small. So why have two rulesets so similar? Why divide an already smaller market further? Well, I tend to not look at it as a division so much as two different methods of approaching the exact same game.

The greatest difference between Swords & Wizardry Core and White Box I've already mentioned: the lack of Supplement 1 rules. In the White Box world, 1975 never came along and the options and expansions to the game that were brought with it in rule supplements were never presented to us up by the games creators. Questions about



the original rules were never officially answered and corrections (or errata) were never made. As a referee, the subjective skeleton of the original rules were yours to use, build upon, expand and interpret without any outside “official” influence. The blanks were yours to fill in as you saw fit.

The biggest mechanical difference I see between the two games is the prevalent use of the six sided die. In White Box, the d6 is the basis for all hit dice and all weapons. To put it simply, a dagger wielding orc has nearly the same chance of killing your lowly first level cleric as he would wielding a battle axe. This level of simplicity appeals to me greatly. It also sets a baseline for anything you can imagine from a chair smashing into you in a bar fight to a deadly gargoyle raking you with its claws. Need a more serious threat, say from a giants giant club or a particularly nasty dragons bite? Go ahead and toss in an extra d6!

Also, in the Core Rules, your vision of your newly created fighter who prefers to fight with a spear or a mace may appeal to you, but who in their right mind would turn down that juicy d8 long sword? I know I couldn't. And why use that over a Battle Axe at 1/3 the cost with the option of using it two handed for some extra damage also? While this isn't a big issue, it is one that's easily negated by using White Box where the d6 is one size fits all.

Speaking of the d6, I also find it to be my perfect die for resolving anything from rule discrepancies to deciding if the party can sneak by the sleeping ogres. 2 in 6, 3 in 6, 4 in 6... it's just a really nice spread. Sure a d100 can do percentages, but that just breaks it down into way to precise for my own tastes.

Stat bonuses for combat in White Box are also optional. While the seemingly minor +1 that the Core Rules contain seems very small, having them absent by default means you'll rarely hear such things as “guys I found *another* sword +1... anyone want this or can I just toss it aside?” With the only permanent combat bonuses coming from magical items you've acquired, you will truly value your treasures and never see them as routine. A level one dwarf with a recently found +1 warhammer may just feel like Thor!

Speaking of combat, the structure of White Box combat is far more subjective. “Roll initiative... OK, you guys go first” is something you may hear at a White Box table. No having to remember if ranged combat takes place before melee. And remembering when spell casting occurs? No thanks, I've got enough to remember! If you win initiative, decide amongst yourselves who acts first, be it an arrow shot at the goblin king, a sleep spell cast first at his minions, or sending in the “redshirts” first to soften ‘em up. It's a small difference, but one whose flexibility I greatly enjoy at my table.

Finally, and this one is based solely on personal play style, spell levels are limited to level 5 (clerics) and 6 (magic-users) in White Box. Hitting these levels as spellcaster is the sweet spot before the game becomes too difficult to run. The ability to completely disintegrate something seems truly epic... until you read about Wish! Isn't *power word kill* basically just a variation on that anyway — just another way to point at something, say a few magic words, and watch it fall down? By keeping spell levels limits lower, you prevent the party magic-users from becoming walking death machines with 50 spells in their arsenal, not even counting their magic items. Designing encounters to challenge such a group is strenuous to say the least. And the spell lists are shorter too! I can almost hear the players screaming for more options now. Don't look at me, guys, you go and come up with your own spells to expand upon those lists and we'll work them in somehow. No more bad jokes about that stinking cloud either, guys, please. Seriously, I get it.

In the end, I find that any version of Swords & Wizardry is the paramount in gaming. The joy of having two extremely similar rulesets to approach the same goal means everyone can use everything we create and thus, everyone wins no matter what direction they came from and I hope I've highlighted some of the reasons why I use the system I do. I'm extremely grateful for Matt Finch, Marv Breig and everyone else who contributed to these projects. Thanks to people like these, we are truly living in, and playing in, the second golden age of old-school gaming.

*See ya in '74!* ■

# Surviving Old-School Dungeons

by Sean Ahmed

**Editor's note:** it appears that Sean prefers to play fighter characters. You'll see what I mean.

"Old-school" dungeons offer an amazing amount of fun adventure to those who play in them, but they also offer something else. As we know, that "something else" is the easy, quick, and horrifying death of our characters. In the realm of the old-school, poison will not just cost the character some hit points, but will kill on a bad saving throw roll. The touch of the undead does not just cause damage, but will drain hard-earned experience points, with not as much as a saving throw to be found.

Following are some general tips to help players in an old-school dungeon heighten their chances of making it out alive.

## Tip 1: Run!

This old-school bit of wisdom has disappeared of late amongst those playing "newer" versions of our favorite hobby. The players in an old-school dungeon must never forget that running away will likely increase chances of survival tenfold.

Old-school games are "open" in their very make-up. They do not rely solely on railroad set pieces which must be overcome.

No, the old-school referee pulls out his books and looks at the random encounter chart. He rolls and...oh, no. Bolo the Brave and Caddus the Faithful, both just starting their illustrious careers, are about to run into not just any ape, but a very hungry carnivorous ape. Run, Bolo, Run!

## Tip 2: All For One!

There can be no doubt that working together to maximize the strengths of each character class in an old-school game is critical for long-term success. Utilizing each of the classes' particular abilities ensures that most challenges in the game have some chance of being overcome. This avoids the scenario of the player characters – after destroying the orc horde guarding the stone door leading to the treasure room – having to leave, because no one thought a thief would be needed.

## Tip 3: Play Your Class!

Playing against character type is fun, but when Waldro the Wizard decides to engage in combat with his staff

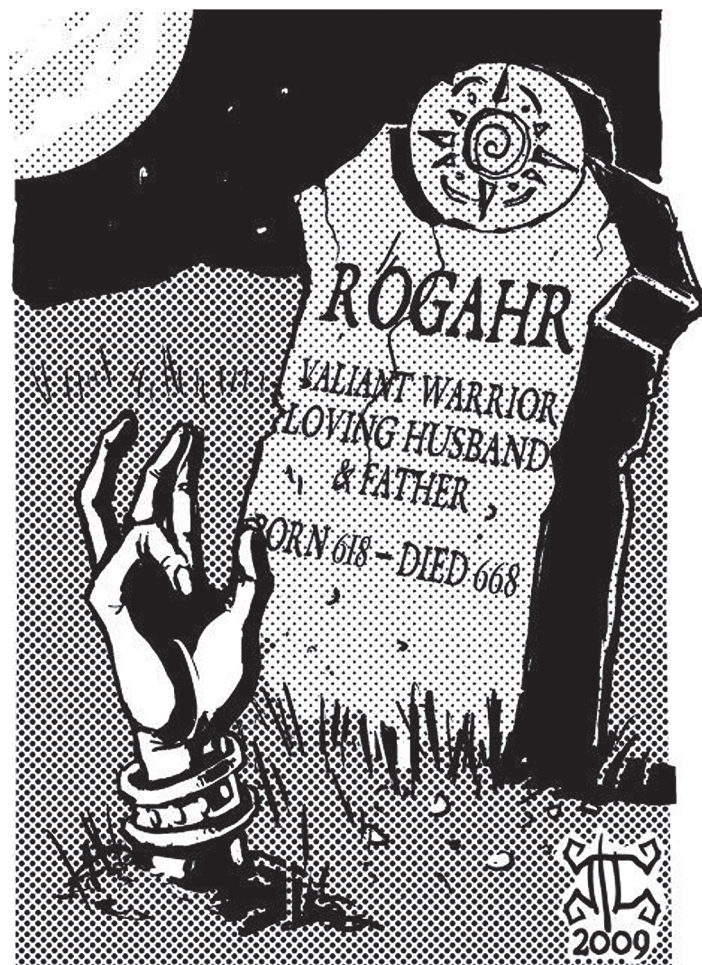
instead of cowering behind his charmed half-orc fighter, well, at least the half-orc will be free after Waldro's hat hits the ground with his head still in it.

## Tip 4: Fire!

One of the best all around old-school tools for getting out of an "unknown monster" jam is the old standby of burning oil. Not only is an oil bomb a ranged weapon for those classes not allowed to use bows and arrows, but it also administers a good amount of damage to varied types of foes.

## Tip 5: Numbers!

Let's face it, the more people in your party the less likely it will be you who sets off a pit trap, gets hit with a ray of disintegration, or gets lifted off the ground by a roc. Like a Star Fleet officer of old surrounded by red shirted security



men, the individual player in an old-school game can breathe slightly easier with more targets all around him. Note to magic-users: there is a reason why charm is so useful.

### Tip 6: The Jump!

Getting “the jump” on one’s opponent can be half the battle. This is when the entire party looks at the thief and gently nudges the poor footpad to his death...er ... I mean, to scout out whatever dangers await the rest of the party. The group that is forewarned by their elf thief of the two ogres up ahead at the bend in the road, can now simply move around the threat or plan their own ambush. A party should not be so hasty to hang or banish their thief if he is caught stealing from the party; after all, he has likely earned it and chances are quite good any stolen items can be later retrieved from the thief’s body when said thief fails in a lethal test of skill.

### Tip 7: The Blight of Noise and Light!

With sharpened swords, torches lit, and shields raised the brave party enters the dungeon. The referee smirks; every goblin and ghoul in the place will likely see and hear the approaching interlopers. How to get around some of these problems? Why, again, it’s time for Mr. Bogo to earn his keep and scout ahead. Should be easy for a halfling thief with Stoutish blood, right? Thieves with infravision are invaluable, since they need no light source to ply their

trade. Assassins, monks, and elves in leather armor are all options for silent movement. Rangers, with their ability to surprise foes, can also use stealth techniques to advantage. Of course, if the group should survive to higher levels, spells such as invisibility and silence can be used to overcome such problems.

### Tip 8: Party Placement!

Attacks can come from any angle and be delivered by any number of foes, but that is no excuse for having Waldo the Wizard walking in front with muscle-bound Bolo the Brave. The odds are that many attacks will come from the front as the party moves ahead in its endeavors. Never forget to protect the preening cleric and arrogant magic-user by placing them in the center of the party, away from anything “bad” that might happen.

Generally, it would be wise to have a thief scouting ahead, beyond the noise of the main party, fighters leading the way (and protecting the rear and flanks if numbers permit), and spellcasters safely stuck in the middle. Note: It is unwise to place the spellcasters too close to one another, as a burning flask of oil, a charm spell, or a well-thrown net might render both temporarily unavailable.

Hopefully these few tips will be of some help for those new to old-school dungeons! ■

*Sean Ahmed, unlike his brother, does not eat his Fruit Loops with beer.*

## Three Sorcerous Creations

by James Carl Boney

**Editor’s note:** I consider it one feature of a good OSRIC or Swords & Wizardry campaign that magic isn’t limited to spells alone; that there are uncharted or forgotten waters of magic requiring more than just the right spell formula, and more than just magic words and gestures. A wizardly character could possibly discover formulas, rituals, and procedures requiring more than spells and yielding powerful results. Creating golems is one example, a procedure requiring a specific tome or libram. To my mind, this sort of creativity on the part of the referee and the player defines the point at which high-level play for the magic-user (and to a lesser degree, the cleric) begins to depart the realm of rules and ascend into the realms of a less-structured, highly creative, different game than that played at lower levels, a game formed by the adventuring that has come before, the “pinnacle” game, if you will, tailored to the character. This game is the concomitant to the stronghold-and-politics game played at the high levels of a fighter’s career. In this article, James Boney jumps into this realm with some ideas for the risks, rewards, and nature of some possible magic-user “projects.” Each has its risks, and the Scourge is likely something players would be forced to face rather than strive to create. What’s particularly good about this article, in my opinion, is that it offers alternatives to the often-hackneyed “time to build a golem, since I’ve got nothing better to do with my time” syndrome. Enjoy!

There is no limit to the genius of the wizard and others of his ilk. Witches, necromancers, and other spellcasters constantly strive to bring into nefarious existence new creatures, items and creations to aid them in their endeavors.

Here are three unique creations from the pages of a long forgotten tome of magic. Feel free to modify their descriptions and creation processes to fit your campaign!

### The Leech

Highly prized for its useful abilities, the Leech can cure and heal all but the most deadly of maladies. The formula for Leech mixture is closely guarded and highly prized, for obvious reasons. Because a Leech has only limited a Leech’s powers, the owner will usually allow access only after his fee is already paid. Castles of the largest size might possess a chamber with up to 4 Leech pits for the benefit of its garrison.



**Creation Process:** The Leech is grown in a pit 6 feet deep, 3 feet in diameter, and lined with stones. Above the pit is a framework made of pure silver. The frame is a circle three feet in diameter, supported on stilts and securely bolted to the floor. The framework rises three feet above the mouth of the pit. An opening to the sky above must be directly over the pit. Construction cost for the entire structure is 7,000 gp.

Once the Leech pit is built, the creator must concoct a mixture consisting of 8 potions of healing, 10 lbs. of various healing herbs of the rarest sort, 12 feathers from the wings of an angel, and 20 gallons of purified water. If 12 ounces of angel's hair can be added, the healing herbs may be eliminated from the formula. Total cost for the mixture is 35,000 gp, and the lead-lined container used for mixing this concoction must have never been used for anything else (though it may be used again for the creation of another Leech).



Once the mixture is created, it must be allowed to set in sunlight for 8 hours, then poured into the pit for the creation ritual when the creator is ready to conduct the ritual.

At dawn on the Summer Solstice, the creator must pour the mixture into the pit and wait. As the sun rises, the mixture will begin to coalesce until the sun reaches the sky portal. At that point, the mixture will take the form of a gelatinous mass that will rise toward the sun and be trapped within the framework.

The Leech extrudes several slick tentacles approximately 3 feet long toward the sunlight during daytime. At night, the tentacles retract into its mass. Any character grasping a tentacle and allowing it to attach to him will benefit from its healing powers.

A Leech can do the following per day:

- *Heal* 10d10 hit points of damage total (roll at the beginning of each day; the amount rolled will be the total healing possible for that day)
- *Cure disease*, three times (these must be three individual diseases, however)
- *Cure poison* five times

These powers only work during daylight hours. If the Leech is removed from its framework during daylight hours it will seek to drift upwards toward the sun and will reach heights of around 200ft if not stopped. It will settle to the ground at nighttime or in the dark and possibly suffer damage from lack of support (1d4 hit points per hour, for a total of 28 hit points before the Leech is rendered “dead.”) unless it is returned to its birthing pit.

Poisons and diseases are excreted through the skin of the Leech during the nighttime hours and drip into the pit. The pit must be occasionally siphoned of the waste material. See *Maliganti* for further details concerning the Leech's waste matter.

## The Maliganti

If the waste contents of a Leech pit are exposed to an eclipse, there is a 50% chance that the residue will coalesce into a dark mass known as a Maliganti.

The chaotic and evil Maliganti will slither from the pit and seek to infect creatures with the poisons and diseases trapped within its matter. The DM should choose what diseases the Maliganti contains if these have not previously been determined.



**Maliganti:** HD 3+1; AC6 [14]; Atk 4 tentacles; Save 14; Move 6; CL/XP 6/400; **Special:** disease

The Maliganti, when encountered, will attack with its four tentacles. A successful hit will infect or poison the opponent unless a successful saving throw is made. If it feels it is in serious danger, a Maliganti can melt into the surroundings, appearing as a dark stain, for up to 20 minutes and move away from danger. The creature often takes this form in order to disguise itself and ambush passersby. This form gives it a +1 on surprise if the target is unaware the Maliganti is in the immediate area.

## Scourge

“The Scourge” is a common name for a series of constructed organisms designed to enter the body and damage it from the inside. Every type of Scourge has several characteristics in common, and these are detailed below. These organisms are well known throughout the scholarly community, and are greatly feared for the havoc they can wreak and the subtlety of their application.

**Creation Process:** the creation of a Scourge requires the extensive use of an intricate alchemical laboratory. The lab includes a testing area, an alchemist’s array of tools and equipment, vats, furnaces, and other assorted conveniences that have an initial cost of 35,000gp, not including material costs.

The laboratory must be underground and should be separate from any other structure, to preclude accidental release of a developing Scourge. Only one method of entry and egress is generally built. Magical means of entry is preferred, though many labs possess a long tunnel with fail-safe doors and seals. The cost for such an underground construction is an additional 12,000 gp.

The testing area for the laboratory must be separate from the rest of the complex for safety reasons, and contains a portal with a quick-acting seal on it. Omitting this requirement will inevitably lead to an unavoidable disaster during testing of the Scourge.

Creation begins with the distillation of the main ingredient into approximately 3 ounces of powder made from 5 drams of blood from a disease victim and the internal juices of a scorpion. The resulting mix is combined with dried belladonna and other poison herbs to accelerate the Scourge through the victim’s body. The results are repeatedly distilled for two weeks until a grainy mixture develops

The grainy mixture is heated until it cakes up into a waxy form weighing ounces. The wax simply is rubbed off into whatever substance that is to serve as the Scourge’s carrier.

The main ingredient for each of the listed Scourges, and its cost, are:

|                  |           |                                                                                |
|------------------|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Beast            | 2,000 gps | 6 drams blood of any were-creature                                             |
| Effusion         | 450 gps   | 8 oz. of the tongue and eyes of someone who bled to death                      |
| Eyebite          | 1,300 gps | 4 drams blood from any magic-resistant creature                                |
| Kindling         | 550 gps   | 6 oz. ashes from a burned witch/sorcerer                                       |
| Kronos           | 350 gps   | 6 drams blood from someone who died prematurely                                |
| Lethe            | 100 gps   | 3 oz. grime from the oubliette where a madman died                             |
| Morpheus         | 350 gps   | 333 perfect poppy seeds, ground to a 20 oz. paste                              |
| Soul’s Enclosure | 250 gps   | 12 oz. blood from a condemned heretic                                          |
| Thickening       | 120 gps   | 1 lb. of flour ground from wheat grown in the battlefield of a pyrrhic victory |
| Wasting          | 850 gps   | 24 oz. mummy dust                                                              |



Common characteristics of Scourges are as follows:

- A Scourge in its release form is virtually undetectable. Its method of delivery precludes seeing, tasting, or smelling the substance until it has infected the victim. Particular warding magics, at the discretion of the DM, may prevent infection.
- All Scourges are highly resistant to curing magic. Any spell that cures disease must be cast by someone at least 5 levels higher than the creator of the Scourge.
- The infection stage of the Scourge is 1d4 days. The sickness stage is 3d20 hours, after which the final result peculiar to the particular Scourge develops.

The usual course of a Scourge falls into three stages: infection, sickness, and the final phase. The victim must make three saving throws in order to avoid the full course of the Scourge. Before the infection stage, a saving throw at -2 must be successfully made in order to avoid contracting the Scourge. If contracted, a further saving throw at -4 is needed to avoid the sickness stage. Once sickened, a final save at -5 is needed to avoid the final phase.

The known forms of Scourge are listed below. The name is given first, followed by a brief description of the common delivery form, symptoms of infection, symptoms of sickness, and the final results.

**Beast:** Usually administered with the meat of a meal, the Beast Scourge shows its first signs through sharpening of vision, hearing and smell plus an underlying sense that “something is wrong.” The victim will have urges to sleep alone outdoors, hunt for his own meals and will begin to prefer his meat raw. Once sickness sets in, the victim will grow large amounts of hair over his body, his incisors will elongate, and his stature will steadily become more animalistic. The final stage of the Beast Scourge is a total transformation of the victim into a common animal of humanoid size. If the Scourge is allowed to progress to this point, the victim will have lost all rationality and will develop the mind of an animal. The referee must choose the final animal form.

**Effusion:** The common form of delivery is through any liquid. Mixing this Scourge with wine or other alcoholic beverages gives the drink a richer taste, encouraging the imbibor to drink more. Once infected, the victim will begin to notice slight bleeding from different areas of the body. The amount of blood slowly increases until he reaches the sickness stage. From this point forward, the victim



experiences uncontrollable bleeding from all bodily orifices, including the pores of the skin. The observer will notice the amount being released far exceeds the amount normally present within a humanoid body. Once the final stage sets in, the victim is gushing at an alarming rate, and will completely dehydrate and die within 1 hour.

**Eyebite:** Delivery is through floating dust in the air. Once this Scourge is inside the body, any victim who uses magical spells will experience a 2% failure chance on each spell cast, for the duration of the infection stage. As the sickness stage begins, the victim will lose the ability to cast one spell level, starting with the highest level, until all spell use is removed. The condition is permanent but not fatal.

**Kindling:** This Scourge is released into any source of fire, and rides the heat waves outward to seep into any exposed flesh within 60ft. Once inside a body, it raises the victim's body temperature by 1 degree per hour of infection. Once the sickness stage sets in, the victim will be incapacitated due to high fever and cramps. The final result causes the



victim to burst into flames, suffering 3d20 hit points of damage. Survival of the Kindling Scourge is possible, but the victim will be permanently brain damaged.

**Kronos:** The Kronos Scourge is delivered by mixing it in with any beauty aid...perfume, creams, or other items intended to cover the ravages of time. In the infection stage, the victim will begin to notice gray hairs over the body, wrinkles developing at a fast pace, and stiffness in the joints. Once the sickness stage occurs, the victim will rapidly age at the pace of 10 years per hour until the disease passes or he dies of extreme old age. Races with extremely long life spans are capable of surviving this Scourge.

**Lethe:** Spread of this Scourge comes about through inserting it in incense or other smoky substances used in temples or houses of ill repute. The Scourge enters the victim's lungs and circulates throughout the system until it enters the brain. The infection phase causes the victim to forget important memories: names, places, locations, etc. By the time the sickness phase is finished, the victim cannot remember anything for more than a few minutes at a time. The final phase leaves the victim completely feeble-minded, reacting to his environment without thought or memory.

**Morpheus:** the Morpheus Scourge enters the victim through water. The infection phase causes the victim to feel lethargic, and he suffers an accelerating penalty to any activities requiring concentration (as determined by the referee). During the sickness phase, the victim fades in and out of sleep. The victim will fall asleep during any time period where no activity is required. During the final phase, the victim will fall into a deep sleep and cannot be awakened. Unless he is somehow fed during this sleep, he will starve to death.

**Soul's Enclosure:** Like the Lethe Scourge, this Scourge spreads by being placed within religious incense or other smoke-creating substances. Once inhaled, it permeates the body and forms a barrier between the victim's soul and the rest of his material substance. During the infection, the victim will begin to feel depressed, then suicidal, and will be convinced his god has abandoned him. Those who use clerical spells will slowly find their access to these magics blocked at a rate of one spell level per hour, beginning with the highest level spells. As sickness sets in, the victim becomes convinced that spiritual representatives of gods opposed to his own are plaguing him. In the final phase, the victim's soul is withered to nothingness, and the victim dies, soulless.

**Thickening:** Ingested through common food and drink, the Thickening Scourge shows no obvious symptoms of infection, yet the infection stage is still present for purposes of saving throws and the passage of time. During the sickness phase, the blood of the victim becomes sluggish, and the victim suffers lethargy, shortness of breath, and great difficulty moving. In the final phase, the blood thickens to a paste, stopping the heart.

**Wasting:** The Wasting Scourge infects by contact; it can be smeared upon surfaces commonly handled or touched such as a sword hilt, inside armor, or mugs. Once ingested, the infection phase leaves the victim feeling sluggish and weak. He will lose one point of constitution per hour until the sickness phase begins. The victim's muscles will begin to atrophy at an alarming rate, and the final phase is cardiac failure due to complete loss of muscle control. ■

*James Carl Boney is a three-decade veteran of many RPGs. He is the author of three OSRIC modules for Expeditions Retreat Press with a fourth in the works. He resides in the spooky little town of New Edinburg, Arkansas.*

**F1**  
New 1st Edition  
Module

# THE FANE OF POISONED PROPHECIES

by Guy Fullerton  
24 pages with  
retro-style detached  
cover & maps

Available at:  
[www.frpgames.com](http://www.frpgames.com)  
[www.nobleknight.com](http://www.nobleknight.com)

Art by Peter Mullen, Jason Braun, and Andy "ATOM" Taylor

CHAOTIC HENCHMEN PRODUCTIONS  
[www.chaotichenchmen.com](http://www.chaotichenchmen.com)

## Magic Items

### Battered Top Hat

by Chris D.

An old black top hat that sizes itself to any head so it fits snugly. Once per day you can reach inside it and pull out a rabbit to toss behind you as you flee. If being pursued by an un-intelligent monster/creature, the monster will always (no saving throw) go after the rabbit until it catches and eats it, helping you to escape. Semi-intelligent monsters are allowed to make a saving throw at -4 and will continue pursuit if they do save, ignoring the rabbit. Intelligent monsters save as normal. If more than one monster is pursuing, adjust saving throws accordingly. Note: if anything besides a hand is put into the hat, random strange effects might ensue.

### Dharumin's Oars

by Russell Cone

Dharumin the fisherman fashioned this perfectly matched set of oars from the wood of an ancient oak tree. Unbeknownst to him, the tree from which the wood was hewn had long ago been the home of a Dryad, whose benevolent spirit imbued the wood with magic. To Dharumin's great surprise, the meager coracle he rowed each day out into the Bay of Vralgefon, to fish for his sustenance, suddenly began moving at a speed far greater than the strength of Dharumin's aged arms could possibly explain. In his enthusiasm, Dharumin rowed far out to sea in his tiny craft, seeking the larger fish – at which point he became suddenly fatigued, and a great wave capsized him. He sank beneath the waves, and was eaten by a large fish. The oars floated gently back to the wooded shore, and perhaps lie there still. Dharumin's oars will never rot, bend, break, burn, or allow themselves to be separated by more than 100 feet. Anyone using them to row a small boat (coracle, canoe, dinghy, rowboat... you get the idea) may row at twice the normal speed the vessel would ordinarily be capable of, for 1d6 hours, after which the rower and the oars must rest for 1d4 hours.

### The Red Fez of Grimblin

by Ed M. Kann

This blood red fez is a magic item crafted from the enchanted skin of a red cap. A red cap is a vicious but not widely known fey creature capable of eating any material it can stuff into its enormous maw. Red caps can consume poi-

sonous materials with no ill effects, eat solid rock, wood, metals, drink ale mugs filled with broken glass, etc...

Once per day this powerful magic item will allow the wearer to consume any physical object he can fit into his mouth or gobble down in smaller bites, for a period of one turn. For ten minutes the wearer's teeth can sheer through solid stone, gold or even an opponent's magical sword as if it were made from freshly baked bread. Any solid matter eaten in this way is, in point of fact, transformed into the equivalent of baked goods such as breads, cakes and the like.

"I try to disarm the anti-paladin, and if I win the next initiative I snatch the blade up off the ground and eat it."

### Shurzod's Stepping Stones

by Russell Cone

The Sorcerer Shurzod once raised a mighty tower, hidden within the forest of Aqqros-Benntar; and to protect it from intruders, he constructed three great moats around it. But he made no bridge, and dug the moats far too wide for anyone to leap across. For his own passage to and from his tower, Shurzod worked an ingenious mode of crossing the



**A crochety old gamer who goes on about Dungeons & Dragons, the World of Greyhawk, wargames, miniatures, and anything else that he can gripe about.**

**Home of the Castle of the Mad Archmage — a megadungeon in the classic style. Monthly updates, and it's FREE!**

**[greyhawkgrogard.blogspot.com](http://greyhawkgrogard.blogspot.com)**

deep moats – by means of the knowledge in his musty tomes, and careful measuring of strange ingredients, he contrived to enchant a quantity of temporary stepping-stones. Now the tower in Aqqros-Benntar is no more, and the moats are dry and filled with strange plants, and Shurzod's body is no more. Yet the stepping-stones, wherever they might be, retain the enchantments he laid upon them centuries ago. Each time one of these stones is thrown into water, it expands to a flat circular paving stone 2 feet in diameter. It will float until the person who casts it there has stepped onto it and then off again; otherwise it is impossible to make them sink (unless Dispel Magic is cast upon them). After the owner passes across them, they revert to their natural size and shape – and sink. They can be recovered and used again within 24 hours. The stones are also subject to the forces of whatever currents may run through the body of water into which they are cast, and it is possible they may float away if their placement is not carefully considered.

It is unknown how many of these stones Shurzod made, but they can sometimes be found in groups of three to five pebbles contained in small waterproof pouches. Sadly, the method for their creation was lost along with Shurzod – who had forgotten to consider that creatures might wish to inhabit his moats, and not just cross them. His only surviving apprentice told of a vicious, gilled humanoid creature that burst from the water as Shurzod was crossing his (second) moat one morning in the late autumn. The apprentice fled with a few dozen pouches of stones while the creature made its grisly feast. Those pouches were sold, at a painfully discounted price, to cover the apprentice's traveling expenses. Meanwhile, however, the legend of Shurzod, his stones, and the tower in Aqqros-Benntar spread throughout the land as the ex-apprentice



unsuccessfully sought a new master in a long series of odd coincidences and inexplicable reverses of fortune. The apprentice's name has been lost to history – as has the exact location of the triple-moated tower of Shurzod's doom – but it seems obvious that Shurzod's method for creating the stones must still held within its walls – along with a great cache of this buoyant bounty.

**Value:** 100gp per stone (complimentary waterproof pouch provided with purchase of 3 or more) ■

## Review: On the Road of Knives

<http://www.roadofknives.com/>

When you're running a magazine, something occasionally comes at you out of left field. In response to the offer of free advertisements, a trio of artists contacted me about their joint website. So I went to check it out, and I found something too weird to pass up. I've always wanted *Knockspell* to be about good fantasy art as well as good gaming resources; the two go hand in hand, together with fantasy fiction. And when you're looking at art, you are

sometimes looking at weird. *On the Road of Knives* fits the bill. It is by no means going to appeal to everyone, but I think it will spark some ideas even in those with whom the art doesn't resonate. Much of it is "modern," and much of it has a Warhammer-type of vibe to it, but it's got some strong, evocative fantasy imagery in there.

Here's the concept, and I'm just going to quote from their website.



*“Zak Smith, Shawn Cheng, and Nicholas Di Genova take turns drawing monsters fighting each other...”*

*So this is how it works: Zak draws something. Shawn draws something that will fight it. Zak draws his thing fighting back. Shawn draws his thing fighting back and maybe tripping over a statue. Then maybe Zak’s thing kills Shawn’s with the statue’s head. Then Shawn draws a new thing. Zak’s surviving thing attacks it. And so on. Zak and Shawn got things started, and now Nick has joined the fray. Though not exactly an exquisite corpse, it will be exquisite, and there will be many corpses.”*

Sounds like something you might do in middle school, right? Here’s the catch: these guys are quite talented artists. Things get weird. Only about half of it really caught my mind’s eye, but half is good. I recommend checking this out, especially if you’re a fan of the more British, gritty style of fantasy art.

I picked out one of the images that really did catch my eye, and we’re reprinting it with permission: ***The Lord Makes His Challenge***, by Shawn Cheng. ■

**Enjoy!**



## Masterminds & Minions

### The Serpent People

by bat

*“Before the rise of mankind, older and inhumanly intelligent creatures reigned supreme; among them, the Serpent People. Once ruling nations, and then being cast down for eons has only served to sharpen their skills and refine their villainy. Nobody will believe you when you tell the world that they are here and ready to overthrow civilization once again, and, indeed, who can you tell in safety? This very person might be one of them...”*

— *Words scrawled on a fragment of manticore parchment found in the debris of a necromancer’s lair.*

This article introduces the Serpent People, an ancient, shape-shifting race that seeks to regain its ancient, vile, glory by infiltrating and overthrowing human civilization from within. With their twisted plots and complete hatred of humanity, the Serpent People are a formidable foe, cautious in the risks they will take but never faltering in their purpose. Driven by insanity and hate, these scaly horrors live to foil the intentions of humanity, while keeping to the shadows, spying carefully, and above all, not revealing their true natures.

The hidden world of the serpent people is led by their Mage-Priests. These masterminds direct the activities of the common ranks (the “Infiltrators”) and also of the massive, less-intelligent “Serpent Kings.”

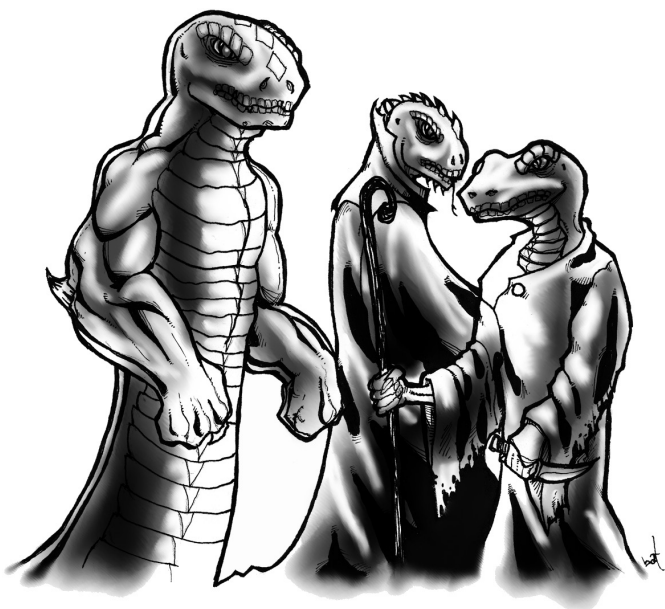
In appearance the common serpent person (an “infiltrator”) is a snake-like humanoid around 6 feet tall and very slender, often dressed in flowing robes of dark colors, which conceal many pockets full of a variety of nefarious devices and implements. The greatest power of the serpent people is their ability to assume human form. Many of the infiltrators with a higher charisma will take on a form appealing to humans and use this to their utmost benefit, often gaining the trust, admiration and even the love of those they despise. While the Serpent Person Mage-Priests also have the shape-changing abilities of the infiltrators, these unholy reptilians prefer to use their magical powers to control and manipulate humanity, although they will not hesitate to take on human form and worm their way into society, if need be. The Serpent Kings, unlike the Mage-Priests and the infiltrators, are completely monstrous

in appearance and cannot alter their forms. These hulking beasts slink around in the hellish underworld lairs of their kind until called to aid their smaller kin, enthusiastically destroying anyone their smaller kin have chosen to target for destruction.

Nests of Serpent People frequently work together to honour their monstrous deities (often through sacrifice) and to further their common racial agenda. Serpent Person Mage-Priests often lead these cult-nests and work surprisingly well with each other to further their wicked schemes. If the nests or the schemes of the Serpent People are in danger of being discovered, these reptilians often summon the Serpent Kings, huge scaly snake-like monsters, who do their best to dispatch all witnesses while the Infiltrators and Mage-Priests erase all evidence of their existence.

As completely uncompromising monsters, the serpent people enjoy tormenting humans as much as possible and will often go out of their way to spread hurtful rumors, cut off supply lines, alienate cities and towns, slowly poison families and perform just about any other low, vile act you can think of.

**Bringing the Serpent People into your game:** There are any number of ways that a referee can bring the Serpent People into his or her game. As these nefarious creatures love spreading rumours, providing red herrings and thwarting the plans of others, they can be virtually anywhere. Think of places where people gather and trade information and there is a good chance that they have been there, rewriting history, replacing important people and bending the ears and minds of influential figures.



## Serpent Person Infiltrator

|                            |                                                   |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Armor Class:</b>        | 6 [13]                                            |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b>           | 3                                                 |
| <b>Attacks:</b>            | 2 claws (1d3), 1 bite (1d4),<br>1 tail whip (1d4) |
| <b>Saving Throw:</b>       | 14                                                |
| <b>Special:</b>            | See below                                         |
| <b>Move:</b>               | 7                                                 |
| <b>Challenge Level/XP:</b> | 5/240 XP                                          |

The Infiltrators are the most common of the Serpent People and the most active in human affairs.

Special Abilities of Serpent Person Infiltrators and High Priests:

**Assume human shape:** The most disturbing of the serpent people's abilities is that of assuming human shape. This state is an actual shape-changing, similar to lycanthropy, yet controlled by the serpent person. This ability is so deceptive that anyone of less than 1HD cannot detect it at all. Characters or others with 1HD or more can detect the true nature of the serpent person with a saving throw (at -2), but a saving throw is only allowed if the character has some reason to suspect that there is something out of the ordinary about the disguised serpent-person. Upon death, serpent people revert back to their true forms.

**Susceptible to Temperature:** The reptilians are cold-blooded and sensitive to extremes of temperature, both hot and cold. Serpent People suffer a -1 on all saving throws when exposed to very cold or very hot temperatures and become slow and sluggish to the point of collapse, eventually dying with prolonged exposure. These monsters take double damage from any heat or cold based magic. The reptilians will go to any length to secure magical items that protect against heat or cold, for obvious reasons.

**Poisonous Bite:** Fifty percent of all serpent people have a venomous bite that causes an additional 1d6 of poison damage.

**Communicate with reptiles:** Cold blooded creatures such as snakes and lizards will never attack a serpent person, unless by command of a reptilian god. Three or more serpent people together may call forth 1d6 Serpent Kings once per month; these huge, brutal creatures act as shock troops or as an 'ace in the hole' when the fiendish plots of the serpent people are foiled.

**Tail-whip Attack:** When in natural form the reptilians can use their tails for a snapping strike for 1d4 damage.

## The Serpent People Mage-Priest

|                            |                                                   |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Armor Class:</b>        | 6 [13]                                            |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b>           | 4                                                 |
| <b>Attacks:</b>            | 2 claws (1d3), 1 bite (1d4),<br>1 tail whip (1d4) |
| <b>Saving Throw:</b>       | 13                                                |
| <b>Special:</b>            | See Serpent Person Infiltrator<br>and below       |
| <b>Move:</b>               | 7                                                 |
| <b>Challenge Level/XP:</b> | 6/400 XP                                          |

Keepers of the cults of the foul deities of the Serpent People, these reptilian mage-priests are the de facto leaders of the Serpent Person race. Often working together on their foul schemes, these are formidable foes, thankfully quite rare.

Special Abilities of Serpent Person Mage-Priests (in addition to those of the Infiltrator):

**Spellcasting:** Reptilian Mage-Priests can use the following spells as spell-like abilities once per day: Charm Person, Cure Light Wounds, Protection from Good, Strength, Wizard Lock, Knock and Prayer. Consider these as if they were cast by a cleric or magic-user of the 3rd level of ability.

**Summon snakes:** Once per day a Serpent Person Mage-Priest can summon 1d4 giant constrictor snakes or 2d6 poisonous snakes. Summoned snakes will remain for one hour, and will obey their summoner.

## Serpent Kings

|                            |                                                 |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Armor Class:</b>        | 5 [14]                                          |
| <b>Hit Dice:</b>           | 5                                               |
| <b>Attacks:</b>            | 2 claws (1d6), 1 bite (2d4),<br>constrict (2d6) |
| <b>Saving Throw:</b>       | 12                                              |
| <b>Special:</b>            | Constrict, spit poison                          |
| <b>Move:</b>               | 7                                               |
| <b>Challenge Level/XP:</b> | 8/800 XP                                        |

Sometimes summoned by the Serpent People when the reptilians are in dire need of backup, the Serpent Kings are vicious brutes. They are huge snakes (an adult is around 30ft long) with a humanoid torso and a cruel face that is a mixture of snake and man. In addition to a claw and bite attack the Serpent Kings can spit a noxious poison up to 25 feet (those struck must make a saving throw or be paralyzed for 2d6 turns) and the worst of all is their ability to constrict with their strong coils. They eschew weapons and armor and rely on their natural abilities to overwhelm the enemies of the Serpent Kingdom.

## Related Magic Item

### Stones of Graslen Gramor

Through an alchemical process long lost to the ages, the Stones of Graslen Gramor are highly valuable magical items from another time. They are usually found in ones and twos, tucked away among other treasures. The Stones of Graslen Gramor look like egg shaped pieces of hardened amber, roughly the size of a peach. Sometimes called “comfort stones”, these arcane implements allow the bearer to function in extremes of heat or cold without suffering any adverse affects. While certainly a sought after magical item, it is common for people who have found one of the Stones of Graslen Gramor to go missing or be killed (by serpent people).

**Benefit:** As long as the bearer of a stone has this on his person, he does not feel the effects of the extreme temperatures of hot or cold climates, and can function in complete comfort. The stones are usable by anyone, but news of one may draw the attention of serpent people, who covet this sort of magic.

## Notes from Sword & Sorcery Fiction

Serpent people of some kind or other are a common feature of sword & sorcery fiction. The serpent is one of the fundamental, atavistic fears that pulp fiction writers sought for use in their stories, and the combination of serpents with human attributes was often used to heighten the fear and horror of the serpent. In some fiction involving the serpent person archetype, these creatures have some weakness that the monsters cannot overcome. For example, in the King Kull fiction by Robert E. Howard, one way of rooting out serpent people is to use a shibboleth, a password tailored to a particular race or creed, that the serpent people themselves cannot utter. Maybe in your game world these creatures react violently whenever they see a serpent being slain, or perhaps they must return to snake form to shed their skin once every few months. Run with these masters of evil and have fun with them! ■

*Sometimes called Ragnar, sometimes bat, the author keeps busy writing, drawing, gaming, geocaching and blogging (<http://ancientvaults.wordpress.com>). An avid reader and one of the founding members of TARGA, Ragnar fully endorses the simulacrum movement and has been roleplaying for nearly thirty years.*



## The Bestiary

What gaming magazine would be complete without a selection of new foes for the players to battle? None, say I! And thus, we present The Bestiary, a section devoted to bad guys of all stripes, spots, and chitinous coverings. This first installment offers the referee a nasty roster of seven new monsters from the minds of Salvatore Macri (Skathros), Russell Cone (Grim), Matt Finch (Mythmere), and Mike Davison (MikeD). All the monsters in this issue were given to us in Swords & Wizardry format, but they're all usable for OSRIC and Labyrinth Lord too, without any changes – although tinkering is, as always, considered virtuous and manly.

### Air Gusts

by Salvatore Macri

These minor elementals from the plane of Air resemble little whirlwinds. Although no more than a few feet in height and width, these tiny tornadoes can easily sent the bulkiest adventurer flying. The victim of a successful hit by an air gust has a 2 in 6 chance of being knocked down (GMs may wish to modify the roll to take into account exceptional strength).

The violent air gusts that make up this elemental's form (and give it its name) make missile/ranged attacks difficult and afford the elemental a bonus of 2 to AC.

**Air Gust:** HD 3; AC 4[15]; Atk Wind Blast (1d6+1 - Range up to 15ft.); Save 14; Move 12 (18 fly); CL/XP 4/120; Special: -2 [+2] to AC vs. missile attacks.

### Aqueous Orbs

by Matt Finch

Aqueous orbs are bubble creatures that levitate above the surface of the water, leaving a long, tube-like feeding tail dangling into the water below. Liquid and nutrients are pulled up through the tail to the bubble-like body, which thrives on rotting carrion in the surrounding water. An aqueous orb glows with green luminescence when attacking; those who fail a saving throw will walk toward the orb, enter the water, and most likely drown. The feeding-tail can also be used as a weapon, piercing foes for 1d4 hit points of damage and inflicting 1d4 points of damage automatically thereafter, as it sucks blood from the victim. An aqueous orb is immune to all but piercing weapons; the feeding-tail is immune to all but slashing weapons.

**Aqueous Orb:** HD 3; AC 4[15]; Atk 1 feeding-tail (1d4); Save 15; Move 3; CL/XP 5/240; Special: Sucks blood, luminescence, immune to weapon types

### Jorogumo

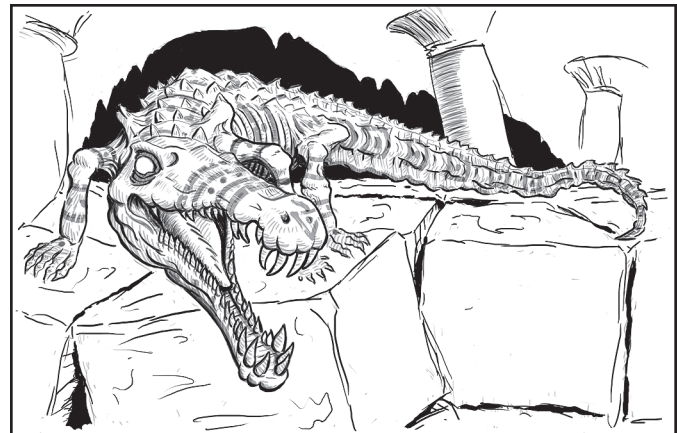
by Mike Davison

Jorogumo are large, ancient spiders than can take the shape of a beautiful woman. They typically make their homes in deep pools or near waterfalls (though they are not confined to water). In spider shape, these shape-changers use entangling webs to drag victims into their underwater lairs. In the form of a woman, the Jorogumo can cast Charm Person twice a day. A Jorogumo's web attacks are treated as missile weapons with a range of 30ft; anyone hit by a web must make a saving throw to avoid becoming stuck. Once a victim is entangled, the Jorogumo drags it 5ft per round (the victim can make a saving throw each round to break free). The web can be attacked as an object with an AC 9 [10] and 4 hps – but not by the entangled victim.

**Jorogumo:** HD 4; AC 7[12]; Atk 1 bite [1d6 + poison] or 2 web attacks; Move 9; Save 13; CL/XP 7/600; Special: lethal poison, webs, charm person.

### Hieroglyphicroc

by Matt Finch

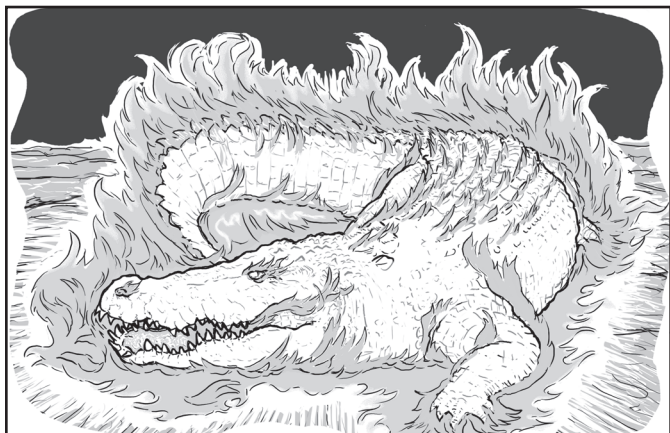


Raised by ancient methods long forgotten or suppressed, zombie crocodiles are actually more akin to mummies than to zombies, at least in terms of the preservation process. Their eyes glow with a yellow light, and they have rudimentary intelligence – often they are defenders of tombs where mummies are found. These creatures are highly immune to being turned, and attack with a bite that can swallow whole on a natural 20. It takes three rounds to completely swallow a victim, but the victim will turn into a zombie within 1d4+1 rounds after being swallowed. Then the zombie crocodile will disgorge it. The bite inflicts 2d6 damage. The dead skin of these creatures is often painted with hieroglyphs.

**Hieroglyphicroc:** HD 7; AC 4[15]; Atk 1 bite (2d6); Move 9; Save 9; CL/XP 8/800; Special: swallow whole on natural 20, transform stomach contents into zombie.

## Kurok Spirits

by Matt Finch



Kuroks are spirit creatures that manifest as a ghostly crocodile, flaming with grey fire. They can only be hit by silver or magic weapons. Anyone coming into the flames, which extend about ten feet from the Kurok's "body," risks being paralyzed by the ghostly conflagration (fire immunities don't help make a saving throw). The kurok's bite causes temporary loss of 1d4 constitution points, and if your constitution drops to 0 ... it takes your soul and eats it.

**Kurok Spirit:** HD 5; AC 4[15]; Atk 1 bite (1d4 points of CON); Move 9; Save 12; CL/XP 7/600; **Special:** magic or silver weapon to hit, drains con, flames paralyze.

## Lightning Lizards

by Salvatore Macri

Lightning lizards stand 5' in height and may reach a length of 14'. Their scales are a shimmering blue and sparks of lightning constantly crackle around their maw. Lightning lizards have sometimes been used as mounts for powerful orcish chiefs or tribal lords. A lightning lizard may spew a crackling stream of lightning to assault its foes twice per day. A successful save halves the damage. Lightning lizards are immune to electrical based attacks or spells. A rare breed of flying lightning lizards are known to exist. They are identical to their earthbound kin with the addition of massive wings which give them a flying movement of 18 (which adjusts the CL/XP to 8/800)

**Lightning Lizard:** HD 5; AC 3[16]; Atk 2 claws (1d4), 1 bite (1d8) or Lightning Blast (4d6); Save 12; Move 12; CL/XP 7/600; **Special:** Lightning blast.

## Vapor Cranes

by Russell Cone

Vapor Cranes make their homes where geysers spew and hot springs make great boiling pools, arranging their rock nests so that they fill with boiling water. Strangely, they do not eat, but draw their sustenance from the steaming waters they inhabit. They will attempt to fly away if they are endangered but they will fight to the death if cornered.

Touching a Vapor Crane without the proper precautions can be deadly, for their bodies are boiling hot (1d6+1 hp/hit die). They are also able to spew clouds of steam from their nostrils as both an offensive and a defensive measure and will use this ability to flee, unless guarding a nest. The steam cloud can be used in one of two ways (3 times per day total): if the crane is attacking, it blows the steam in a cone 30ft long to a width of 30ft, inflicting 1d6 + 1/ hit die. When used defensively, the crane surrounds itself with the cloud in a radius of 15ft, which not only inflicts damage but also obscures the bird from sight. In normal combat, a vapor crane attacks with its beak, which is filled with needle-sharp teeth.

**Large Adult Vapor Crane:** HD 5; AC 4[15]; Atk 1 bite (1d4+5); Save 12; Move 5 (fly 12); CL/XP 6/400; **Special:** scalding to the touch, steam cloud (1d6+1/ hit die) in cone or 15ft radius.

**Small Adult Vapor Crane:** HD 2; AC 4[15]; Atk 1 bite (1d4+2); Save 16; Move 5 (fly 12); CL/XP 3/60; **Special:** scalding to the touch, steam cloud (1d6+1/ hit die) in cone or 15ft radius.

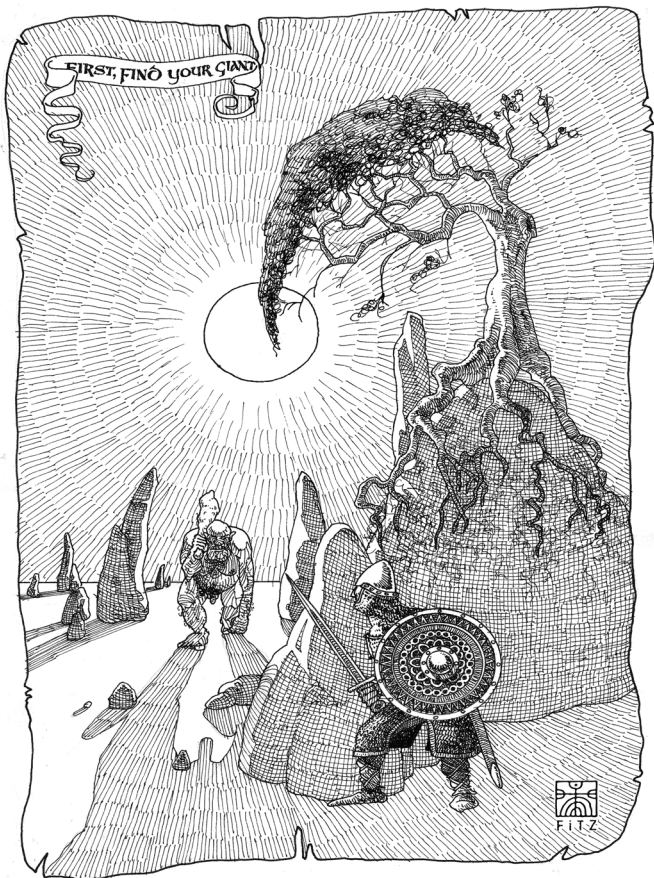
**Fledgling Vapor Crane:** HD 1; AC 4[15]; Atk 1 bite (1d4+1); Save 16; Move 5 (fly 6); CL/XP 2/30; **Special:** scalding to the touch, steam cloud (1d6+1/ hit die) in cone or 15ft radius.

*A casual gamer of the most serious sort, Russell Cone bides his time between game sessions either working with slave-like fervor at a job he would gladly perform for free, enjoying family life, or wandering aimlessly through the cosmos of his own imagination. Enamored with polyhedral gameplay of the fantasy sort from an early age, he was naturally drawn to Swords & Wizardry and the retro-revival.*

*Mike Davison lives in Villa Rica, Georgia. He started his role-playing addiction sometime around Christmas of 1982 when (at the age of 12) he received his Moldvay boxed set from Santa Claus (aka: his mom). He is a contributing author on the newly revised OSRIC system (1e retro clone game).*

*Salvatore Macri hails from Montreal, Quebec. Receiving the Basic box-set as a gift in 1980 sealed his fate and he's been a devoted fan of Classic D&D ever since. When not working on RPG related material, he can usually be found making the rounds of the various OOP and Classic gaming message boards.*

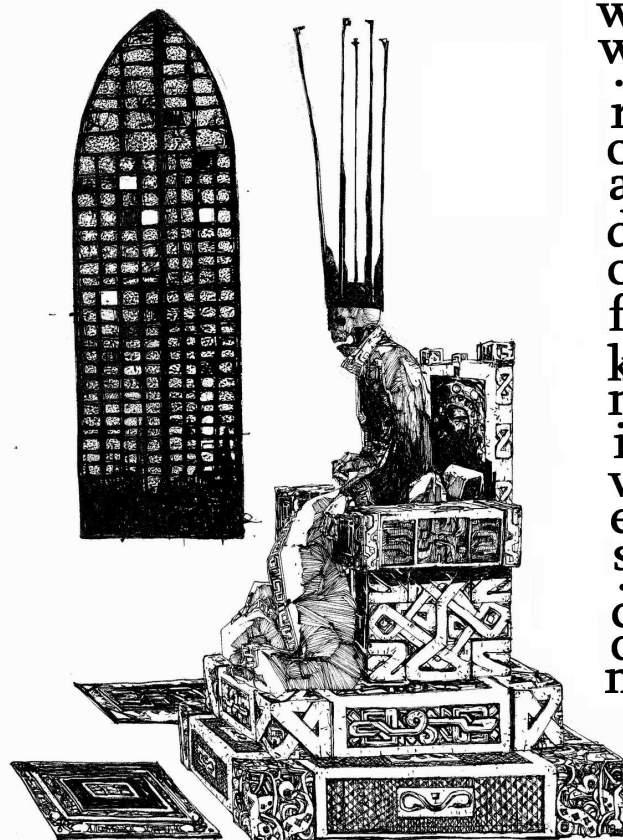
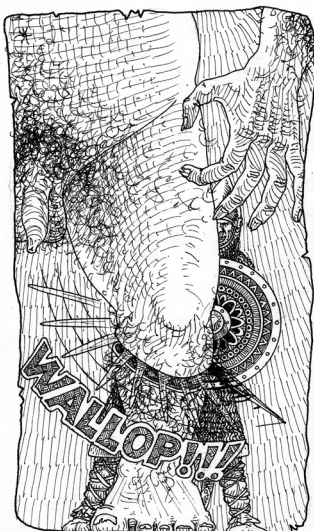
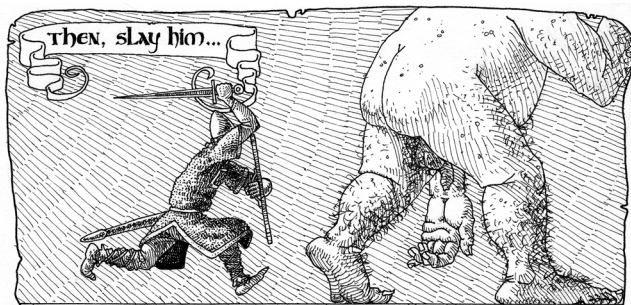




less stats,  
more story



[www.ageoffable.net](http://www.ageoffable.net)



[www.roadofknives.com](http://www.roadofknives.com)





## Classified Ads

### **The Grumblin' Grogard**

<http://grumblinggrogard.blogspot.com/>

Home to Musings, Ramblings, and lots of Grumblin'. A perspective on gaming and other stuff

### **Pied Pier Publishing**

<http://www.pied-piper-publishing.com>

### **RPG Blog 2**

<http://www.rpgblog2.com>

Old-School, small press, Dungeons & Dragons, Traveller, Greyhawk, and many more RPGs. Featuring gamer culture, reviews, links, freebies, resources, and opinion. Updated regularly!

### **Kellri's Joint**

<http://Kellri.blogspot.com>

New & Original Old-School Netbooks

### **The Delver's Dungeon**

[www.thedelversdungeon.com](http://www.thedelversdungeon.com)

### **Wizard in a Bottle**

<http://sites.google.com/site/wizardinabottle>

Old-school gaming and retro-clones!

### **RetroRoleplaying.com**

<http://www.retroroleplaying.com>

Home of Microlite74. Discover the joys of out-of-print and out-of-style RPGs! That is not dead which can still be played!

### **Dragonsfoot**

<http://www.dragonsfoot.org/forums/>

The oldest and biggest OOP fantasy website on the net!

### **Knights & Knaves Alehouse**

<http://knights-n-knaves.com/phpbb/index.php>

Old-school Gygaxian D&D

### **Philotomy's OD&D Musings**

<http://www.philotomy.com>

### **Sham's Grog'n Blog**

<http://shamsgrog.blogspot.com/>

### **Fight On!**

<http://fightonmagazine.com/>

### **Grogardia**

<http://grogardia.blogspot.com>

### **Brave Halfling Publishing**

<http://bravehalflingpublishing.blogspot.com/>

### **The Swords & Wizardry Companion**

<http://swcompanion.wikidot.com/>

### **The Outlook is Grim**

<http://postapocapost.blogspot.com/>

### **Chgowiz's Oldguy RPG Blog**

<http://oldguyrpg.blogspot.com/>

### **Ubiquitous Orcs**

<http://spikesgames.blogspot.com/>

### **Ancient Vaults & Eldritch Secrets**

<http://ancientvaults.wordpress.com/>

### **Sword +1**

<http://swordplusone.blogspot.com/>

### **Beyond the Black Gate**

<http://beyondtheblackgate.blogspot.com/>

### **LotFP: RPG Blog**

<http://lotfp.blogspot.com>

Transatlantic Musings on Dungeons and Dragons, Simulacra, and the Old-School Renaissance "A kick to the face of Old-School Gaming"

### **Usherwood Adventures**

<http://www.usherwoodadventures.com>

First Edition/OSRIC campaign setting, includes original modules, both free for download, and premium modules for purchase at RPGNow.com and Lulu.com.

### **Supplement V: CARCOSA**

<http://carcosa-geoffrey.blogspot.com/>

is a book of rules options for the original fantasy role-playing game published in 1974. It adds Cthulhoid horrors, blasphemous sorcery, and science-fantasy to the game. Go here to order your copy, either in print or in PDF:

Visit Knockspell Magazine's home on the web: [www.swordsandwizardry.com](http://www.swordsandwizardry.com)





## OPEN GAME CONTENT:

Open Game Content may only be Used under and in terms of the Open Game License Version 1.0a (OGL).

This entire work is designated as Open Game Content under the OGL, with the following exceptions, which are Product Identity: the trademarks "Swords & Wizardry," "S&W," and "Mythmere Games," all artwork, all author names and column titles such as "From Kuroth's Quill" and "Chgowiz's Old Guy RPG Blog," and any trademarks or titles mentioned herein by reference.

Note regarding trademarked names and titles referred to herein: Any reference to the trademarked name of a game herein is used for discussion of that game's history or general gaming practices, or is used merely to identify a set of particular rules, and is not to be interpreted as an indication of compatibility or cross-compatibility, or as an indication that the author is affiliated with the company owning such trademark.

For purposes of the article "The Fantasy Marketplace: Looking at Merchants Differently," the OGL Section 15 after the SRD reads:

Swords & Wizardry Core Rules, © 2008, Matthew J. Finch Microlite20 © 2006, Robin V. Stacey (robin@greywulf.net) Microlite20 Equipment List © 2006, Darrell King (rev\_sims@yahoo.com) Labyrinth Lord TM © 2007, Daniel Proctor. Author Daniel Proctor. Tao of D&D blog © 2009 Alexis, <http://tao-dnd.blogspot.com> Fantasy Shopper's Guide © 2009, Michael Shorten (chgowiz@gmail.com)

## OPEN GAME LICENSE Version 1.0a

The following text is the property of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. and is Copyright 2000 Wizards of the Coast, Inc ("Wizards"). All Rights Reserved.

1. Definitions: (a) "Contributors" means the copyright and/or trademark owners who have contributed Open Game Content; (b) "Derivative Material" means copyrighted material including derivative works and translations (including into other computer languages), potation, modification, correction, addition, extension, upgrade, improvement, compilation, abridgment or other form in which an existing work may be recast, transformed or adapted; (c) "Distribute" means to reproduce, license, rent, lease, sell, broadcast, publicly display, transmit or otherwise distribute; (d) "Open Game Content" means the game mechanic and includes the methods, procedures, processes and routines to the extent such content does not embody the Product Identity and is an enhancement over the prior art and any additional content clearly identified as Open Game Content by the Contributor, and means any work covered by this License, including translations and derivative works under copyright law, but specifically excludes Product Identity. (e) "Product Identity" means product and product line names, logos and identifying marks including trade dress; artifacts; creatures characters; stories, storylines, plots, thematic elements, dialogue, incidents, language, artwork, symbols, designs, depictions, likenesses, formats, poses, concepts, themes and graphic, photographic and other visual or audio representations; names and descriptions of characters, spells, enchantments, personalities, teams, personas, likenesses and special abilities; places, locations, environments, creatures, equipment, magical or supernatural abilities or effects, logos, symbols, or graphic designs; and any other trademark or registered trademark clearly identified as Product identity by the owner of the Product Identity, and which specifically excludes the Open Game Content; (f) "Trademark" means the logos, names, mark, sign, motto, designs that are used by a Contributor to identify itself or its products or the associated products contributed to the Open Game License by the Contributor (g) "Use", "Used" or "Using" means to use, Distribute, copy, edit, format, modify, translate and otherwise create Derivative Material of Open Game Content. (h) "You" or "Your" means the licensee in terms of this agreement.

2. The License: This License applies to any Open Game Content that contains a notice indicating that the Open Game Content may only be Used under and in terms of this License. You must affix such a notice to any Open Game Content that you Use. No terms may be added to or subtracted from this License except as described by the License itself. No other terms or conditions may be applied to any Open Game Content distributed using this License.

3. Offer and Acceptance: By Using the Open Game Content You indicate Your acceptance of the terms of this License.

4. Grant and Consideration: In consideration for agreeing to use this License, the Contributors grant You a perpetual, worldwide, royalty-free, non-exclusive license with the exact terms of this License to Use, the Open Game Content.

5. Representation of Authority to Contribute: If You are contributing original material as Open Game Content, You represent that Your Contributions are Your original creation and/or You have sufficient rights to grant the rights conveyed by this License.

6. Notice of License Copyright: You must update the COPYRIGHT NOTICE portion of this License to include the exact text of the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any Open Game Content You are copying, modifying or distributing, and You must add the title, the copyright date, and the copyright holder's name to the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any original Open Game Content you Distribute.

7. Use of Product Identity: You agree not to Use any Product Identity, including as an indication as to compatibility, except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of each element of that Product Identity. You agree not to indicate compatibility or co-adaptability with any Trademark or Registered Trademark in conjunction with a work containing Open Game Content except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of such Trademark or Registered Trademark. The use of any Product Identity in Open Game Content does not constitute a challenge to the ownership of that Product Identity. The owner of any Product Identity used in Open Game Content shall retain all rights, title and interest in and to that Product Identity.

8. Identification: If you distribute Open Game Content You must clearly indicate which portions of the work that you are distributing are Open Game Content.

9. Updating the License: Wizards or its designated Agents may publish updated versions of this License. You may use any authorized version of this License to copy, modify and distribute any Open Game Content originally distributed under any version of this License.

10. Copy of this License: You MUST include a copy of this License with every copy of the Open Game Content You Distribute.

11. Use of Contributor Credits: You may not market or advertise the Open Game Content using the name of any Contributor unless You have written permission from the Contributor to do so.

12. Inability to Comply: If it is impossible for You to comply with any of the terms of this License with respect to some or all of the Open Game Content due to statute, judicial order, or governmental regulation then You may not Use any Open Game Material so affected.

13. Termination: This License will terminate automatically if You fail to comply with all terms herein and fail to cure such breach within 30 days of becoming aware of the breach. All sublicenses shall survive the termination of this License.

14. Reformation: If any provision of this License is held to be unenforceable, such provision shall be reformed only to the extent necessary to make it enforceable.

## 15. COPYRIGHT NOTICE

Open Game License v 1.0a Copyright 2000, Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

System Reference Document Copyright 2000-2003, Wizards of the Coast, Inc.; Authors Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Rich Baker, Andy Collins, David Noonan, Rich Redman, Bruce R. Cordell, John D. Rateliff, Thomas Reid, James Wyatt, based on original material by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson.

Swords & Wizardry Core Rules, copyright 2008, Matthew J. Finch

Knockspell Magazine Issue #2, copyright 2009, Matthew J. Finch



Swords  
& Wizardry

Issue No. 2

<http://www.swordsandwizardry.com>

# KNOCKSPELL

Spring 2009

THE MAGAZINE OF OLD-SCHOOL FANTASY GAMING